

Partitioning the Projects: Racial Segregation and Public Housing in Durham, North  
Carolina

by

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Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of  
Arts in the Department of Political Science in the Graduate School of Duke University

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ABSTRACT

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## *Abstract*

Racial residential segregation is an enduring feature of America's urban landscape. Patterns of residence have become so divided along racial lines, in fact, that many social scientists have described this phenomenon as an "American Apartheid" that is justified and enforced in practice, if not codified in law.<sup>1</sup> With the rise of public housing in the 1960s, the segregation of racial minorities, and particularly African Americans, reached a new level. Indeed, individuals living in public housing experience such a high degree of social and political isolation that they effectively became members of their own city within the larger metropolis.

This research examines racial segregation in public housing in Durham, a medium-sized city in North Carolina. Specifically, I sought to address why the majority of public housing projects in Durham are located in areas that are racially segregated and secondly, what role public policy has played in creating this outcome. To address this question, I utilized decennial census data from 1950 to 2000, with the tract level as the primary unit of analysis, and archival resources pertaining to housing policies in the 1960s. The conclusions reached are twofold. Firstly, the current high degree of segregation in the Southeast section of the city is the result of policy decisions on the part of the City of Durham in conjunction with the Durham Housing Authority in the late 1960s. Secondly, rising levels of segregation in northeast Durham is a consequence of the concentrated placement of public housing in this area in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and the continuance of this policy today. Racial segregation in public housing in Durham is in

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<sup>1</sup> Douglas S. Massey and Nancy A. Denton, *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993).

this way an ongoing issue that profoundly affects not only the individuals living in public housing, but also political society at large.

*For Dr. Kerry L. Haynie and Dr. Paula D. McClain, for showing me the importance of fighting for civil rights, and for giving me the courage and inspiration to do so*

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## **List of Abbreviations**

DHA	- Durham Housing Authority
FHA	- Federal Housing Administration
GMRP	- General Neighborhood Renewal Program
HOLC	- Home Owners' Loan Corporation
HUD	- Housing and Urban Development
LIHDC	- North Carolina Fund Low-Income Housing Development Corporation
UOCI	- United Organizations for Community Improvement



# Introduction

## Race and American Politics

“I would like to be the first Negro president”

- Boy, age about 17 living in Harlem circa 1965<sup>1</sup>

American politics is fundamentally a politics of race.<sup>2</sup> At the very inception of the republic, race played a salient role, influencing the political system and the nature of political institutions. The American Constitution, perhaps the most revered document in the history of the United States, was directly affected by the issues of slavery and the presence of freed blacks in the United States. Particularly, the drafters of the Constitution were “struck over the issue of slavery and suffrage requirements.”<sup>3</sup> At stake was the issue of how slaves ought to be counted for purposes of representation and direct taxation.<sup>4</sup> Ultimately, the delegates settled on a compromise at the Constitutional Convention, effectively counting slaves as three-fifths of a person.<sup>5</sup>

As its very name indicates, the three-fifths compromise was intended as an act of conciliation, or a “means of cooperation between the North and the South.”<sup>6</sup> By counting its slave population, even if only by a factor of three-fifths, the South gained political representation and therefore power. Not only did Southerners have an increased presence

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<sup>1</sup> Kenneth B. Clark, *Dark Ghetto: Dilemmas of Social Power*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1989): 10.

<sup>2</sup> Kerry L. Haynie, “Understanding the New Race Politics: Conclusions and Challenges.” In: Jane Junn and Kerry L. Haynie (eds.), *New Race Politics in America: Understanding Minority and Immigrant Politics*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008): 173.

<sup>3</sup> Paula D. McClain and Joseph Stewart Jr., *Can We All Get Along: Racial and Ethnic Minorities in American Politics*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (Colorado: Westview Press, 2006): 12.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*: 12, 228.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*: 228.

in the House of Representatives, but they also were able to influence the executive branch of government because they now had the power to elect southern presidents. This comparative advantage that the South gained over the North gave Southern states an incentive to sign the American Constitution and to join the Union. In this way, race was a salient factor in the American polity even in its earliest days. Indeed, the dynamics of race structurally re-shaped the landscape of American politics and the distribution of power therein.

The significance of race is illustrated by the role that it has played in major events in American history. The Civil War, for instance, was essentially a war centred on race. As Du Bois asserts, "... however much they who marched South and North in 1861 may have fixed on the technical points of union and local autonomy as a shibboleth, all nevertheless knew, as we know, that the question of Negro slavery was the real cause of the conflict."<sup>7</sup> Du Bois remarks, furthermore, that it is "[c]urious" how "this deeper question ever forced itself to the surface despite effort and disclaimer. No sooner had Northern armies touched Southern soil than this old question, newly guised, sprang from the earth, – What shall be done with the Negroes?"<sup>8</sup>

The question of "[w]hat shall be done with the Negroes?" had been a thorn in the side of white American society for generations.<sup>9</sup> Thomas Jefferson, the author of the Declaration of Independence and the third president of the United States, proclaimed the uniqueness of the American polity in *Notes on the State of Virginia*, published in 1787.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, eds. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and Terri Hume Oliver. (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1999): 17.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> McClain and Stewart *Can We All Get Along: Racial and Ethnic Minorities in American Politics*, 2006: 10.

Jefferson declared that the American political system was “more peculiar than those of any other in the universe.”<sup>11</sup> According to Jefferson, the exceptional nature of the United States arose from its “composition of the freest principles of the English constitution, with others derived from natural right and natural reason.”<sup>12</sup> If the foundation of America’s excellence lay in the composition of the body politic, it follows that any demographic shift in this population is precarious.

Thus, the influx of European immigrants, and the Old World political views that they brought with them, was naturally a cause of concern for Jefferson. “They will bring with them the principles of the governments they leave,” Jefferson wrote, which were “imbibed in their early youth.”<sup>13</sup> If these immigrants did not taint the purity of the American population with their love of monarchical governments, Jefferson was concerned that they would “throw them off...in exchange for unbound licentiousness, passing, as is usual, from one extreme to another. It would be a miracle were they to stop precisely at the point of temperate liberty.”<sup>14</sup>

If Jefferson experienced a degree of disquiet over European immigration, he was extremely perturbed about the prospect of the growing black population in the United States. “Under the mild treatment our slaves experience,” he explained, “and their wholesome, though coarse, food, this blot in our country increases as fast, or faster, than the whites.”<sup>15</sup> In response to this, Jefferson advocated a “duty on the importation on slaves”<sup>16</sup> and perhaps, if the former was successful, a near “prohibition”<sup>17</sup> on this

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<sup>11</sup> Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*. In: Merrill D. Peterson, ed. *The Portable Thomas Jefferson*. (London: Penguin Books, Ltd., 1975): 124.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid: 124-125.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid: 125.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid: 127.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

practice. Stopping the importation of slaves, Jefferson argued, would “in some measure stop the increase of this great moral and political evil.”<sup>18</sup> In light of Jefferson’s belief in the pre-eminence of the American political body, and the importance of this vis-à-vis the maintenance of a government that is characterized by liberty and democracy, it seems more likely that he was concerned that the growing black population would tarnish white American society. That is, given that Jefferson was an owner of slaves himself, reason would indicate that his unease lay less with the morality of importing slaves, and more with the increase in the African American population that would inevitably result from this practice. Faced with the prospect of a growing black population, Jefferson was, in essence, asking the question that has been invoked throughout American history: “[w]hat shall be done with the Negroes?”<sup>19</sup>

I will examine how this question was addressed in the city of Durham, North Carolina, with respect to residential segregation in public housing in the twentieth century. Fundamentally, I argue that the segregation of African Americans, and later other racial minorities, in Durham’s housing projects is the result of a series of policy decisions on the part of the Durham Housing Authority in the 1960s, and the tacit acceptance of these policies at both the local and federal levels of government. Through the processes of urban renewal and the construction of the Durham Freeway, housing policy in the 1960s facilitated the concentration of Durham’s black population in the southeast quadrant of the city, and the dispersal of the white population in the suburbs. The segregation of African Americans in cities and whites in the suburbs is not unique to Durham. In fact, this pattern of residential segregation was so pervasive throughout the

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid: 128.

<sup>19</sup> Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, 1999: 17.

United States that it prompted black funk musician George Clinton, and his band Parliament, to coin the term “chocolate city – vanilla suburbs” in his 1975 in response to this occurrence.<sup>20</sup>

I will build my case by describing first the issue of segregation and specifically, the history of racial residential segregation in the United States. Particularly, I will outline the role of the federal government bodies, local and state governments, and the practices of real estate agents and other private actors. Second, I will discuss the advent of public housing and also, the increase in segregation that took place during this time period. In this section, I also will address the social and political consequences of hyper-segregation in American ghettos, and the various arguments and debates relating to its causes. Finally, I will outline the case of Durham in light of the history and politics of racial residential segregation in the United States, as detailed in the first two chapters. I will present findings from archival research on the policies that date back to the late 1960s when the majority of Durham’s public housing projects were built. The controversy surrounding the location of these public housing developments and particularly, the policies of urban renewal in Durham, are the focus of this section.

Current statistics, as well as the history of public policy in Durham in the 1960s, strongly suggest, as Dr. Ray Thompson stated in a Durham City Council hearing in 1967, that “[t]here seems to be a great conspiracy in Durham to expand and enlarge the Negro ghetto.”<sup>21</sup> Through an empirical analysis of statistical data from the 1960s and 2000

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<sup>20</sup> Noel S. Anderson and Haroon Kharem (eds.), *Education as Freedom: African American Educational Thought and Activism*. (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2009): 165.

<sup>21</sup> Durham Morning Herald, July 18, 1967, p.1. Cited In: Glenda Lackey Bunce, *The Housing Authority of Durham, North Carolina: A Case Study of an Independent Commission*. January 14, 1968. Folder 4710, North Carolina Fund Papers, Southern Historical Collection at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (herein after called NCF Papers): 14.

census, in conjunction with the historical records that date from the 1960s, I will argue that the goal of expanding and enlarging the “Negro ghetto” was not merely a conspiracy.<sup>22</sup> Instead, it was the result of a concerted, overt effort by elites in the Durham City Council, the Durham Housing Authority, and the Durham Redevelopment Commission, in tandem with Housing and Urban Development in Washington. Segregation in Durham’s public housing market did not occur by chance. Furthermore, it was not a mere side effect of the lower socioeconomic status of many African Americans who lived in Durham in the 1960s. Contrary to the argument that is often put forward to explain patterns of racial residential segregation, it was and is not solely the result of blacks’ residential preferences.

Because the actions of elites were instrumental in creating and further establishing racial residential segregation in Durham’s public housing projects, the community power studies literature will serve as the theoretical foundation for this analysis. Floyd Hunter, in his work *Community Power Structure: A Study of Decision Makers*, argues that the community is the appropriate unit of analysis when studying power relations because “the community is a primary power center and because it is a place in which power relations can be most easily observed.”<sup>23</sup> Moreover, Hunter argues that power is best understood as an elite discourse. In society, “men of authority are called power and influence leaders” and more often than not, this power is not dispersed evenly throughout the community. Instead, it is isolated in the upper echelons because “[t]here appears to be a tenuous line of communication between the governors of our society and the governed.”<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Floyd Hunter, *Community Power Structure: A Study of Decision Makers*. (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1953): 2.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid :1-2.

If power is conceptualized as an elite, and not a pluralist, discourse, then it can be operationalized by examining the relationships between elites, and how they share power amongst themselves. Thus, Hunter defines power “in terms of men and their actions in relation to one another.”<sup>25</sup> The case of Durham, perfectly illustrates these premises of community power structure theory. The source of power vis-à-vis public housing was concentrated among elites and furthermore, could be best understood by examining the relationships between the elites in the Durham Housing Authority, the Durham Redevelopment Commission, and Housing and Urban Development.

It is important to understand the origins and current causes of racial residential segregation in the United States because the consequences of segregation are tremendously significant. In *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass*, Massey and Denton argue that “racial segregation – and its characteristic institutional form, the black ghetto – are the key structural factors responsible for the perpetuation of black poverty in the United States.”<sup>26</sup> Taeuber and Taeuber express a similar sentiment in their work, *Negroes in Cities: Residential Segregation and Neighborhood Change*, that “residential segregation is not only a vital social issue in itself, but is closely intertwined with most of the problems confronting urban society.”<sup>27</sup> Just as the effects of segregation are all-encompassing, the studies examining it are characteristically broad, examining a large number of cities; many are major urban centres with large populations. In conducting these large-scale studies, scholars seek generalizability and in turn, to unearth trends and patterns that might otherwise be

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid: 2.

<sup>26</sup> Massey and Denton, *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass*, 1993: 9.

<sup>27</sup> Karl E. Taeuber and Alma F. Taeuber, *Negroes in Cities: Residential Segregation and Neighborhood Change*. (New York: Atheneum, 1969): 1.

obscured by the idiosyncratic factors of an individual city. As Taeuber and Taeuber write, “[p]atterns of residential segregation and neighborhood change vary from city to city, and only comparative research can elucidate some of the underlying sources of this variation.”<sup>28</sup>

While it is possible to attain a high level of generalizability from comparative studies that span a number of large metropolises, the advantage of a case study is that it is characterized by a higher degree of internal validity. Certainly, focusing on the particular factors of an individual city may not be conducive to uncovering the “underlying sources of variation” of segregation across the United States.<sup>29</sup> On the other hand, describing and examining the historical processes that underlie the current statistics on racial segregation in public housing in one city allows for a more thorough explanatory approach to this research.<sup>30</sup> First, it is possible to ask what the relationship is between the Durham Housing Authority’s policies in the 1960s, and racial segregation in public housing in Durham today. Second, because this is a case study, if indeed there is a relationship, I am able to more fully and accurately address the question of why this relationship exists in this one particular context.

Examining racial residential segregation in a Southern setting has a political and historical resonance because, as McClain et al. point out, and as V.O. Key observed in his work, *Southern Politics in State and Nation*, published in 1949, “the politics of the South is the politics of race.”<sup>31</sup> Race has been salient throughout the United States, yet the role

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid: vi.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Winston Jackson and Norine Verberg, *Methods: Doing Social Research*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (Toronto: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2007): 16.

<sup>31</sup> Paula D. McClain et al., “Racial Distancing in a Southern City: Latino Immigrants’ Views of Black Americans.” *The Journal of Politics*, 2006. 68(3): 572.



of race in the South has always been particularly pronounced when culture, the law, and politics are considered. Moreover, the unique history of race and African American politics in Durham also make it a compelling case.

In 1912, Du Bois praised Durham “for its exceptional progress that “characterizes the progress of the Negro American” out of the feudal darkness of the past and into an era of capitalist stability.”<sup>32</sup> Yet for black Americans, Durham represented both the best and the worst of worlds. Leslie Brown writes that Du Bois observed that “the significance of the rise of a group of black people to the Durham height and higher, means not a disappearance but, in some respects, an accentuation of the race problem.”<sup>33</sup> Indeed, Brown argues that:

[t]he Durham Group, as its notable residents were called, created exactly what southern whites despised: a prosperous black society marked by the elements that whites believed black people should not achieve. Yet Durham’s open secret was that, just below the surface of unity and prosperity, black Durham’s internal clashes characterized its development, sometimes stimulating creative initiatives and sometimes stymieing progress.<sup>34</sup>

Nevertheless, by the end of the end of nineteenth century, “black Durham emerged as a symbol of black nationalism and black pride.”<sup>35</sup> It had become, furthermore, “a symbol of what African Americans could do on their own when left alone by whites.”<sup>36</sup> Houck, writing in 1941, asserted boldly in regard to black leadership in

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<sup>32</sup> Leslie Brown, *Upbuilding Black Durham: Gender, Class, and Black Community Development in the Jim Crow South*. (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2008): 12.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid: 12-13.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid: 14.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

Durham that “there seems to be no wonder that the Durham Negroes are said to “have the best Negro citizenship in the state.”<sup>37</sup>

The dynamics of this unlikely pairing of black pride and black repression are exhibited in the case of black residential segregation in Durham vis-à-vis public housing. Black citizens reacted to this segregation, forming coalitions and expressing themselves politically. In so doing, they expressed their pride, demanding the rights to which they were entitled as African Americans. Yet it was also clear that being black in Durham still brought with it the sting of repression. While in some cases they were successful in their opposition to particular housing projects, other times they were ignored and their efforts completely thwarted. As one black citizen in Durham expressed, “[w]e had said from the beginning we could take the ‘intelligent route.’ It wasn’t worth a damn.”<sup>38</sup>

Thus, Durham’s southern location, its unique history, and the dynamics of race politics in this city provide an interesting backdrop to study how race influenced the development of public housing. This thesis will endeavour to address and explain how each of these factors interacted with one another to establish the pattern of racial segregation that is exhibited today in Durham’s public housing projects.

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<sup>37</sup> Thomas Hamlin Houck, *A Newspaper History of Race Relations in Durham: 1910-1940*. (Durham: Duke University Library, Manuscript Theses, 1941): 75.

<sup>38</sup> Alex Hurder, Noell Beyle (ed.), *History of the Hoover Road Housing Project*. December 20, 1968: 25. Folder 7453, Series 6.10. NCF Papers, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

## Chapter One

### “What Shall be Done With the Negroes?” Residential Segregation and the Politics of Exclusion

“The flag here in America is for the white man. The blue is for justice; the fifty white stars you see in the blue are for the fifty white states; and the white you see in it is the White House. It represents white folks. The red in it is the white man’s blood – he doesn’t even respect your blood, that’s why he will lynch you, hang you, barbecue you, and fry you.”

- Man, age about 35, living in Harlem circa 1965<sup>1</sup>

With the end of the Civil War and the ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment that abolished slavery in 1865, American citizens, and particularly white Southerners, once again revisited the question of what to do with the African American population in their midst.<sup>2</sup> In response to this question, white southerners devised, and subsequently enforced by law, a “troubling set of racial codes known as Jim Crow.”<sup>3</sup> Brown observes regarding Jim Crow that:

the term belies the most profound abuses perpetuated in the name of white racial supremacy: the lynching of black men, the rape of black women, the burning of black schools and churches, the bombing of black neighborhoods, the destruction of black towns, race riots, and random violence attest that Jim Crow was homegrown oppression and terrorism, an American apartheid sanctioned by all three branches of government.<sup>4</sup>

Brown adds, furthermore, that this form of de jure segregation not only created a “mockery of black hopes,” but it also “portrayed black people as inhuman, irresponsible, and immoral, diametrically distinct from whites and therefore unable to measure up to

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<sup>1</sup>Clark, *Dark Ghetto*, 1989: 6.

<sup>2</sup> McClain and Stewart *Can We All Get Along: Racial and Ethnic Minorities in American Politics*, 2006: 231.

<sup>3</sup> Brown, *Upbuilding Black Durham*, 2008: 10.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid: 10-11.

their standards of character.”<sup>5</sup> When Jim Crow was not damaging an individual’s dignity and sense of self-worth, it was removing their political and economic rights as citizens of the United States. “Insisting that “the Negro is a Negro and always would be just that and nothing more,”” Brown writes, “whites translated antiblack rhetoric into officially administered discrimination in the areas of democracy – employment, education, and elections – and sustained it for over a hundred years.”<sup>6</sup>

The legal apparatus of Jim Crow segregation ensured that African Americans were removed from mainstream society in a myriad of ways. As Massey and Denton explain, the Jim Crow system comprised “a set of laws and informal expectations that subordinated blacks to whites in all areas of social and economic life.”<sup>7</sup> In Houck’s work, *A Newspaper History of Race Relations in Durham*, a master’s thesis completed at Duke University in 1941, he discusses an article written by Charles S. Johnson in regard to the tobacco factories in the South. Writing in 1936, Johnson said:

One of the most widespread expressions of prevailing racial attitudes is racial segregation. Segregation, even enforced by distinctions that are little more than symbolic, is regarded as of *vital importance to the normal equilibrium*, and, generally, *to the best interests of both races* [emphasis mine]. The traditional racial sentiments are shared fully and felt deeply by the workers, and especially by the white workers, who regard the practice of segregation as essential not merely to their own economic security but also to their racial and social status. The Negro workers, more or less resigned to their station, seek for themselves whatever security then can gain from a less exacting wage scale, from the uncomplaining performance of disagreeable tasks, from the moral support which casual personal relations with employers afford them, and from occasional benevolent sentiments of the more influential elements of the white population.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid: 11.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Massey and Denton, *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass*, 1993: 25-26.

<sup>8</sup> Charles S. Johnson, “The Conflict of Caste and Class in American Industry,” *American Journal of Sociology*, 1936. 42: 58. In: Houck, *A Newspaper History of Race Relations in Durham: 1910-1940*. 1941: 28.

The colour-line of which Du Bois spoke in his famous assertion “[t]he problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color-line” was manifest most obviously in this phase of American history.<sup>9</sup> Indeed, maintenance of the colour-line was thought to be of “vital importance to the normal equilibrium” of society.<sup>10</sup> Johnson continued by noting that:

Curiously enough, the existing racial division in work is rationalised by both white and Negro workers in essentially the same terms. A white worker who had come into one of the factory towns some years before from farm labor explained the racial division of labor as something having a biological basis. He said: “The niggers handle the dirty work. A white man couldn’t get in there. The niggers always done the heavy, hot work. They stand it better.”

In like manner, a Negro prizer, doing heavy work, assumed that these jobs fell to Negroes because they alone could sustain them. He said: “The white men work alongside of us, but they do the light and we do the heavy work. They couldn’t do the kind of work we do. We go carrying around iron racks weighing from ninety pounds up. That would kill the whites.”<sup>11</sup>

Interestingly, segregation in the South was not always characterized by a strict physical separation. The water fountains, restrooms, and entrances to theatres and other public venues labelled “colored” are the popular images of Jim Crow. Yet the separation was just as much psychological and social as it was spatial. As the Negro prizer observed, “[t]he white men work alongside of us.”<sup>12</sup> It was not their tangible separation that mattered, but rather the type of work that was undertaken by black and white workers. In the American South, Jim Crow segregation was more about “keeping your place” than it was about geography. Thus, as Massey and Denton explain, “the implementation of Jim Crow did not increase segregation,” and neither did it “reduce the

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<sup>9</sup> Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, 1999: 17.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Johnson, “The Conflict of Caste and Caste in American Industry.” *American Journal of Sociology*, 1936: 58. In: Houck, *A Newspaper History of Race Relations in Durham: 1910-1940*. 1941: 27.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

frequency of black-white contact.”<sup>13</sup> Instead, it “governed the terms under which integration occurred and strictly regulated the nature of interracial social contacts.”<sup>14</sup>

Residential segregation in the Jim Crow South also reflected this pattern. The almost impenetrable social boundaries that separated blacks from whites rendered spatial segregation almost superfluous. Social norms, codified in law, dictated that African Americans could never associate with whites on equal terms, no matter where they lived. In this way, “[t]he relationship between master and slave was supplanted by one of master and servant, or a paternalistic relationship between boss and worker.”<sup>15</sup> Nevertheless, in spite of “their economic and social subjugation,” and indeed because of their clear status as subordinates, “blacks in southern cities continued to have direct personal contacts with whites, albeit on very unequal terms.”<sup>16</sup> The consequence was that:

Neighborhoods in many southern cities evolved a residential structure characterized by broad avenues interspersed with small streets and alleys. Large homes on the avenues contained white families, who employed black servants and laborers who lived on the smaller streets.<sup>17</sup>

In the North, residential segregation wore a different face. After the Civil War, a large proportion of the African American population moved from the rural South to the urban North in search of greater equality of opportunity. So dramatic was this demographic shift that by 1960s, seventy-three percent of the black population was urban, while previously in 1910, seventy-three percent of African Americans had lived in

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<sup>13</sup> Massey and Denton, *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass*, 1993: 26.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

rural areas.<sup>18</sup> Black Americans moved to the North in search of better life chances and opportunities.

The large metropolises in the North were envisioned as beacons of opportunity for many blacks. In the South, the majority of African Americans “were exploited by a sharecropping system that was created by white landowners to replace slavery.”<sup>19</sup> Many were hopelessly caught in the quagmire of “ignorance and poverty,” a condition created and continually reinforced by a white power structure that had a vested interest in dominating blacks, and employed violence, both threatened and realized, to maintain the status quo.<sup>20</sup> Living in the sweltering heat of oppression, African Americans searched for hope, and believed they would find it in the North. The prevailing discourse in the black community at the time added currency to these aspirations, as black newspapers from the North, such as the *Chicago Defender*, “exhorted southern blacks to escape their oppression and move northward.”<sup>21</sup> Moreover, the prospects of re-locating also became increasingly practical. As more and more blacks moved to northern cities and found jobs, they implored friends and relatives in the South to do the same and usually helped them secure housing and employment.<sup>22</sup>

The outbreak of World War I only served to amplify this trend. At the time, European immigrants typically comprised the majority of workers in industrial plants and factories.<sup>23</sup> With the increased demand for industrial production and the reduced flow of European immigrants to fill these job positions as a result of the war, factory employers

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<sup>18</sup> Taeuber and Taeuber, *Negroes in Cities: Residential Segregation and Neighborhood Change*, 1969: 1.

<sup>19</sup> Massey and Denton, *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass*, 1993: 18.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid: 29.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid: 28.

sought out blacks as a replacement, and “began a spirited recruitment” in the South.<sup>24</sup>

Those who did move north escaped the shackles of Jim Crow and legal segregation, but they were not free from the effects of blatant racism and discrimination. In fact:

Northern whites viewed this rising tide of black migration with increasing hostility and considerable alarm. Middle-class whites were repelled by what they saw as the uncouth manners, unclean habits, slothful appearance, and illicit behavior of poorly educated, poverty-stricken migrants who had only recently been sharecroppers, and a resurgence of white racist ideology during the 1920s provided a theoretical, “scientific” justification for these feelings. Working-class whites, for their part, feared economic competition from the newcomers; and being first- or second- generation immigrants who were themselves scorned by native whites, they reaffirmed their own “whiteness” by oppressing a people that was even lower in the racial hierarchy. Blacks in the early twentieth century frequently said that the first English word an immigrant learned was “nigger.”<sup>25</sup>

In this way, white immigrants used a strategy of political exclusion in order to advance their own interests in the United States. At this point, it is also important to note that white, European immigrants were able to use such a strategy because American society at the times was effectively synonymous with “white society.” European immigrants may have initially appeared distinct and unusual in the American polity due to the uniqueness of their style of dress, their customs and their dialect, among other things.<sup>26</sup> Yet each of the attributes described could be “shed” by the descendents of these immigrants.<sup>27</sup> Moreover, not only was this possible, but it was “*encouraged* [sic] by the dominant white population as a device used to generate assimilation and loyalty to American society.”<sup>28</sup>

For black migrants, on the other hand, the characteristics that labelled them as outsiders could not be so easily dismantled. Indeed, the assimilation of blacks was

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid: 29.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Stanley Lieberson, *A Piece of the Pie: Black and White Immigrants Since 1880*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980): 31.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.



precluded by their race. The fact that European immigrants quickly added the word “nigger” to their lexicon is neither accidental, nor characteristic of a particular point in history. Indeed, decades later, Malcolm X expressed his frustration with the fact that blacks would always be “niggers,” no matter who they were, where they lived, and what they accomplished. “What do you call a Negro with a PhD?” he quipped. “A nigger.”<sup>29</sup>

### ***The Beginnings of American Apartheid: 1900-1920***

Rising anti-black sentiment in the North was quickly manifest in patterns of residence. In the South, whites relied on a combination of de jure segregation under Jim Crow and violence, usually in the form of lynching, to keep blacks in their place. In the North, however, white mobs, leaders, and citizens initially relied almost exclusively on violence, as they did not have any direct, legal means of excluding blacks. Violence erupted in New York City in 1900; in Evansville, Indiana, in 1903; in Springfield, Illinois, in 1908; in East St. Louis, Illinois, in 1917; and in Chicago, in 1919.<sup>30</sup> Massey and Denton explain that:

In each case, individual blacks were attacked because of the color of their skin. Those living away from recognized “black” neighborhoods had their houses ransacked or burned. Those unlucky or unwise enough to be caught trespassing in “white” neighborhoods were beaten, shot, or lynched. Blacks on their way to work were pulled from trolleys and pummelled. Rampaging bands of whites roamed the streets for days, attacking blacks at will. Although most of the rioters were white, most of the arrests, and nearly all the victims, were black.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Massey and Denton, *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass*, 1993: 170.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid: 30.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

Just as in the South, blacks faced the prospect of being lynched for overstepping a particular social or political boundary, such as attempting to cast a vote or having a relationship with a member of another race; blacks in the North were confronted with the prospect of violence when they unwittingly overstepped a spatial boundary that related to residence.

The excessive use of violence to exclude blacks, and the race riots that often ensued, were not strictly a northern phenomenon, however. Race riots also occurred in the South in cities such as Atlanta, Georgia, in 1906, and Wilmington, North Carolina, in 1898.<sup>32</sup> In Wilmington, the discourse of exclusion among whites was remarkably similar to the dialogue that took place in many northern cities as whites attempted to keep blacks in their place. Sheila McKoy writes that in Wilmington:

Part of the reason why white hysteria was so effective was because of the success of the African American middle class in Wilmington. While most major cities had segregated business districts, Main Street in Wilmington was home to numerous African American businesses. There was also an extensive black business district on Seventh Street. The economic and political success of the African American population was the primary focus of the campaign to galvanize the white community against “negro domination.”<sup>33</sup>

The sentiment among whites in the South and the North was increasingly one of exclusion. For whites, African Americans ought not to step outside their place, whether this meant working in white business circles or living in white neighborhoods. For whites, “black people belonged to black neighborhoods no matter what their social or economic standing.”<sup>34</sup>

City policies and zoning requirements quickly responded to this sentiment of exclusion, particularly in regard to housing and the location of black and white

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<sup>32</sup> Sheila Smith McKoy, *When Whites Riot: Writing Race and Violence in American and South African Cultures*. (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2001): 41.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid*: 47.

<sup>34</sup> Massey and Denton, *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass*, 1993: 30.

residences. In the North, affluent and educated African Americans who had previously lived in integrated neighborhoods were relegated to “black belts,” “darkytowns,” “Bronzevilles,” or “Niggertowns.”<sup>35</sup> Because residential segregation has a direct effect on other areas of life, employment also became increasingly segregated, as did education.<sup>36</sup> Indeed, as Lieberman argues, residential segregation is the precursor for other forms of isolation. “[R]esidential isolation is of consequence for a wide variety of other events,” he explains, “such as school isolation, [and] restriction of opportunities because of minimal contact with whites.”<sup>37</sup> The result is that the black population increasingly was viewed as “distinct and different, [with] restricted opportunities to live near all sorts of employment found at great distances from the black ghettos.”<sup>38</sup> In this way, segregation had the effect of being self-reinforcing. Blacks were segregated in the first place because they are viewed as outsiders, and because segregation made them seem even more “distinct and different,” whites had an increased incentive for maintaining the colour line.<sup>39</sup>

Once blacks had been driven out of white neighbourhoods by violence, white leaders and citizens once again used this strategy for maintaining the boundaries of the black ghetto. Despite the fact that the illusion of the North as a paradise of opportunity for blacks was no doubt diminished by the waves of racial strife and violence that these areas experienced, African Americans continued to migrate to northern cities. Considering that blacks were not permitted to live in areas outside of those that were designated as “black,” the ghetto became increasingly crowded. The deteriorating

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Lieberman, *A Piece of the Pie: Black and White Immigrants Since 1880*, 1980: 10.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

conditions and health problems that naturally follow from overcrowding ultimately forced middle class black families to the periphery of the ghetto, and into the white neighborhoods that surrounded it as early as the 1940s.<sup>40</sup> In Chicago, for example, Arnold Hirsch explains that the “horrendous conditions produced by confining a rapidly growing black population in an already overcrowded, aged, and deteriorating housing supply drove many to seek shelter outside their traditional communities.”<sup>41</sup> Furthermore, as more and more whites moved to Chicago’s suburbs, “vacancies began to appear around the Black Belt. The availability of this housing, and blacks’ ability to pay for it, rendered unstable the old geographical accommodation.”<sup>42</sup>

Faced with the unwelcome prospect of a black family in their neighborhood, whites mobilized to remove them. White individuals and organizations in the neighbourhood would not usually resort to violence initially. Instead, they would harass the black individual or family, or write threatening letters expressing the “dire consequences to follow.”<sup>43</sup> If this was unsuccessful, whites would form a coalition among themselves, or through a church or neighbourhood organization, in an attempt to buy the black homeowners out.<sup>44</sup> Usually these bids were complemented with a subtle or not so subtle threat, indicating that it would be in the homeowners best interest to accept the offer.<sup>45</sup> If each of these tactics proved unsuccessful, whites would resort to violence. In this typical scenario, groups of angry whites would surround the house, “hurling rocks

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<sup>40</sup> Massey and Denton, *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass*, 1993: 34.

<sup>41</sup> Arnold R. Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto: Race and Housing in Chicago, 1940-1960*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983): 16.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Massey and Denton, *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass*, 1993: 34.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

and insults and at times storming the home and ransacking it.”<sup>46</sup> If the residents remained steadfast in their resolve to stay, in spite of such ardent opposition, they faced the threat of being bombed.<sup>47</sup>

The increasing frequency of bombings in American cities at the time bears witness to this. In Chicago, for example, as many as “fifty-eight black homes were bombed between 1917 and 1921, one every twenty days.”<sup>48</sup> One such victim in Chicago, a “black real estate agent” by the name of Jesse Binga, “had his home and office bombed seven times in one year.”<sup>49</sup> Bombings also took place in Cleveland. In one instance, “a wealthy black doctor who constructed a new home in an exclusive white suburb had his house surrounded by a violent mob, and when this attack failed to dislodge him, the home was dynamited twice.”<sup>50</sup>

Violence, however, has its costs. It exacts a cost on the victim, of course, but it also has a price for the perpetrator. Bombing black houses to dislodge a resident from a white neighbourhood often caused damage to white houses.<sup>51</sup> Socially and politically, it reflects poorly on those who are responsible for this violence, even in a time when racial discrimination was acceptable in many spheres of life. Moreover, violence is not consistently an effective means of exclusion. For one thing, it is not a sustainable strategy. It requires a continual and repeated effort on the part of whites to mobilize, plan, and carry out the act. While this may be possible for short periods of time, whites

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid: 34-35.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid: 35.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

certainly could not carry out this strategy for every black family that moved into their neighbourhood for perpetuity.

It should be acknowledged that violence can be an effective strategy for a period of time. If the threat of violence establishes itself as credible, whites may not always have to resort to violence every time a black family crosses the residential colour-line. The threat alone may deter some individuals who were unwilling to risk harm being inflicted on their families. Nevertheless, a structural, top-down means of effecting black residential segregation is, I would argue, an even more effective means of exclusion than the credible threat of white violence. It is for this reason that although violence remained, it also began to wear a more “civilized” face. As Hirsch writes, “[v]iolence took on a new importance as it not only targeted blacks but was aimed at influencing white policy makers as well.”<sup>52</sup> Indeed, building the ghetto would increasingly become an institutionalized process.

### ***Establishing and Enlarging the Ghetto: 1920-1940***

Employing institutional measures to segregate African Americans signalled a decreased emphasis on overt discrimination and violence, and the beginning of a series of covert methods and practices that were often presented as benign and even benevolent. The most obvious example of this is the advent of neighbourhood improvement associations. Their purpose, adherents claimed, was to increase property values and

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<sup>52</sup> Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto*, 1983: 36.

increase neighbourhood security.<sup>53</sup> Nevertheless, “their principal raison d’être was the prevention of black entry and the maintenance of the color line.”<sup>54</sup> In New York, for example, white community members formed the “Harlem’s Property Owners’ Improvement Corporation and Brooklyn’s Gates Avenue Association” with the express purpose of “checking the expansion of black settlement along the ghetto’s frontier.”<sup>55</sup>

Labelling these associations “improvement organizations” is interesting. It was, of course, intended to disguise the fact that they were not primarily concerned with improving the neighbourhood’s overall safety, value, and appearance, but rather with removing blacks from the area. Yet the name of these organizations is not entirely disingenuous. To be sure, neighbourhood improvement associations were certainly concerned with “improving” their neighbourhood; it was just that their idea of improvement involved the removal of blacks.

With this goal in mind, neighbourhood improvement associations became active in municipal politics. They concerted their efforts to create zoning restrictions and endeavoured to shut down hotels and other businesses that typically attracted black patrons.<sup>56</sup> They provided black renters with an incentive to leave the neighbourhood by providing them with cash bonuses if they complied.<sup>57</sup> Neighbourhood improvement associations also worked to encourage public investment in their areas to increase property values in these communities.<sup>58</sup> Although increasing property values is

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<sup>53</sup> Massey and Denton, *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass*, 1993: 35.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid: 36.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

congruent with their expressed mandate, it also had the insidious, and intended, side-effect of precluding black property ownership in the area.

White neighbourhood associations did not always act as one cohesive group to remove blacks from their areas of residence, however. In Chicago, whites often disagreed about how best to remove blacks, and different associations became territorial when it came to protecting the racial homogeneity of their neighbourhood.<sup>59</sup> The reason for this was that if one neighbourhood improvement association successfully removed all blacks from their area, this meant that these blacks would have to re-locate elsewhere, perhaps in another white area. Consequently, “Chicago’s whites found themselves engaged in a desperately competitive struggle with each other. The successful “defense” of one neighborhood increased the problems of others.”<sup>60</sup>

With this goal of “defending” their area of residence in mind, neighbourhood improvement associations implemented restrictive covenants.<sup>61</sup> Restrictive covenants have been described as one of the more forceful examples of collective action on the part of whites to keep blacks living in black ghettos.<sup>62</sup> As Massey and Denton explain, these documents were:

contractual agreements among property owners stating that they would not permit a black to own, occupy, or lease their property. Those signing the covenant bound themselves and their heirs to exclude blacks from the covered area for a specified period of time. In the event of the covenant’s violation, any party to the agreement could call upon the courts for enforcement and could sue the transgressor for damages.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto*, 1983: 172.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Massey and Denton, *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass*, 1993: 36.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.



Typical covenants were characterized by a high degree of longevity, with most lasting for up to twenty years.<sup>64</sup> So long as seventy-five percent of the property owners in a neighbourhood agreed to the terms of restrictive covenants and gave their consent, the covenant was enforceable through the courts.<sup>65</sup> These documents came into use in 1910, and were widely used until 1948, when the U.S. Supreme Court declared them unconstitutional.<sup>66</sup> The effort that was made to keep blacks out of white neighbourhoods meant that blacks were kept in black neighbourhoods in increasing numbers. In order to maintain segregated housing patterns, whites adopted a “policy of containment.”<sup>67</sup> Real estate agents and the real estate industry in general, played a pivotal role in this strategy.<sup>68</sup>

An increased demand for housing in black ghettos led to overcrowding and unfavourable living conditions. Nevertheless, the need for housing in these areas also meant that buying or renting property in the black ghetto was increasingly expensive. Because of the soaring demand for housing in the ghetto, and the relative rise in housing prices, real estate agents were in a position to exact a large profit from the sale of these properties.<sup>69</sup> Real estate agents could not, however, simply sell properties on the outskirts of ghettos in a random or irregular manner. Indeed, it was imperative that they sold and rented properties to African Americans in a systematic fashion in order to keep blacks segregated from whites.

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto*, 1983: 16.

<sup>67</sup> Massey and Denton, *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass*, 1993: 37.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

With this goal in mind, a policy of containment became extremely useful. This policy allowed for the real estate industry to make a large profit on the expanding frontier of the ghetto, while also appeasing whites by maintaining the colour line. Thus, they kept blacks contained to black areas by seeing to it that “they filled a block solidly [with black occupants] before being allowed to move into the next one.”<sup>70</sup> Real estate agents were able to facilitate this process of racial turnover by convincing whites to sell their properties and move into other areas that were predominantly white, and would remain so in the future. It was not uncommon for them to “go door to door warning white residents of the impending “invasion” and offer to purchase or rent homes on generous terms,”<sup>71</sup> a practice that later became known as blockbusting.

Many times, “they selected ostentatiously lower-class blacks to be the first settlers in the neighborhood in order to heighten fears and encourage panic.”<sup>72</sup> So determined were real estate agents to convince whites to move by invoking a sense of fear of blacks that in many instances the lower-class African Americans selected to move into the neighbourhood first were in reality “confederates of the realtor.”<sup>73</sup> While planting the seeds of white panic by informing whites of the rising demand by blacks for housing in these areas, realtors acted to increase, and even create, this demand. Within the black community, they advertised aggressively, “pointing out the availability of good housing” in these “newly opened” neighbourhoods.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Rose Helper, *Racial Policies and Practices of Real Estate Brokers* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1969): 4. In: Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid: 38.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

Many African Americans were desperate to escape the confines of the ghetto. As was previously discussed, a large number of well educated, elite blacks had been effectively trapped within the ghetto's invisible, yet impermeable, walls. Thus, when properties became available outside the ghetto, these families were among the first to move because they had the economic means to do so.<sup>75</sup> Realtors were, indeed, happy to sell homes to this class of blacks, since it meant that they could extort an even greater profit than might otherwise be possible. They were also well aware of the fact that banks were reticent, if not outright opposed, to granting mortgages and loans to African Americans. Capitalizing on this fact, realtors acted as “bankers as well as sales agents; and given the racially segmented credit market, they were able to charge interest rates and demand down payments well above those paid by whites.”<sup>76</sup>

Once middle class black families had moved into these neighbourhoods, after paying an exorbitant amount of money in order to do so, the black ghetto was not far behind. Real estate agents would move quickly to sell nearby houses to lower class blacks who were not in an economic position to pay for these properties. After paying a cash advance to secure rights to the property, and a few months of mortgage payments, the family or individual would inevitably be unable to continue these payments, and would be evicted.<sup>77</sup> Subsequently, another family of the same low economic status would move into the house or apartment, only to also be evicted not long after. This process contributed to the neglect of households and neighbourhood decay and ultimately, to the recreation of the black slum found in the ghetto.

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid: 38-40.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid: 38.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid: 38-39.

Through the process of systematically re-segregating blacks just outside of the ghetto, real estate agents made tremendous profits. By selling a home multiple times, realtors not only acquired several cash advances, but they also garnered profits from high interest mortgage payments.<sup>78</sup> In Chicago, real estate agents were also notorious for subdividing apartments so that they could effectively rent out one single apartment while garnering multiple rent payments each month.<sup>79</sup> Hirsch writes regarding this that:

“Kitchenette” apartments proliferated as real estate speculators and absentee landlords exploited the situation by cutting up large apartments into numerous small ones. These units frequently lacked plumbing and often a solitary bathroom served all the families on the floor. A Chicago Urban League investigation of the Armour Square neighborhood found many homes lacking the most “ordinary conveniences,” such as water and toilets, and the widespread use of kerosene lamps.<sup>80</sup>

The overcrowding and unsanitary living conditions that resulted from this practice of subdividing apartments exacted a toll on the lives of the African Americans who lived in these “apartments.” Illustrating this is the fact that, in the periphery of Chicago’s ghettos, “the infant mortality rate for the area was 16% higher than for the city as a whole, the tuberculosis rate was twice as high, and the general mortality rate was 5% higher.”<sup>81</sup> When tenants throughout the United States would complain to city hall regarding these issues, their concerns were rarely addressed. Indeed, real estate agents were quick to pay off local officials, many of whom were only “too happy to turn a blind eye to problems in the black community if there was money to be made.”<sup>82</sup>

When considering these facts, it is not unreasonable to argue, as did Richard Morrill, that “[t]he strongest force...in maintaining the ghetto may well be real-estate

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid: 39.

<sup>79</sup> Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto*, 1983: 18.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Massey and Denton, *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass*, 1993: 39.

institutions: the real-estate broker and sources of financing.”<sup>83</sup> In areas that were not directly outside the ghetto, real estate agents refused to sell and rent properties to blacks at all, irrespective of their economic status. As Morrill observed:

Segregation is maintained by refusal of real-estate brokers even to show, let alone sell, houses to Negroes in white areas. Countless devices are used: quoting excessive prices, saying the house is already sold, demanding unfair down payments, removing “For sale” signs, not keeping appointments, and so on. Even if the Negro finds someone willing to sell him a house in a white area, financing may remain a barrier. Although his income may be sufficient, the bank or savings institution often refuses to provide financing from a fear of Negro income instability, and of retaliatory withdrawal of deposits by whites.<sup>84</sup>

In this way, real estate agents, and the real estate industry in general, “opposes with all its resources not only all laws but any device, such as cooperative apartments or open-occupancy advertising, to further integration.”<sup>85</sup>

Motivated by a desire for profit, and for maintaining the residential status quo so that their businesses would not be threatened, real estate agents were instrumental in maintaining the racial divide in the face of the growing black population in growing cities. Yet the practices of realtors, as previously outlined, had other, more structural, effects. Indeed, the adoption of similar policies by banks and saving institutions, as well as by certain branches of the federal government, such as the Home Owners’ Loan Corporation (HOLC), ensured that black segregation would be enduring aspect of the American political landscape.

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<sup>83</sup> Richard L. Morrill, “The Negro Ghetto: Problems and Alternatives.” *Geographical Review*, 1965. 55(3): 345.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid: 346.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid: 345.

## ***Instituting Segregation: The Role of the Federal Government from 1940-1970***

After World War II, racial residential discrimination became even more pervasive and institutionalized.<sup>86</sup> To be sure, white American citizens and real estate agents did not desist in their prejudiced beliefs regarding where blacks ought to live vis-à-vis whites. In 1963, one year before the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, sixty percent of Americans agreed that “[w]hite people have a right to keep (Negroes/blacks/African Americans) out of their neighborhoods if they want to, and (Negroes/blacks/African Americans) should respect that right.”<sup>87</sup> As the previous discussion would lead one to expect, this prejudice was reflected by real estate agents, who were notably biased when it came to race. The fact that this bias was motivated by racism and a desire for profit, is illustrated by a study conducted by Harvey Molotch in the mid-1960s. In his survey of Chicago real estate agents, Molotch found that “only 29% of agents were willing to rent to blacks unconditionally (regardless of market conditions on racial composition), and half of these open-minded agents were black.”<sup>88</sup>

The involvement of the federal government in maintaining racial residential segregation not only amplified, but also added legitimacy to these practices. The first major government program that had this effect was the Home Owners’ Loan Corporation (HOLC).<sup>89</sup> Founded in 1933, HOLC was designed to increase home ownership during

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<sup>86</sup> Massey and Denton, *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass*, 1993: 50.

<sup>87</sup> Howard Schuman, Charlotte Steeh, Lawrence Bobo, and Maria Krysan, *Racial Attitudes in America: Trends and Interpretations*. Revised Edition. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997): 106.

<sup>88</sup> Harvey Molotch, *Managed Integration: Dilemmas of Doing Good in the City*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972): 23. In: Massey and Denton, *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass*, 1993: 50.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid*: 51.

the Great Depression.<sup>90</sup> In an effort to enable white Americans to keep their homes during a time of economic down-turn, HOLC provided low-interest loans to individuals who had lost their homes during the depression so that they might be able to re-purchase their properties.<sup>91</sup> HOLC also worked to re-finance mortgages for homeowners who were in danger of defaulting on their loans.<sup>92</sup>

HOLC's policies were not inconsistent with other federal initiatives that were put forward at the time as part of the New Deal and the emerging welfare state. As Katznelson argues, "policy decisions dealing with welfare, work, and war during Jim Crow's last hurrah in the 1930s and 1940s excluded, or differentially treated, the vast majority of African Americans."<sup>93</sup> Moreover, Katznelson contends that "[a]s a result of the legislation they passed, blacks became even more significantly disadvantaged when a modern American middle class was fashioned during and after the Second World War."<sup>94</sup> Federal policies relating to housing, such as HOLC, fit perfectly into this paradigm. In an attempt to provide loans and financial assistance to white homeowners and not African Americans, HOLC "initiated and institutionalized the practice of "redlining."<sup>95</sup> Massey and Denton explain that the "redlining" involved establishing [f]our categories of neighborhood quality."<sup>96</sup> Among these categories, the:

lowest was coded with the color red; it and the next-lowest category virtually never received HOLC loans. The vast majority of mortgages went to the top two categories, the highest of which included areas that were "new, homogenous, and in demand in good times and bad" (to HOLC this meant areas inhabited by "American business and

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Ira Katznelson, *When Affirmative Action Was White: An Untold History of Racial Inequality in Twentieth-Century America*. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2005): x.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Massey and Denton, *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass*, 1993: 51.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

professional men”); the second category consisted of areas that had reached their peak, but were still desirable and could be expected to remain stable.<sup>97</sup>

This rating procedure clearly reflected the racial discrimination that had become commonplace in America’s housing market. Predictably, “[b]lack areas were invariably rated as fourth grade and “redlined.””<sup>98</sup> Nevertheless, by legitimizing these patterns of prejudice, HOLC and by extension, the federal government, signalled their tacit approval and outright acceptance of such practices.

Consistent with the theme that has arisen throughout American history of “what do to with the Negroes,” HOLC “underwriters were far more concerned about the location and movement of blacks than about any other demographic trend.”<sup>99</sup> Just as two centuries ago, Thomas Jefferson had been deeply troubled by the growing black population in the United States,<sup>100</sup> HOLC was intent on addressing the issue of the “rapidly increasing Negro population” in St. Louis.<sup>101</sup> Specifically, the organization was worried that the growing black population would be a “problem in the maintenance of real estate values.”<sup>102</sup> Moreover, in a confidential survey report, written in 1941, the analysis of each neighborhood included “maps of the density of black settlement.”<sup>103</sup> In each of these maps, “[b]lack neighborhoods [were] always coded as red; and even those with small black percentages were usually rated as “hazardous” and placed in the lowest category.”<sup>104</sup> The hierarchy of neighbourhoods that HOLC established rippled

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<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid: 52.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*. In: Peterson, ed. *The Portable Thomas Jefferson*, 1975: 124.

<sup>101</sup> Massey and Denton, *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass*, 1993: 52.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.



throughout other institutions that played a vital role in homeownership and housing.

Banks were quick to adopt these procedures, and as a consequence, were increasingly reticent to give loans to individuals living in areas that were coded as “red.”<sup>105</sup>

The Federal Housing Administration (FHA), a loan program that developed from the 1937 Housing Act, followed suit by “guaranteeing the value of collateral for loans made by private banks.”<sup>106</sup> Because private banks essentially only granted loans to white Americans and not blacks, the fact that the FHA followed the lending patterns of these banks only served to exacerbate the existing disparity of race and residence. In fact, FHA loans were the catalyst for suburbanization after 1945,<sup>107</sup> with cities growing increasingly darker and the suburbs becoming whiter and whiter.<sup>108</sup> As Morton Grodzins noted:

The white and non-white citizens of the U.S. are being sorted out in a new pattern of segregation. In each of the major urban centers the story is the same: the better-off white families are moving out of the central cities into the suburbs; the ranks of the poor who remain are swelled by Negroes from the South. This trend threatens to transform the cities into slums, largely inhabited by Negroes, ringed about with predominantly white suburbs. The “racial problem” of the U.S., still festering in the rural South, will become equally, perhaps more acutely, a problem of the urban North.<sup>109</sup>

Not only had blacks been forced out of integrated neighbourhoods and relegated to the ghetto through acts of violence, the covert practices of neighbourhood improvement associations, and the discriminatory practices of realtors, but now they were confronted with an institutional Goliath of magnanimous proportions. African Americans had to combat the policies of banks, arguably one of the most powerful

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<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid: 53.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> Massey and Denton, “Suburbanization and Segregation in U.S. Metropolitan Areas.” *The American Journal of Sociology*, 1988. 94(3): 592.

<sup>109</sup> Morton Grodzins, “Metropolitan Segregation.” *Scientific American*, CXCVII, No. 4 (October, 1957), p. 33. In: Taeuber and Taeuber, *Negroes in Cities: Residential Segregation and Neighborhood Change*, 1969: 55.

private institutions in the United States, as well as the federal government. The walls of the ghetto had perhaps never seemed so insurmountable. To those who were thus confined, the prospect of escape had likely never felt so impossible.

## Chapter Two

### **“A City within a City”: The Advent of Public Housing and the Social Consequences of Segregation**

“You know the average young person out here doesn’t have a job, man, they don’t have anything to do. They don’t have any alternative, you know, but to go out there and try to make a living for themselves. Like when you come down to the Tombs down there, they’re down there for robbing and breaking in. They want to know why you did it and where you live, but you have to live. You go down to the employment agency and you can’t get a job. They have you waiting all day, but you can’t get a job. They don’t have a job for you. Yet you have to live. I’m ready to do anything anyone else is ready to do – because I want to live – I want to live. No one wants to die. I want to live.”

- Man, age about 35, living in Harlem circa 1965<sup>1</sup>

Today, use of the term “ghetto” usually invokes images of an overcrowded and impoverished urban area occupied predominantly, if not entirely, by blacks. Yet historically, the term ghetto was employed to refer to Jewish settlements.<sup>2</sup> In medieval European cities, Jewish people were concentrated and segregated from their “Christian neighbors” in particular areas of town.<sup>3</sup> This pattern was not revisited in twentieth century America, however. “Even at the height of immigration from Europe,” Massey and Denton claim, “most Italians, Poles, and Jews lived in neighborhoods where members of their own group did not predominate, and as their socioeconomic status and generations spent in the United States rose, each group was progressively integrated into American society.”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Clark, *Dark Ghetto*, 1989: 1.

<sup>2</sup>Louis Wirth, “The Ghetto.” *The American Journal of Sociology*, 1927. 33(10): 57.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid: 59-60.

<sup>4</sup>Massey and Denton, *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass*, 1993: 10.

Blacks, on the other hand, have not been “progressively integrated into American society.”<sup>5</sup> As has been discussed in chapter one, the experience of blacks has been one of mounting levels of segregation, not integration. The segregation of African Americans behind what Kenneth B. Clark referred to as the “invisible walls” of the ghetto has consequences for blacks, of course, but it also has implications for wider society.<sup>6</sup> “Racial segregation, like all other forms of cruelty and tyranny, debases all human beings” Clark argues, “those who are its victims, those who victimize, and in quite subtle ways those who are mere accessories.”<sup>7</sup> In 1968, President Johnson appointed the Governor of Illinois, Otto Kerner, to “identify the causes of [racial] violence” in American cities.<sup>8</sup> In March of that same year, the Kerner Commission concluded that America was moving “toward two societies, one black, one white – separate and unequal.”<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, the Report stated that “[w]hat white Americans have never fully understood – but what the Negro can never forget – is that white society is deeply implicated in the ghetto. White institutions created it, white institutions maintain it, and white society condones it.”<sup>10</sup>

This admonition of white society may seem overtly biased or political to some. Nevertheless, the removal of blacks from integrated neighbourhoods, and the crystallization of the walls of the ghetto were accomplished by the real estate industry and the policies of banks and the federal government, institutions that were at the time controlled almost exclusively by white bureaucrats and businessmen. Even if many

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Clark, *Dark Ghetto*, 1989: 11.

<sup>7</sup> Kenneth B. Clark, quoted in: Massey and Denton, *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass*, 1993.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid: 3.

<sup>9</sup> U.S. National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, *The Kerner Report*. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1988): 1.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid: 2.

members of mainstream white society were not actively involved in the residential segregation of blacks, their silence signalled a tacit approval of the colour-line. “The impact of the ghetto on the life of its residents is partly well known, partly hidden,”<sup>11</sup> writes Morrill in 1965. “The white person driving through is struck by the poverty, the substandard housing, the mixture of uses, and the dirt; he is likely to feel that these conditions are due to the innate character of the Negro.”<sup>12</sup> By placing the blame on “the innate inner character” of blacks, whites are able to conveniently ignore the systemic forces that have placed blacks in the ghetto in the first place.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, the fact that whites have the privilege of simply “driving through” only to leave it once more is telling.<sup>14</sup> Indeed, many blacks never have had this opportunity, even if they might otherwise be in an economic position to do so.

The white driver who passes quickly through the ghetto is also able to escape the feelings of “hopelessness and inferiority” that characterize it.<sup>15</sup> As the black man, quoted at the beginning of this chapter, observed, “[n]o one wants to die. I want to live.”<sup>16</sup> Yet the discouragement and despondency that pervade the ghetto make this goal increasingly unattainable, if not at times impossible. Morrill says that “[i]nferiority in almost every conceivable material respect is the mark of the ghetto. But also, to the minority person, the ghetto implies rejection, a stamp of inferiority.”<sup>17</sup> Clark explains that:

Those who are required to live in congested and rat-infested homes are aware that others are not so dehumanized. Young people in the ghetto are aware that other young people

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<sup>11</sup> Morrill, “The Negro Ghetto: Problems and Alternatives.” 1965: 343.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid: 344.

<sup>16</sup> Clark, *Dark Ghetto*, 1989: 1.

<sup>17</sup> Morrill, “The Negro Ghetto: Problems and Alternatives.” 1965: 339.

have been taught to read, that they have been prepared for college, and can compete successfully for white-collar, managerial, and executive jobs.<sup>18</sup>

Feelings of despondency arise because, despite the fact that the “privileged white community is at great pains to blind itself to conditions of the ghetto, the residents of the ghetto are not themselves blind to life as it is outside of the ghetto.”<sup>19</sup> Reflecting on this disparity, the individuals who live in the ghetto “can never be sure whether their failures reflect personal inferiority or the fact of color.”<sup>20</sup> If the latter is seen to be true, a sense of hopelessness takes root, for hope has neither a purpose nor a place for the individual who believes he is innately inferior.

The fact that white Americans were able to escape this hopelessness did not, however, mean that they were immune to its effects. The presence of black slums engendered a social and political strife that reverberated throughout American society. Black slums were eyesores, and not only in the visual sense. Not only were they ugly, they were offensive to American sensibilities. America is supposed to be the land of opportunity and freedom, and the concentration of black poverty in the heart of urban centres is the very antithesis of this creed. As Gunnar Myrdal expressed in *An American Dilemma*, published in 1944, “[t]here is a “Negro problem” in the United States and most Americans are aware of it. To the great majority of white Americans,” he claims, “the Negro problem has distinctively negative connotations. It suggests something difficult to settle and equally difficult to let alone. It is embarrassing. It makes for moral

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid: 12.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

uneasiness.”<sup>21</sup> Black ghettos represented the pinnacle of this embarrassment and so, in response to this, America once again asked itself, “What shall be done with the Negroes?” who now inhabited these “cities within a city.”<sup>22</sup>

### ***Urban Renewal and the Rise of Public Housing: 1950-1970***

The expanding ghetto, no matter how well its boundaries were defined and irrespective of the successful maintenance of the colour line around its periphery, began to be problematic for white citizens, businesses, and institutions. The moral unease that the ghetto invoked was increasingly difficult to ignore as it expanded. The material and economic costs it exacted were also troubling. By the late 1950s, Massey and Denton comment that:

many cities were locked into a spiral of decline that was directly encouraged and largely supported by federal housing policies. As poor blacks from the south entered cities in large numbers, middle-class whites fled to the suburbs to escape them and to insulate themselves from the social problems that accompanied the rising tide of the poor. As the growing demand for city services – and particularly social services – drove up the cost of local government, politicians were forced to raise taxes, which further accelerated the flight of the white middle class, creating additional pressures for tax increases, and so on.<sup>23</sup>

Thus, sustaining the black ghetto was an increasingly expensive endeavour. “The real cost of maintaining the ghetto system is fantastic,” Morrill writes.<sup>24</sup> “In direct costs the city spends much more in crime prevention, welfare payments, and so forth than it

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<sup>21</sup> Gunnar Myrdal, *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy*. (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1996): xix.

<sup>22</sup> Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, 1999: 17.

<sup>23</sup> Massey and Denton, *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass*, 1993: 55.

<sup>24</sup> Morrill, “The Negro Ghetto: Problems and Alternatives.” 1965: 344.

can collect.”<sup>25</sup> White society was, in light of this, faced with a troubling dilemma. Black segregation was still largely supported, and thought to be necessary, as is evidenced by the fact that cities remained willing to support and perpetuate the ghetto, regardless of its high costs. Yet as the black ghettos in American cities expanded, they often grew closer to elite white institutions. White citizens could flee to the suburbs to escape the encroaching black ghetto, but “elite institutions” including “universities, hospitals, libraries, foundations, [and] businesses were not so mobile.”<sup>26</sup> The concentration of black poverty within urban centres had created a “spiral of decline” in cities that had to be averted by whatever means possible.<sup>27</sup>

The powerful elites who had a vested interest in the continued viability of these institutions appealed to Congress. These appeals were successful, and Congress quickly passed the housing acts of 1949 and 1954.<sup>28</sup> Each of these respective Congressional actions allocated “federal funds to local authorities to acquire slum properties, assemble them into large parcels, clear them of existing structures, and prepare them for ‘redevelopment.’”<sup>29</sup> Congress recognized, however, that the individuals residing in inner-city ghettos would have to be relocated somewhere after slum clearance. The federal government could certainly not just remove a large number of people from their homes and leave them with no where else to go. Nevertheless, Congress quickly devised a solution to this problem. They outlined one prerequisite that cities had to meet in order to be eligible for federal financing. This stipulation was simple: “in order to qualify for federal funding, local redevelopment authorities had to guarantee that an adequate supply

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Massey and Denton, *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass*, 1993: 55.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.



of replacement housing would be made available to displaced families at rents within their means.”<sup>30</sup> Public housing was thought by policy makers at the time to be the logical solution to this end.

The policy of removing black slums in urban centres was given the title of ‘urban renewal.’ Once urban renewal took effect in American cities:

Public housing was pressed into service to house black families displaced by the razing of neighborhoods undergoing renewal. Although liberal planners often tried to locate the projects away from ghetto areas, white politicians and citizens mobilized to block the construction of projects within their neighborhoods; white city councils and mayors usually obtained the right of veto over any proposed project site. As a result, projects were typically built on cleared land within or adjacent to existing black neighborhoods. In order to save money, maximize patronage jobs, and house within the ghetto as many blacks as possible, local authorities constructed multi-unit projects of extremely high density.<sup>31</sup>

Because urban renewal policies were almost exclusively directed toward black neighbourhoods, critics quipped that the term “‘urban renewal’ simply meant ‘Negro removal.’”<sup>32</sup>

Public housing, however, had been in place long before the advent of urban renewal. Indeed, “[t]he Housing Act of 1937 had established the United States Housing Agency and the nation’s first public housing program” which had also “mandated slum clearance for the construction of public housing projects.”<sup>33</sup> Other scholars, such as Bickford and Massey, date the advent of public housing even further back to the Great Depression, “when the Public Works Administration constructed some 21,800 housing

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid: 56.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Eric Avila and Mark H. Rose, “Race, Culture, Politics, and Urban Renewal: An Introduction.” *Journal of Urban History*, 2009. 35(3): 338.

units for low-income families.”<sup>34</sup> By 1937, however, the concept of public housing had become almost exclusively linked to urban renewal. By the 1950s, this connection became even more robust, as more and more cities received federal funds to renew their cities as long as enough housing projects were built to house the displaced.

The rise in public housing development was not quietly accepted by all, however. Real estate developers objected to the building of housing projects because they saw them as a threat to nearby property values.<sup>35</sup> Others opposed them on an ideological basis, arguing, ironically, that the government ought not to intrude in housing because it is “a private affair.”<sup>36</sup> Bickford and Massey argue that the most salient and enduring aspect of this controversy, however, was race.<sup>37</sup> While initially blacks in the South were segregated by law under Jim Crow, they later confronted de facto segregation through a variety of mechanisms.<sup>38</sup>

Factors in the development of public housing such as site selection, tenant selection, and “the simple refusal of white tenants to share projects with blacks” usually resulted in African Americans being placed in all black housing projects in all black neighbourhoods.<sup>39</sup> Even when housing projects were integrated, racial conflict simmered below the surface. W. Scott Ford (1972) found that the black mothers living in this project were well aware of their status vis-à-vis whites. Illustrating this are the sentiments of one of the black women who when interviewed said:

I tell my kids to be pleasant to the white folks here but not to get involved – that’s dangerous! I know, I’ve been burned before. Whenever trouble stirs between whites and

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<sup>34</sup> Adam Bickford and Douglas S. Massey, “Segregation in the Second Ghetto: Racial and Ethnic Segregation in American Public Housing, 1977.” *Social Forces*, 1991. 69(4): 1011.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid: 1012.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

us, you know it's going to be the Negro who loses. There's lots of us in the projects, but you know the color of the face behind the desk! (referring to the Housing Authority Office).<sup>40</sup>

The controversy surrounding race and public housing is also reflected in the way public housing was organized and funded. The majority of the public housing stock in the United States was “constructed under the 1949 Housing Act and its 1954 amendments.”<sup>41</sup> Although Congress stipulated that cities must provide public housing in order to qualify for federal funds directed at urban renewal, they did not specify precisely where these housing projects ought to be located. This meant that “housing programs were only remotely controlled by the federal government,”<sup>42</sup> while “local housing authorities typically were chartered by states and run by city or county governments.”<sup>43</sup> Aside from allocating funds generally, “[f]ederal agencies do not design, locate, or construct any housing projects.”<sup>44</sup>

By devolving power to the state and municipal level, the federal government gave license to councilmen and local housing authorities to segregate blacks. By controlling the location of public housing, local officials were free to reinforce patterns of racial residential discrimination. In the South, authorities were at liberty to make sure that blacks continued to live in “black areas,” even if they were no longer legally bound to do so. In the North, the walls of the ghetto were simply constructed anew, albeit in a slightly different location. Furthermore, because local housing authorities had complete control over how each housing project was designed and constructed, they could recreate the

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<sup>40</sup> W. Scott Ford, *Interracial Public Housing in Border City: A Situational Analysis of the Contact Hypothesis*. (Lexington: D.C. Heath and Company, 1972): 66.

<sup>41</sup> Bickford and Massey, “Segregation in the Second Ghetto.” 1991: 1014.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

crowded conditions of the black slums that urban renewal had removed. This has been the case in Durham, as I will discuss in chapter three.

The federal government, nevertheless, was aware of the resegregation that almost always resulted from the “unholy marriage” of urban renewal and public housing.<sup>45</sup> Even if they did not enforce patterns of segregation, they often encouraged this by giving guidelines to this effect.<sup>46</sup> The result was:

By 1970, after two decades of urban renewal, public housing projects in most large cities had become black reservations, highly segregated from the rest of society and characterized by extreme social isolation. The replacement of low-density slums with high-density towers of poor families also reduced the class diversity of the ghetto and brought about a geographic concentration of poverty that was previously unimaginable.<sup>47</sup>

Thus, public housing brought black segregation to a new level. It was as if blacks had been made the unwilling residents of their own overcrowded, deteriorating cities within a larger metropolis. Hirsch writes that “[p]reviously, white hostility had been expressed primarily through *private* means – violence, voluntary agreements among realtors, and restrictive covenants [sic].”<sup>48</sup> Yet “[w]ith the emergence of redevelopment, renewal, and public housing...government took an active hand not merely in reinforcing prevailing patterns of segregation, but also in lending them a permanence never seen before.”<sup>49</sup>

So isolated were blacks within public housing projects that it prompted Hirsch to proclaim that public housing was simply a “second ghetto” where blacks were forced to

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<sup>45</sup> Massey and Denton, *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass*, 1993: 57.

<sup>46</sup> Raymond J. Burby and William M. Rohe, “Deconcentration of Public Housing: Effects on Residents’ Satisfaction with their Living Environments and their Fear of Crime.” *Urban Affairs Review*, 1989. 25(1): 118.

<sup>47</sup> Massey and Denton, *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass*, 1993: 57.

<sup>48</sup> Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto*, 1983: 254.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

live after black slums had been razed and redeveloped.<sup>50</sup> Others, such as Fuerst and Petty, lamented:

Public housing in the United States is a national disgrace. Instead of building decent homes for low-income citizens – as most European nations do – we have created twentieth-century poorhouses, to which we condemn our economic outcasts and then charge them rent for the privilege. The high-rise towers in the blighted centers of our cities are multi-billion-dollar monuments to misguided policies and politics.<sup>51</sup>

The passage of the Fair Housing Act in 1968 was, in light of this, met with hope and anticipation. Indeed, for many individuals, the Fair Housing Act represented not only a victory for advocates of desegregation, but a solution to this problem in and of itself. Because the common sentiment was that housing discrimination and segregation had been adequately addressed and even “solved” by this Act, many civil rights leaders and other advocates re-focused their attention on other issues that faced the black community and racial minorities.<sup>52</sup> Problems relating to poverty, the welfare state, and affirmative action took centre stage on the political agenda, while “conditions in the nation’s ghettos steadily deteriorated” without notice.<sup>53</sup> While the persistence of segregation was acknowledged, this was thought to simply be “an unfortunate holdover from a racist past, one that is fading progressively over time.”<sup>54</sup> With the passage of time, many believed that segregation would be dismantled and its effects ameliorated.

In Durham, North Carolina, however, and in other cities within the United States, this hope remains a dream deferred. Blacks who had been segregated in public housing before the passage of the Fair Housing Act remained trapped behind the walls of the

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> J.S. Fuerst and Roy Petty, “Public Housing in the Courts: Pyrrhic Victories for the Poor.” *The Urban Lawyer*, 1976. 284: 496.

<sup>52</sup> Massey and Denton, *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass*, 1993: 4.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid: 1.

second ghetto. Public housing projects continue to be built in areas that are highly segregated and predominantly black. The policies and actions of political actors in the 1960s set the stage for this pattern, which continues to be reinforced and recreated even up to the time of this writing. As one member of the East Durham Citizens' Association wrote in a letter to Housing and Urban Development in 1968, the City of Durham and the Durham Housing Authority were actively engaged in a "questionable practice" in the 1960s involving "containment of the Negro population."<sup>55</sup> The following chapter will examine how this "containment"<sup>56</sup> was made possible, and why its effects are still felt today.

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<sup>55</sup> Hurder, and Beyle(ed.), *History of the Hoover Road Housing Project*. December 20, 1968: 25. Folder 7453, Series 6.10. NCF Papers, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill:18.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

## Chapter Three

### Durham's "Great Conspiracy"<sup>1</sup>: A Forgotten History of Race, Public Housing, and Segregation

Under our present policy in housing there is not a place outside the southeast section where a person may find decent housing for his family if he is poor or happens to be Negro. This is a real travesty of justice...Reactionaries to opportunity for Negroes and the poor came to the forefront and blocked any progress here. Again, attempts were made to locate our citizens of low income in an existing development - - the Damar Apartments - - again, reactionaries came to the forefront and thwarted what were, perhaps, only halfhearted attempts to begin with. So now, we return to the citizens who are presently locked in an existing ghetto and say, "we know it's going to be like being sardines in a can, but after all if not there, then where?"<sup>2</sup>

- Eugene Hampton Jr. on behalf of the Durham Council on Human Relations, Minutes of Durham City Council, July 17, 1967.

#### *A Black City on a Hill: Durham's History and Legacy*

Durham is in many ways reminiscent of other medium sized, Southern cities. However, its history and legacy are far from typical. "In the nadir of race relations," Brown writes in her book, *Upbuilding Black Durham: Gender, Class, and Black Community Development in the Jim Crow South*, "black Durham emerged as a symbol of black nationalism and black pride by the end of the nineteenth century."<sup>3</sup> In Durham,

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Ray Thompson, *The Herald Sun*, July 18, 1967: pg. 1A. In: Alex Hurder, *Origin of the Damar Dispute*. August 30, 1968: 24. Folder 7450, Series 1.6, NCF Papers.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid: 25.

<sup>3</sup> Brown, *Upbuilding Black Durham*, 2008: 14.

“[m]odern buildings, owned and occupied by African Americans, rose against a backdrop of repression. Nationally, black Durham was viewed as a symbol of what African Americans could do on their own when left alone by whites.”<sup>4</sup> Booker T. Washington and Du Bois may have disagreed on many important issues, yet Durham was never a point of contention for the two leaders. Washington proclaimed that Durham was “the city of cities to look for the prosperity of Negroes.”<sup>5</sup> Du Bois similarly praised Durham because in his eyes, it “characterize[d] the progress of the Negro American.”<sup>6</sup>

When Black Wall Street, a prominent black community in Tulsa, Oklahoma, was destroyed by whites in 1921, black leaders found their “new beacon of hope” in Durham.<sup>7</sup> E. Franklin Frazier, a prominent black sociologist, dubbed Durham the “Capital of the Black Middle Class,” a place that symbolized black progress and the “triumphant climb out of slavery.”<sup>8</sup> Black Durham had become, for African Americans, a City on a Hill. Its black citizens had transcended the burdens of slavery, removing the shackles of oppression through innovation, hard work, and sense for business that was perhaps unparalleled at the time. Even when disaster struck and the National Negro Finance Company, a nationally proclaimed investment firm located in Durham, went bankrupt during the Great Depression, “the black business and professional league could still declare in its promotional film of the 1940s that “Negro Durham marches on.””<sup>9</sup>

In many ways, black Durham seemed invincible, if not imperturbable in spirit. Hayti, the centre-point of black business in Durham located at the intersection between

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid: 12.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid: 14.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Parisher and Hennessey, “Negro Durham Marches On.” In: Ibid.



Fayetteville and Pettigrew Streets, boasted of six-hundred homes and over one-hundred businesses.<sup>10</sup> The North Carolina College for Negroes “attracted men and women academics and students from throughout the country, including historians Helen G. Edmonds and John Hope Franklin, folklorist Zora Neale Hurston, and artist Elizabeth Cattlet.”<sup>11</sup> Moreover, “[t]he institution served as a site for critical research and dialogue on topics relevant to black life so much that Du Bois gave serious thought to joining the faculty.”<sup>12</sup>

Nevertheless, in spite of this progress, Durham was in many ways a city divided. The experiences of those living there in the early twentieth century told a tale of what seemed like two very, different cities. Durham may have been the “Capital of the Black Middle Class, as E. Franklin Frazer proclaimed, it was also “a center of industrial racism, where the renowned tobacco factories, notorious for exploiting black female labor, replayed slavery in an urban form.”<sup>13</sup> As Durham grew and became more prosperous, black women flocked to the city in response to the growing demand for labour in the tobacco factories. Working in these tobacco factories “was one of the few industrial jobs available to black women,”<sup>14</sup> and it was appealing because, in spite of the harsh working conditions and low pay that characterized these jobs, it gave them a “control [over] their work space or time”<sup>15</sup> that household labour did not.<sup>16</sup> Thus, while many black leader and businessmen prospered other African Americans were forced to work for long hours for little pay in Durham’s tobacco factories and industrial plants. Illustrating this are the

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid: 14-15.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

sentiments of a white factor worker in 1920s Durham, who explained that in the factory, “[t]he niggers handle the dirty work. A white man couldn’t get in there. The niggers always done the heavy, hot work. They stand it better.”<sup>17</sup>

The fact that the majority of blacks continued to be demoted to lower status jobs where they did almost all of the “dirty work” for little pay is reflected in the 1960 Census of Durham County.<sup>18</sup> In 1960, only 10.1% of “nonwhite” persons were represented in white-collar jobs.<sup>19</sup> On the other hand, 70.4% of service workers were African Americans, in contrast with 15.8% of whites.<sup>20</sup> Blacks were also overrepresented in the area of private household workers, where they comprised 91.8% of workers, while whites only held 5.8% of these jobs.<sup>21</sup> It is telling that 91.8% of all household workers were black, given that blacks were a minority in Durham County at the time.<sup>22</sup> According to the 1960 Decennial Census, only 32.0% of the population was black, while 68.8% of the population in Durham County were white.<sup>23,24</sup> When these occupational categories are described in more general terms, the results are even more disparate. Indeed, in 1960, 51.6% of white-collar workers were white, while only 14.9% were nonwhite.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Johnson, “The Conflict of Caste and Caste in American Industry.” *American Journal of Sociology*, 1936: 58. In: Houck, *A Newspaper History of Race Relations in Durham: 1910-1940*. 1941: 27.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Morton Hoffman & Co., *Study of Housing in Durham*, May 1968, Folder 984, NCF Papers, II-16a.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Source: United States Decennial Census, 1960. Accessed through Social Explorer, Professional Edition: [http://www.socialexplorer.com/pub/reports/Results.aspx?name=C1960CntyReports&%3Ccommand+cmd%3d%22areareport%22+mapindex%3d%220%22+themeindex%3d%220%22+rendering%3d%220%22+reportindex%3d%221%22+viewwidth%3d%22600%22+viewheight%3d%22400%22+outputtype%3d%22html%22+sel%3d%22%26lt%3bselections+spatial%3d%26quot%3bfalse%26quot%3b%26gt%3b%26lt%3b sel+selmode%3d%26quot%3bv%26quot%3b+querylayercaption%3d%26quot%3bcounty\\_sevars1%26quot%3b+searchfield%3d%26quot%3bcntyn%26quot%3b+find%3d%26quot%3b37063%26quot%3b%2f%26gt%3b%26%23xa%3b%26%23xd%3b%26lt%3b%2fselections%26gt%3b%22+%2f%3E&Census=C1960Cnty](http://www.socialexplorer.com/pub/reports/Results.aspx?name=C1960CntyReports&%3Ccommand+cmd%3d%22areareport%22+mapindex%3d%220%22+themeindex%3d%220%22+rendering%3d%220%22+reportindex%3d%221%22+viewwidth%3d%22600%22+viewheight%3d%22400%22+outputtype%3d%22html%22+sel%3d%22%26lt%3bselections+spatial%3d%26quot%3bfalse%26quot%3b%26gt%3b%26lt%3b sel+selmode%3d%26quot%3bv%26quot%3b+querylayercaption%3d%26quot%3bcounty_sevars1%26quot%3b+searchfield%3d%26quot%3bcntyn%26quot%3b+find%3d%26quot%3b37063%26quot%3b%2f%26gt%3b%26%23xa%3b%26%23xd%3b%26lt%3b%2fselections%26gt%3b%22+%2f%3E&Census=C1960Cnty). April 22, 2010.

<sup>24</sup> The remaining 0.2% of the Durham County population in 1960 consisted of individuals classified as Indian, Chinese, Filipino, and “Other” according to census data.

<sup>25</sup> Morton Hoffman & Co., *Study of Housing in Durham*, May 1968, Folder 984, NCF Papers, II-18.

Conversely, while 39.5% of nonwhite workers were service workers, a mere 6.5% of white employees worked in this area.<sup>26</sup>

The fact that blacks were over-represented in the unskilled areas of employment, and under-represented in the white-collar, professional positions, was only exacerbated by issues of unemployment. In a confidential report prepared for the Low Income Housing Development Corporation in 1968, Morton and Hoffman, a private consulting firm, estimated that “approximately 60 per cent of the unemployed persons in Durham County are nonwhite, and that one-third are between 16 and 21 years of age, of whom a large proportion are female.”<sup>27</sup> Furthermore, many of the jobs that were available in the service industry, where blacks were over-represented, were so low paying that securing such a job did little to alleviate the economic insecurity that many African Americans faced. As Morton and Hoffman reported, “[m]any available jobs in the service category, particularly household employment, pay at hourly rates as low as \$.50 per hour, far below the median pay scale for the Durham area.”<sup>28</sup> It is not surprising, in light of all of these factors, that the “medium income of nonwhites was 58 per cent of the median income for all households in Durham County” in 1960.<sup>29</sup>

The fact that “nonwhites” in Durham, the overwhelming majority of whom were black, earned approximately half the income of whites certainly lends credence to the argument that the over-representation of African Americans in Durham’s housing projects was simply one consequence of their generally lower economic status. Between 1965 and 1967, for instance, Morton and Hoffman report that there was a “critical

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid: II-20.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid: II-21.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid: III-24.

shortage of housing for nonwhite families in Durham,”<sup>30</sup> because of their lower socioeconomic status in comparison to whites. Between 1964 and 1967, they also report an increase in the total number of public housing tenants who are “nonwhite” from 372 to 609.<sup>31</sup> This represents an increase from 57 to 72 percent of all public housing occupants being “nonwhite.”<sup>32</sup>

It is true that increased demand for public housing on the part of racial minorities is in part a result of the fact that blacks earned a lower income than whites. Illustrating this is that individuals and families could not even qualify for public housing if they earned more than a specified income.<sup>33</sup> That so many blacks did qualify is indicative of the fact that many were at or below this low income threshold. Moreover, because of the legacy of slavery and long history of economic disadvantage that blacks experienced, African Americans had neither the opportunity nor the resources to accumulate wealth to the same extent as whites.<sup>34</sup>

Nevertheless, disparities in wealth and income are only one aspect of this issue. Other structural factors are also deeply implicated in the over-representation of blacks in Durham’s public housing projects. Racial discrimination in the housing market was rampant throughout the United States from the early twentieth century onward, and Durham was no exception. In their report, Morton and Hoffman concede that Durham had “two parallel housing markets” in light of the fact that “substantial segments of existing housing [were] unavailable to the nonwhite minority group.”<sup>35</sup> Other

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid: V-19.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid: V-23.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid: V-18.

<sup>34</sup> Kris Marsh et al., “The Emerging Black Middle Class: Single and Living Alone.” *Social Forces*, 2007. 86(2): 741.

<sup>35</sup> Morton Hoffman & Co., *Study of Housing in Durham*, May 1968, Folder 984, NCF Papers: VIII-3.

institutional practices, such as the connection between urban renewal and public housing, also contributed significantly to racial residential segregation in Durham.

### ***An “Unholy Marriage”: Urban Renewal and Public Housing in Durham***

The Durham Housing Authority (DHA) came into existence in 1949.<sup>36</sup> After the passage of the National Housing Act in 1949, “the North Carolina General Assembly passed legislation enabling the creation of local public housing commissions, upon petitioned request of twenty-five citizens.”<sup>37</sup> In response to this, the DHA was chartered in October of 1949, and the Mayor of Durham was responsible for appointing five commissioners to the Authority “for rotating five year terms.”<sup>38</sup> In 1953 the DHA built Few Gardens, Durham’s oldest public housing project.<sup>39</sup> The Housing Authority also constructed McDougald Terrace soon after in 1954.<sup>40</sup>

Initially, Few Gardens was designed as an all white complex, while McDougald Terrace was intended to be “the “Negro” complex.”<sup>41</sup> This is reflected in the location that was chosen for each of these developments. According to 1950 census data, Few Gardens was built in tract 0001, with a white population of 2,548 out of a total population of 2,557, or 99.6%.<sup>42</sup> McDougald Terrace, on the other hand, was developed in census

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<sup>36</sup> Bunce, “The Housing Authority of Durham, North Carolina: A Case Study of an Independent Commission.” January 14, 1968. Folder 4710, NCF: 3.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Morton Hoffman & Co., *Study of Housing in Durham*, May 1968, Folder 984, NCF Papers: V-15.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid: V-16.

<sup>41</sup> Lewis Krauskoph, “Living in the Projects: the Crime, the Stigma, and What can be Done: the Case of Few Gardens, a Public Housing Complex in Durham, NC.” Honours Paper, Duke University: Terry Sanford Institute of Public Policy, 1995: 13.

<sup>42</sup> Source: United States Census, 1950. Accessed through Social Explorer, Professional Edition: <http://www.socialexplorer.com/pub/reports/home.aspx> on March 25, 2010.

tract 0014, where 2,280 people out of a total of 2,870, or 79.4%, were black.<sup>43</sup> An additional 113 units were subsequently added in 1959 to the original 247 units at McDougald Terrace, making it the largest public housing complex in Durham to this day.<sup>44</sup>

With Few Gardens and the two complexes at McDougald Terrace completed, the DHA increased its public housing stock by slow increments. Between 1953 and 1962, an average of only “65 units per year were added to the supply of public housing in Durham” and “[n]o units became available for occupancy during the 1962 to 1965 period.”<sup>45</sup> The acceleration of urban renewal programs, and the construction of the Durham Freeway, however, quickly reversed this trend. Although urban renewal had been taking place from 1960 to 1967,<sup>46</sup> it took on new force between 1967 and 1975.<sup>47</sup> “The substantial number of housing units anticipated to be removed by public action in Durham County from 1967 to 1975” Morton and Hoffman relate, “stems primarily from the need to improve the quality of the housing stock in fringe areas around the Durham Central Business District and other concentrations of substandard housing.”<sup>48</sup>

Specifically, between 1967 and 1975, a total of 1,075 housing units were removed from the Durham County housing stock as a result of urban renewal, and another 265 were demolished because of “highway construction and street improvements.”<sup>49</sup> Thus, a

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Morton Hoffman & Co., *Study of Housing in Durham*, May 1968, Folder 984, NCF Papers: V-16.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid: VIII-7.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid: VI-21.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid: VI-7.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid: VI-7 to VI-8.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid: VI-7, Table VI-2.

total of 1340 “substandard” housing units were removed in Durham as a result of urban renewal and the construction of the Durham Freeway.<sup>50</sup>

In response to this, the DHA quickly built more public housing units. While on average only 65 units per year had been built between 1953 and 1962, between 1966 and 1967, the Authority constructed an average of 250 units per year.<sup>51</sup> Morton and Hoffman, writing in 1968, explain that “[p]resent plans call for an additional 561 units by the end of 1969, or an average of 280 units per year for 1968 and 1969.<sup>52</sup> Furthermore, they predict “[b]ased on past experience and the increased concern of the Federal government in providing housing for low-income households in Durham” that “a warranted addition to the public housing supply would be 1,300 to 1,500 units over the 1967-1975 period, or 163 to 188 units per year.”<sup>53</sup> The average annual construction of housing units from 1967 to 1975 was thus predicted to be nearly three times what it was between 1953 and 1962 as a result of urban renewal and the creation of the Durham Freeway.

The individuals displaced by urban renewal who became eligible for public housing as a result, were largely racial minorities, the majority of whom were black. In a confidential report to be submitted to the Office of Economic Opportunity, the North Carolina Fund Low-Income Housing Demonstration Proposal indicated in 1966 that, “[t]he total number of families already displaced and to be displaced by GNRP [General Neighborhood Renewal Program] projects and other governmental action by July, 1967,

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid: VI-8.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid: VIII-7.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

is 1,338: 306 white families, and 1,032 nonwhite families.”<sup>54</sup> The fact that the number of “nonwhite” families projected to be displaced was over three-times that of whites is not surprising. Indeed, the majority of areas that were demolished and “renewed” were predominantly black. Among these was the historic Hayti district at the heart of what was once Black Wall Street. “The buildings in the 500-acre Hayti-Elizabeth Street Area are 90 per cent blighted and dilapidated,”<sup>55</sup> the report states. Thus, “[t]he rehabilitation and conservation program in the 232-acre tract adjacent to North Carolina College will save as many structures as possible, but will involve some clearance.”<sup>56</sup> Durham’s former pre-eminent black areas, which Du Bois and Washington praised as the “symbol of black nationalism and black pride” were thus all deemed dilapidated, and with the help of federal funds, quickly razed and replaced.<sup>57</sup> The criticism that “urban renewal” really meant “Negro removal”<sup>58</sup> could not have been more evident than in this scenario. What had once been a proud black community was now demolished, and its residents re-located to public housing, if they were so lucky.

The fact that a large portion of Hayti was razed by urban renewal, and that the Durham Freeway was also constructed through the heart of this community, has social and political consequences that are perhaps beyond measure. What is also troubling, however, is the issue of where the individuals who lost their homes through this process were placed. The North Carolina Fund Low-Income Housing Demonstration Proposal expresses, for the 306 white families who were displaced, 132 housing units will be made

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<sup>54</sup> *North Carolina Fund Low-Income Housing Demonstration Proposal* (Incomplete, Confidential). To Be Submitted to: The Office of Economic Opportunity, 1966. Folder 930, Series 1.9, NCF Papers: 11.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> Brown, *Upbuilding Black Durham*, 2008: 14.

<sup>58</sup> Massey and Denton, *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass*, 1993: 56.



available.<sup>59</sup> Yet for the 1,032 nonwhite families who were displaced, only 418 would be eligible for public housing.<sup>60</sup> Thus, for the 614 African American families displaced, future housing options were uncertain at best.

A hand-written note written on this report in this section also states that, “[f]or those earning more than \$3,600 a year the private market will probably suffice.”<sup>61</sup> This conjecture was no doubt the result of a consultation with the DHA, which set its income limits for public housing eligibility at the time at \$3,600 for families of three to four.<sup>62</sup> Because it was in line with current DHA guidelines, the recommendation that “the private market will probably suffice” seems reasonable at first glance.<sup>63</sup> But a deeper analysis indicates that such a claim is not realistic, given the housing market conditions at the time vis-à-vis race. The DHA itself recognized this, and in 1966 changed its income eligibility requirements for “households displaced by government action” from \$3,600 to \$4,500 for families with three to four persons.<sup>64</sup> Clearly, as even the Housing Authority acknowledged, \$3,600 would not suffice.

Second, the North Carolina Fund Low-Income Housing Demonstration Proposal did not take into account the fact that the majority of the persons displaced by urban renewal were African Americans, and that the private housing market did not function in the same fashion for “nonwhite” persons as it did for white persons. As noted above, Durham’s housing market was divided along racial lines into “two parallel housing markets.”<sup>65</sup> It was neither reasonable nor realistic to expect that the private market would

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<sup>59</sup> *North Carolina Fund Low-Income Housing Demonstration Proposal*, 1966, NCF Papers: 11.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>62</sup> Morton Hoffman & Co., *Study of Housing in Durham*, May 1968, Folder 984, NCF Papers: V-18.

<sup>63</sup> *North Carolina Fund Low-Income Housing Demonstration Proposal*, 1966, NCF Papers: 11.

<sup>64</sup> Morton Hoffman & Co., *Study of Housing in Durham*, May 1986, Folder 984, NCF Papers: V-18.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*: VIII-3.

be sufficient for blacks displaced by urban renewal, especially with such a low income cut-off as \$3,600. Thus, it is likely that many families faced housing insecurity after being displaced if they were not accommodated by public housing. A report sponsored by the North Carolina Fund in 1964 echoed this concern: “Urban Renewal officials have indicated that there is an insufficient supply of standard private housing available in which to relocate the predominantly Negro families affected.”<sup>66</sup> The report continued by noting that while public housing is required for families displaced by urban renewal, it “has been virtually unavailable for the relocation of otherwise qualified Negro families.”<sup>67</sup>

The high probability of individuals being displaced without being provided public housing was inconsistent with the terms of the Housing Acts of 1949 and 1954.<sup>68</sup> Each act stipulates that cities cannot be granted federal funds for redevelopment if local redevelopment authorities cannot guarantee housing for those who have lost their homes.<sup>69</sup> Thus, to continue to receive funds, it was necessary that the Durham Redevelopment Commission maintain strong connections with the DHA, even if many individuals’ needs were not met by this process. Yet the DHA and the Durham Redevelopment Commission were not as closely connected in Durham as they were in other cities. In Winston-Salem, for example, “the public housing authority and the urban renewal agency are one unit.”<sup>70</sup> The degree to which the housing authority and the

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<sup>66</sup> *Proposal to Better Coordinate Private and Public Housing in Durham*. The North Carolina Fund, Folder 4479, Series 4.8, Box 363. NCF Papers, 1964: 2.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> Massey and Denton, *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass*, 1993: 55.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>70</sup> Bunce, “The Housing Authority of Durham, North Carolina: A Case Study of an Independent Commission.” January 14, 1968. Folder 4710, NCF: 8.

redevelopment commission were aligned is decided “at the time the urban renewal program is established.”<sup>71</sup>

While the Durham Redevelopment Commission and the DHA did not comprise one unit, they did not function as entirely separate entities. Carvie Oldham, the Executive Director of the DHA during the 1960s, expressed in an interview that he and Henry Moss, the Deputy Director of the Durham Redevelopment Commission, worked together when considering “relocation, [and] determining the need of future public housing.”<sup>72</sup> So connected were the leaders of these two agencies, in fact, that Oldham explained that “the two usually operate in one office” and even when they did not, he “felt [that] the two offices in Durham [shared] a high degree of cooperation under the present system.”<sup>73</sup>

The City of Durham also was linked with the Durham Redevelopment Commission and the Durham Housing Authority. The DHA, in particular, was connected directly to the City because all of its commissioners were appointed by City Council.<sup>74</sup> This process of appointment, as opposed to election, was controversial. Glenda Lackey Bunce, wrote in her case study of the Housing Authority in 1968:

While the Commissioners are not directly interested in public housing - - they are not tenants - - it is very difficult to find a non-interested person for Commission appointment. Almost any candidate just by his residence in the City will have some interest in public housing. At the present, the white community and the white small business community is over-represented.

Supposedly appointment, rather than election will assure that Commission members have the interests of the community as a whole in mind. However, when one person - - the Mayor - - is appointing the members they are likely to reflect his opinions.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid: 9.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid: 7-8.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid: 4-5.

Appointing commissioners who are “likely to reflect his opinions” was key for the mayor and other members of the City Council because once this appointment was made, the Durham Housing Authority was granted “ultimate authority in any matter concerning public housing.”<sup>76</sup> Unless a potential location for a new public housing project had to be “rezoned or renamed,” the City did not become involved.<sup>77</sup>

The Durham Housing Authority’s total control over the design and location of public housing was consolidated in the 1960s under the leadership of Carvie Oldham. While the Housing Authority had the final say in matters relating to public housing, other agencies previously had been “involved to some extent in the problem of housing” in Durham.<sup>78</sup> Oldham, however, had “shown himself unwilling to cooperate with these agencies” in “most instances,” preferring to exercise total authority without taking the interests of other agencies or parties into account.<sup>79</sup>

Because the Durham City Council had complete control over the appointment of Durham Housing Authority commissioners, and because these commissioners, in turn, exerted a significant influence over the process of urban renewal through the close workings of the Executive Director of the Housing Authority and the Deputy Director of the Durham Redevelopment Commission, there was a high probability of collusion between these parties. That is, the interests of the white business community were over-represented among the DHA commissioners because the City continued to appoint individuals to the commission who would promote these interests. For instance:

In October, 1967, a seat became vacant on the Commission. The United Organization for Community Improvement (UOCI) suggested the names of several public housing tenants

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid: 4-8.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

or ex-tenants whom they considered representative and “qualified” to serve on the Commission. These names were rejected by the Mayor, and A.B. Stone, Jr., president of a woodcraft company, was appointed.<sup>80</sup>

These commissioners, led by Oldham, then worked closely with Henry Moss, the Deputy Director of the Durham Redevelopment Commission, often operating in “one office” as previously noted.<sup>81</sup>

When considering this arrangement, it is easy to see how the white community could mobilize to displace blacks, and subsequently relocate them in other black areas to create a highly concentrated black section of the City. It is easy to see how whites could segregate blacks in Durham through the dual processes of urban renewal and the development of public housing projects. Independent commissions, such as the Durham Housing Authority, “are often created to take them out of politics [as] experience indicates that they are [more] responsive to the people they regulate rather than the board member’s opinion.”<sup>82</sup> Indeed, the Durham Housing Authority was neither independent, nor was it removed from political interests. As the following section will illustrate, it was certainly not responsive to the needs of “the people they regulate[d]” who lived in, or were affected by, public housing.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid: 5.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid: 9.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid: 10.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

## ***“If not There, then Where?” Black Segregation in Durham***

On July 17, 1967, “a hundred and fifty Negroes marched to the Council meeting in Downtown City Hall. The march was to protest the further construction of public housing in the southeast sector of the City... [t]his was the beginning of a prolonged attack on housing by Negro groups in Durham.”<sup>84</sup> The fact that the Durham Housing Authority was attempting to build more public housing in the southeast quadrant of the City was contentious because in the area “between Seaboard Railroad and Roxboro Road and Fargo Street,” 99.26% of the population was black.<sup>85</sup> Yet as of “September, 1967, all public housing projects had been located in this area of the City.”<sup>86</sup>

Few Gardens, Durham’s first public housing project that was designed exclusively for whites was the exception to this rule. Located in the Northeast part of the City, as of 1960, census tract data indicate that it was still in a primarily white location where only 97 out of the 5,162, or 1.89%, of the people living in this tract were black (see Figure 1).<sup>87</sup>

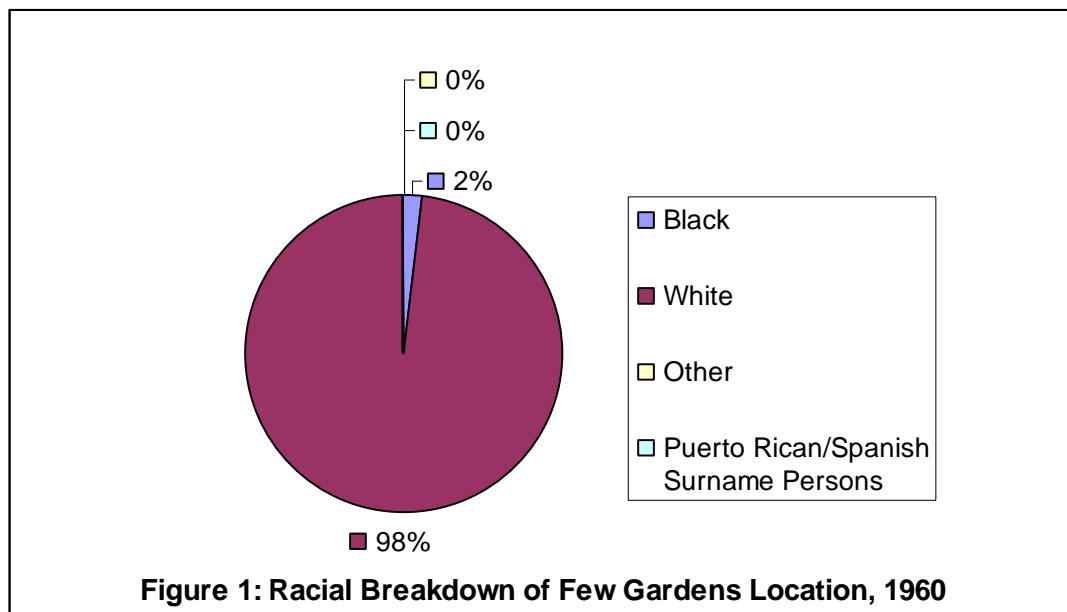
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<sup>84</sup> Ibid: 14.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Source: United States Census, 1960. Accessed through Social Explorer, Professional Edition: <http://www.socialexplorer.com/pub/reports/home.aspx> on March 25, 2010.

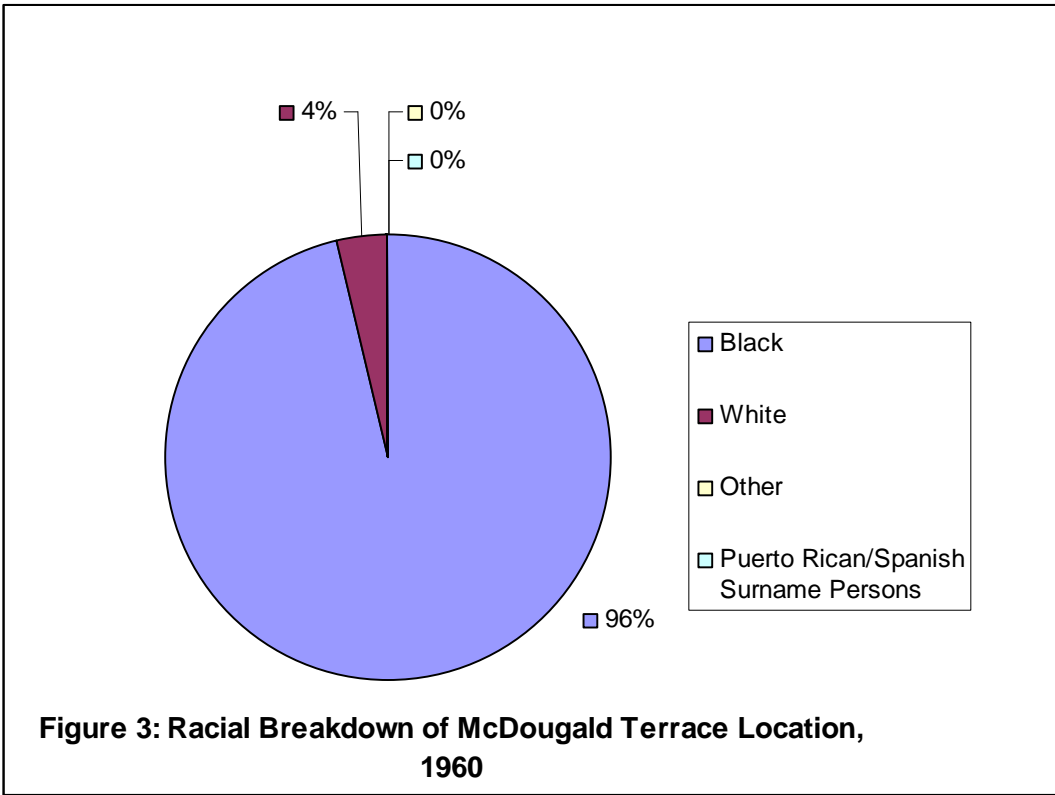
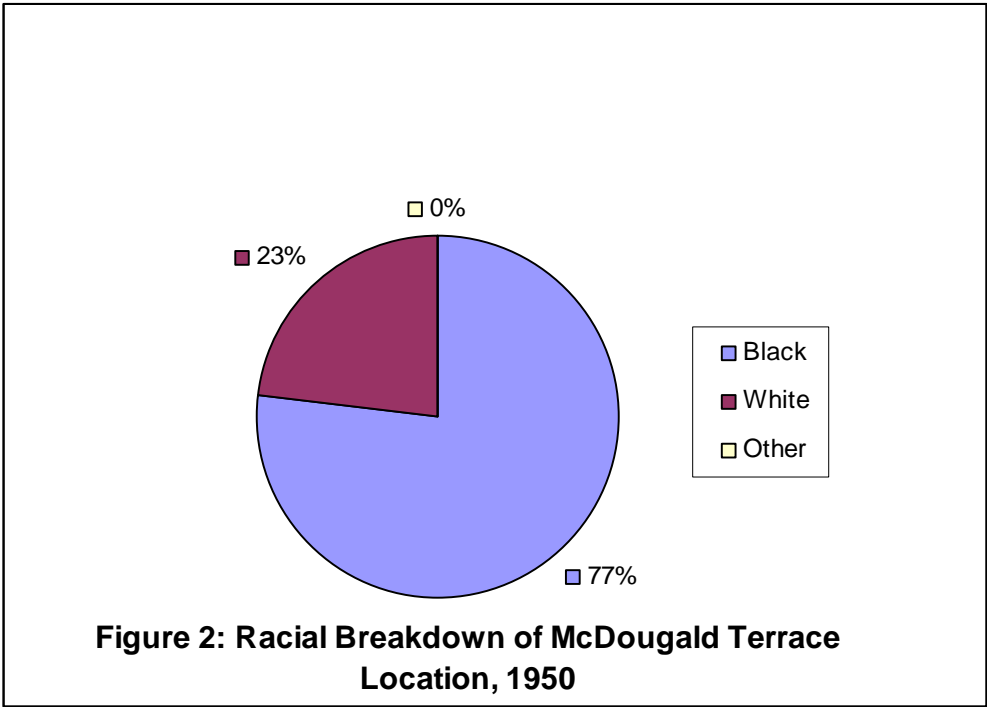


McDougald Terrace, on the other hand, was constructed in Tract 0014 within Durham’s southeast section in the 1950s, where 76.9% of the population was black (see Figure 2).<sup>88</sup> By 1960, McDougald Terrace remained located within Tract 14, but the racial composition of the tract had changed significantly. According to 1960 Census Data, the tract where McDougald Terrace was located was now almost entirely black, with African Americans comprising 96.3% of the population<sup>89</sup> (see Figure 3). The DHA had intended for McDougald Terrace to be the “Negro complex” and it is likely that its tenant placement policies reflected this, resulting in a dramatic influx of African Americans into this neighbourhood.<sup>90</sup>

<sup>88</sup> Ibid: 1950 Decennial Census.

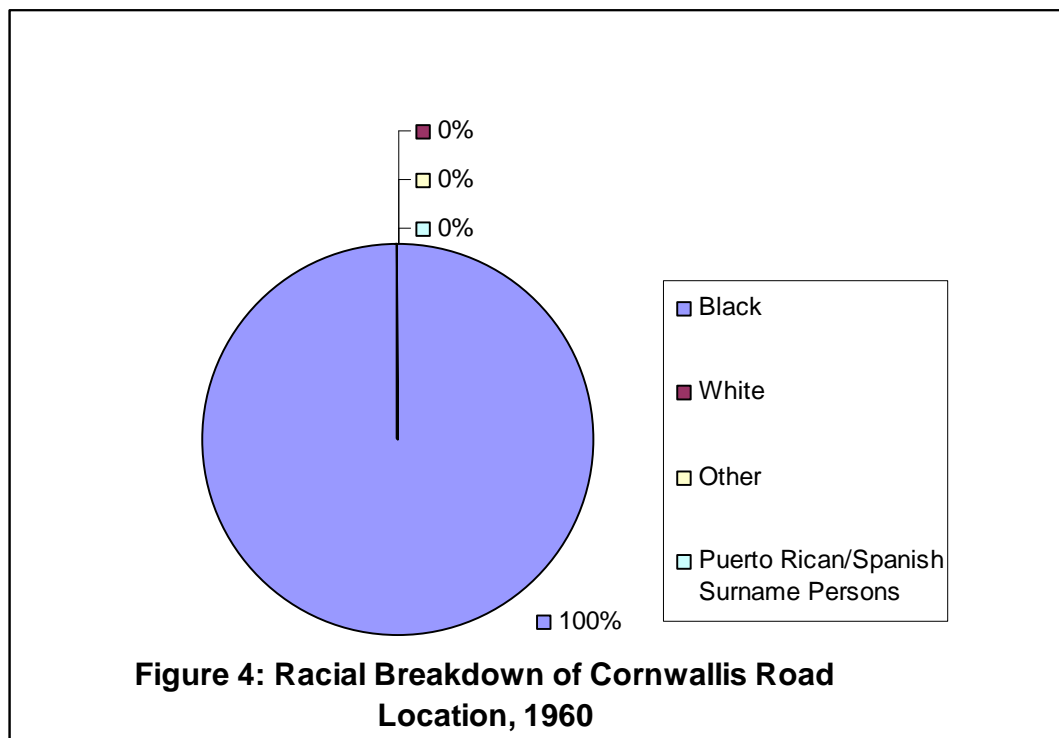
<sup>89</sup> Ibid: 1960 Decennial Census.

<sup>90</sup> Krauskoph, “Living in the Projects.” Honours Paper, Duke University, 1995: 13.





Black activists in Durham also lamented the fact that the location of Cornwallis Street and the Fayetteville Housing Project, completed in 1966 and 1967, were also in the southeast.<sup>91</sup> “Fayette Place,” as it was once called, was demolished in 2009, but was once located in the predominantly black Hayti district. Cornwallis Road was constructed in Tract 13B, directly adjacent to Tract 14 where McDougald Terrace is located. In 1960, Tract 14 was the most segregated area in Durham, with a population of 4,872 individuals, all of whom were black (see Figure 4).



The Cornwallis Road public housing development was one of the DHA’s larger communities. Cornwallis Road consisted of 200 units, making it slightly smaller than

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<sup>91</sup> Bunce, “The Housing Authority of Durham, North Carolina: A Case Study of an Independent Commission.” January 14, 1968. Folder 4710, NCF: 13.

Few Gardens which consisted of 240 units, and much larger than the second McDougald Terrace development, consisting of only 113 units.<sup>92</sup>

It is also important to note at this point that a community consisting of 200 or more units was considered particularly dense in the 1960s. According to the North Carolina Fund Low-Income Housing Development Corporation (LIHDC), a non-profit corporation focusing on low-income housing in North Carolina, constructing a project of 200 units or more is detrimental because, such crowded living conditions can easily ‘lead to a community of failure.’<sup>93</sup> Walter Smith, the Executive Director of the LIHDC, said that “a community of failure” can arise from these crowded living conditions because, “[t]his type of <sup>94</sup> can arise from these crowded living of group is found in large housing units where one is constantly surrounded by individuals who have not been successful, which creates a general feeling of apathy.”<sup>95</sup> Massey and Denton argue similarly that the high housing density which is often characteristic of public housing concentrates poverty in such a way that the consequences of poverty are increased disproportionately. When such a highly populated community is also segregated by race, as was the case in the Cornwallis Road community where all of the individuals living in this tract are black, the effects of poverty are magnified. As Massey and Denton explain:

if we begin with a poor minority group whose poverty rate is twice that of the majority (a situation common for blacks in American cities) and impose successively higher levels of segregation on blacks, then *with no other changes* [sic], the degree to which minority members experience geographically concentrated poverty increases steadily from a level at parity with whites to a level twice that of whites. As segregation rises, in other words, the neighborhood environment of whites steadily improves while that experienced by

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<sup>92</sup> Morton Hoffman & Co., *Study of Housing in Durham*, May 1968, Folder 984, NCF Papers: V-16, Table V-9.

<sup>93</sup> *North Carolina Fund Low-Income Housing Demonstration Proposal*, 1966, NCF Papers: 32.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*

blacks progressively deteriorates; and this outcome is achieved without the movement of any nonpoor blacks out of the ghetto.<sup>96</sup>

If Massey and Denton are correct, locating a large public housing project, such as Cornwallis Road, in an all black neighborhood is conducive to white interests. By segregating blacks in Durham, whites insulate their neighborhoods, and therefore themselves, from the effects of poverty.

One might, at this point, contend that even if black segregation suited white interests, blacks often segregate themselves because they prefer to live with other African Americans and not whites. This argument has a particular relevance in Durham, where the legacy of a strong black community in Hayti and Black Wall Street still prevails.

Indeed, Leslie Brown writes that:

It could be argued, for instance, that black folk shared in configuring Durham's pattern of residential segregation by race through their own actions as much as through their compliance with whites' preferences. Retreating from the direct supervision of whites, most blacks preferred to live among one another, for the sake of their comfort rather than racial custom, with the network of African Americans facilitating a pattern that encouraged migrants to move to places where other blacks already lived. Settling in Hayti, black migrants of the 1880s expanded the residential blueprint developed in the 1860s. The homes, schools, and churches built along the streets of the Hayti district made autonomous space out of the places where blacks lived. Durham passed no segregation laws before the twentieth century, a point of municipal pride. But it did not have to.<sup>97</sup>

Durham may not have had to structurally impose segregation from the top-down in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, as Brown argues, but this does not mean that blacks always preferred segregation. Indeed, it is just as likely that they would not even attempt to purchase housing in predominantly white areas, such as Hope Valley, because they knew that such an endeavour would be futile. Thus, the fact that there were

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<sup>96</sup> Massey and Denton, *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass*, 1993: 123.

<sup>97</sup> Brown, *Upbuilding Black Durham*, 2008: 39.

no initial laws preventing this is not necessarily an indication that African Americans had no desire for integration, as Brown insists. Moreover, the fact that laws were not even needed illustrates the strength of the unofficial norms and rules that imposed residential segregation. Brown maintains that “Durham passed no segregation laws before the twentieth century” which represented “a point of municipal pride.”<sup>98</sup> I would argue, however, that the fact that “it did not have to” is less a matter of pride, and more a reflection of the strength of de facto patterns of segregation.<sup>99</sup>

Brown’s argument is representative of one side of the debate regarding racial residential segregation. While scholars including Katznelson, and Massey and Denton, claim that segregation is, at its core, the result of structural factors perpetuated by the local and federal government and financial lending institutions, others insist that segregation is simply a consequence of blacks choosing to live with one another. Scholars such as Brown make the case that segregation is a matter of preference, not exclusion. Yet the fact that whites have consistently had to use force and violence, and subsequently, covert institutional mechanisms to segregate blacks, indicates that segregation does arise from black preferences. If blacks wanted to isolate themselves and live only in all black communities, whites would not have had to develop a number of strategies to exclude them. It could be conceded that segregation is indeed a matter of preference, but it is the preference of whites, and not blacks, that has played the primary role.

The lower economic status of African Americans in the 1960s made blacks even more susceptible to white preferences in regard to residential location. Illustrating this is

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

that the common sentiment in the 1960s with the demise of Jim Crow was that although racial segregation occurred, this was not a consequence of race per se but rather, of the economic status of blacks. “Since the predominant low-income group in N.C. is Negro,” the North Carolina Fund Low-Income Housing Demonstration Proposal reported in 1966, “economic segregation means racial segregation.”<sup>100</sup> The lower socioeconomic status of African Americans in Durham vis-à-vis whites meant that they often did not have a choice of residence; they could only live where they could afford to locate, or where they were assigned by the DHA.

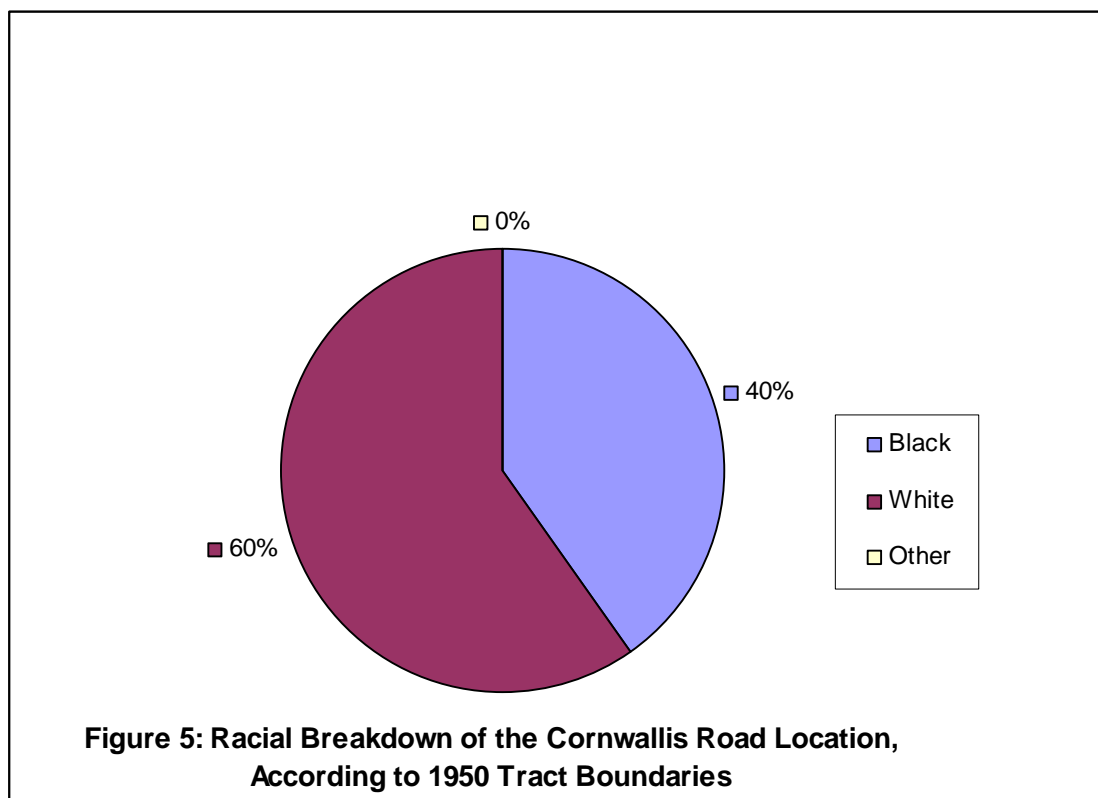
My argument that African Americans were intentionally segregated in public housing by the Durham Housing Authority and the Durham City Council is also supported by tract level census data from the 1950s and 1960s. The Cornwallis Road community was built, in 1966 in Tract 13B where 100% of the population was African American (see Figure 4 and the discussion above relating to this).<sup>101</sup> Since the probability of a single tract of land being entirely racially homogenous is highly unlikely, I investigated what the racial demographic characteristics of this corresponding area were in 1950. Interestingly, in 1950, this same location was within Tract C0021, which was, for the most part, racially integrated (see Figure 5).<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> *North Carolina Fund Low-Income Housing Demonstration Proposal*, 1966, NCF Papers: 33.

<sup>101</sup> Source: United States Census, 1960. Accessed through Social Explorer, Professional Edition: <http://www.socialexplorer.com/pub/reports/home.aspx> on March 25, 2010.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid*: 1950 Decennial Census.



It seems that, in anticipation of the creation of a new public housing location in the 1960s, the City re-drew the boundaries of this particular tract.

Of course, the development of public housing in a newly created, all black tract could be a coincidence. Reason indicates, however, that such a coincidence would be highly suspect. The relationship between the Durham Housing Authority and the City is one where “[t]he Housing Authority has ultimate authority in any matter concerning public housing. No unit of city government becomes involved unless a proposed location must be rezoned or renamed.”<sup>103</sup> Once the potential for rezoning is raised, however,

<sup>103</sup> Bunce, “The Housing Authority of Durham, North Carolina: A Case Study of an Independent Commission.” January 14, 1968. Folder 4710, NCF: 8.

“hearings are held by the Planning and Zoning Commission, a recommendation is made to the City Council by the Commission, and action is taken by the City Council.”<sup>104</sup>

It is conceivable that the Durham Housing Authority proposed that a new public housing complex be built in racially heterogeneous Tract 0021, and certain individuals, whether they be commissioners on the Housing Authority, City Councilmen, or prominent white citizens, requested that the site be rezoned. Bunce reports that, “[i]n considering sites in different parts of the City, the Authority had been responsive to pressures brought by white neighborhoods not to build in their area.”<sup>105</sup> With the prospect of Cornwallis Road Apartments being built in “their area,” it is natural to assume that white citizens mobilized to block development of the project, or, in the very least, to redefine “their area” by re-drawing tract lines.<sup>106</sup>

Black citizens grew increasingly frustrated with the concentration of public housing in areas of the city that were predominantly black and with the Housing Authority’s outright support for white demands and white interests. When they marched on City Hall on July 17, 1967, they demanded that their own interests be heard and acknowledged. Eugene Hampton Jr., on behalf of the Durham Council on Human Relations, commented at the City Council meeting that resulted from this protest, “So now, we return to the citizens who are presently locked in an existing ghetto and say, “we know it’s going to be like being sardines in a can, but after all, if not there, then

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<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid: 11.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

where?”<sup>107</sup> African Americans, however, were quick to answer this question of “where?”<sup>108</sup> Whether or not they were given a consistent response was another matter.

### ***“You all better wake up:”<sup>109</sup> Durham’s Protest Movements***

On February 6, 1967, an attorney for the Tomrich Corporation advised the City Council that the Tomrich Corporation, a private developer, was planning to develop land that it owned on Bacon Street into “multi-residence apartments under a contract which was to be negotiated and entered into with the Durham Housing Authority.”<sup>110</sup> The Durham Investment Company owned the tract, however, and in order for the site to be approved for public housing, the twenty-two acre tract of land had to be re-zoned for apartments to be built on the site.<sup>111</sup> Before this zoning change was to be made, Durham Mayor Grabarek asserted that there would be a public hearing held by the County regarding the proposed location of the housing project.<sup>112</sup> Furthermore, if public housing was to be created on the site, the City would have to annex the land first, before re-zoning it and effectively handing it over to the Durham Housing Authority.

From the start, the proposal was controversial, because Bacon Street is located in the southeast section of Durham, an area that was now increasingly referred to as the “Negro ghetto.”<sup>113</sup> Prominent black citizens, including W.C. Lovett, a faculty member at North Carolina Central University, formerly called North Carolina College, and Eugene

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<sup>107</sup> Dr. Ray Thompson, *The Herald Sun*, July 18, 1967: pg. 1A. In: Alex Hurder, *Origin of the Damar Dispute*. August 30, 1968: 25. Folder 7450, Series 1.6, NCF Papers.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid: 26.

<sup>110</sup> Durham City Council Minutes, Durham City Clerk’s Office, City Hall. In: Ibid: 15.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid: 17.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid: 15.

<sup>113</sup> *The Herald Sun*, July 18, 1967, p. 1A. In: Ibid: 24.



Hampton, president of the Durham Human Relations Council, warned county officials about “the controversy which was going to accompany the project.”<sup>114</sup> Specifically, spokesmen for North Carolina College and the Durham Human Relations Council “stressed the nearness of the Lincoln and McDougald Terrace housing projects to the Bacon Street site.”<sup>115</sup>

McDougald Terrace was already located in a tract which was entirely black. Now, the City Council, with the exception of John Stewart who cast the dissenting vote when it came to annexing the land for the development of public housing, and Jim Hawkins, who abstained, was entirely in favour of building another public housing unit in the same vicinity. Considering that the increased need for public housing arose from urban renewal, and because the majority of individuals who were displaced were black, it seemed that the City and the Durham Housing Authority were moving to concentrate even more blacks in what was already an all black area. When the controversy later erupted, Dr. Ray Thompson observed at a City Council hearing that, “[t]here seems to be a great conspiracy in Durham to expand and enlarge the great Negro ghetto.”<sup>116</sup>

The fact that Dr. Thompson referred to this phenomenon as a conspiracy is not inaccurate or overly dramatic. Indeed, as Hurder explains:

Bacon Street was considered a good area for public housing because the new R.N. Harris School was in the works for the immediate area. Since the location of nearby schools is always considered when the sites for public housing are discussed, a school nearby made the Bacon Street site seem desirable. Charles Tilman, DHA, and Mrs. Ann Atwater, UOCI [United Organizations for Community Improvement] have both noted, however, that the choice of the school’s location was originally very puzzling to many people because it was not near any area with a large school-age population. They strongly suspect that the Mayor and other parties persuaded the Board of Education to plan the school where it did, so that public housing would then be feasible there. Bacon Street did

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<sup>114</sup> Ibid: 18.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

not just happen to be chosen for a public housing site because a school would be nearby; the school was planned so that Bacon Street would be a suitable site.<sup>117</sup>

Rather than stating directly that they wanted to build more public housing in a racially segregated area of the City, the Mayor “and other parties” simply planned the build a school in a nearby location to justify the location of the housing project.<sup>118</sup> The fact that Mayor Grabarek would go to such lengths to ensure an increase in the African American population in Durham’s southeast section indicates that black segregation must have served his interests and those of his constituency.

The Durham City Council was not the only institution that catered almost exclusively to white interests. The Durham Housing Authority was also biased in this fashion. On June 17, 1967, *The Carolina Times*, a newspaper “aimed at black readers, made discrimination by the DHA the subject of an editorial.”<sup>119</sup> In the editorial, *The Times* “pointed out” that J.J. Henderson, the only black commissioner in the Durham Housing Authority, “had been passed over four times when vacancies occurred in the office of chairman although he was the senior commissioner and the most qualified for the job.”<sup>120</sup> The editorial further, stating that the “editors believed that the mayor and city officials would not appoint a black person to a position of importance.”<sup>121</sup> After this article was published, City Councilman John S. Stewart, one of the two black City Council members, “once again accused the DHA of racial discrimination in its hiring

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<sup>117</sup> Ibid: 15.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid: 21.

<sup>120</sup> *The Carolina Times*, June 17, 1967, p.2. In: Ibid: 21.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

practices and pointed out: “There is no Negro in a position of authority in the whole set-up.”<sup>122</sup>

On July 17, 1967, 150 black citizens went to City Hall to protest the Bacon Street Project, and to press for better housing code enforcement in black areas. The march was led by Ben Ruffin, Ann Atwater, and Howard Fuller, although “representatives of every major civil rights community action group in Durham were present.”<sup>123</sup> Ben Ruffin spoke to the City Council, saying that “the black community of Durham had been the whipping boy of the white interests” and “[i]f the City Council did not start responding to the requests of the black community...the whipping boy might turn around and “whip the whippers.”<sup>124</sup> Eugene Hampton Jr. spoke next at the meeting, and expressed his concern with the issue of black segregation in the southeast section of Durham. He ultimately conceded, however, that the issue of where to locate the Bacon Street Project would always be contentious, for “if not there [in the southeast], then where?”<sup>125</sup>

Howard Fuller subsequently discussed the problems of public housing in Durham. As Hurder notes, his statement was described at the time as “inflammatory” by the media.<sup>126</sup> Yet it might be more accurate to describe it as eloquent and accurate, in light of the issues of public housing and segregation that the black community faced in Durham at this time. “Now we come again at a time when you all are beginning to take the Negro, black people, and stick them together once again,” Fuller said.<sup>127</sup> Fuller continued by asserting that he questions this form of segregation:

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<sup>122</sup> *The Durham Sun*, June 20, 1967, p. 1B. In: Ibid: 21-22.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid: 23.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> Minutes of the Durham City Council, July 17, 1967. In: Ibid: 25.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid: 26.

from two bases. One, I think it is highly political, because I think that you don't want Negroes living with white folks and you know that those white folks that voted for you don't want it, and you're gonna vote it down. Secondly, you know that if Negroes lived in a precinct, a mixed precinct they could go to a precinct meeting and take part of it. But if you put us all over there in the precincts that we already have, you don't lose any votes. And I question it on that basis.<sup>128</sup>

The issues and questions that Fuller raised were not only salient in Durham, but resonated throughout black communities in the United States at this time. Racial residential segregation in public housing is politically immobilizing for African Americans because it excluded them from the body politic. Particularly, segregation is not conducive for politics because it stands in the way of coalition building with other groups outside the African American community.

According to Massey and Denton, integration is necessary because it “creates a basis for political coalitions and pluralist politics.”<sup>129</sup> Furthermore, unlike the experience of blacks, other minority groups, particularly white immigrants in the early twentieth century, were able to slowly integrate into American society and thus could easily “find coalition partners because other groups can anticipate sharing the benefits” of this coalition.<sup>130</sup> Black segregation, and the concentration of poverty that followed from this, however, made blacks undesirable coalition partners.<sup>131</sup> The result is that while “segregation paradoxically makes it easier for blacks to elect representatives, it limits their political influence and marginalizes them within the American polity.”<sup>132</sup> It was this marginalization that Fuller spoke of when he expressed that white citizens and politicians in Durham knew that if they allowed blacks to live in “mix[ed] precincts” they would “go

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<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

<sup>129</sup> Massey and Denton, *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass*, 1993: 14.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

to a precinct meeting and take part of it.”<sup>133</sup> By segregating African Americans in the “second ghetto,” whites precluded blacks from forming political coalitions, and in so doing, excluded them from political society.

Fuller continued by questioning the Durham Housing Authority itself, and the fact that “the whole thing is dominated by a white board, a white man, and white assistants.”<sup>134</sup> Moreover, he argued that “the continued placement of those projects in this area [the southeast] is just another indication that maybe this city is being turned over to the white folks.”<sup>135</sup> Fuller also criticized the City and the Durham Housing Authority for not enforcing housing codes in the projects, and alluded to the discriminatory practices of realtors, noted in chapter one. “I’ll say that you refuse to enforce that code because like that man that’s not there, many of our (Councilmen) are realtors. And I’d say and suggest that many of you won’t become involved with those kind of people, because they’re your people,” he exclaimed.<sup>136</sup>

Fuller went on to observe that while the white real estate agents may in reality be “your people:”<sup>137</sup>

these are my people out here, and they’re all black, and they’re all beautiful, and they’re gettin’ tired of coming up here. And I didn’t come to beg, and I didn’t come, you know, with my hat in my hand. We come up here this time on the basis of we’re just tired. We’re tired of comin’ up here, we’re tired of readin’ in the paper, this, that and the other thing. We’re tired of you white folks turnin’ down everything that will benefit Negroes. We got two black faces, and a couple of supporters who sit up here, and are constantly, constantly frustrated by their attempts to be progressive in a town that’s movin’ backward in the year 1967. And you all better wake up, you all better wake up, you all better wake up to what’s happening, and you better listen, because these are the voices of the people, and they’re people that you have pushed across those railroad tracks, they’re people that you have moved out of the urban renewal areas so that you could get that nice express-

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<sup>133</sup> Minutes of the Durham City Council, July 17, 1967. In: Hurder, *Origins of the Damar Dispute*. August 30, 1968. NCF Papers: 25.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

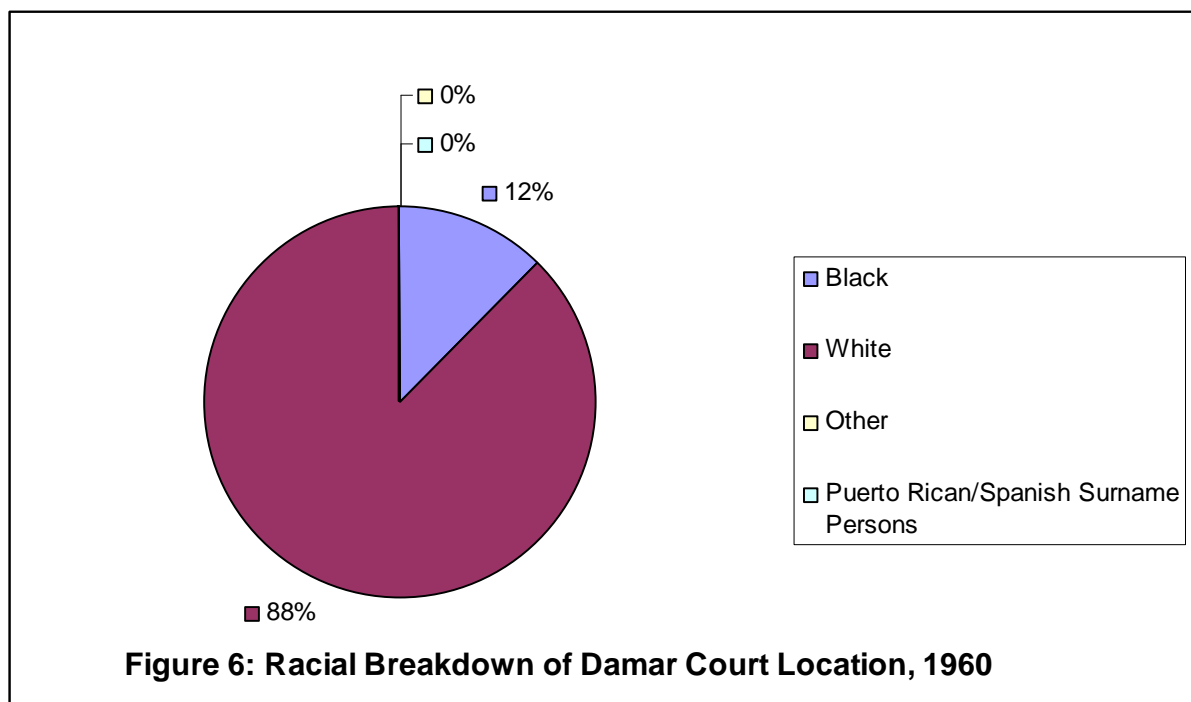
<sup>135</sup> Ibid.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

way so that you white folk can get from Hope Valley to the Research Triangle in ten minutes. And they're human beings, they're human beings and you better start listening to them.<sup>138</sup>

In what may be seen as a surprising turn of events, the Durham City Council and the Housing Authority did listen to the black protestors and citizens in this instance. Indeed, the Bacon Street proposal was defeated, and instead, the Housing Authority acquired Damar Court.<sup>139</sup> The acquisition of Damar Court was seen as victory for black activists at the time, since it is located in northwest Durham, far away from the City's "black ghetto." Indeed, in 1960, 87.5% of the residents of the Damar Court area were white (see Figure 6).<sup>140</sup>



<sup>138</sup> Ibid: 26-27.

<sup>139</sup> Hurder, and Beyle(ed.), *History of the Hoover Road Housing Project*. December 20, 1968, NCF Papers: II-1.

<sup>140</sup> Source: United States Census, 1960. Accessed through Social Explorer, Professional Edition: <http://www.socialexplorer.com/pub/reports/home.aspx> on March 25, 2010.

Yet the fact that the Housing Authority and the City Council acquiesced to the demands of the black community may be more of a result of outside pressure and fears of a black insurgency. Indeed, as black activists marched to City Hall on the evening of July 17, 1967, they broke “a few windows” on Main Street on the way.<sup>141</sup> After Fuller made his poignant and moving speech about segregation in public housing, Mrs. Viola Holman warned that “[r]ight here in Durham will be another Vietnam.”<sup>142</sup> In light of the urban riots that erupted in Newark which “began on July 14 and lasted through July 18” of that same year, people in Durham worried that the same course of events would unfold in their city.<sup>143</sup>

On the morning of July 18, 1967, the headline on *The Durham Morning Herald* read “ANOTHER NEWARK THREATENED HERE.”<sup>144</sup> When the group of black citizens who had originally marched on July 19, marched again to City Hall on July 20, “the streets were lined with National Guardsmen reluctantly called out by the governor upon the mayor’s request, and the town had become an armed garrison.”<sup>145</sup> The fact that Durham needed National Guardsmen to control what seemed to be an impending riot did not reflect well on Durham nationally. The fear that this course of events incited in Durham’s citizens, in conjunction with the bad publicity the City was receiving was probably enough, in and of itself, to force the City to concede to the demands of the United Organization for Community Improvement and other black interest groups. In

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<sup>141</sup> Hurder, and Beyle(ed.), *History of the Hoover Road Housing Project*. December 20, 1968, NCF Papers: II-1.

<sup>142</sup> Hurder, *Origins of the Damar Dispute*. August 30, 1968. NCF Papers: 227.

<sup>143</sup> Hurder, and Beyle(ed.), *History of the Hoover Road Housing Project*. December 20, 1968, NCF Papers: II-5.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

cases where such pressure was not exerted, the plight of African Americans often went unheard and unattended.

### ***“It’s Just a Form of Segregation:” The Hoover Road Housing Controversy***

The protestors of the Bacon Street Project received sharp criticism in the press, both nationally and locally.<sup>146</sup> The *Durham Sun*, for example, described them as an “agitating element”<sup>147</sup> that was influenced not by legitimate concerns but rather, by an “outside elements of some questionable intent.”<sup>148</sup> This negative publicity prompted the citizens who opposed the location of the Hoover Road public housing project to take a more quiet approach.<sup>149</sup> The *Durham* As Hurder explains, “white and black citizens who lived near Hoover Road chose to protest quietly by going through official channels.”<sup>150</sup> Hoover Road was a turnkey project where a private developer constructs the site before it is bought by the Housing Authority. The Durham Housing Authority ultimately purchased the Hoover Road development, located in southeast Durham, on November 13, 1968 from Herndon Building Company.<sup>151</sup> Yet the project “had been planned over a year and a half before its sale to the DHA” during which time many citizens in Durham endeavoured to prevent its construction.<sup>152</sup> With this goal in mind:

Neighbors of the proposed project chose to protest the project through established channels. They talked with all the officials responsible for locating sites for public housing. Their argument was one used to protest other public housing developments in

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<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

<sup>147</sup> *The Durham Sun*, July 22, 1967, p. 1A. In: Ibid: II-1.

<sup>148</sup> *The Durham Sun*, June 22, 1967, p. 4A. In: Ibid.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid: II-2.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid: 1.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid.



southeast Durham: that the city was trying to create a black ghetto in the southeast quadrant of town.<sup>153</sup>

Unfortunately, “[t]heir opposition to the Hoover Road project never received public attention, and public housing officials remained unmoved by the pleas of the neighborhood residents.”<sup>154</sup>

One such resident, Mr. Wade Kerr, “perceived that the city administration was trying to confine poor people and black people to one area of the city, and he was concerned that this policy would mean the end of attractive working class neighborhoods with single family housing in southeast Durham.”<sup>155</sup> Hurder continued by writing that “[t]he area north of Hoover Road and east of Angier Avenue, known as the Rand Terrace subdivision, was just such a neighborhood. Although the residents were predominantly white working class, there were some black families in the neighborhood.”<sup>156</sup> Census data from 1950 and 1960 illustrate this claim. Hoover Road was, in fact, located in the same census tract as Few Gardens, although the Hoover Road location is in the southernmost part of the tract, while Few Gardens is located further north. In 1960, the proposed site for Hoover Road was in a tract where 98.0% of the population was white (see Figure 7). It should be noted that these figures may slightly over-estimate the proportion of white persons living near the Hoover Road site, since more white residents probably lived in the northern areas of this tract near the Few Gardens location.

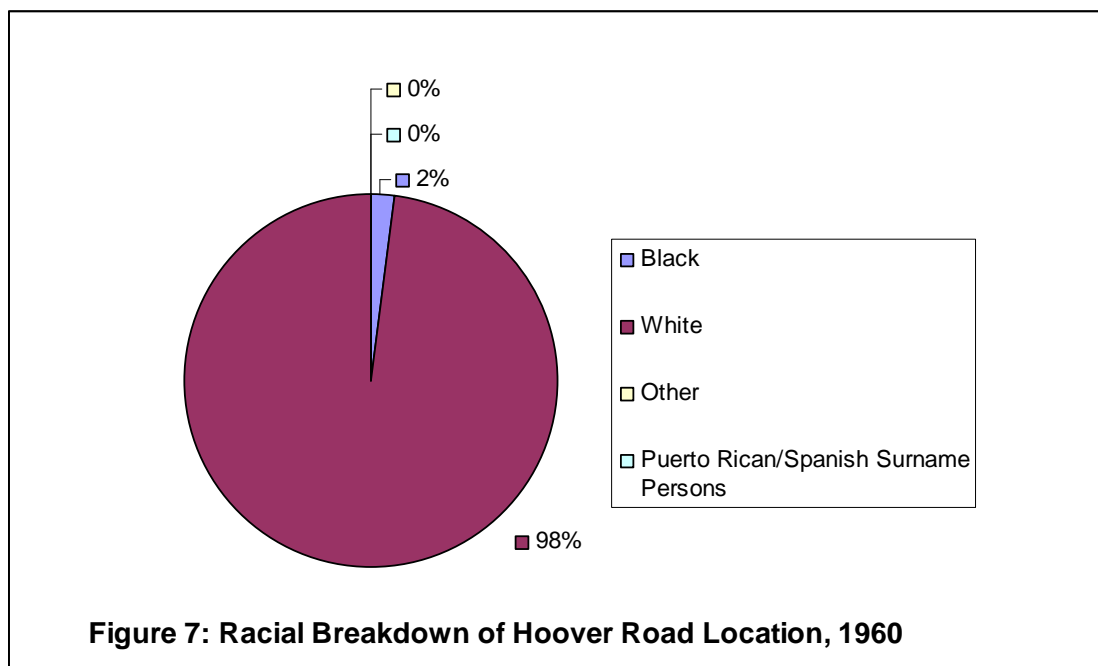
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<sup>153</sup> Ibid.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid: II-3.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid.



While the “[r]esidents of the area were proud that the neighborhood had been integrated without difficulty and without a mass exodus of white families from the neighborhood,” they were concerned that “the construction of apartment-style housing with space for up to 500 children in the neighborhood would cause the neighborhood to break up.”<sup>157</sup> Furthermore, there were only two small elementary schools in the neighborhood, Y.E. Smith Elementary, which served 100 children, and Holton Junior High, which also only had approximately 100 students.<sup>158</sup> When residents asked the principals of each of these respective schools whether they were making arrangements for the potential large increase in the number of children in the area, they stated they had no

<sup>157</sup> Ibid.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid: II-2.

such plans.<sup>159</sup> When Wade Kerr brought these issues to the attention of the Durham Housing Authority's Executive Director, Carvie Oldham, he was told that he "had nothing to worry about" and that "there would be a public zoning hearing before anything could be done."<sup>160</sup> Despite Oldham's assurances, Hurder relates that:

This information was false since the property was already properly zoned for apartment housing, but Mr. Kerr was persuaded by the argument enough to delay organizing any public opposition. Neighborhood citizens did not take any action until the builder was breaking ground.<sup>161</sup>

The residents were not thwarted by this deception, however, and quickly formed the East Durham Citizens' Association in response to the impending development of the housing project.<sup>162</sup> Rather than conducting a series of public demonstrations, as the opponents of the Bacon Street project had done, the East Durham Citizens' Association sent representatives to the Durham Housing Authority and the City Council, wrote letters, and circulated petitions.<sup>163</sup> They even flew to Washington to speak with Mr. Phillip G. Saddler, the assistant for Inter-Group Relations for Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and Mr. Abner Silverman, the Deputy Director for the Housing Assistance Administration.<sup>164</sup> During this meeting:

The group related the situation in Durham to the officials. Silverman explained to the group that similar complaints were coming in to him about housing authorities across the country. Silverman described the mechanism that housing authorities were using to create ghettos. Silverman, according to Rankin [one of the members of the East Durham Citizens' Association], said that housing authorities would submit proposals showing sites all over the city, and HUD would approve the proposal. Then the local housing authority would find reasons for not completing all of the projects except for the ones in the ghetto area of the city. He also said that since HUD had approved the site once, HUD would not back down later.<sup>165</sup>

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<sup>159</sup> Ibid: II-3.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid: II-4.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid: II-8 to III-9.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid: III-9.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid: IV-15.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid.

In the hopes of gaining federal support to oppose the development of Hoover Road, Rankin later appealed to HUD's regional office in Atlanta. HUD responded with a letter to Rankin, informing him and the East Durham Citizens' Association that "HUD had confirmed the information supplied by the group which visited Washington."<sup>166</sup> Furthermore, the letter "pledged that HUD would not allow any more public housing to be built in southeast Durham."<sup>167</sup> Nevertheless, HUD officials claimed that their hands were now tied and the development of the Hoover Road complex was inevitable as "the contract with the developer Herndon would not allow the DHA to stop construction of the Hoover Road project."<sup>168</sup> The construction of Hoover Road thus continued, despite the prolonged efforts of the East Durham Citizens' Association. In retrospect, Rankin said that he, and other members of the Association, "could readily understand why some folks get excited and throw a match. We had said from the beginning we would take the 'intelligent route.' It wasn't worth a damn."<sup>169</sup>

By late November of 1968, the project was completed and tenants, the majority of whom had been displaced by construction of the Durham Freeway, moved in immediately.<sup>170</sup> The majority of the residents that moved in were black, although Hurder writes that a small number of white families from Few Gardens also moved in "to take advantage of the larger apartments" in the new development.<sup>171</sup> Mrs. Martin, a white member of the East Durham Citizens' Association, said in a telephone interview to

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<sup>166</sup> Ibid: IV-17.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid: IV-17 to IV-18.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid: IV-25.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid: IV-23.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid.

Hurder on December 16, 1968, that, “[a]ll my neighbors are moving. This is sad because what is really going to happen is that it is going to be a black community. That’s what the city council had in mind. It’s just a form of segregation.”<sup>172</sup>

Mrs. Martin’s prediction was in many ways correct. When compared to Figure 7 above, Figures 8, 9, 10, and 11 show the changing demographics of the tract in which the Hoover Road project is located from 1970, 1980, 1990, and 2000, respectively.<sup>173</sup> The location of the Hoover Road project did not become a completely black community, as Mrs. Martin claimed it would, but from 1970, after the project was built, up until 2000, the number of whites living in this area decreased dramatically from 73% in 1970 to 9% in 2000.<sup>174</sup>

The comparison between Figure 7 and Figure 8 is also telling. Members of the East Durham Citizens’ Association had been concerned that the development of the Hoover Road housing complex would result in an influx of African Americans who had been displaced by urban renewal and the construction of the Durham Freeway.<sup>175</sup> This demographic shift would, in turn, compel white residents to move to the suburbs in the far south of Durham County and Research Triangle Park.<sup>176</sup> This dynamic of an influx of blacks and an exodus of whites is supported by census data, collected at the tract level, comparing 1960 and 1970. Indeed, in 1960, only two percent the individuals living in

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<sup>172</sup> Ibid: IV-24.

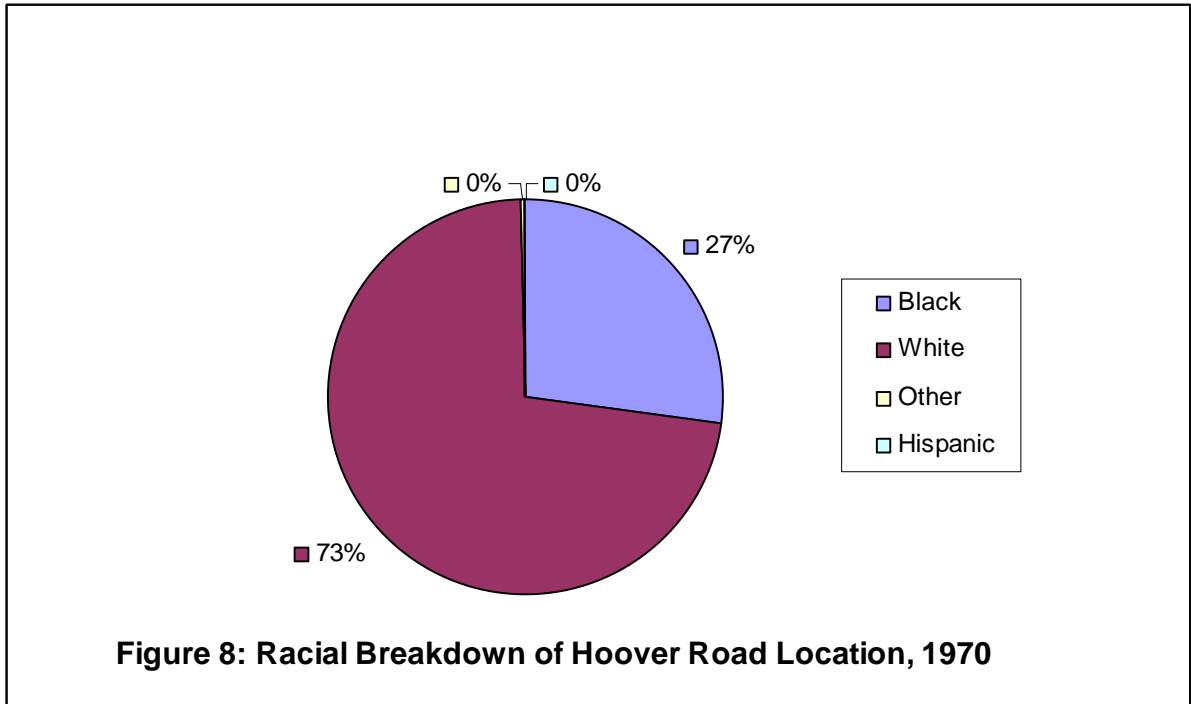
<sup>173</sup> Source: United States Census, 1970, 1980, 1990, and 2000. Accessed through Social Explorer, Professional Edition: <http://www.socialexplorer.com/pub/reports/home.aspx> on March 25, 2010.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid.

<sup>175</sup> Hurder, and Beyle(ed.), *History of the Hoover Road Housing Project*. December 20, 1968, NCF Papers: IV-17.

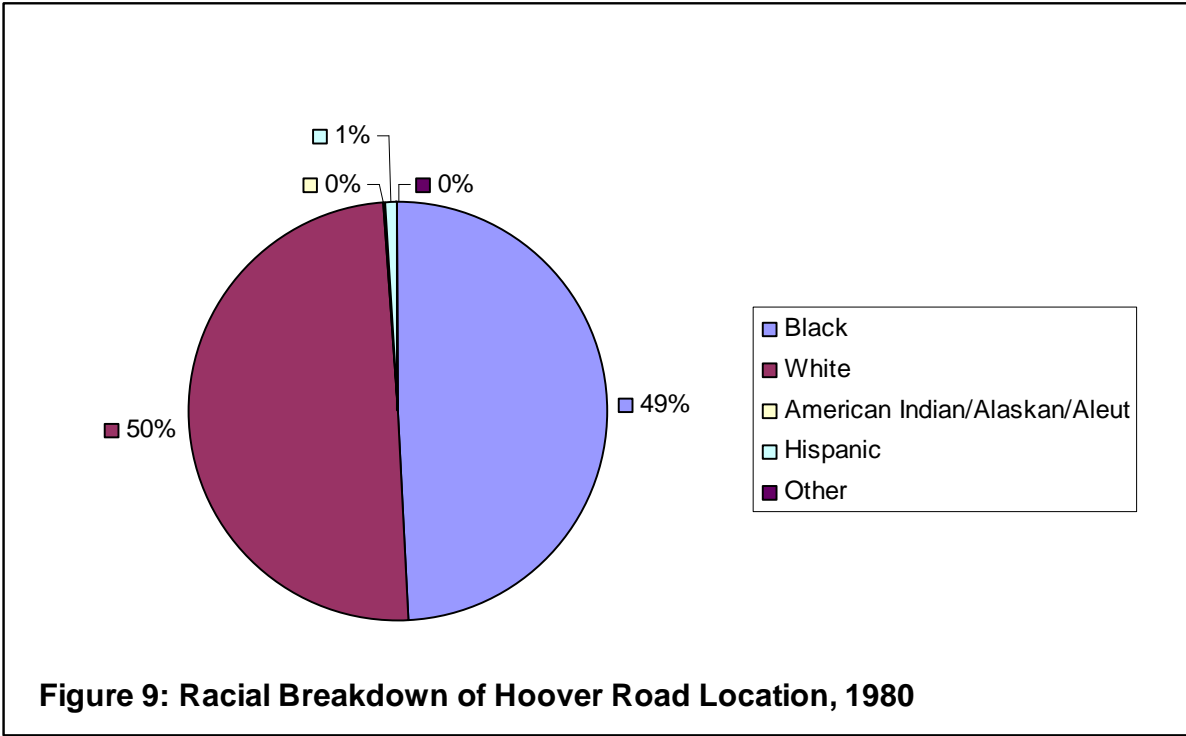
<sup>176</sup> Ibid: IV-24.

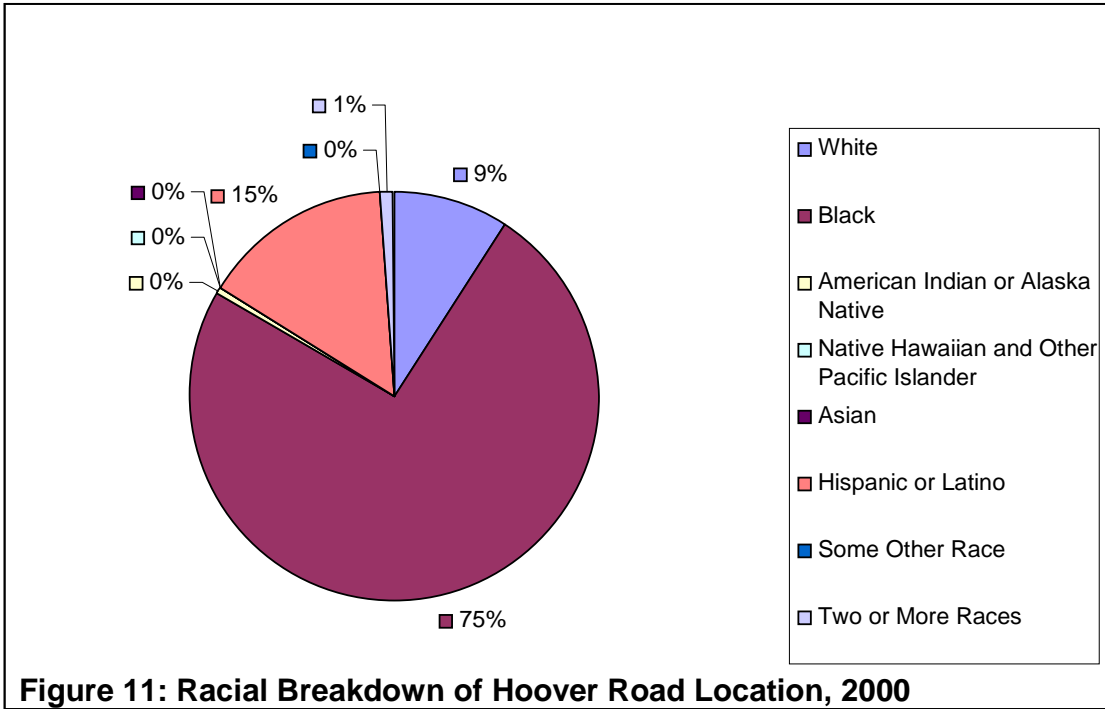
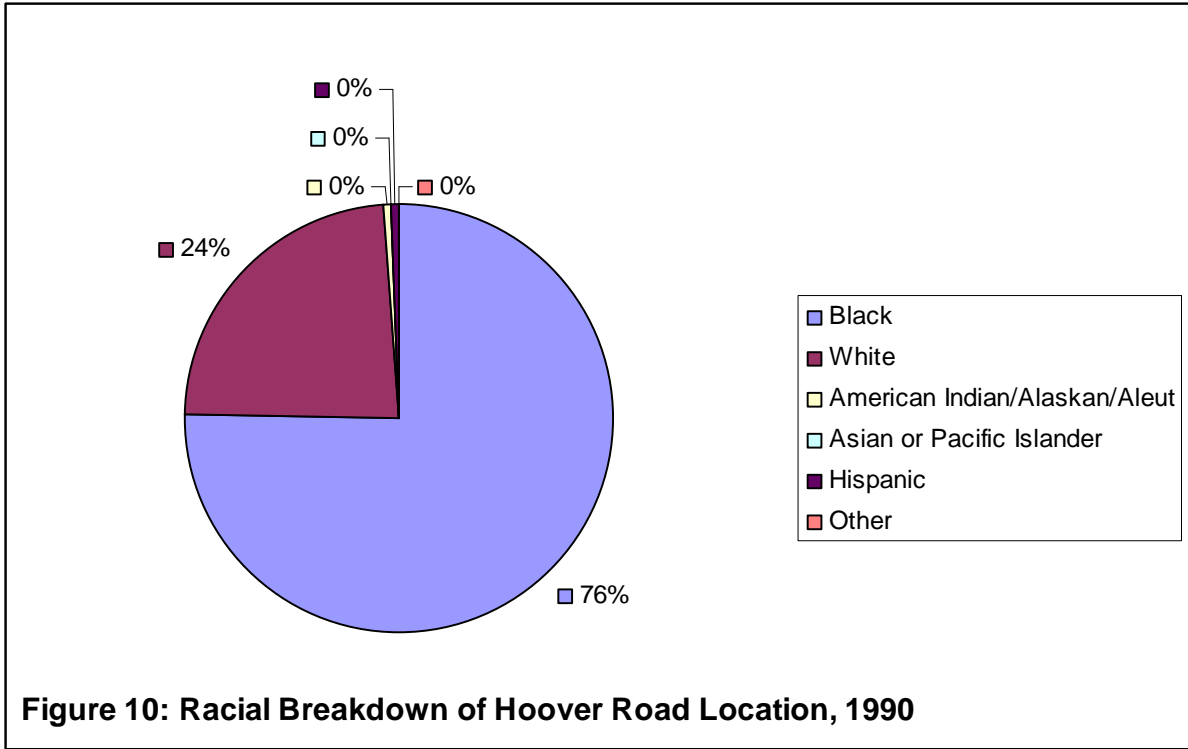
this area were black (See Figure 7).<sup>177</sup> By 1970, on the other hand, the white population share in this tract had shrunk to 73.0%, while the black population share to 27.0%.<sup>178</sup>



<sup>177</sup> Source: United States Census, 1970. Accessed through Social Explorer, Professional Edition: <http://www.socialexplorer.com/pub/reports/home.aspx> on March 25, 2010.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid: 1970 Decennial Census.







If the Durham City Council, in conjunction with the Durham Housing Authority, had racial residential segregation in mind in the southeast quadrant of the City, census data indicate that they were successful. What was once a majority white space, interspersed with integrated neighbourhoods such as Hoover Road, became a majority black space starting in 1970 and this trend only continued with each decade leading up to the year 2000.

On May 6, 1968, the East Durham Citizens' Association wrote, in a letter to the HUD's regional office in Atlanta that the Durham Housing Authority had been engaged in a number of questionable practices, the most salient of which was racial residential segregation, or the "containment of the Negro population."<sup>179</sup> While the majority of these policies of containment were enacted in the late 1960s and early 1970s with the development of new public housing projects by the Housing Authority, the persistence of racial residential segregation in Durham today is not only an artifact of past policies. A hold-over effect from practices set in motion in the 1960s is, of course, a significant cause of segregation today in public housing in Durham, but it is not the only cause. In fact, the Housing Authority continues to be committed to concentrating public housing developments within close proximity to each other in predominantly black areas of town. Segregation seems alive and well in Durham. What is more, the Housing Authority's policies of containment now wear the new face of hope.

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<sup>179</sup> Hurder, and Beyle(ed.), *History of the Hoover Road Housing Project*. December 20, 1968, NCF Papers: IV-16.

## *A New Hope? Residential Segregation in the Northeast Central Durham*

In 2003, Few Gardens, Durham's oldest public housing unit, was demolished. Like many other public housing projects, it had become a visual and moral eyesore for the Durham community. The stigma that is usually associated with public housing projects was particularly salient in the case of Few Gardens. Indeed, it had evolved into an "urban nightmare" for those who lived in, or near, this community.<sup>180</sup> In 1991, the Durham Housing Authority responded by building a fence around the Gardens with the intention of cutting off any criminal activity that was occurring in and around this housing development.<sup>181</sup> This action was met with "mixed reviews," Krauskoph notes, because although "[m]any residents felt safer with the fences...some recognized that their home was turning into a fortress."<sup>182</sup>

Although issues such as crime are pervasive in public housing in general, the Housing Authority created a fortress around Few Gardens, and not the other projects, because it was considered Durham's "problem project."<sup>183</sup> Some residents of the Gardens, such as Monica Melton, said that the reports of crime in the Gardens were exaggerated. "This is not that bad, Few Gardens is not that bad" she argued.<sup>184</sup> "I'm from up North," she continued, "and you don't know what bad is. This is like barbie doll house time here."<sup>185</sup> Melton may have felt that life in Few Gardens was like "Barbie doll

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<sup>180</sup> Krauskoph, "Living in the Projects." Honours Paper, Duke University, 1995: 28.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid: 27.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid: 34.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid: 44.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid.

house time,” but these sentiments were not echoed by the Durham community at large.<sup>186</sup> In what was seen to be an effort of last resort, the Durham Housing Authority and the City orchestrated the destruction of the complex. The move to raze Few Gardens was not novel and had been the subject of debate for some time. Indeed, advocates argued that “eliminating Few Gardens would result in a less dense population living in a two-square block area, and would thereby decrease the opportunities for crime in a relatively pernicious neighborhood.”<sup>187</sup>

The plan to demolish Few Gardens was part of a broader move on behalf of the Durham Housing Authority and Housing and Urban Development in Washington to revitalize the northeast area of the City.<sup>188</sup> Specifically, the Hope VI grant consisted of \$35 million dollars, granted to the Housing Authority on behalf of Housing and Urban Development, which was intended, as its very name indicates, to breed a sense of hope in northeast Durham. As part of this plan, Few Gardens was to be demolished and replaced by three new housing developments in the northeast.<sup>189</sup> One of the first developments, Main Street Townhomes, was built less than a block away from Oldham Towers, a public housing project completed in 1969, and is across the street from Liberty Street Apartments, constructed in 1972. The new development consisted of 43 apartments, 21 of which were to be used for public housing.<sup>190</sup> Northeast Durham was chosen as the location for the Hope VI revitalization project because the area had become “notorious for its drug activity, crime and dilapidated housing.”<sup>191</sup> Proponents of the revitalization

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<sup>186</sup> Ibid.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid: 52.

<sup>188</sup> Virginia Bridges, “A New Hope.” *The Herald Sun*, 2004: C1.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid.

project argue that the creation of Main Street Townhomes in this area will give the “fraying edge of downtown” a “new sparkle” and that it will “shine like a new penny on a mound of old change.”<sup>192</sup>

Main Street Townhomes certainly are more physically appealing than Liberty Street Apartments and Oldham Towers. Neither of these public housing complexes can boast of new carpets, dishwashers, or garbage disposals.<sup>193</sup> Proponents of the development argue that this new building will revitalize the area, inspiring its residents to achieve their goals through the job training and financial management courses that are required for new occupants.<sup>194</sup> Moreover, the high physical quality of the building itself is thought to inspire change in the neighbourhood. By helping the northeast to get “a new sparkle” by increasing its aesthetic appeal by the addition of the Townhomes, individuals living in this “dilapidated” area will also begin to shine.<sup>195</sup>

Nevertheless, the location of Main Street Townhomes is suspect. The Durham Housing Authority had already constructed two other public housing developments, Oldham Towers and Liberty Street, directly adjacent to one another in northeast Durham. Why did the Housing Authority and the City Council feel it was necessary to locate yet another housing development, and more racial minorities, in the same vicinity? The fact that Housing and Urban Development also approved of this project, funding it through the Hope VI grant, is also interesting. HUD officials had expressed to members of the East Durham Citizens’ Association regarding the Hoover Road controversy in the 1960s that they would no longer support public housing development in the southeast quadrant

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<sup>192</sup> Ibid.

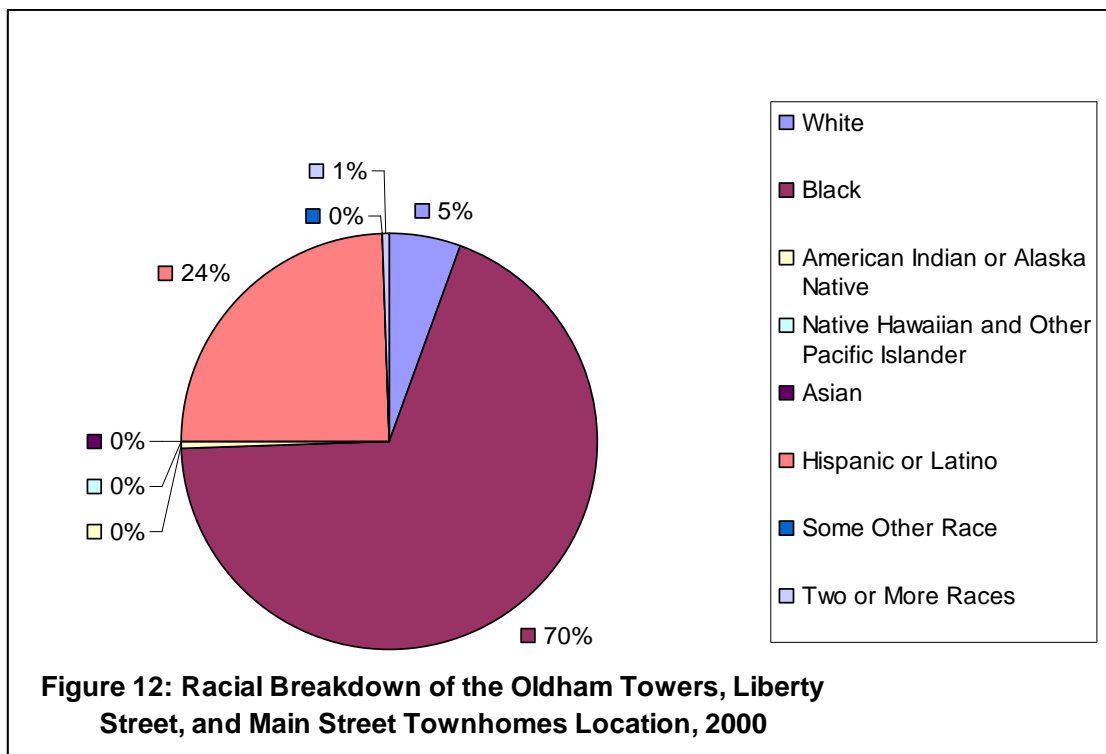
<sup>193</sup> Ibid: C3

<sup>194</sup> Ibid.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid: C1.

of the City.<sup>196</sup> Officials in Washington acknowledged that the Durham City Council and the Durham Housing Authority “were trying to create a totally black southeast quadrant” within Durham.<sup>197</sup>

Yet in this case, it also seems that the City and the Durham Housing Authority are still continuing their previous efforts to concentrate racial minorities in the northeast. Oldham Towers, Liberty Street, and Main Street Townhomes are all located in tract 11, which, according to the 2000 Census, is a majority black district (see Figure 12).<sup>198</sup>



<sup>196</sup> Hurder, and Beyle(ed.), *History of the Hoover Road Housing Project*. December 20, 1968, NCF Papers: IV-17.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid.

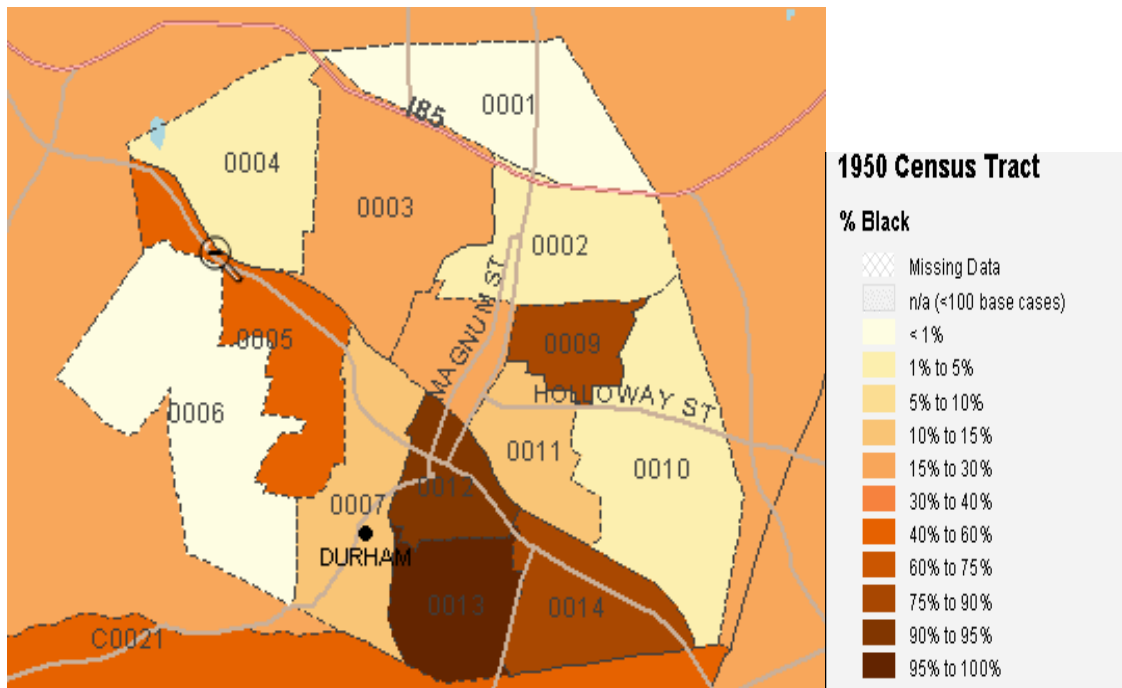
<sup>198</sup> Source: United States Census, 2000. Accessed through Social Explorer, Professional Edition: <http://www.socialexplorer.com/pub/reports/home.aspx> on March 25, 2010.

As Figure 12 illustrates, 69.06% of the individuals residing in this census tract are black, while only 5.42% of individuals are white.<sup>199</sup> The practice of continually constructing public housing units in predominantly black areas is reminiscent of the 1960s when the Durham Housing Authority and the City repeatedly attempted to create a racially homogenous area in the southeast. City Planners are no doubt aware of the white flight that results as the number of African Americans in an area increases. By concentrating blacks and other racial minorities in northeast central Durham, the Durham Housing Authority and the City are once again practicing a policy of containment. With the southeast already segregated, it seems that the Housing Authority and the City are working to reproduce this same effect in the adjacent region of northeast Durham.

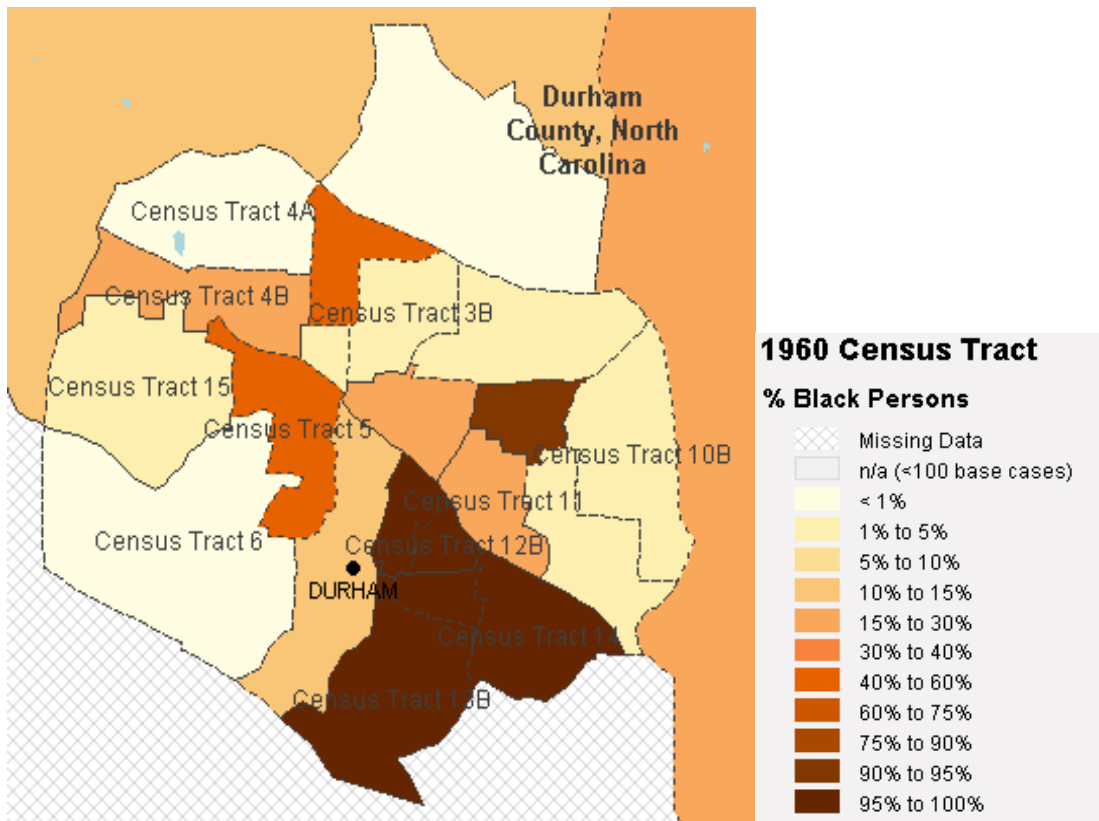
The maps generated below illustrate this trend visually by showing the percentage of the population that is black in each of Durham's respective tracts from 1950 to 2000. Moving from 1950 to 1990, the southeast section of the city becomes increasingly darker with each decade as the black population steadily increased. There is a slight amelioration of this trend in 2000, although it is not significant. A successive "darkening" can also be observed in northeast central Durham from 1950 to 2000.

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<sup>199</sup> Ibid.

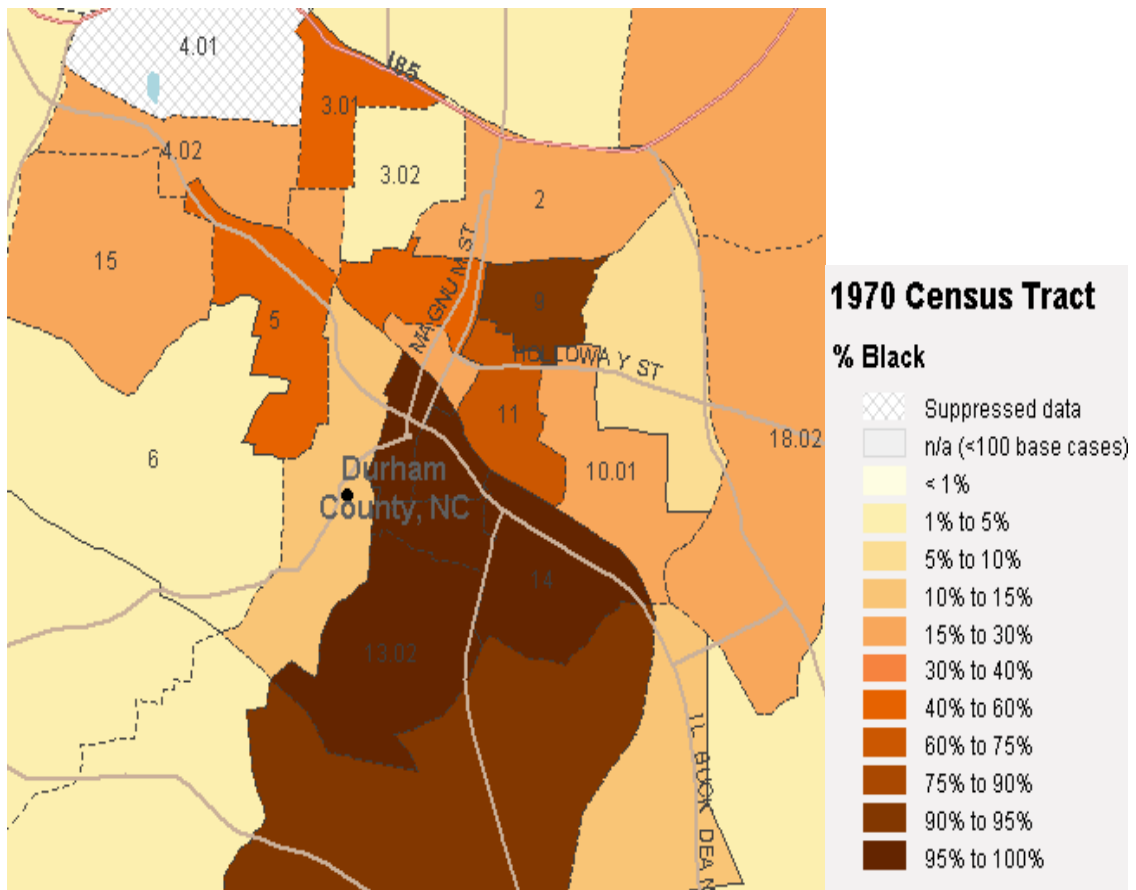


**Figure 13: Percentage of Black Population by Tract, 1950**

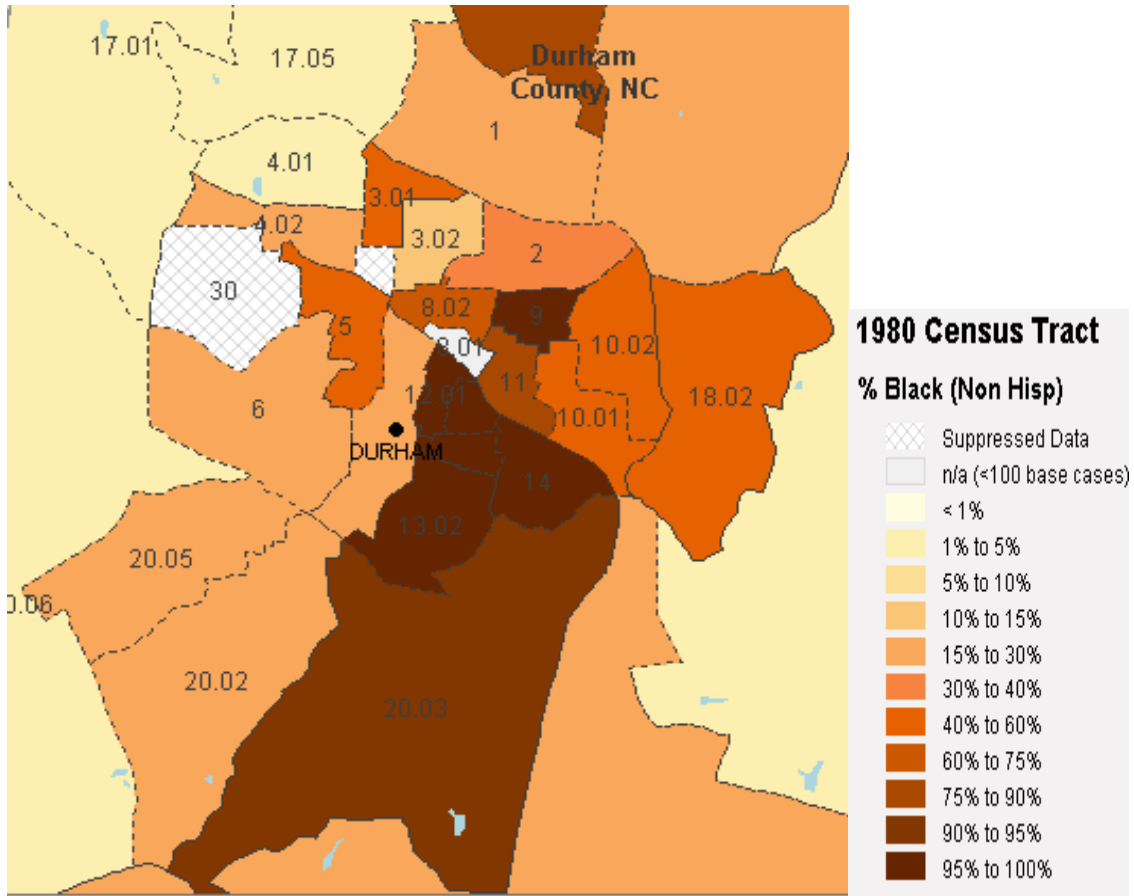


**Figure 14: Percentage of Black Population by Tract, 1960**

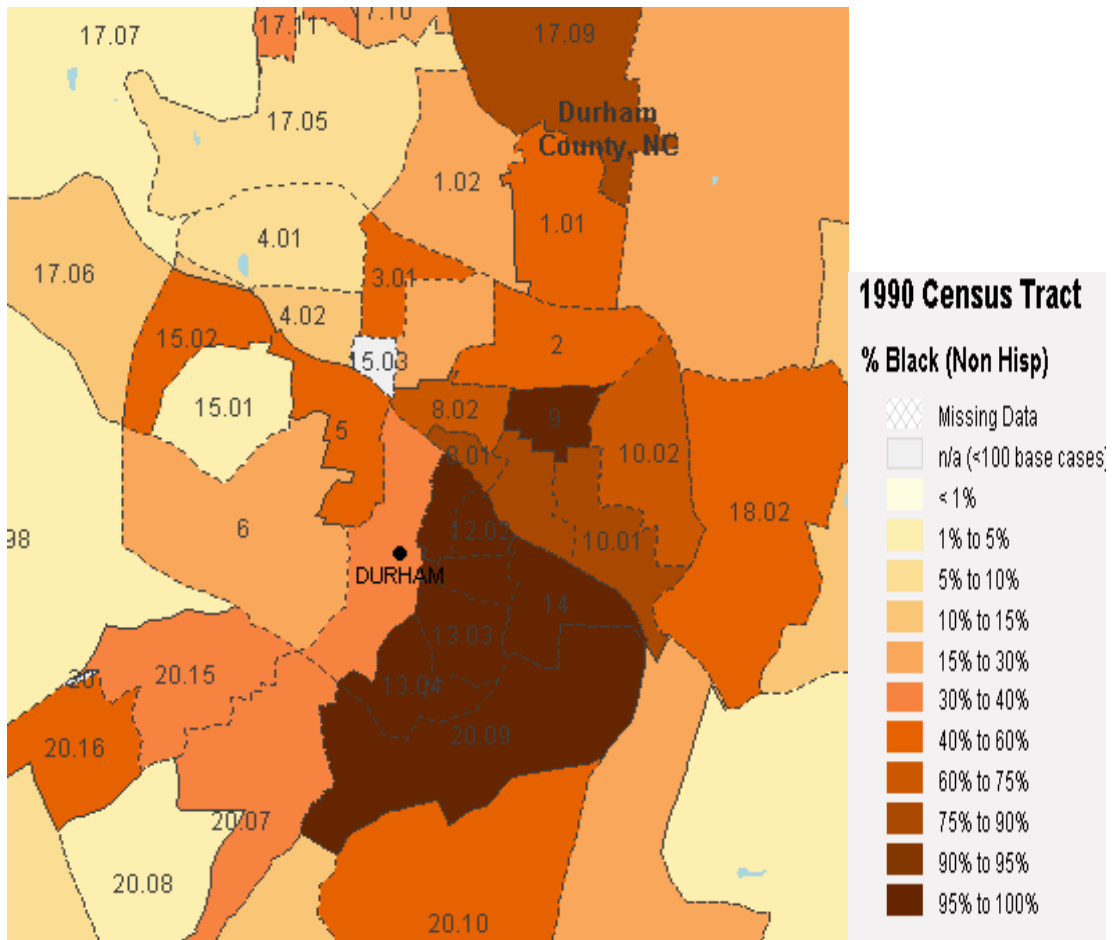




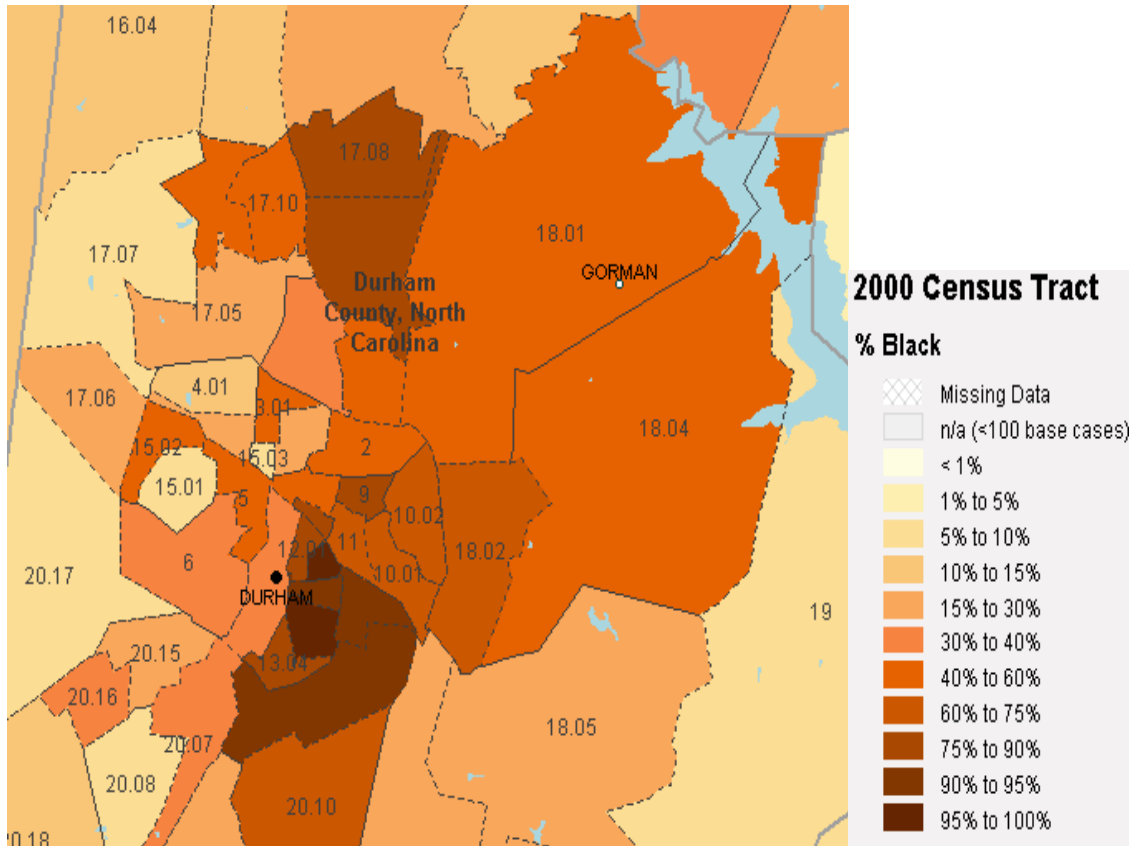
**Figure 15: Percentage of Black Population by Tract, 1970**



**Figure 16: Percentage of Black Population by Tract, 1980**



**Figure 17: Percentage of Black Population by Tract, 1990**



**Figure 18: Percentage of Black Population by Tract, 2000**

If segregation was what the Durham City Council and the Durham Housing Authority had in mind in the southeast, as Mrs. Martin of the East Durham Citizens' Association argued in the 1960s, then they were certainly successful. The increasing black population in northeast central Durham, and the effort to concentrate public housing in this area through the construction of Liberty Street Apartments, Oldham Towers and recently,

Main Street Townhomes, is indicative of another move to segregate blacks, and in an area that is directly adjacent to the Southeast.

## Conclusion

Housing is not an abstract social and political problem, but an extension of a man's personality. If the Negro has to identify with a rat-infested tenement, his sense of personal inadequacy and inferiority, already aggravated by job discrimination and other forms of humiliation, is reinforced by the physical reality around him. If his home is clean and decent and even in some way beautiful, his sense of self is stronger. A house is a concrete symbol of what the person is worth.<sup>1</sup>

- Kenneth B. Clark, *Dark Ghetto*

Massey and Denton argue that racial residential segregation has become the “forgotten factor” in theories of racial inequality, and Durham is no exception.<sup>2</sup> Since the protest movements in the 1960s, segregation has ceased to be a part of the local political discourse. Perhaps it is assumed that the passage of the Fair Housing Act in 1968 made racial discrimination in housing a thing of the past. Current patterns of segregation are not the result of continued policies that serve this end but rather, are the remnants of a past that cannot now be undone. Yet Durham remains a segregated city.

The dissimilarity index of black white segregation, which “gives the percentage of blacks who would have to move to achieve an “even” residential pattern – one where every neighborhood replicates the racial composition of the city,” indicates that Durham is very segregated.<sup>3</sup> When interpreting indices of dissimilarity, a score under 30 is low, one between 30 and 60 is moderate, and a result over 60 indicates a high degree of

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<sup>1</sup> Clark, *Dark Ghetto*, 1989: 32-33.

<sup>2</sup> Massey and Denton, *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass*, 1993: 3.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid: 20.

segregation.<sup>4</sup> Durham ranges on the high end of the moderate scale, bordering on being highly segregated with a score of 57.8.<sup>5</sup>

Segregation in Durham is certainly not caused by public housing alone. Nonetheless, the history of public housing in this city, in conjunction with current practices of locating public housing in areas that are racially segregated, is a significant contributing factor. By placing public housing in segregated locations, not only does the number of racial minorities entering these areas increase, but the number of whites leaving the location also rises. In this way, it is possible to contain the African American population within well defined areas of a city, specifically in southeast Durham and increasingly, in the Northeast quadrant of the City. Containing blacks through public housing recreates the slums that policies of urban renewal intended to eradicate. The segregation of African Americans, and other racial minorities, in the projects produces a second ghetto where blacks live in almost complete isolation. Indeed, they are left within the confines of institutionally created black reservations and as such, become members of their own “city within a city.”

Black segregation has a dehumanizing effect, both for mainstream society and for blacks and other racial minorities who are segregated. Segregation removes blacks from the body politic by thwarting their ability to form coalitions. Moreover, because racial minorities are often segregated within public housing projects that are for the most part dilapidated, this signals to the individual living there that he or she is also, in some way, in a condition of disrepair. Housing is more than shelter. As Clark expresses, it is a

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> William H. Frey and Dowell Myers' Analysis of [Census 2000](#); and the [Social Science Data Analysis Network \(SSDAN\)](#). <[http://www.censuscope.org/us/s37/p19000/chart\\_dissimilarity.html](http://www.censuscope.org/us/s37/p19000/chart_dissimilarity.html)> Accessed on [March 1](#), 2010.

“symbol of what the person is worth.”<sup>6</sup> It signifies, moreover, what society deems a person’s worth to be. So long as black segregation persists in our cities, we signal to those who are forced into isolation that they are not true members of political society. So long as an American apartheid is condoned in public housing, our political society is not truly a society at all.

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<sup>6</sup> Clark, *Dark Ghetto*, 1989: 33.



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