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Black Power in River City: African American Community Activism in Louisville, Kentucky, 1967-1970

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BLACK POWER IN RIVER CITY:
AFRICAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY ACTIVISM
IN LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY, 1967-1970

THESIS

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Master of Art in the
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By
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Lexington, Kentucky

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ABSTRACT OF THESIS

BLACK POWER IN RIVER CITY: AFRICAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY ACTIVISM IN LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY, 1967-1970

The impact of Black Power rhetoric and ideology in Louisville, Kentucky in 1967-1970 is explored. The role of Black Power in shaping the discourse of Louisville's black counter-public and civil rights counter-public is analyzed in the context of the 1967 open housing demonstrations, the May, 1968 riot, and the trial of the 'Black Six'. Black Power played a vital role in community organizing and in displays of black national and cultural pride. It actively challenged the city's mystique of Southern white paternalism embraced by the mayoral administration of Kenneth Schmied. Despite that administration's allegations, Black power rhetoric in the West End did not play a significant role in the riot that left two African American youth dead.

KEYWORD: Louisville, Black Power, Civil Rights, Black Six, Race Riot

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Chapter I: Conflicting Narratives

What was Black Power? What role did it play in the civil rights movement? The burgeoning scholarship of Black Power Studies, coined in 2006 by Peniel Joseph, continues to sort through the diverse factions, persons, and events that made up what has been termed the Black Power Movement. These initial questions become yet harder to answer when one considers the still settling dust of the Civil Rights Movement itself. Matters of blame and credit have yet to be definitively attributed. The prevailing narrative of the Civil Rights Movement takes place almost exclusively in the South, begins in 1954 with the *Brown vs. Board of Education* Supreme Court case that ruled separate but equal schooling unconstitutional, and culminates heroically with the Civil Rights Act of 1964 following the previous year's March on Washington.¹ Along with the 1965 Voting Rights Act, these two pieces of legislation ended the legality of Jim Crow segregation in the South in the major areas of public accommodations, education, and disenfranchisement for the South's African American population. In fact, according to President Lyndon Johnson in 1965, "the struggle has been all about the South."²

This version of civil rights has an obvious hero in Martin Luther King, Jr and obvious victories with King's "I Have a Dream" speech on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial in August 1963 and the aforementioned legislative victories over the next two years.³ "Black Power" rhetoric and ideology, first championed by Stokely Carmichael in 1966 and then carried violently forward by such radical groups as the Black Panther Party, stands as the tragic epilogue to this heroic narrative.⁴ Buying into this aggressively militant separatist movement, African Americans in northern cities rioted intermittently throughout the latter half of the decade.⁵

Indeed, riots did explode all across the country during that period. According to Nat Tillman, editor of the *Louisville Defender* newspaper, “1966 saw the emergence of a “Black Power” slogan that caused a gulf between various civil rights factions and precipitated an unrest among whites that culminated in a vast backlash.”⁶ Violence occurred in cities across the country following his April 4, 1968 assassination in Memphis. Louisville, Kentucky, though many there mourned the passing of the famous civil rights activist, did not erupt in violence. Sam Hawkins and Robert Sims, prominent Louisville activists and former SCLC (Southern Christian Leadership Conference) members who had been arrested and acquitted during the open housing demonstrations the previous autumn, released a statement warning that the then accepted policy of non-violent protest might be abandoned.⁷

This narrative obscures as much as it reveals, and in fact “these histories are as much the product of forgetting as remembering.”⁸ Stokely Carmichael, in defining the term “Black Power” in *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation*, wrote that “it is a growing sense of community. It is a growing realization that black Americans have a common bond not only among themselves, but with their African brothers.”⁹ “It is absolutely essential,” Carmichael continues, “that black people know [their] history, that they know their roots, and that they develop an awareness of their cultural heritage.”¹⁰

The narrative of the latter half of the sixties, and especially the period 1967-1970, is not one of tragedy. Nor does it denote the shift of the civil rights struggle from the South to the North, or from nonviolent protest to militant Black Power. What this period of civil rights saw, in Louisville and on the national scene, was the rise of the Black Power movement within, and alongside, the nonviolent southern wave of activism that

constitutes most common conceptions of the 'civil rights movement'. Locally, WECC (West End Community Coalition) and other activists embraced many facets of black power ideology. This did not lead to the marginalization of prominent white activists such as the Bradens as the organization they directed, the Southern Conference Educational Fund (SCEF), endorsed black power and supported local black power discourse, including militancy rhetorics.¹¹ The idea that Black Power promotes complete separatism, or that it seeks to rid "the civil rights struggle of white people" is something that "has been untrue from the beginning."¹²

Charles Kaiser, in *1968 in America*, wrote that "For a surprisingly large number of Americans, I think 1968 marked the end of hope...Violence was everywhere...in American streets two months later, when 65,000 troops were needed to quell riots in 130 cities after Martin Luther King Jr.'s killing. "Go home and get a gun" was Stokely Carmichael's advice".¹³ While 1968 may indeed have been a violent and explosive year, with war, civil unrest, and high-profile assassinations blanketing the national consciousness, 1968 was neither the advent of the Black Power movement, nor necessarily more violent because of the Black Power movement. In fact, according to Robert Self in *American Babylon*, "in their conflation of black power, black nationalism, black radicalism, and violent urban rebellions and riots, they leave us bereft of the meaningful distinctions that provide a guide through a tangled and tumultuous period."¹⁴

The civil rights movement in the late 1960's, and the rise of Black Power in the national consciousness, is not best characterized by the violence endemic of the period, but by the shift of the focus of the movement from the federal to the local level. Black Power's self-determinism and community activism, along with a distrust of local

government and frustration over what was seen by many as the obstruction of earlier civil rights victories, came to establish a power relationship and purpose different than that in the south in the early 1960's.¹⁵

During this period, Louisville, Kentucky was immune neither to Black Power nor to violence. Detailing the struggles of civil rights activists, both African Americans and whites, in Louisville demonstrates men and women struggling for equality in their city using a variety of means. As many civil rights groups and leaders embraced Black Power, they used it to continue the struggles of the Long Civil Rights Movement. The issues they fought for and their methods in doing so blur issues of Northern and Southern Civil Rights, the role and causes of urban violence, and forces reconsideration of established narratives of the movement as a whole. The situation in Louisville leading up to the riots in May 1968, along with the events of the trial of the "Black Six", serve to illustrate these changing dynamics and the role of Black Power rhetoric in the reshaping of localized subversive publics. These publics worked to define ideas of African American community and equality against the prevailing narrative of civil rights tragedy and fragmentation during these turbulent years.

Robert Self's assertion then, that soft generalizations stand at the heart of misconceptions of the black power movement, is as equally true during the civil rights struggle in Louisville, Kentucky in the latter years of the 1960's as it is in any other city across the country. However, this form of misconception is more nefarious than mere mistake. Blaming Black Power rhetoric for escalations in violence burdens the African American community and civil rights advocates with responsibility for urban riots regardless of the actions and policies of white city governments. In Louisville, as in

Harlem in 1964 and other American cities, prevailing black power narratives worked rhetorically just as governments worked judicially to absolve themselves of blame. .¹⁶

Another primary facet of misunderstanding between white and black publics involves the rhetorical use of the geographic location of Louisville itself. Louisville was, and is, some combination of southern and northern city. Mark Ethridge, general manager from 1936-1963 of the *Louisville Courier-Journal* and the *Louisville Times*, the two major local papers, is known for stating flatly that “I believe the Negro gets a better break in Louisville than in any southern city.”¹⁷ This southern white paternalism framed the conception of civil rights progress in many cities across the south. Rather than representing pockets of substantive social change, this attitude typically served to further conservative and segregationist ends.¹⁸ This opinion, and identification, was long held by conservative whites in Louisville, especially among the progression of city administrations that sought to utilize such a rhetorical positioning to mollify the increasingly frustrated African American community.

Chapter II: Louisville's Publics

“Black people must redefine themselves, and only they can do that. Throughout this country, vast segments of the black communities are beginning to recognize the need to assert their own definitions, to reclaim their history, their culture; to create their own sense of community and togetherness.”- Kwame Ture and Charles V. Hamilton, Black Power: The Politics of Liberation¹⁹

To understand the civil rights movement in Louisville, Kentucky, particularly the movement in 1967-1970 as a time both of union and division, progress and defeat, one must understand the various local civil rights publics that came to dominate the civil rights discourse during this period. Rhetorical theory understands ‘publics’ to be particularly oriented subject positions which individuals place themselves either in relation to or as part of.²⁰ According to Jenny Rice in her work *Distant Publics*, “a publics approach looks to common patterns of everyday talk in order to uncover the ways people read themselves into these rhetorical acts...participants in these rhetorical scenes used public discourse to orient themselves to the scene of public crisis.”²¹ For the purposes of this study then, a public constitutes a group of individuals who have either explicitly or implicitly agreed to join in a certain discourse in a certain way involving a specific set of rhetorical tools.

The white administration of Louisville, before but especially following the election of Mayor Schmied, constituted one such public. Their agreed subject position on civil rights discourse was one of southern identification and comparison. Louisville’s white press continued to cultivate an image of Louisville as progressive in their

responsiveness to African American needs, an image that many African Americans found false.²² This was a subject position that historically, and especially as a player in the southern “heroic period of civil rights” in 1954-1965 showed Louisville in a favorably progressive light.²³

This myth of progress continued as, during the 1950’s and 1960’s, conditions for African Americans in Louisville worsened.²⁴ The rhetoric of progress, however, allowed white government officials to overlook outcries against institutional racism. Lyman Johnson, a prominent Louisville civil rights activist, spoke to this when he said “the white leaders would say, ‘Look how good we are to you. Now, don’t bug us too much.’”²⁵

Stokely Carmichael in *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation*, wrote that “black people must organize themselves without regard to that which is traditionally acceptable, precisely because the traditional approaches have failed.”²⁶ This conception of black power, as an outgrowth of ‘heroic civil rights’ instead of a perversion of it, remains as an important distinction in understanding the Louisville African American community’s response to Louisville government’s rhetorical positioning. Throughout the struggle for civil rights, Louisville activists would form, join, and reform a variety of rhetorical publics, all with their own subjective positions and acceptable tools of public discourse. Even the riot of May 1968 can be seen as a public utilizing a narrow set of rhetorical tools.

However, far from being completely distinct entities, these publics worked to constitute the rise of a self-conscious black public.²⁷ The actions of these groups and individuals, taken together as a black public, worked to create a discursive “counter public sphere” in which the white public of city government and the white press could be

effectively challenged.²⁸ The primary public that worked to create this counter public sphere was the black press. Louisville's iteration of the black press was *The Louisville Defender* newspaper, headed by Frank L. Stanley, Sr., who spoke to the role of the press in an address to the national Insurance Association on July 24, 1968: "[The Negro Press] was almost exclusively printing news of, by, and for the Negro...He believes what he reads in the Negro press because he knows that it is meant for him The same can not be said of what he reads in other media."²⁹

It is important then to identify *The Louisville Defender* as not just one of a multitude of publics in which African Americans took part in advocating for civil rights. Through a privileged position within the community, the public of *The Louisville Defender* constituted a set of subject positions and rhetorical tools utilized to advocate their favored positions and outcomes. The privileged position of *The Louisville Defender* as a public allowed it a nearly unique, within the Louisville African American community, ability to foster cooperation between other publics and to shape the subject positions and rhetorical tools of those publics.

In a letter to Frank L. Stanley, Sr. from William O. Walker, Walker wrote that:

"In his search for status and identity, the Black man has had to rely on the Negro press for a voice and a medium of expression...

The Negro is not being fooled by this selfish, superficial motivation [by the white press]. He knows that when the hounds of segregation bark and, the mailed fist of racism scourges over our cities and nation, it is the Negro press that gives the leadership and furnished the impetus [sic] for unity that enables the persecuted and segregated Blacks to coalesce in their determination to survive and meet the challenge.

The Negro press will survive as long as Black people are an identifiable segment of the American population."³⁰

This attitude of Louisville's African American readers, turning to *The Louisville Defender* for news about the African American community in Louisville, both works to

demonstrate the public that Louisville's black press represented and the contribution of that public to the city's black public. In this role, *The Louisville Defender* fostered black cultural nationalism working to challenge the city's white cultural hegemony.³¹ Another way Frank L. Stanley and the *Defender* worked to shape a black public was to publish a special edition feature documenting the "Negro's Role in History".³² Frank L. Stanley, Sr. spoke to the reasoning for an issue such as this when he stated that "unawareness of where the Negro fits in the American society results in...many Negro youths have become frustrated, discouraged and bitter over their feeling of nobodyness."³³ This statement by Frank L. Stanley and its implicit need for such a self-awareness to be fostered within the African American community, echoes Harold Cruse in *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual*: "The rules of the power game meant that unless the American Negro taught himself the profound implications of his own revolutionary significance in America, it would never be taught to him by anybody else."³⁴

This creation of 'nobodyness' caused by the creation of a sense of placenessness and ahistoricism of African Americans, particularly the younger generation of African Americans living in increasingly segregated urban neighborhoods, creates alienation.³⁵ Overcoming this alienation requires cultural nationalism that creates the black public in which African Intellectuals "create [the] values by which his race is to struggle, live, and die."³⁶ Through his role as the editor of *The Louisville Defender*, Frank L. Stanley worked actively to create a black public to challenge this alienation and work for civil rights justice. In doing this, he also challenged other prominent African Americans in the community to "identify your company and yourself with the Negro revolution...by becoming directly involved in our struggle for human dignity."³⁷

This Louisville black public also contained many different civil rights groups that worked to further shape Louisville's civil rights movement. One major narrative of the prevailing city's public that these Louisville African Americans and white activists challenged was an association not with southern states and their antagonistic role towards southern civil rights movements, but with civil rights struggles in the north. Other Louisvillians argued simply that the divide between Louisville and the deep south was simply not as wide as the city's government and white intelligentsia claimed.³⁸ CORE's successful use of sit-ins in Louisville and other northern cities, a tactic usually identified with southern activists, as well as its prominent role in civil rights in the north and south in the early 1960's, blurs this ideological and methodological divide.³⁹ The identification of Louisville as either northern or southern held important rhetorical utility for both the city leadership and Louisville activists.

In what Peniel Joseph termed the 'heroic civil rights struggle', racism was a facet of southern society. That racism took the form of de jure segregation in public accommodations, public schools, and voting. The period from 1954 to 1965 saw these pillars of white supremacy dismantled, first by *Brown v. Board of Ed* that desegregated schools, then by a massive wave of non-violent marches, sit-ins, and boycotts that desegregated public accommodations, and finally by the Voting Rights Act of 1965 that removed many barriers to African Americans being able to cast ballots in the south. This is the narrative that prominent Louisville whites were tapping in to in considering Louisville a progressive southern city.⁴⁰

Louisville, in regards to these mainstays of Jim Crow, had indeed been progressive. Though segregation had taken place in the city, it had never been as strong

as it was in the Deep South. Sit-ins and protests in Louisville proved very effective in dismantling the city's segregations in public accommodations. African Americans had also rarely been kept from voting in the city. There were arrests and reported cases of violence during June 19, 1961 demonstrations in support of open accommodations in the city, with most violence originating with white 'spectators' throwing rocks and other items at the demonstrators. During the course of open accommodations negotiations, Louisville's mayor still declared "that Louisville 'has gone further in desegregation than in any other city, including St. Louis'" and as he called on downtown businesses to desegregate. The triumph of the heroic narrative seemed especially triumphant in relation to Louisville.⁴¹

However, this narrative fails to take into effect other types of de facto segregation not enforced by law that could be found in many cities in the south and in the north. In Louisville, as in many places in the south, school desegregation severely lagged behind the Supreme Court ruling striking down separation based on color. In this issue as well, following the 'wait and see' approach of the Kentucky Board of Education, Louisville's activists pointed to progress in cities in other border states as an indictment of Kentucky's lack of speedy implementation.⁴²

Another civil rights issue generally associated with the north was open housing and the segregation of African Americans into racially homogeneous 'neighborhoods'. Struggles over open housing had existed in northern cities since at least the 1920's, in many cases with African Americans attempting to integrate white neighborhoods meeting violent confrontation with white residents.⁴³ More recent cases in the 1950's such as the prominent case of the Braden's had also met with violent white resistance.⁴⁴ In the South,

under the guise of heroic civil rights narrative, these same issues were easier to ignore with the other, more explicitly apparent tenets of Jim Crow struck down. Without those other issues, “there was no dramatic or symbolic issue around which to mobilize the community.”⁴⁵ In the South after 1965, the struggle for civil rights was seen as won by many that had supported the movement of the previous decade.⁴⁶ In this sense, the rhetorical struggle over the geographic location of the city impacted disagreement not just over the rate of progress by the city’s leadership, but also which issues activists were mobilizing to combat. The changing and disparate conceptions of Louisville’s place in civil rights worked to shape the rhetorical tools and methods appropriated by the various dominant and subversive local publics.

Many of these publics took the form of community action groups. In the early 1960’s, many prominent groups were local chapters of national organizations. CORE (Congress of Racial Equality) founded a Louisville chapter in 1960 and remained an influential factor in local activism until the middle of the decade. The NAACP, of which Lyman Johnson served as a leader of the local branch, also played an active role in Louisville during this period.⁴⁷ In the latter half of the 1960’s, other, local groups took center stage in Louisville civil rights.

Primary among those was WECC (West End Community Council), which was organized to keep Louisville’s West End an integrated neighborhood, to “ward off an all-black neighborhood.”⁴⁸ Founded on May 22, 1963, by Anne Braden, by 1967 WECC was the major voice of Louisville civil rights, as well as the first Louisville civil rights organization to take upon itself the label of Black Power.⁴⁹ Though this shift in ideology initially caused Anne Braden and others to question whether they would be allowed to

continue working in the organization, WECC continued to be an integrated entity with white members in prominent leadership roles. Ruth Bryant describes the WECC philosophy as “We tried to have a black and a white co-chairman. Yeah, the West End Community Council was balck and white and largely people with college degrees.”⁵⁰ WECC’s Black Power positioning assumed a character much closer to cultural and political nationalism championed by Amiri Bakara and others than the more militant rhetoric of the Oakland Black Panthers or even the self-defense arguments of Robert F. Williams in *Negroes with Guns*.⁵¹ However, “they [WECC] would go as far as they had to go, within limits, of course, to accomplish a goal.”⁵²

As a member of WECC, Ruth Bryant served as chairman of the housing committee. From this position, she worked closely Mansir Tydings, executive director of the Louisville Human Relations Commission, another prominent Louisville organization, on the issue of open housing. She also served on the Mayor’s Advisory Committee on community development and the League of Women Voters. Ruth Bryant describes herself and her rapidly expanding involvement thusly:

“I think I was, the thing I was what you would call palatable, you see. I was articulate and I knew how to carry myself...Well, they thought that I was a nice lady but they didn’t know, you know, there was an iceberg that was going to be tipped, that would become volatile.”⁵³

Ruth Bryant, though she used her role on the Mayor’s Advisory Committee to forward information to the other committees, she quickly became disillusioned with the ability of, or interest in, city hall doing anything to better conditions in the West End.⁵⁴

In the creation of a black public in Louisville, these individuals and groups worked together to further civil rights causes. Individuals like Frank L. Stanley, Sr. in his role of as editor of *The Louisville Defender*, the West End Community Council and those

associated with it, including Anna Braden, Ruth Bryant, and Ken Phillips, who was co-chairman in the late 1960's, the Louisville Human Rights Commission, and other groups worked together in support of a variety of goals, employing different methodologies and rhetorics, to advance Louisville civil rights. In doing so, they called in other activists, such as Frank Stanley, Jr., Frank L. Stanley, Sr.'s son and a prominent activist, as well as Whitney Young, an activist in New York with ties to Louisville. Others, such as Robert Sims and Sam Hawkins, were "street activists" that rose to prominence through the housing demonstrations of 1967 and other civil rights initiatives.⁵⁵ This public formed despite the discouragement of whites, who sought to avoid "people being involved and aware and wanting to articulate demands."⁵⁶

The other important facet of publics is that their repertoire of rhetorical tools changed in response to their interaction with other publics. In this sense, the disparate Louisville civil rights publics reacted against each other, as well as outside forces, reforming and shifting in relation to the demands of the moment. Militancy and radicalism, when it became prominent in Louisville African American civil rights discourse, grew out of both the obstructionism of the Louisville government, especially in housing, and the changing national trends in civil rights rhetoric associated with the rise of the Black Power Movement.

While "local Black Power advocates focused on empowerment, pride, and community development", Blaine Hudson, leader of the Black Student Union and other younger activists adopted Black Power because of the "ineffectiveness of the old strategies" and their "worn out tools."⁵⁷ C.H. Parrish, and African American Sociologist and University of Louisville professor, while agreeing that activists under thirty tended to

be more militant, cited a poll by *The Courier Journal* that suggested African American acceptance of all attributes of white power rhetoric, especially an aversion to the term “Negro” as a method of identification, was overblown by white media listening to the voices of a small number of militants.⁵⁸ Maurice F. Rabb, Louisville resident and member of the national board of the NAACP however, recalled that “I was brought up in the theory that the proper way to address me would be to say “Negro” but it’s popular now to say “black,” it’s very popular to say “black” and not say “Negro.” As far as I’m concerned it doesn’t make any difference.”⁵⁹ In these rhetorical positionings, one begins to see a divide between Louisville’s African American middle class and its African American working class or poor. While many middle class African Americans worked diligently for civil rights in the city, in many cases their goals differed from the African American poor living in the increasingly segregated West End. Frank Moorman, an African American businessman, when asked about the demonstrations and picketing that occurred during the struggle for desegregated public accommodations in Louisville in the early 1960’s, stated that “no I didn’t [feel any urge to become involved], because I knew that would be the wrong thing for a businessman. Therefore, I stayed out of all of that.”⁶⁰ When asked again if he made any contributions to the demonstrations, Moorman initially restated that “no. We didn’t participate at all” and then that “I may have made some financial contributions. Small, you know, but that is about the only contribution that I could afford to make being in business, you know.”⁶¹ The relationship between Louisville’s civil rights movement and its African American middle class remained varied and complex throughout the decade.

Other prominent Louisville African Americans also sought to make it understood

that militant rhetoric was not pervasive through the African American and activist communities. Lyman Johnson, in a Letter to the Editor of *The Louisville Defender*, wrote that:

“It is certainly time for some Negroes to speak out and let the general community know that every black who opens his mouth does not necessarily speak for the totality of the non-white community...Certainly we deplore the ghetto, poverty, the present war, racism, and the like. But we also deplore violence, stupidity, and destruction as rational means of strategy.”⁶²

Even in decrying, and misrepresenting, role of Black Power in Louisville civil rights publics, Lyman Johnson’s repudiation asserts the significance of Black Power ideology in shaping the movement in Louisville in the late 1960’s. Also, in writing his statement as a letter to the editor of *The Louisville Defender*, Johnson affirms the existence and importance of a discursive black public sphere which allowed such rhetorical and ideological divisions within the community as shifting facets of an ever-evolving black public that constantly redefined itself.

Black power rhetoric certainly played a significant role in this evolution of the rhetorical tools employed by these publics within the black public sphere. The dominant narrative regarding the role of black power in civil rights, according to Peniel Joseph in his introduction to *Neighborhood Rebels* is one in which black power created “a white backlash, dooming interracial cooperation, and pushing” young black activists “into an unabated orgy of domestic violence in the name of revolution. Black power is most often seen as triggering the demise of the civil rights era.”⁶³ This narrative overlooks the role of black power in establishing and strengthening cultural and ethnic pride, self-determinism of communities, and localized community activism.⁶⁴ This focus on the community and the local as an aspect of black power did not burst onto the scene in the mid 1960’s, but

had instead always been a powerful and integral part of the civil rights movement, both in Louisville and in cities around the country, including New York, Detroit, Chicago, and Oakland.⁶⁵

However, the man of that focus on the local changed in the late 1960's. WECC, though they continued to work for open housing and an integrated West End, realized that "empowering the West End meant empowering blacks."⁶⁶ In presenting this shift in ideology, WECC acknowledged that efforts to halt the segregation of the West End had largely failed, and that the area now represented a primarily African American population. In this sense, "empowering blacks" meant empowering the communities WECC had always sought to empower. As such, acceptance of and use of Black Power rhetoric not so much a sharp shift in ideology or methods, but an outgrowth of the organization's founding principles. Though they continued to work for items beneficial to all West End residents, such as a health center, they also began programs focusing on African American heritage and cultural pride.⁶⁷

WECC supported a variety of organizations and initiatives under their new Black Power trajectory. Among these were the Louisville Welfare Rights Organization (LWRO), the Louisville Arts Workshop, and the Black Workers' Coalition (BWC). They also founded the Black Urban League of Kentucky (BULK) to, among other initiatives, work to organize African American West End youth. Charles Tachau, WECC's white co-chairman, recruited Sam Hawkins, Robert Sims, and Willie Coggins to head the organization in October 1967. Sam Hawkins and Robert Sims had previously worked together while working as members in SCLC (Southern Christian Leadership Council).⁶⁸

Aiming to "teach black people to think black", BULK prepared a black culture

curriculum which taught a variety of topics designed to create an African American self-conscious identity. Ruth Bryant stated that:

“It was black history, getting black history in the schools of Louisville and to this end the Black Unity League was organized to study black history, that’s all. And we had black history classes for all black students, from elementary through high school who wanted to come up to West End Community Council for the courses. We asked teachers and people who had done research in black history to come in and speak and it was nice.”⁶⁹

Working towards this end with support from WECC, as well as a grant from VISTA workers and from the Episcopal church in New York secured by Charles Tachau, BULK planned workshops to teach the material and worked to get the curriculum implemented in local schools, eventually securing an agreement from the Board of Education that led to limited success.⁷⁰ BULK also sponsored a “Soul Session” in early 1968, followed by a later and larger “Black is Beautiful Festival”. BULK also worked with university students to establish black student unions at state colleges and universities.⁷¹ These bread and butter issues focused on African American identity and self-concept embodied much of the Louisville iteration of the Black Power Movement.

Sylvia Mangahan, writing to *The Louisville Defender*, praised these efforts by BULK and others:

“I’m grateful to the ‘black power’ folks for doing something that I never got to do for myself. What has been going on in the schools for generations has not been merely whitewashing, but WASPwashing. And I was WASPwashed too, and hated every minute of the that aspect of school. Due to the efforts of the proponents of Black Culture education, it won’t be so easy to WASPwash everyone. This is a good effect aside from the intrinsic merits of Black Cultural education.”⁷²

BULK sought to foster the concept of a unified and aware black public, for “in order to alter social conditions, blacks first had to change the way they looked at themselves.”⁷³

As has been seen through their connection with WECC, BULK, and other organizations, the black church remained important in Louisville civil rights and constituted a variety of publics in and of themselves. Ordained ministers such as Charles Tachau, A.D. King, and others served prominently in civil rights organizations or worked closely with organization leaders. “Civil rights movement was born in the churches and this is where the bulk of the people are and this is the way we’re going to get things done is through church support,” Ruth Bryant recalls A.D. King telling her. Such religious figures continued to hold important positions in Louisville’s black public, and black churches continued to serve as meeting places and as centers of civil rights activity despite the rhetoric of Louisville’s publics became increasingly secular.

Meanwhile, Ken Clay, a staff member with the Community Action Commission (CAC), opened the Corner of Jazz. The store “displayed pictures of Malcolm X and Muhammad Ali, sold African clothes and art, and hosted discussions of black art and culture.”⁷⁴ WECC worked to persuade other businesses in the West End to hire African American workers and to make sure the rights of those workers were protected. Robert Cunningham worked to form a Black Worker’s organization.⁷⁵ The concerns of white officials that such efforts as the Corner of Jazz store, the black student unions, and the other actions of WECC and its allies were inherently separatist and militant were unfounded. However, the changing dynamics of the black public sphere did open room for expression within the African American community for doubt about the intentions of whites.

Ruth Bryant recalled that “I tried to involve some of the white women I had been friendly with...I found out they were going around saying I was an anarchist...wouldn’t

march for housing, you see, that kind of thing.”⁷⁶ Another West End resident wrote in to *The Louisville Defender* that “I have many whites ask “What can we do?” to help relieve or extirpate the racial tension, and I am wondering if they are really sincere or do they want to do just enough to pacify the Negro?”⁷⁷ Of course, African Americans in the increasingly segregated West End had seen and experienced enough discrimination and indifference by Louisville’s white population and administration to plant those seeds of doubt. Like the violence accused of it, Black Power neither fostered nor created such ideas in Louisville. Its efforts to create an African American identity and black public sphere, simply allowed for the expression of such sentiments.

In Louisville, narratives of black power played out in both the civil rights community and in the city leadership. *The Louisville Defender* opened their January 4 issue of the weekly paper with a 1966 retrospective in which was headlined with statement that “1966 Was Shaped by ‘Black Power’, ‘Backlash’.”⁷⁸ The author, Nat Tillman, goes on to describe the divide that black militancy and rhetorics of violence caused between different civil rights groups and eventually led to a white backlash during the 1966 elections.⁷⁹ This perceived backlash was limited to white voters for, despite the Voting Rights Act of 1965, African Americans that had formerly been denied the polls in the south and elsewhere still found their ability to vote threatened and impeded in a variety of ways.⁸⁰

This backlash was not limited to elections. As some civil rights publics around the country adopted Black Power affiliations, which carried with them the assumption of more violent and separatist rhetorical positions, white city administrations became more concerned with preventing the possibility of violence than with seeking cooperation in

advancing civil rights concerns.⁸¹ This is not to say that Louisville's government ever displayed more than a begrudging willingness to allow civil rights concessions within the city, but they, like other Southern cities that deemed themselves "progressive" in their treatment of race issues, had earlier made moves to maintain that veneer of progressivism.⁸² Of course, this was a progressivism repeatedly challenged by Louisville's civil rights publics. One of these was the Louisville Human Rights Commission, headed by Dr. Maurice Rabb, who challenged segregation in the police department. Speaking to Louisville's progressive image versus its reality, Rabb referenced an editorial in *The Louisville Defender*, stating " 'For too long Louisville has basked in the false glory of a desegregated police department when in actuality it was not true.'⁸³ In challenging segregation in the police force, Rabb, and the editorial he draws from, utilize non-Southern comparisons in order to further their civil rights agenda.⁸⁴

Ruth Bryant recalled that:

"The thing that I resented very deeply...was when they called the city officials...we called them in and when the women from Southwick called them they would come but they treated them with such disrespect. There was all the difference in the world between the way they them and the way they treated me; at least they kept their amenities with me but with them they were very rude with no respect at all."⁸⁵

Like in other civil rights struggles, activists were expected to work within very narrow and paternalistic channels of civility that narrowly circumscribed interaction between white city leaders and leaders within the African American community.⁸⁶ When asked whether Mayor Schmied was willing to work with her and other community leaders, Ruth Bryant responded, "No. He said that he liked friendly criticism...I don't know what he meant by friendly criticism but he didn't get friendly criticism, he got harsh criticism."⁸⁷

One area where Louisville African Americans in the latter years of the 1960's,

like other cities in the north, did not see significant mass backlash was from the white populace, though demonstrations in Louisville in the early part of the decade had met with white violence.⁸⁸ However, during the sit-ins in 1960, the one of the greatest impediment to their eventual success was still the arrest of more than six hundred protesters.⁸⁹ Pockets of protest existed, but not on the level of the white mobs typical of the southern movement during the early 1960's. In 1967 and 1968, the danger to civil rights protestors came not from the white populace, but from the police and other arms of the city administration.

Chapter III: Community Organizing for Open Housing

“The core problem within the ghetto is the vicious circle created by the lack of decent housing, decent jobs and adequate education. The failure of these three fundamental institutions to work has led to alienation of the ghetto from the rest of the urban area as well as to deep political rifts between the two communities...Urban renewal and highway clearance programs have forced black people more and more into congested pockets of the inner city.” – Kwame Ture and Charles V. Hamilton, Black Power: The Politics of Liberation⁹⁰

By 1967, Black Power, in its multiple iterations, misconceptions, and movements, was in full swing both as the dominant rhetoric of the continuing civil rights struggle and in a mainstream consciousness frightened by this ostensibly new and unapologetically aggressive African American rhetoric.⁹¹ Urban violence had become a more and more consistent part of the American landscape, with violence in Newark in July, set off after a police officer had severely beaten an African American man, only one in a string of ghetto uprisings.⁹² More violence followed the speeches and public appearances of Stokely Carmichael throughout 1966 and 1967. “For the moment,” Peniel Joseph writes in chronicling the history of the Black Power Movement, “Black Power remained a revolution whose spokesman gave voice to – rather than inspired – the outrage of the masses from below.”⁹³

Police brutality served as a visible sign of the continued oppression of white governments and their recalcitrance to grant the full extent of civil rights victories or to

address continued inequality. Nat Tillman, in his summary of 1966, wrote that:

“Community action programs designed to aid the poverty-affected from head-start programs to jobs for adult poor came into being and the poor could look for a brighter tomorrow. But alas, the stepped-up war in Viet Nam had its effect towards the end of 1966 and the poor found themselves again becoming victims, this time of a shortage of anti-poverty funds.”⁹⁴

This scenario played out in Louisville similarly to how it played out across the country.

Poverty programs that had shown great promise saw budgets cut drastically to fund the escalation of the Vietnam War, so that “the battle against poverty, against slums, against hunger and all the nightmarish things with which the poor are so acquainted, will have to wait until the end of the war.”⁹⁵ This limited the power of community programs, often maintained in cooperation with local activist groups and individuals, that had, according to Sugrue in *Sweet Land of Liberty*, “unleashed and legitimized an insurgent movement for “community control” that dovetailed with the growing demand for black power.”⁹⁶ This shift created “alternative institutions to unresponsive local governments.”⁹⁷ Coupled with the Black Power rhetoric of community nationalism, this localized the civil rights movement, refocusing it on disputes between local governments and activist groups, a vital change from the large organizations lobbying for federal change in the narrative of the heroic civil rights movement.

Many African Americans hoped for renewal of these programs, which had shown promise in their short period of operation, though no new federal funds appeared to “bring renewed vigor to the badly faltering ‘war on poverty’...Most harmful were the sharp cuts in the community action programs.”⁹⁸ Community programs continued, with urban leagues and other community groups working to bring youth training centers, adult education, and other hopeful enterprises to Louisville’s West End.⁹⁹ However, their continued operations were carried out largely without the federal funding that had been

previously contributed.

As the impact of federal assistance to these ‘alternative institutions’ in this local dynamic faded, the activist groups that had supported them and the local governments that they had challenged fell into direct confrontation, both in Louisville and elsewhere. In Louisville, WECC (West End Community Council), BULK (Black Unity League of Kentucky), and WLCM (West Louisville Cooperative Ministry) continued their work to further Louisville civil rights. Each of these groups constituted a public as previously defined, though there were multiple instances of these groups working either with each other or with groups from the state or national level to further individual causes.¹⁰⁰ Louisville’s black public continued to seek to evolve and redefine itself in the face of these new and continuing struggles. This growing confrontation between local community groups and Louisville’s city government over increasingly contentious issues such as open housing was not new to civil rights in the latter half of the decade. What was absent were the markers of success in public accommodations and landmark legislation that had served to shift focus from the continued socioeconomic inequality of large numbers of African Americans living in an increasingly segregated West End.

The vast majority of African Americans had been extremely enthusiastic for the possibility that President Lyndon Johnson’s ‘War on Poverty’ would create true change in poor urban communities. This enthusiasm was a hallmark of the heroic civil rights movements, as African Americans continually demonstrated real faith in the federal government to create positive social changes. In 1966, that support still stood firm, with three quarters of African Americans expressing faith that the federal government was “helpful”.¹⁰¹

Less than a third of northern African Americans held the same opinion of their local governments. Local governments, rightly, drew significant blame in continued housing segregation, high rates of minority poverty, and stalled civil rights initiatives such as improved integration or betterment of schools.¹⁰² Frank L. Stanley, Sr., editor and publisher of *The Louisville Defender*, in writing that “racial residential segregation is the single greatest economic and social cost to every municipality in America...Louisville must have freedom of residence if equality of opportunity in education, employment and recreation is permanently to endure,” also asserted that it was the obstructionism of city hall and the failure of Mayor Schmied to work with the Board of Aldermen that had hampered the passing of an adequate open housing ordinance.¹⁰³ He also cited the many local African American groups that had studied the issue and made recommendations that were ignored by city hall.¹⁰⁴

In its capacity as the local iteration of the black press and the major voice of Louisville’s black public, *The Louisville Defender* proved relentless in pushing for open housing. In allowing prominent members of community groups a forum in which to speak and in being a filter for the actions and words of said groups, *The Louisville Defender* played a significant role in the popularity of particular figures and positions. In particular, their antagonism of Mayor Kenneth Schmied and his office undoubtedly played a major role in shaping public opinion of the progress of open housing legislation in Louisville. In his editorial published May 30, 1968, several days after riots had wreaked havoc in the west end, editor Frank Stanley, Sr. wrote that “the inability of local negro leadership to contain the rioting in Louisville’s west-end rests upon the shoulders of mayor Kenneth Schmied...Day long efforts to reach the mayor failed. City Hall aides

told leaders of the negro community that the mayor was golfing and unavailable.”¹⁰⁵ Such words had far reaching effects in the African American community.

One other way in which *The Louisville Defender* worked to shape local rhetorics was a dedication to reporting the work of publics committed to the maintenance of Great Society social programs and other efforts to better the African American community both outside of and including direct action activism. The trend towards community activism did not dissipate with the decrease in federal funding. The Louisville and Jefferson County Action Commission’s budget was supplemented by local funding from the city and county governments and Boards of Education after federal funding to the program was cut by almost 30%. Despite these extra funds, the Commission was still forced to cut almost 63 professional employees and 30 non-professional employees, among them area program coordinators and community organizers.¹⁰⁶ This laying off if significant numbers of largely African American community workers was worrisome. Thanks in large part to the ‘war on poverty’ programs which were now seeing their funding slashed, and the lack of choice created by continued discrimination in employment, the government had become the largest employer of African Americans, and especially college-educated African Americans, in northern cities.¹⁰⁷ In Louisville and elsewhere, lack of funding marked the potential for dramatic reduction in the numbers of publicly employed African Americans that were employed on roads to both roles of political leadership and middle class status.¹⁰⁸

The Director of the Louisville Urban League, Charles Steele, stressed the importance of local anti-poverty programs and the need for their continued operation to creating change for Louisville’s poor.¹⁰⁹ Groups like the Louisville and Jefferson County

Human Rights Commission continued to work to create local change by working with the city government.¹¹⁰ The Committee on Open Housing, a conglomeration of other community groups on prominent individuals, also formed to develop recommendations for a robust open housing ordinance.¹¹¹ This committee represented one of several joint efforts by Louisville's activist publics to reach consensus views on important issues, particularly housing, though their efforts were not typically utilized by the city administration.

Still working with WECC as well as a variety of other groups, Ruth Bryant became one of the faces of Louisville civil rights across the country. Starting in 1963, she had begun to attend the Race Relations Institute at Fisk University, and continued her attendance every summer through 1967. During this period, she had also attended two national conferences for the National Committee against Discrimination and Housing (NCDH). It was there that she learned of the NCDH idea to use "model cities as a tool to secure open housing in cities...and Louisville was a model city."¹¹²

Working with the new Open Housing Committee, which met in A.D. King's Church and included many of Louisville's civil rights leaders including Charles Tachau of WECC, Bryant and the Committee decided to use the grants associated with NCDH's model cities for leverage against Louisville government. Ruth Bryant recalled that in the position state they drafted and sent to city hall "we said that if they did not give us open housing that they were not going to have a demonstration city project, a model city project here in this city."¹¹³ The Open Housing Committee continued to meet, contacting activists both in and outside Louisville. In her work outside of the city, Ruth Bryant had made contacts with people in Washington D.C. that the committee maintained contact

with, as well as with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development offices in Atlanta, continuing to work a multitude of angles, especially the city's lack of compliance with the model city guidelines. Despite the potential of the committee's efforts losing the city several million dollars, according to Ruth Bryant, they continued to work with very limited cooperation from city hall.¹¹⁴

Frank L. Stanley, Sr., in stressing the need for open housing laws, concluded with the unwished for alternative: "unrest and vivid disobedience on the part of both, the aggrieved and their enlightened sympathizers to the disgrace and shame of our city."¹¹⁵ While Black Power was an important and powerful rhetoric to African American activists in Louisville, it did not carry with it the explicit threat or promise of violence. Civil disobedience, when it came later that year, would be the result of frustration over the obstructionism of local government, such as Frank L. Stanley, Sr.'s assertion of the Mayor's repeated efforts to "intimidate or negatively influence the Board of Aldermen."¹¹⁶

However, later in the same issue, Whitney M. Young, Executive Director of the National Urban League, stated his wish that the president would issue an executive order that would accomplish the same safeties against housing discrimination that the defeated Civil Rights Act of 1966 would have had. Despite President Johnson's failure to issue the executive order in 1966, Young stated his continued hope that the new year would see such a presidential action.¹¹⁷ In cases like this, even as civil rights refocused to community efforts against local governments, many national organizations still sought to further civil rights causes and many African Americans still hoped for aid from a federal government whose attentiveness to domestic racial issues was quickly waning as other

issues pushed to the forefront.

Frank L. Stanley, Sr. echoed this dichotomy of opinion a week later when he, in his editorial “The Die is Cast”, again railed against Mayor Schmied’s weakening of the proposed open housing ordinance, as well as that of Judge Cook, a candidate for Kentucky governor, before concluding on the fear that local legislation was stymied unless the federal “high office itself” would force change.¹¹⁸ Federally mandated change and enforcement in housing and other issues remained continually absent or haphazardly implemented in the late 1960’s, in Louisville and across the north. Meanwhile, local distrusts continued to simmer.

In many cases what was later construed as black separatism, though that did exist, leading Nat Tillman to reference it amid other civil rights concerns in 1966, was in large part this growing community nationalism, assisted by now defunded federal programs and fueled by distrust of the city government. African Americans sought to control their own destinies and protect their own communities, while continuing the struggle to increase opportunities within those communities. An arena where this divide between black power’s community nationalism and more traditional conceptions of civil rights gains was the changing attitudes of African Americans in Louisville towards school desegregation.

Lyman Johnson had maintained a prominent status among civil rights activists and Louisville’s African American community since his lawsuit in 1949 had desegregated the University of Kentucky and his subsequent years serving as a Louisville school teacher at Central (Colored) High School in downtown Louisville, from the 1930’s through the 1960’s. He also served as an assistant principal in Jefferson County

schools as well as being instrumental in securing equal pay for African American teachers in the district and in district efforts at school desegregation in the 1970's.¹¹⁹ Despite Lyman Johnson's groundbreaking judicial victory in 1949, and the subsequent civil rights victory as the University of Louisville was fully desegregated two years later in 1951, initial efforts by the Louisville School Board to follow suit with the city's public schools did not meet with the same success. However, despite continued de facto segregation, Jefferson County Public Schools were applauded in the wake of the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Ed* ruling met with success and national praise as their efforts resulted in peaceful change instead of violence.¹²⁰

Such apparent initial successes in school integration, while at least symbolically substantial, did not solve the major racial disparities between schools in the district. A variety of solutions were proposed over the next decade, culminating in the early 1970's with the idea for busing to generate a desired racial makeup of all schools in the city. Efforts at "racial balancing" before then involved redrawing neighborhood lines or separating students along criteria other than geographic lines so as to maintain an even racial distribution across schools. Neville Tucker, an African American lawyer and civil rights advocate as well as member of the Louisville School Board and proponent of "racial balancing", resigned from the school board following the negative response of African American parents to his ideas on May 27, 1968, the same night violence erupted in the Parkland neighborhood of Louisville.¹²¹

This rejection of Neville Tucker's redistricting plan represented a break from the accepted narrative of school desegregation. While it by no means constituted an example of unanimous dissent, it does demonstrate the increased importance of the African

American community in Louisville. The African American community remained committed to bettering the educational opportunities of its children, and a majority still saw an end to de facto school segregation as the means to that end. However, many Louisville groups and individuals worked towards alternative means towards improving education, often with community-based initiatives that largely bypassed large scale changes in school populations. “The concept of community control has now rooted itself in the consciousness of many black people,” Stokely Carmichael had written a year earlier in *Black Power*.¹²² However, many activists and African American parents continued to work for school integration because “they knew the only way to get quality education was to have white pupils in the school.”¹²³

The primary reason that an end to enforced school segregation over a decade before had done little to alleviate the segregated nature of the county’s and the city’s public schools was the issue of informally segregated housing in Louisville. Among a myriad of other issues, this created largely racially homogenous neighborhoods that, though assigned to a desegregated school, still maintained widely disparate racial makeups across different areas of the district.

These homogenous schools and neighborhoods were not unchanging areas within the West End with longstanding racial identities. During the late 1950’s and 1960’s, these neighborhoods were actually becoming more predominantly African American, even in West End neighborhoods that had been historically interracial. These new African American neighborhoods, now more isolated from identification with the city as whole, turned more heavily towards community activism through the construction of new community identities.

This community identity and burgeoning black public, fostered by WECC, BULK, and others, and the organization's associated activism targeted the housing practices that had forced so many African Americans into largely poor, subpar West End housing. Black power rhetoric allowed a means for African Americans to come together and retain agency and, though centered on the community, was by no means an acquiescence to the effects of Urban Renewal projects or unfair housing practices.

Lyman Johnson would later describe the 1968 riots by saying that "a racial disturbance that we had in 1968 was really a continuation of the agitation for better housing, better accommodations for the blacks."¹²⁴ The struggle for open housing was not simply a matter of where one would live, or what part of town one's house would be in, but the quality of the conditions in which African Americans lived. Hence Lyman Johnson's emphasis on the betterment of housing accommodations for African Americans. A.D. Williams King, in an editorial to *The Louisville Defender*, added the factor that housing prices and rental rates in the West End were higher than in the rest of the city despite the higher quality of the properties in other areas of the Louisville, a factor common in urban ghettos across the north. According to A.D. King, retail stores, insurance rates, and other items also suffered from West End markups.¹²⁵ The West End remained overcrowded, overwhelmingly poor, yet overpriced and underdeveloped, conditions which grew worse throughout the decade. Open housing represented the possibility of escape from the "increasing decay and bitterness of our cities" and "the inhuman conditions of ghetto life."¹²⁶

Struggle by WECC and others for open housing laws became one of the major factors in civil rights after 1964 and one which incurred its most violent opposition as an

increasing frustrated black public struggled against an increasingly conservative city hall. Open housing discussions began in earnest in Louisville, propelled by the successful passage in 1963 of an open accommodation ordinance that promised unsegregated access to public places for African Americans.¹²⁷ Coupled with this movement was growing agitation by African Americans and civil rights organizations over ongoing Urban Renewal projects, whose design was ostensibly intended to foster economic growth in dying city centers but which, as seen in John Anderson's 1976 assessment, usually "in practice meant razing poor and minority neighborhoods and replacing them with large construction projects".¹²⁸

Whitney Young agreed with both of these analyses of such projects when he stated in *The Louisville Defender* his fears that if open housing legislation was not passed, then "our cities are doomed and will perpetuate Negro ghettos ringed by a 'white noose' of suburbs, harmful to both human values and the ideals of democratic life."¹²⁹

Lyman Johnson remembers the urban renewal projects as operating thusly:

"Originally there were many Negroes living up around Tenth and Chestnut, Tenth, Ninth, say Twelfth, down to Fifteenth. Ah, say between, ah, Walnut and Broadway. Now urban renewal went through and that section and tore down the old shacks and houses the blacks had been living in -- were just completely demolished, with no provisions made for the people who inhabited that area...when they were uprooted, the lending agencies would not provide, and the real estate agencies would not provide homes outside of the West End...So these Negroes had to crowd into the places that were being vacated by the whites who were taking what we commonly call 'white flight'...Now the riot that took place in 1968 was a result of the resentment of being forced into one section..."¹³⁰

As becomes clear from Lyman's Johnson's statement, though the city guaranteed relocation, poor African Americans typically found themselves moved into overcrowded slums. This process dramatically increased the segregation of neighborhoods in Louisville as more and more African Americans became concentrated in West End

neighborhoods, which already suffered from poor housing conditions. The “Louisville Survey West: Final Report”, completed in April 1977 by the Preservation Alliance of Louisville and Jefferson County, Inc., discussed this “massive exchange of property” from white homeowners in the west end and African Americans moving into the area, forced out of other Louisville areas by urban renewal programs which, at their height, the report claims, left a huge swath of emptied but undeveloped land between the primarily African American west end and the west of Louisville. “It should be remembered”, the report states amid a description of these conditions, “that the racial exchange in western Louisville was primarily a replacement of white middle-class families by black middle-class families. There was no significant change in median family income, house value, or educational attainment”.¹³¹ This version of the housing changes in Louisville in the 1960’s, though depicting the ‘white flight’ and urban renewal programs that defined it, paints little of Johnson’s picture of overcrowding and resentment.

These practices, especially the tendency of many white residents of the West End to leave rather than remain in integrated neighborhoods, led to other housing problems in the city, such as the issue of “blockbusting”. This practice involved the selling of housing in a predominantly white neighborhood to African Americans, then either encouraging or supporting the desires of the other white homeowners in the area to sell at a loss so as to “escape” the neighborhood, then reselling to more African Americans at inflated prices for maximum profits. WECC was formed with the primary goal being to combat this practice and to “ ‘help the west end become an integrated community’.”¹³² WECC attacked the problem of an increasingly segregated residential Louisville in two ways, by sponsoring get-acquainted block meetings, neighborhood clubs, and arts events in various

neighborhoods to promote the idea of integrated communities, and by lobbying the city government for open housing legislation in all of Louisville. Mayor William O. Cowger, Louisville's mayor until 1965, and his administration, though speaking publicly of support for integrated housing in the early 1960's, had backed only voluntary initiatives without any provisions for punishment of segregationist practices.

Describing the effect of Urban Renewal on Louisville's African American neighborhoods, John Anderson of the University of Louisville wrote that:

“By 1950 spatially separate black communities evolved, each having distinctive nomenclature and identity. Exchange of property from white to black residents led to expansion and by 1970 black housing areas were consolidated into a more continuous zone of urban space... By 1970, the black residential areas consisted of nearly 78,000 people, including over ninety percent of the city's black residents.”¹³³

In addition to working for open housing initiatives, Louisville's civil rights organizations sought to combat real estate practices that furthered segregation in the West End. The Kentucky Commission on Human Rights even dispersed pamphlets to homeowners in the area entitled “Fair Housing: Myth vs. Fact”, both to encourage open housing practices and to combat panic selling and other blockbusting techniques by allaying the racial concerns of Louisville's white residents.¹³⁴

Mayor Schmied, Cowger's successor, spoke of the possibility of strengthening the voluntary code of ethics for housing practices during his election campaign in the autumn of 1965, but he continued his opposition to any inclusion in the legislation of jail time or other punishment for persons caught in discriminatory housing practices. In 1966 he had opposed stronger laws proposed by WECC, the NAACP, and KCLC (Kentucky Christian Leadership Conference), a new organization ran by A.D. King, Martin Luther King's brother.¹³⁵ His office had pressured the Board of Aldermen as to the wording of the

proposed ordinance and recommended public hearings that, to African Americans in the west end whose voices had been previously ignored, seemed little more than continued obstruction, while others feared that the hearings would actually weaken the law's already questionable methods of enforcement.¹³⁶ Representatives of the Louisville Commission on Human Rights met with Mayor Schmied and the Board of Aldermen on multiple occasions in attempts to circumvent just such weakenings occurring.¹³⁷

The Louisville Defender continued its weekly commentary on the struggles of the mayor's office, the Board of Aldermen, and civil rights leaders to create a strong housing ordinance that would discourage housing discrimination. This process involved as many seeming backward steps as it did progress, which mainly concentrated around the specifics of enforcement of the law and penalties for breaking it. Coupled with this, Stanley also spoke out against efforts to revise the existing city public accommodations law, removing the potential of a \$100 fine for offenders and weakening provisions in other significant ways. Stanley, speaking both as *The Louisville Defender* and as a major voice in the African American community, wrote explicitly that he is "opposed to the revision of the Louisville public accommodations ordinance... 'Never a backward step!'"¹³⁸

As the debate over specifics of the proposed open housing legislation dragged on through 1966 and into early 1967, civil rights leaders in the community began to threaten demonstrations and protests, and that if the issue were not handled soon "restiveness and overt action" in the form of marches and demonstrations such as the city had seen several years earlier would be inevitable.¹³⁹ John Anderson's later study of the housing segregation in Louisville asserted that the fact that "greater portions of black residents are living in black majority areas...are closely associated with many of the urban problems

and issues of our time.”¹⁴⁰ It was this, rather than any Black Power rhetoric influencing Louisville’s black public, that fed the threats of open demonstrations and the growing unrest within the West End during the heightening open housing debates of 1967.

Demonstrating the cooperation between civil rights publics with differing professed ideologies and the continued, though lessened, impact of national organizations on local movements, SCLC (Southern Christian Leadership Conference) sent “technicians” to begin organizing local groups for a massive protest campaign to force the city government’s hand.¹⁴¹ When SCLC officials did arrive in Louisville, first they met with city officials to ascertain details of the city’s ongoing housing strife.¹⁴² One of the local SCLC organizers was Robert Sims, who, along with Sam Hawkins, would be appointed to head BULK later in 1967 and would become major players the following year in the riots and the ensuing “Black Six” trial.

The first of Mayor Schmied’s open public forums for Louisville citizens to voice their opinion on open housing legislation took place February 2, 1967.¹⁴³ The fiery rhetoric and hostility displayed at the public hearing, held at Southern High School in the Okolona area of southern Jefferson County, an area almost exclusively white, displayed the stringent opposition faced by the WECC and other groups pushing for integrated housing laws.¹⁴⁴ Coupled with this rising opposition was rising support from other Louisville groups and individuals, many of them white and living in primarily white areas. What was then seen by city hall as public outcry against the housing law led to exactly what civil rights groups and leaders had feared, another proposed housing ordinance, at least as marred by weakness as the first. Despite the combined efforts the vast majority of Louisville’s civil rights advocating publics, utilizing the majority of

rhetorical tools then on the table, the new ordinance lacked all fines or jail times as penalties for violations of the proposed law. In addition, individual homeowners were exempted from coverage by the new law.¹⁴⁵

In a speech delivered by J. Mansir Tydings, executive director of the Louisville Human Relations Commission, in Muncie, Indiana, and reprinted in its entirety in *The Louisville Defender*, Tydings stated that civil rights progress had stalled in recent years because “cries of ‘black power’, ‘insurrection’, ‘lawlessness’ have characterized what the press has labeled the ‘white backlash’...Negro organizations became disunited.”¹⁴⁶ He went on to state that “many of the disruptions of the past summer took place in areas where tensions is [sic] strong and hope is weak; where unemployment is high, and drop-outs numerous.”¹⁴⁷ Despite this, Tydings spoke out against the militarism of groups such as the Black Panthers, citing seven unnamed civil rights leaders who recently spoke out against ‘black power’ and violence. In concluding, he urged cooperation and for the direction of a moderate civil rights leadership.¹⁴⁸

Coming as it did on the heels of the weakened housing law in Louisville and severe increase in tensions and discontent over the city government’s cooperation with civil rights leadership to make progress, it is hard to construe Tydings comments as anything other than directed at discontent Louisville publics who continued to threaten city hall with the possibility of protests. Along with Lyman Johnson and other individuals, it also demonstrates the continued diversity in civil rights rhetoric in 1967. Multiple iterations of Black Power ideology were at play in Louisville’s black public, in some cases by individuals who repudiated Black Power as they understood it on the national level.

Though Harry S. McAlpin, along with other moderate members of Louisville's black public, spoke out publicly against street demonstrations over housing law, claiming that such forms of protest should only be utilized after a complete breakdown in communication between city hall and civil rights groups, something that had not yet happened. These moderate leaders such as McAlpin, Bishop Tucker, and others, had previously spoken out against the efficacy of street demonstrations, being instead content to, "let the Schmied administration set the pace" of progress.¹⁴⁹ Other African Americans and civil rights activists were far from willing to allow the city administration that authority. WECC, along with five representatives of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), began to plan peaceful protests.¹⁵⁰ Demonstrations began on March 7, 1967, with spokesmen for the Committee on Open Housing claiming demonstrations would continue until an acceptable open housing law met all their conditions.¹⁵¹

The marches and demonstrations grew throughout the week, aided by representatives from the NAACP regional conference which was meeting in Louisville at the time. On March 14, during a sit-in at a Board of Aldermen meeting, police cleared out the protesters by force, leading at least one protester to claim that he was stomped on by an over-aggressive policeman. After that event, and accusations of police violence at a rally the following day, the mayor called on local activists to repudiate their outside allies in the sake of peace in the city. This led SCLC and Martin Luther King Jr. to intensify their focus on Louisville and its stalled open housing legislation.

As demonstrations increased, so did claims of violence and police brutalization. Ruth Bryant recalls that Hosea Williams, one of the chief SCLC aides, herself, and others went marching one night and "there was an encounter with the police...his pants were all

torn and his shorts were showing and he was going to get those police...It becomes very subjective and very personal when a person is physically attacked.”¹⁵² In another incident during the demonstrations, Martin Luther King, Jr. and his brother, A.D. King, were driving when a brick was thrown at them through the car’s open window. “That night at St. James Methodist Church over there at Twenty-Sixth and Oak, he [Martin Luther King, Jr.] held that rock in his hand and he was madder than I’d ever seen him before,” Ruth Bryant recalled.¹⁵³ In August 1967, Sims and Hawkins were arrested for arson despite multiple witnesses vouching for the two activists’ presence at an open housing demonstration blocks away. Unable to pay their unreasonably high bail, the two remained in jail until they were acquitted in October. This and other events led Charles Tachau to warn that West End residents, “both black and white, were losing faith in the police.”¹⁵⁴

Other cities and counties in Kentucky did take actions to pass fair housing ordinances, including Covington, which was followed shortly by all of Kenton County, and Fayette County. In Louisville, an election of aldermen in November led to an overwhelming Democratic majority on the Board of Aldermen. The new Board passed an opening housing ordinance on December 13, 1967. The following March, the state of Kentucky passed a fair housing act as well.¹⁵⁵

However, like school segregation in Louisville, legislation did not ensure equality. The Council on Religion and Race opened and ran a Housing Information Service to assist African Americans find housing in Louisville. In 1969, the State Commission on Human Rights opened Housing Opportunity Centers to work towards the same purpose. Despite all of this, segregated housing in Louisville continued to be a problem that manifested itself in multiple ways, working to shape the power dynamics

and the ideologies of the Louisville populace, both black and white, in ways beyond the arena of housing.¹⁵⁶ “With ‘white flight’ and the riots of the late 1960’s in the black residential areas of western Louisville, the barren urban renewal landscape became a new physical and psychological dividing line between the ‘Black West End’ and the rest of Louisville”.¹⁵⁷ This separation, both physical and mental, would lead directly into the movements that became the 1968 riots.

Chapter IV: Days of Rage and Riot

“Blame should not be placed on “outside agitators” or on “Communist influence” or on advocates of Black Power. That dynamite was placed there by white racism and it was ignited by white racist indifference and unwillingness to act justly.” - Kwame Ture and Charles V. Hamilton, Black Power: The Politics of Liberation¹⁵⁸

Under the prevailing narrative of civil rights, in the south and nationally, Black Power rhetoric led to expressions of rage by what Lyman Johnson termed the “more irrational--emotional young people”. These youth took out their resentment against all things white in the form of uncontrolled, unproductive, and illogical riots.¹⁵⁹ This narrative is wrong.

In 1977, Lyman Johnson, despite also blaming irrational African American youth, pointed to inequality in housing as the major cause of the 1968 riots, and it becomes easy to see why he would refer to the violence as a continuation of the previous year’s protests. The Schmied administration’s response to the demonstrations, continual unwillingness to support substantive housing reform, and numerous stories of police antagonism and brutality against demonstrators all served to increase the frustrations and anger within the West End. But the housing demonstrations themselves were a piece of the far larger puzzle, the culmination of years of community and individual efforts to gain equality in housing. However, such gains were met with consistent opposition from racist individuals and groups in Louisville as well as an administration in the mayor’s office under Mayor Schmied more interested in maintaining order than in eliciting change. These were characteristics of open housing movements across the north, and the 1967

demonstrations in Louisville had been noteworthy largely because of their lack of any significant violence. “Violence showed its ugly head throughout 1966,” wrote Nat Tillman of *The Louisville Defender* in January 1967, “Riots occurred in Chicago, New York, St. Louis, and other northern cities as the bitterness generated by ghetto living boiled over.”¹⁶⁰

A. Phillip Randolph, testifying before a Senate subcommittee in January 1967, drew similar conclusions, stating that “whites who want to hold Negroes back” and “Negroes who distrust white people” were on a collision course towards violence.¹⁶¹ Randolph blamed the reductions in the ‘war on poverty’ for the coming trouble, citing the removal of the “little carrot” of those social programs as the cause, which alleviated African Americans leaders of the blame.¹⁶² Martin Luther King, Jr., who also testified, agreed, citing a “failure to pursue justice” on the part of white governments as the reason.¹⁶³

Despite the hard fought gains that Louisville activists had won through SCLC’s non-violent methods and techniques, frustration for clearer progress continued to mount. For many, and especially the younger generation of activists and African Americans growing up and operating in an increasingly segregated and poverty stricken West End, the desire, and impatience, for more fully realized progress was growing. The civil unrest of 1967 and the housing demonstrations had given these bitter elements of unrest a new conception of their own power, of the relationship of their needs to the city leadership’s goals and concerns. Black Power, the black press, and the continued work of local activists continued to foster a black public. In the early days of her involvement with WECC and the Mayor’s Advisory Committee, Ruth Bryant was angered to see African

Americans from poor neighborhoods in the West End not only being disrespected by city officials, but not even realizing that they were being disrespected.¹⁶⁴ Public demonstrations in 1967 and previously had already served as a statement by civil rights organizations that the city government did not have complete control over the interactions between the two groups. The same awareness, accompanied by frustration and anger, was building among the rest of Louisville's African American community. Two major events in spring 1968, one on the national stage and one in Louisville, would continue to exacerbate these already strained dynamics.

In 1967, the Louisville civil rights movement had grown increasingly localized, with Louisville civil rights groups working with or against city government to create change for the city's African American population, primarily in the arena of open housing. Even as prominent local publics sought to repudiate the racial violence that had erupted in many northern cities over the previous months, local activists utilized the tools of Black Power to foster community nationalism within the West End and across Louisville.¹⁶⁵ Black Power rhetoric, coupled with President Johnson's flagging Great Society programs and their focus on local community-based initiatives, served to refocus civil rights at the local level, putting these localized publics in direct confrontation with local governments that Louisville African Americans had long ago learned to distrust, and whose continued stalling, recalcitrance, and sometimes brutal repression of protests, organizations, and individuals fueled continued resentment.

Reduced funding for the federal programs that had worked to create this dynamic exacerbated the tensions between the different groups, with civil rights publics adapting new rhetorical positions and tools against an increasingly paranoid and obstructionist city

government. Responding to media-fed fears of Black Power's militant and violent tendencies, city governments across the country moved from what they had claimed to be working relationships with civil rights groups advocating Black Power positions, to even more conservative positioning privileging "maintaining order" over continued progress. In this, stalled civil rights progress by local governments in Louisville and other cities was, at least in part, fueled by an increasingly vocal "white backlash" against potentially enforced segregation in housing and education. White and media misconceptions of black power formed erroneous narratives, asserting that "blacks wanted too much, too fast" and recoiling "at the angry militancy of black power."¹⁶⁶

The struggle for effectively enforced open housing legislation in Louisville demonstrated the changing approaches and willingness to reconstruct their rhetoric and methodologies that typified the city's African American activist publics. As demonstrations over housing stretched over 1967, it was the city's response that became more militant, and accusations of police violence more common. Frustration over those issues would explode in violence in May of 1968, as frustration and tension boiled over to engulf the west end. Other factors would play significant roles, the activity of outside agitators, the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., and continued housing disputes all among them. However, this localization of the civil rights movement, pitting local groups against local governments, and the frustrations resulting from a lack of progress in this dynamic, lie at the heart of Louisville's outbreak of racial violence.

On May 7, 1968, police officer Michael Clifford pulled over Charles Thomas, who was an African American schoolteacher and friends with Manfred Reid, who witnessed Thomas being questioned by the police and stopped. Officer Clifford

demanded that Reid step back and pushed him in the chest. According to Tracy E. K'Meyer, "Reid recalled that, when he knocked the officer's hand away, 'He grabbed me and started hitting me in the face. He hit me once with his open hand and then with his fist.' Reid was arrested for breach of peace and assault and battery. No charges were brought against Thomas."¹⁶⁷ In his interview with David Cline in 2006, Reid stated that:

"We walked over and we asked what was wrong and whatever it was, it was a conversation between him and the police. The one officer told us, 'Niggers, get out of the street.' We said, 'Come on, man.' So he pushed me and so I said, 'Okay, cool, I'll get out of the street.' So I started backing up out of the street and he brings out this rubber club and hits me and wow, man. At twenty-three, I just fired on him, I hit him, but he had no reason to do that...I was charged with assault and battery of a police officer and disorderly conduct, and he [Thomas] was charged with a bank robbery, but he hadn't robbed no bank."¹⁶⁸

Clifford was suspended awaiting a hearing after the immediate outcry from multiple prominent civil rights groups. Both city hall and the initial police review upheld the suspension despite calls for Clifford's reinstatement by the Fraternal Order of Police. On May 20, several hundred members of the SCLC Poor People's Campaign moved through the city and brief confrontations with police flared up but did not escalate. Tensions between the many groups in Louisville grew past even the high levels that housing issues had achieved, levels which Nat Tillman of the *Louisville Defender*, the city's African American newspaper, considered tinderbox conditions.¹⁶⁹ Reid believed that, in light of the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr, only a little over a week earlier, "everybody was looking for an issue or some reason by which they could express their discontent."¹⁷⁰

On May 23, a Civil Service Board convened to consider the suspension and possible reinstatement of Officer Clifford. Reid, though represented at the original hearing, was not present at the Civil Services Board hearing, nor were any witnesses for

him called to testify, though witnesses for Clifford were called. The Board then ruled to suspend Clifford for fifteen days without pay and recommended his transfer from the district, but reinstated him to the Louisville Police Department.¹⁷¹ Within a week, the Louisville Fraternal Order of Police voted to compensate Clifford for all lost pay during his suspension. This led some African American members of the police force to protest against this “cracker racism”, leading an African American police officer to tell the *Louisville Defender* that this compensation is “a racial action led by known Klansmen in the police department. There’s more race hate on the police force than there is outside”.¹⁷²

The Black Unity League of Kentucky, (BULK) and its leaders, particularly Sam Hawkins and Robert Sims, called for protests to speak out against the reinstatement of Clifford to the Louisville police force.¹⁷³ One of the outside activists invited to town by Ruth Bryant and slated to speak at the rally was a man named James Cortez, from Washington D.C., who was affiliated with SNCC, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, and one of SNCC’s main members, Stokely Carmichael. Ruth Bryant recalls meeting Cortez in Washington D. C.:

“And then this guy was attracted, I guess, to the people who were at the table and he came over and introduced himself as Stokely’s assistant, James Cortez. And then he said he had worked in the prison rights movement or something like that, and he showed us pictures – he had a briefcase, well, an attaché case – and he brought out all these pictures of him and Stokely and things they had done together. He sounded like he was hard enough and crude enough to come to Louisville and speak to our black history classes where we were getting young blacks together to listen to, to study black history.”¹⁷⁴

Recalling a conversation with Robert Sims, Ruth Bryant asked Cortez to come to Louisville to speak, hoping that his magnetic personality and “crude” sensibilities would allow him to connect with some of the West End youth which the BULK members with

college degrees or the ordained ministers with whom BULK and WECC worked had struggled to reach. She asked Sam Hawkins, who would be in Washington a week later for his work with the black history courses of the “National Sunday School Association or something”, to go by SNCC headquarters and “check Cortez out.” Despite promises that both Cortez and Carmichael would come to Louisville to speak, by Saturday only Cortez had shown up, though he assured Bryant and others that Carmichael would arrive on Monday.¹⁷⁵ Lyman Johnson, who would speak against Cortez at his trial in 1970, called Cortez “a person of ill repute” even though “the people didn’t know it, and he came here to agitate and to ride into some sort of publicity perhaps, I guess he figured he’d get a little fame out of leading a big riot against whitey”.¹⁷⁶

To assume that the motives of James Cortez were synonymous with the motives of BULK, WECC or any of the local activists would be an unfounded assertion. More doubt would be spread among Louisville’s black public in the following months as the rumors spread that Cortez was an FBI informant.¹⁷⁷ Turning the short amount of time between his arrival in Louisville on Saturday May 25 and his arrest the following Saturday on June 1, Cortez rose to a level of influence in Louisville because he tapped into the frustration and anger of African American youth and “so several of the more irrational--emotional young people jumped on his coat tail and well, the thing got out of hand”¹⁷⁸ as Lyman Johnson explained. Cortez exerted influence in different ways, both wielding the power of the people he represented, in his role as the local representative of SNCC and Stokely Carmichael, and as himself attempting to raise his own reputation by utilizing the strength of his personality and his fiery oratory.¹⁷⁹

Local civil rights activists met at the Zion Baptist Church on 22nd and Walnut to

discuss possible responses to the reinstatement of Clifford. According to Lyman Johnson, who was there, James Cortez rose at the end of the meeting and, without being called on to speak, assumed the floor of the event while raising loud calls to violence and to “get up and do something to get rid of whitey”.¹⁸⁰ Johnson asked permission to speak against what he perceived as Cortez’s dangerous vitriol, and, after being initially denied by the presiding officer, was allowed to speak at the urging of the crowd. Johnson, in his recollection, told the crowd that violence should be avoided and that the city’s problems could be solved without violence. To this, Johnson remembers very clearly, Cortez responded “Ladies and gentlemen, you can’t get rid of the whitey until you get rid of that half black nigger”.¹⁸¹ Johnson continued urging peace and patience. Despite the violence of the previous year against open housing demonstrators, Johnson and others still viewed the civil rights movement in Louisville as peaceful.¹⁸² No prominent Louisville organizations or leaders had expressly come out in support of self-defense or any of the more violent rhetoric espoused by Cortez.

The next day, representatives of several West End groups attempted to meet with Mayor Schmied to discuss their objections to Clifford’s reinstatement. According to the *Courier Journal*, the primary Louisville newspaper, the “Negro delegation...unsuccessfully protested the reinstatement of Patrolman Michael Clifford in a meeting with Mayor Schmied earlier in the day. However, *Civil Rights in the Gateway to the South: Louisville, Kentucky, 1945-1980*, drawing mostly from the papers of James Braden, asserts that the mayor’s assistant, Schrader Miller, did not allow them to meet with the mayor at all, and sent them away, branding them troublemakers.

BULK held its public rally against Clifford’s reinstatement on Monday evening,

May 27, 1968, at the corner of 28th and Greenwood. The decision to hold the rally outdoors was made for several reasons. First and foremost, the organizers of the rally operated on the belief in Cortez's promise that Stokely Carmichael was coming to speak, a matter of great excitement to many in the West End, and no church would hold the high number of people gathering for such an event. Secondly, "you can get people like pimps and prostitutes who would never go in a church but they would come out to 28th and Greenwood to hear him [Carmichael]," Ruth Bryant recalled being told.¹⁸³

Several businesses owned by African Americans, including an African bookstore and the Corner of Jazz, were clustered near the intersection.¹⁸⁴ This area, according to Lyman Johnson was "a nice little business community, business shopping area".¹⁸⁵ A little further down 28th street, near Dumesnil, there were more businesses, to Johnson's recollection, that were owned primarily by white residents, "and the resentment was against anything white, which I say was not altogether rational...when the riots came into being and irrational elements under the leadership of ah, I won't say leadership, under the urging and prompting of a fellow who came in town called...Cortez".¹⁸⁶

Speakers, including James Cortez, stood on the hood of a car to address the crowd that had gathered for the rally. Ruth Bryant was in the African bookstore with her children and other middle class members of the community, waiting to hear Carmichael speak. She recalled that "I hadn't seen Cortez, I hadn't seen Sam [Hawkins], hadn't seen anybody, hadn't been able to get in touch with anybody all day."¹⁸⁷ Carl Braden remembered the police parked in alleyways during the rally, "not visible to people in the street, but maybe to those on the rooftops."¹⁸⁸

Cortez, along with Charles X, an activist and member of the Louisville Nation of

Islam mosque, urged the African Americans present to “assert black control over the community”.¹⁸⁹ Sims and Hawkins spoke and, though neither specifically endorsed violence, both gave voice to their frustration with current racial conditions in the city and their process of dealing with them, with Hawkins lamenting that times had changed since he had marched with Martin Luther King Jr. earlier in the decade. Various speakers urged the crowd to assert black control over their community and other calls to realize Black Power within the West End.¹⁹⁰

Manfred Reid recalled that:

“When I heard about the rally, I went down there and stood at a distance and watched for a few minutes and they were just speaking, so I went home. I’ve never really been in a protest. I really don’t believe in it...I lived about eight or ten blocks from there – so then I just went home. When the police got there, I wasn’t there.”¹⁹¹

Perhaps the most stimulating moment in the speeches occurred after Reid left, as the speeches were concluding. Cortez claimed that Stokely Carmichael “was in a plane circling the city and white officials were refusing to let it land”.¹⁹² Ruth Bryant and her family were walking back to the car across the street “—well, he [Carmichael] didn’t come and Cortez said that Eastern Airlines wouldn’t let the plane land because Mr. Carmichael was in it...well, you know, it sounded strange but, who knows.”¹⁹³ Cortez told the crowd to return once Carmichael finally arrived. However, according to Eastern Airlines officials, Carmichael was not and had never been scheduled to speak in the city and though two flights had been kept from landing that day due to mechanical difficulties, Carmichael had not been listed on either of the incoming flights.¹⁹⁴ Also, according to Sandy Leight, a Carmichael aide and former SNCC employee in Washington D.C. who was reached by *The Courier Journal* later in the week, Stokely

Carmichael had never had plans to appear in Louisville at all. Despite this, Cortez's claim about Carmichael served to excite the crowd and the apparent obstruction by whites of his landing and appearance served to anger them.

According to witnesses, the meeting broke up peacefully, despite Sims' closing declaration that future cases of police brutality would be met by "smoke signals" in the West End.¹⁹⁵ Eugene Robinson, newly appointed Associate Director of the city-county Human Relations Commission, reported that the speeches given by Sims, Hawkins, Cortez and another had not been instrumental in arousing passions. He cited the arrival of a bus in the intersection, though police had ostensibly stopped traffic going into the intersection. The bus, according to Robinson, drive through the crowded intersection slowly but without braking or using its horn. The youths that had been hanging out on the rooftops of the businesses surrounding the intersection threw rocks at the bus and, according to Robinson, "that put the throwing idea in their mind."¹⁹⁶

It was into the dispersing crowd that three police cars arrived, pulling into the intersection, though other reports state that only one police cruiser pulled into the intersection.¹⁹⁷ *The Courier Journal's* story on the events stated that "Sims climbed down from the car roof, and the crowd began to disperse. But one of a group of about 25 Negro youths perched atop the roof of the House of Champs Poolroom...threw a bottle into the street, and the disturbance began."¹⁹⁸ According to Bud Dorsey, a freelance photographer who was there, the cruisers had come to help the intersection clear out:

"About 30 young kids- about 11 or 12 years old- started throwing bottles and bricks at the police. Right away the crowd started spreading out to get out of the way...That's what really started the whole thing off-the police coming into the intersection and starting to clear it out...And they (the police) didn't fire back. They just stood there".¹⁹⁹

Dorsey and another, female witness even referenced two carloads of African Americans driving through the intersection and firing weapons in the air without the police taking action. Dorsey left to take his daughter home, but when he returned to the intersection of 28th and Greenwood “it seemed like half the police department was there. The teenagers were throwing stones through the windows of stores. The first place they hit was the pawn shop – Lucky Morris pawn shop – then the grocery, and then the cleaners.”²⁰⁰ Another witness claimed that “the boys were going in [to the stores]...About 80 boys were breaking in...There must have been about 25 police cars there.”²⁰¹ Rioters spread out in all directions as police left to return with more reinforcements. With reinforcements, 500 firemen were called into the area and, by 11:30 that night, about four hours after the rally had begun and three after it had ended, patrol cars were ordered to accompany all firemen after two were hit with “missiles”.²⁰²

Starting at the rally at 28th and Greenwood, police tracked disturbances across the West End. *The Courier Journal*, in their coverage, termed the disturbances “outbreaks of violence and looting” beginning at about 8:34 with the first police call and continuing throughout the night.²⁰³ Within an hour of the first police call, police had reported at least two cars set on fire and multiple reports of break-ins, looting, and destroyed property.²⁰⁴ Another *Courier Journal* article states that two police cruisers were damaged in the initial barrage of rocks and bottles at 28th and Greenwood and that one of those cars was turned over and set on fire as well. By 9:30 PM, Mayor Schmied had requested the state National Guard be deployed in the city to assist in peace-keeping, a request granted by Governor Louie B. Nunn. In addition, all county police and off-duty Louisville police were mobilized.²⁰⁵

Ruth Bryant recalled the events at 28th and Greenwood:

“I looked around and Sam [Hawkins] was running with us. There were young kids running and I saw fire and somebody said the cleaners was on fire and people were literally running down the railroad tracks trying to get as far away...I don't know how the place caught on fire but to have gone in the place was to break the law and to take stuff out was stealing; therefore they were looters and I remembered what I had seen in Washington, you know, the devastation that can really come.”²⁰⁶

Bryant, her family, and Hawkins made it to Hawkin's mother's house, and from there Ruth Bryant was taken home by a BULK secretary. It was there that she was told by her son that Cortez was outside, she let him in and was told that “I have a sawed-off shotgun in the closet up there at Stouffer's and if they start, you know, tracing anything to me they're going to find that gun and I'm going to be in trouble.”²⁰⁷ Ruth Bryant and her husband allowed Cortez to stay there for three days and also went up to his hotel room at Stouffer's and got the shotgun, with Bryant sneaking it out of the hotel under her dress.²⁰⁸

The following day, with over a thousand National Guard troops and large numbers of police patrolling the West End, violence broke out again. Describing the violence as “worse than it was (Monday) night,” Guardsmen and police fought hit and run tactics and scattered “action” in a wide area through the heart of the West End. City hall imposed a curfew at 8 PM. Police arrested four men suspected of sniping at police early Wednesday morning. Police blocked off Fourth Street from Broadway to the Ohio River, a run of several city blocks, where window breaking and looting had occurred Monday night. Louisville Police Chief C.J. Hyde claimed that “violators of any laws” would be arrested and police would not “disregard violations of any kind...By this method and a show of force at an early stage, we have been able to control the situation to the extent that there is no large gathering of any kind.”²⁰⁹

Despite Chief Hyde's claims of control and order, by Wednesday morning at least seventeen people had been injured during the previous days' unrest. Four injured persons at General Hospital were treated for gunshot wounds. All four were residents of the West End and at least two of the four had been shot by the police. Mrs. Minnie Chenault, one of those being treated had, according to witnesses, been shot by police "while standing at the window of her apartment, by a policeman outside chasing a group of youths."²¹⁰

By 11 PM Tuesday night over a hundred Louisville residents had been arrested, mostly for "breach of peace," which for many involved violation of the 8 PM curfew.²¹¹ Of those arrested, seven were protesters who had been part of a group of around fifty mostly white protesters picketing outside city hall for removal of the National Guard from the West End and amnesty for those that had been arrested during the two days of unrest. The protesters, led by a priest and minister, had been protesting since their attempt to enter city hall had been blocked by police at about 3:20 that afternoon. At 8:05, five minutes after the beginning of the curfew, seven of the protesters were arrested and charged with breach of peace and parading without a permit. The success the group did have was the arrival of a representative of Martin Perley, the executive director of the City-County Human Relations Commission. Speaking on behalf of the mayor, Perley heard their demands, while maintaining that Schmied could not meet with the group because he "doesn't feel anything can be accomplished in an atmosphere of violence."²¹² Entering city hall with the group's demands, Perley returned with Schmied's answer, that "as soon as the disorders have quieted down, he'll be glad to talk to you and all other groups...you can help by trying to calm things in the West End."²¹³ It was after the protesters continued picketing following their discussion with Perley that they were

warned about violation of the curfew and arrested after it had passed.

Also Tuesday afternoon, A.D. King spoke in a press conference where he laid the blame for the continued violence on Mayor Schmied, stating that the Mayor “flatly refused to go into the West End to help bring disorder to an end.” He continued, stating that “we are opposed to violence in any form. It can be brought to an end if he comes to talk. This is not a time for a politician to be arrogant. We have pleaded and begged for them to come here.”²¹⁴

Anne Braden, one of the founding members of WECC and an official of the Southern Conference Education Fund (SCEF), repudiated the Mayor’s message and in part echoed A.D. King’s words in stating that “we can’t ask the black people to be non-violent until white people start being non-violent.”²¹⁵ She also claimed that “the National Guard may keep the area quiet, but the people will get madder and madder, and then you’re going to have a permanent police state to keep things quiet.”²¹⁶

Blame for the violence and unrest was a contentious issue, with Louisville’s black public and city hall each laying blame at the feet of the other. Beyond that, the riot in the West End was rhetorically constructed by different publics in a variety of ways as well. While one might not consider their coverage wholly unfair, a consideration of a story from *The Courier Journal* illustrates the point. Titled “Official Tells of Escape From Besieged Bank”, Kathleen Arnold continually utilizes allusions and word choice that paints a very specific picture of the destruction of property that occurred at the Bank of Louisville branch on 28th and Dumesnil Tuesday. She writes that, after an initial confrontation with a small group of five youths, twenty or thirty youths began throwing bricks and concrete blocks through the bank’s windows. “While the 12 employees

huddled in the back room, the manager waited in front, a loaded gun hidden behind his back, watching the youths break down the windows.”²¹⁷ Shortly after the heroic image cut by the manager’s lone stand against the vandals, the police arrived, and “like the U.S. cavalry, they came just in time.”²¹⁸ Kathleen Arnold adds another quote from the manager, writing “thank gosh a squad of police with shotguns walked up to the bank and stayed while I finished up. We got into the car and got the hell out of there,” concluding with the manager’s assertion that “right now I’m washing my hands of the area.”²¹⁹ The romantic vision of the police as U.S. cavalry, the inclusion of only the single viewpoint of the bank manager, and the identification of the youths with the entire area serve to alienate readers from the West End and from the rioters. While space is given on the same page to voices from the other side, the only ones whose words were included are A.D. King and Anne Braden, both much more palatable civil rights leaders than others who espoused more militant or angry Black Power rhetoric.

The first West End voices other than King and Braden were heard the next page over, where Paul M. Branzburg interviewed youth who had been at the rally two nights earlier. Though all three youth interviewed give slightly different accounts of the chain of events leading up to the escalation of violence, they agree that a few children and teenagers throwing bottles and the unnecessary police response contributed to the riot. One accused the police that arrived first of getting out of their cruiser with pistols drawn, a claim that Capt. John Hampton, who said that he was the first officer on the scene, refuted by saying that he had yet to draw his weapon. Another youth claimed that the police did not initially have their weapons drawn, but drew them after more bottles were thrown. Another person interviewed stated that “the police were acting like the colored

people were supposed to run when they came in with sirens and guns.”²²⁰

While some of those interviewed expressed pride at the crowd’s reaction to the police, Officer Hampton put forward a different version of events, one that would come to define the ensuing legal proceedings surrounding the Black Six and the attribution of blame for the riot. “It had direction,” he said. Hampton said that by 7 PM 200 persons had gathered and within 15 minutes the crowd had swelled to 400. From a car roof, the leaders were making anti-police speeches, he said, and from the crowd came cries of “Black Power!” Others interviewed viewed the cause of the riot differently:

“All these stores are white stores,” said another. “They take money out of the community and put nothing back in.”

At a nearby street corner, another man tried to sum it up:

“I don’t condone this sort of thing, but what do you expect after 400 years in America? Look at the neighborhood. The houses are older than you and me both! You people live in them 50 years and then we move in. It’s not right.”²²¹

The National Guard withdrew from the West End during the afternoon of Wednesday, May 29. The curfew that had been in effect since Tuesday was lifted as well. In conversation with “Negro militants”, Schmied agreed to the withdrawal, replacing the National Guard troops with a combination of city police and African American marshals. Police Chief C.J. Hyde, though he did report that looting had occurred at a higher rate after the removal of the National Guard, stated late Wednesday that the marshal and police forces were doing well. National Guard returned twice Wednesday as crowds gathered, but both times the crowds were dispersed without aid from any Guardsmen.²²²

The aforementioned negotiations between the mayor and African American leadership was conducted by telephone between Mayor Schmied and Eugene Robinson, the newly appointed associate director of the Human Relations Commission. The

interview had been conducted by phone because Schmied stated that he “could not leave police headquarters.”²²³ Outside of Eugene Robinson, A.D. King and his KCLC (Kentucky Christian Leadership Council) was involved in the negotiations. The final meeting occurred in person outside of police headquarters, where the plan to withdraw the National Guard troops was announced.

Joining the African American marshals were groups of staff and directors of several area settlement houses, who pledged their own “cooling’ efforts” to that of the marshals. Mrs. Dorothy Naveau, who headed the Market Street Neighborhood House, and others expressed their doubts at the effectiveness of the endeavor. One priest was quoted as commenting that “If you haven’t been in the neighborhood before this trouble, then you’re almost antagonizing (the Negro community) by coming in now...it’s sort of an insincere move.”²²⁴ Others, particularly Louisville whites, questioned the ability of African American leadership to control African American youth. However, in citing A.D. King, Eugene Robinson, Charles Tachau, and others, white residents demonstrated their own lack of understanding of both the diverse nature of civil rights leadership in the West End and in the figures that had risen to prominent positions in those civil rights publics over the last few years.²²⁵ Louisville’s city government, in choosing to work expressly with those individuals as representative of all African American leadership and in turn all of the city’s African Americans, they demonstrated their recalcitrance to deal with individuals who espoused Black Power ideology.

“The inability of local Negro leadership to contain the rioting in Louisville’s west-end rest [sic] upon the shoulders of mayor Kenneth Schmied,” wrote Frank L. Stanley, Jr. in *The Louisville Defender* on May 30.²²⁶ According to Frank L. Stanley, Jr.,

the mayor had been golfing Tuesday while “the west-end was embattled and in flames.”²²⁷ After being told by civil rights leaders that they had been unable to meet with the mayor because he was golfing, rioters had refused further negotiation with civil rights leaders. Stanley, Jr. also asserted that it was over-policing by the national Guard and police in the West End that had led to resumed unrest the previous day after police had arrested a man for “not moving along fast enough.”²²⁸ Interviews with others whom the paper termed “black militants” predicted riots of the coming Memorial Day weekend, with one individual interviewed stating that “We’re going to teach whitey a lesson this week-end.”²²⁹ Other sources interviewed in the West End, particularly around 28th and Greenwood, while their rhetoric was more ambivalent, expressed their support for the rioters.²³⁰ Robert Sims told protesters that “I won’t tell you to stop rioting. I tell you to do whatever is necessary.”²³¹

Meanwhile, the group of protesters that had been turned away from city hall the previous day after seven of their members were arrested for violating curfew and charged with breach of peace regrouped on Thursday. Calling themselves the White Emergency Support Team (WEST), they stated their goal was to “investigate the causes of the riot and to provide whatever assistance they could to black victims.”²³² They were joined in these endeavors by WECC, BULK, SCEF and others. Forty nine people who had been arrested for violations of curfew were also released with their charges filed away and, after being told of the agreement struck to remove the National Guard from the West End, were told by Judge William G. Colson to work to stop the disturbances and unrest.²³³

By the end of the week, the West End had seen a quarter of a million dollars in

property damage, most in the first two day of violence. One hundred and nineteen fires had been set, including burning cars and stores. Of the four hundred and seventy two people that had been arrested, most had been for curfew violations. Officially, fifty two people had been injured and two had been killed.²³⁴ Drawing a distinction between ‘riot’ and insurrection’, insurance spokesman assured *The Courier Journal* readers that property damage was covered under insurance policies. Unless the riot had been made an insurrection by the governor or president. The insurance counsel defined insurrection as “the open resistance against civil or established authority.”²³⁵

Manfred Reid agreed with the distinction made by the insurance counsel that the riots had not in any constituted an insurrection against authority. Though he supported such an insurrection, he stated that “it quieted down, it ran its course. What that really was, was a protest more than a fight. They called it riots when it was really just protests, it was a form of protests which extended into disorder.”²³⁶ Such methods, according to Reid, would never work because “the conflicts that people have in terms of nations or in groups within nations, it usually comes down to open conflict so that they can have a stake at the table. Otherwise, you’re pleading.”²³⁷

Cautioning that he was not sure that the disturbances were over because none of the underlying issues or tensions had been addressed, Rev. Leo Lesser, KCLC chairman, gave credit for the calm achieved by the week’s end to Fannie Groves, whose son had been one of the two killed in the violence.²³⁸ Her son, James Claude Groves, had been shot by policemen who had claimed the fourteen year old youth had been in the act of looting. According to police, James Groves had been running with stolen items from a grocery store when the police killed him by firing into a dark alley after him.²³⁹ However,

eye witnesses reported that James had been walking down the street when other youth ran past him from the direction of the grocery store, and medical records showed that the fourteen year old had been shot in his stomach and chest, contradicting the recollections of the police officers.²⁴⁰ After visiting James Groves' parents on Thursday, May 30, Chief Hyde promised that he would assign to police man to investigate the incident and James' father told a press conference that "I want to see justice done to the man who shot my boy."²⁴¹

Matthias Browder, who had been nineteen years old, was the other person killed in the riots. He had been shot and killed by W.J. Berger, the owner of Vermont Liquors. Police reports showed that Berger had fired into a group of youths after the window to his store was broken. Matthias Browder's father claimed that his son was "murdered by reckless gunfire" and no police investigators had come to make any inquiries into the matter at all.²⁴² Though Berger was initially charged with manslaughter, the case was dismissed by Judge Colson, who claimed that Berger had been justified in the defense of his store despite the lack of evidence that Browder was involved in any vandalism or looting.²⁴³

The responses of civil rights leaders to the violence and the attempts to control it varied throughout the week. Lyman Johnson recalled the rioting youth urging him off the street as he tried to calm them down, saying that police would not discriminate in arresting him along with everyone else. "And sure enough," Johnson stated:

"when the statistics were counted up after the affair, so many were rounded up and put in jail, and some were accused of conspiracy and all that kind of stuff. The police were beating up any number of people. Their heads were bloody, and I think as many as two people were killed, and it was a needless, needless waste..."²⁴⁴

While A.D. King, the KCLC, and others were urging West End rioters to “cool it”, Rev. C. Eubank Tucker was protesting the appointment of Eugene Robinson to the position of Associate Director of the city-county Human Relations Committee. Voicing his unhappiness with the appointment to Dr. Perley, Rev. Tucker claimed that WECC was filled with Communist sympathizers, including Eugene Robinson. He also stated that Robinson should not have been considered for the appointment after his role in the housing demonstration of the previous year, especially in plans to disrupt the Kentucky Derby.²⁴⁵ Robinson responded to Rev. Tucker’s calls for his resignation “with an appeal for the bishop to join him in building a strong community.”²⁴⁶ WECC, WEST, and other civil rights organizations also turned to protesting the dismissal of the manslaughter charges against Berger. When taken before Mayor Schmied, the Mayor claimed that he had no jurisdiction in such matters.²⁴⁷ Amid this disjointed mixture of responses, which even included a short WAVE-TV broadcast on Monday night by A.D. King, James Cortez, and Neville Tucker urging West End residents to stay in their homes and off the streets, the dissonance between the black public sphere and city hall grew wider.

This gulf was increased by mayor Schmied’s continued reluctance to visit the West End. Despite a unanimous vote that he visit the area of the disturbances by the end of the week, Mayor Schmied stated instead he would only visit the West End after all “peace and tranquility” had been restored. Schmied added that “meetings with neighborhood groups do not often accomplish much. ‘It’s a self-satisfaction sort of thing with the neighbors to meet with the mayor’...”²⁴⁸ This led Rev. Miller, chairman of the Louisville and Jefferson County Crime Commission committee on riots and disorders, to state that the greatest ongoing harm in “this crisis” was the mayor’s refusal to visit the

people in the West End. While Miller claimed some individuals would make visible displays of their anger, including cursing and shouting insults, Miller insisted that West End residents just wanted a chance to talk to the mayor and air their grievances.²⁴⁹ This reluctance on the part of the mayor, and his lack of visibility during the entire week's disturbances, led Sam Hawkins to accuse "the mayor of being 'afraid of black people'."²⁵⁰ Robinson argued against others who preferred that Mayor Schmied meet with small groups of African American leaders by claiming that the African American community in the West End had no leaders and that those days were gone. Instead, they were individuals and "the day is gone when you get X number of people together and say that each of them represents X number of people."²⁵¹ Despite this assertion, working with a small number of perceived moderate African American leaders like A.D. King was how city hall had operated throughout the week. Louisville's black public, along with WECC and BULK's efforts to foster African American identity and pride, now desired to deny the ability of the city government to determine the mouthpieces of the community for them.

Turning a blind eye to charges of police brutality and over-policing by the city police and National Guard and dismissing the manslaughter charges against Berger were only the initial waves of Louisville's government backlash against the violence. The next step was the assessment of blame and the search for the "organizers" of the violence. On May 31, the city ordered an investigation into many African American organizations and civil rights publics that were believed to be involved.²⁵² Throughout the week, accusations had arisen that the riots were planned, though no evidence had surfaced to substantiate them.²⁵³ Everyone from Carl and Anne Braden, federal anti-poverty workers,

and others were suspected and set to be investigated, a move which Eugene Robinson denounced, specifically contacting *The Courier Journal* to disassociate himself from any idea of collaboration or cooperation on the recommended investigations, calling the accusations an attempt by white Louisville to cleanse its conscience.²⁵⁴ The Bradens issued a statement saying that “Whenever they want a scapegoat in Louisville, they pick out the Bradens. We have been scapegoats here now since 1954...we had hoped that after 14 years, Louisville would now have reached the point of facing its problems instead of finding scapegoats...or at least find a new scapegoat.”²⁵⁵ With Cortez and the others that would become the Black Six, Louisville’s government did just that.

“Well, they wanted Cortez because he was an outside agitator,” Ruth Bryant recalled.²⁵⁶ In fact, one of the points made by the crime commission had been to determine exactly who Cortez was and who he worked for.²⁵⁷ *The Courier Journal*, in seeking to confirm whether or not James Cortez was the Carmichael aide that he claimed to be, reported that “Leigh [Stokely Carmichael’s aide] added, and SNCC headquarters in Washington confirmed, that Cortez is not an aide of Carmichael’s. SNCC headquarters in Washington said Cortez had no connection with the organization.”²⁵⁸ Among West End organizations, the rumor began to spread that Cortez was an FBI informer.

During the three days when Cortez was staying at the Bryants’, Ruth Bryant recalled that:

“My husband said he would get up at night and Cortez would be talking long-distance to someone on the telephone and he would always hang up when my husband came in the room. More and more information kept coming to us that Cortez was an FBI informant. Anne Braden and them didn’t feel that he was.”²⁵⁹

The Louisville Defender began to ask similar questions of Cortez, his origins, and his

intentions. In the article “Black League Paid Expenses for Cortez”, they write that “unconfirmed reports link Cortez with Newark, N.J., New York City, and Baltimore, Md. Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee members refuse to claim him.”²⁶⁰ Continuing in the article, the *Defender* sought to distance Cortez from BULK and, by extension, Louisville’s black public. They write:

“The original purpose for summoning Cortez to this city was harmless. He was an accomplished orator who claimed knowledge of every civil rights activists of note. All BULK wanted Cortez to do in Louisville was talk to the people, arouse in them a black awareness and marshall [sic] support for BULK’s aim to have Michael Clifford discharged from the police force.

The plan did not go according to script. By design or error, the spark was ignited, the riot started.”²⁶¹

In distancing themselves from Cortez, *The Louisville Defender* not only worked to distance BULK and other suspected local activists from the violence and the conspiracy charges that were being brought against individuals, but sought to distance themselves and all of Louisville’s black public for the blame for the violence. It is important here to not dismiss the possibility of the possible intentionality of Cortez’s actions. In 1968 in other cities around the country, FBI agent provocateurs had been used to espouse militant rhetoric once ingratiated into local Black Power movements. That rhetoric was then used as evidence against the local activists after their arrest.²⁶²

Cortez was arrested on June 1, 1968, at his room in the Stouffer Hotel. Asked to accompany two detectives to meet Chief Hyde, Cortez accompanied voluntarily, but stopped in the lobby to place a call to an unknown place in Virginia where he received no answer.²⁶³ The prosecution in Cortez’s 1970 appeals trial also stated that, while at the police station, Cortez told them that he was an FBI informant and that the Louisville police had interfered in his mission. His mission in Louisville, he claimed, was to stop

Robert Sims and Sam Hawkins, who planned:

“To get axes and dig trenches around the oil refineries in the west end. Cortez said he was supposed to purchase the dynamite...and that Simms [sic] and Hawkins and others had planned to blow up the oil refineries in the west end of Louisville. He inferred that he was supposed to frustrate the planned dynamiting.”²⁶⁴

When Cortez took the stand in his defense, he denied that he had left the Hotel with the officers voluntarily and that he had never claimed to be an FBI informant. However, he also claimed that he had not told the police that he had a sawed off shotgun in his hotel room and that the first time he had ever seen the weapon was when it had been brought in as evidence in the initial trial.²⁶⁵ Portions of this story may or may not have been supported by the autobiography of FBI agent William C. Sullivan, who writes about an FBI informant whose actions and circumstances matched up exactly with those of Cortez, though Sullivan named him Peter Cardoza in the autobiography. If Peter Cardoza was in fact James Cortez, then Sullivan rights that Cortez came to Louisville and transported the shotgun without FBI permission and that the FBI subsequently withdrew support from him.²⁶⁶

Whether or not the presence of the shotgun, which according to police was broken down into three pieces in an attaché case and left in the hotel room right where Cortez told them it would be, contradicts Ruth Bryant’s assertion that she smuggled the shotgun out of the hotel room on Monday night remains unclear. Broken down and hidden, it is entirely possible that the shotgun was returned to the hotel room by Cortez, though it is less likely that, as Cortez claimed, the shotgun was a police plant.

Sam Hawkins and Robert Sims were also arrested on a variety of charges, including conspiracy to destroy public property in regards to their alleged involvement in

the plot to blow up the oil refinery. Ruth Bryant, through WECC and other organizations, continued to work to raise bond money for them. However, Judge Colson ruled that no one “past eighteenth street could put up the bond for them,” which in effect meant that no individuals, groups, or organizations in the West End could post the extravagant bond for the release of Sims or Hawkins. Later in the summer, Ruth Bryant was called by Neville Tucker and told that she too had been indicted on conspiracy charges.²⁶⁷ Manfred Reid was also brought up on the same charges, as well as the earlier charges of assault and battery of a police officer, for which he was found guilty but the charges were probated.²⁶⁸ Walter “Pete” Cosby became the last member of the Black Six, based on the allegation that, along with Cortez, he had been riding around in a car planning places to dynamite.²⁶⁹

The riots in Louisville’s West End in May 1968 were not the result of Black Power, nor of “a known outside agitator, looter, and rioter,” as Mayor Schmied asserted.²⁷⁰ Louisville’s black public, almost completely without cooperation from city hall, worked to control violence in the West End. Division among those civil rights leaders over whether or not to support the rioters arose not from the existence or adherence to Black Power rhetoric, but from the community’s anger, frustration, and continued lack of success in pushing for real change for the West End. Throughout 1967 and 1968, Louisville’s civil rights publics utilized a variety of methods to fight for their goals. The militant stances of some of their prominent members such as those in BULK or elsewhere did not act to cause the riots. The refusal of Mayor Schmied and city hall to work with more than a few, hand-picked and moderate civil rights leaders, the presence

of the National Guard in the West End, the over-policing and violence exercised by police, and other factors worked to instigate and shape the riots. By their end, peace had been restored but, as many residents of the West End had asserted, none of the problems that caused them had been addressed. And, as 1968 wore on, the Black Six were brought up on charges of conspiracy to destroy public property, along with a host of other charges.

Conclusion: The Black Six

*“We shall have to struggle for the right to define ourselves and our relationship to the society, and to have these terms recognized. This is the first necessity of a free people, and the first right that any oppressor must suspend.”*²⁷¹ – Kwame Ture and Charles V. Hamilton, *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation*

Robert Sims and Sam Hawkins had worked with police as two of the appointed African American marshals patrolling the West End as part of the ‘cool it’ campaign.²⁷² They were arrested Saturday June 1 after the early morning arrest of James Cortez the same day. Police claimed that the three had planned to use dynamite to blow up oil refineries in the West End. The refineries were protected through the night by National Guard troops. The charges were based on police claims that Cortez had told them about the dynamite plot after being brought to the police station early that morning. They also produced witnesses that claimed Cortez had told them about the plot as well the previous day.²⁷³

Discussion became heated during the court of inquiry called by Judge Colson. With cross-examination prohibited and no time to gather witnesses for the defense, the defense attorneys for Sims, Hawkins, and Cortez argued that Judge Colson had no authority to call the court of inquiry in the first place. Repeatedly overruling motions to postpone the hearing, Judge Colson also exchanged angry words with Neville Tucker, who was serving as one of the defense attorneys. During recess, Judge Colson consulted with Mayor Schmied and other city hall administrators.²⁷⁴ While in the West End all vacations and off days remained cancel for policemen patrolling 12 hour shifts, bond for

Sims and Hawkins was set at \$50,000 each. Bond for Cortez was set at \$75,000.

Demonstrators, both African American and white, gathered outside to protest “a ‘frame-up’ of black leaders.”²⁷⁵ Judge Colson concluded the court of inquiry by ordering Chief Hyde “to obtain security warrants” based on the prosecution’s evidence as presented before the court. “As the defendants were led out of the courtroom, Cortez shouted, “This is justice...good old America.”²⁷⁶

The “Black Six”, Cortez, Sims, Hawkins, Reid, Cosby, and Bryant, were formally indicted on conspiracy charges in October. Manfred Reid had previously been held on a \$25,000 bond on a bad check charge, though that was dismissed on September 6 due to a lack of evidence. His indictment for assaulting officer Clifford remained, though the police department had previously stated that Reid was assaulted by Officer Clifford without provocation. Charges against Officer Noe, who had shot and killed 14 year old James Groves, and William Berger, who had shot and killed 19 year old Matthias Browder, were dismissed by Judge Colson. By the time of the October indictment, the charge of conspiring to blow up the oil refineries in the West End had become a more general charge of conspiracy to destroy private property. Following all of this were continued allegations that the entire case against the Black Six was merely a cover up of the real cause of the disorders, “poverty; neglected schools, police brutality, poor housing, etc.”²⁷⁷ If so, was “it possible, people are asking, that the real conspirators in this community are not those under indictment but some of the public officials in our City Hall and Courthouse?”²⁷⁸

Ruth Bryant, in reflecting on her efforts on behalf of WECC and other civil rights organizations, said that:

“I had cost the city, in terms of things that they had to do in complying with guidelines...millions of dollars. And then it looked like millions of dollars were going to be lost again, you see [for the loss of the model city grant that Ruth Bryant spearheaded]. So people say, ‘Well why was Ruth Bryant involved in the Black Six? How did she get in the Black Six?’ Well, that was one reason.”²⁷⁹

Bill Allison spoke similarly when asked later to speak on the Black Six. He said that:

“The thing that was so stark about the Black Six case was that they arrested black leaders from all different segments of black society, so that they were sending a message to the entire black community...They really targeted, it seemed like they targeted the entire black community strata to send a message to – a chilling effect.”²⁸⁰

These charges continued throughout the trial. The conception of the trial as government repression of African American and civil rights publics that Mayor Schmied’s administration found undesirable certainly had precedent in other cities around the country. Even the charges of conspiracy and allegations of outside agitators echoed similar events in Greensboro, North Carolina happening almost simultaneously.²⁸¹ In both cases, the city had responded with excessive force and military tactics to first subdue the area, and then worked to repress the most outspoken of its activists with charges of conspiracy and inciting a riot.

All this distracted from the actual causes of the riot that city hall refused to acknowledge. Whether or not the riots were planned, and, if they were premeditated in any form, it was more than likely not by the Black Six, is in fact nearly immaterial. No rioters, looters, or militants in the West End created the conditions under which a riot was possible, nor exacerbated those conditions through continued judicial and police oppression. Black Power may have given the oppressed of the West End a greater awareness of themselves and their conditions, and, through the black press, outspoken activists, and community organizations such as WECC and BULK, given them a voice.

Black Power did not incite them to violence.

The trial and the proceedings surrounding it drug on for the better part of two years. At first, legal proceedings were held in Louisville, but a change of venue was granted by Criminal Court Judge Herman Jorris and the trial was moved to Munfordville in Hart County, Kentucky. The judge there, who according to Manfred Reid, “sent it back to Louisville, because he felt that they didn’t have jurisdiction and that wasn’t an issue facing Hart County. While Judge Jorris claimed that publicity in Louisville had made it impossible to conduct an impartial trial in Louisville, Cortez claimed that the judge wanted ““to put us in a racist county. You’re not going to gage [sic] me. You want those damn white farmers to judge us with no Negroes on the jury.’ Cortez was shoved from the courtroom after” his outburst.”²⁸²

Ruth Bryant recalled that in Hart County:

“The farmers were all lined up down the road with overalls and straw hats and corncob pipes, spittoons in the courtroom, this sort of thing. It was a three ring circus. And some of the guys said, like Pete Cosby, “They want a circus. I’m going to give them a circus,” and he’d ride his big Cadillac up there...It was an ordeal, it was a great ordeal.”²⁸³

After being moved back to Louisville in January of the following year, the trial officially began on June 22, 1970, over two years after the riots had occurred.²⁸⁴ Lyman Johnson served as a witness against Cortez, where he recounted the harsh words that the two had exchanged during the meeting at Zion Baptist Church the Sunday before the riot. Lyman Johnson, when asked his take on the riot, said that while it was a shame that race relations had gotten to the point where an outside agitator could push the tensions that way that Johnson thought Cortez had done, it was the city’s power structure that bore responsibility for the riot. After his comments and dismissal from the witness stand,

Cortez leapt up and shook Johnson's hand.²⁸⁵

After the conclusion of the prosecution's case on July 7, 1970, the Judge ordered a directed verdict of not guilty, citing a lack of evidence by the prosecution as his reasoning.²⁸⁶ The trial of the Black Six was over and, while the victory was celebrated, the Black Six, WECC, and Louisville's other civil rights groups continued to criticize the existence of the trial and the city's flimsy charges in the first place.²⁸⁷ Ruth Bryant stated that "they used Cortez as a scapegoat to discourage, to crush the movement. They used me to help crush the movement."²⁸⁸

Manfred Reid stated that:

"The cost to my life [of the trial] was the loss of my broker's license, the loss of my marriage, loss of my business, and loss of my character and reputation. It reduces you to being homeless and being destitute. That's what it reduces you to. You have to overcome that by just pure determination."²⁸⁹

That attitude of pure determination characterized the Louisville civil rights movement from 1967 through the end of the trial of the Black Six, but it also characterized it before and after. It was the rhetoric, not the determination, which changed. Louisville's black public continued to prove that throughout the trial. Led by WECC, a coalition of the city's civil rights organizations was instrumental in posting bond for all of the Black Six except Cortez. They demonstrated, held rallies, and continued to pressure the city officials on behalf of those charged. According to Manfred Reid, Stokely Carmichael was invited to town in the summer of 1968 to support protests against police brutality.

²⁹⁰Throughout the process they remained active and committed. *The Louisville Defender* continued in its role as the local extension of a robust and pro-active black press.²⁹¹

Though the trial of the Black Six may well have been an attempt at repression of the

African American community through defamation of some of its leading activists and members, the effort failed.

In the following years, struggles for civil rights continued in Louisville, as housing, school desegregation, and poverty continued to be major issues. Individuals, organizations, and the black public continued to work to further these and other causes. Conspiracy cases as a means of government repression continued, with several notable cases across the country.²⁹²

However, the conspiracy trial was only one of the means by which Louisville's government sought to impose their will on the African American community. Urban Renewal and the unchecked practices of racist real estate agents in the 1960's had further segregated the city, leading to a higher and higher concentration of African Americans in the West End. Protests, petitions, and other non-violent efforts to rectify this had been ignored. Peaceful demonstrations in 1967 had been met with violent and at times brutal repression. Continual failure to address the conditions in the West End, rude and disrespectful treatment, and a further widely publicized case of police brutality, that of Officer Clifford beating Manfred Reid without provocation, led to a heightening of tensions in the West End. Further police intervention, over-policing, and brutal strategies instigated and escalated the riots. During the riots, city hall refused to meet with any but select civil rights representatives, and even then the meetings were delayed and handled in a paternalistic manner. Blaming 'outside agitators' and others for the unrest, Mayor Schmied continually refused to visit the West End and listen to the grievances of the residents there.

If the prevailing narrative of Black Power in America is one of defeat, as Peniel

Joseph asserts, then it is a defeat caused by brutal oppression by city governments. City administrations like Louisville's continued to stall, subvert, and attempt to remove civil rights victories. Frank L. Stanley, Sr., speaking to college students in Bowling Green in 1969, said that "even in states like Kentucky, where segregation is outlawed in most of its forms, Negroes still live largely behind the barriers of extra-legal segregation."²⁹³ Such segregation continued in Louisville after events of 1967-1970. Seemingly, civil rights initiatives had been largely defeated by a city government threatened by Black Power activists who "posed a radical threat to the status quo."²⁹⁴ However, viewing Black Power, in Louisville and elsewhere, from this perspective overlooks what Black Power was.

Black Power did involve "striking at the very base of white control – the power to define what is real and unreal, permissible and impermissible."²⁹⁵ However, they achieved this through their creation of a black public, shaped it by fostering the shaping of an African American identity, and working to foster racial pride. Black Power activists worked to shape robust institutions, organizations, and communities that could challenge racist and segregationist practices in city governments, paternalism in accepted methods of civil rights progress, and work actively to shape identities, communities, and lives of success and equality. As evidenced by activists like Hawkins and Sims, there was militancy in the movement, and the use of violent rhetoric. According to Frank L. Stanley, Sr. "the social revolution has done much toward establishing for the Negro an affirmative identity in American life."²⁹⁶ Black Power was a rejection of paternalism in civil rights, for otherwise "it's the same slave you had a hundred years ago, because you're pleading to your master for help. I don't believe in that."²⁹⁷ Black Power, in

Louisville during the housing demonstrations of 1967-1970, involved civil rights and community publics adopting new methodologies and rhetorical tools to fight for civil rights. Black Power represented “their drive to achieve dignity, to achieve their share of power, indeed, to become their own men and women – in this time and in this land.”²⁹⁸ Black Power was the struggle of Louisville’s African American communities, activists, and organizations to become a black public capable of creating and defining itself.

Notes

Introduction

- ¹ Thomas Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty* (New York: Random House, 2008), xiii-xiv.
- ² Timothy J. Minchin and John A. Salmond, *After the Dream: Black and White Southerners Since 1965* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2011), 2.
- ³ *Sweet Land of Liberty*, xiii-xiv.
- ⁴ Peniel E. Joseph, *Waiting 'Til the Midnight Hour* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2006), xiii-xiv.
- ⁵ *ibid*, xiii-xiv. For additional treatment of the scholarship surrounding Black Power's role in the Civil Rights Movement also see Peniel E. Joseph, "The Black Power Movement: A State of the Field," *The Journal of American History* (2009): 751-776.
- ⁶ Nat Tillman, "1966 Was Shaped By 'Black Power', Backlash", *The Louisville Defender*, January 5, 1967, A1.
- ⁷ Tracy E. K'Meyer, 187.
- ⁸ Thomas Sugrue, xiv.
- ⁹ Kwame Ture and Charles V. Hamilton, *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation* (New York: Random House, 1967), 38.
- ¹⁰ *ibid*, 38.
- ¹¹ Tracy E. K'Meyer, 186.
- ¹² Kwame Ture and Charles Hamilton, 81.
- ¹³ Charles Kaiser, *1968 in America: Music, Politics, Chaos, Counterculture, and the Shaping of a Generation* (New York: Grove Press, 1988), x-xi.
- ¹⁴ Robert Self, *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 218.
- ¹⁵ Thomas Sugrue, 253-312.
- ¹⁶ For discussion of the Harlem riot of 1964, see Peniel E. Joseph, *Waiting 'Til the Midnight Hour*, 110-113. Paul M. Branzburg, "View from 28th and Greenwood: Police Lit the Fuse", *The Louisville Courier-Journal*, May 28, 1968, A11. This initial report by the city's primary white newspaper the morning after violence was a position largely maintained by the newspaper throughout the ensuing legal proceedings. Tracy K'Meyer, 193-200.
- ¹⁷ Tracy E. K'Meyer, *Civil Rights in the Gateway to the South* (Lexington: The University Kentucky Press, 2009), 1.
- ¹⁸ William H. Chafe, *Civilities and Civil Rights: Greensboro, North Carolina, and the Struggle for Black Freedom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 28-29, 37, 39.

Chapter I

- ¹⁹ Kwame Ture and Charles V. Hamilton, *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation*, (New York: Random House, 1967), 37.
- ²⁰ Jenny Rice, *Distant Publics* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2012), 14.
- ²¹ Jenny Rice, 15.
- ²² Judith Corse, Letter to the Editor, Frank L. Stanley, Sr. Papers, C General, Box 1, May 3, 1968.
- ²³ Peniel E. Joseph, *Neighborhood Rebels* (2010), 1. Joseph asserts that black power, and by extension northern civil rights as a whole, is normally construed as following after this period of southern civil rights, with its own privileged narrative of great social change spearheaded by non-violent initiatives and great national heroes such as Martin Luther King, Jr.
- ²⁴ John L. Anderson, "Changing Patterns of Louisville's Residential Areas", Paper presented at Conference of Southeast Division of the Association of American Geographers, November 19, 1976, File "Blacks-Housing", Topic Guides "Blacks".
- ²⁵ Tracy K'Meyer, 1.
- ²⁶ Robert Self, 218.

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- ²⁷ Nikhil Pal Singh, *Black is a Country: Race and the Unfinished Struggle for Democracy*, (Cambridge: Harvard university Press, 2004), 61.
- ²⁸ Ibid, 61-65.
- ²⁹ Frank L. Stanley, Sr. "The Imperativeness of Image Building", speech to National Insurance Association, Frank L. Stanley, Sr. Papers, File "Speeches 1968-1969", Box 6, July 24, 1968.
- ³⁰ William O. Walker, letter to Frank L. Stanley, File "The Black Publisher", Box 1, April 12, 1973.
- ³¹ Komozi Woodard, *A Nation Within a Nation: Amiri Bakara (LeRoi Jones) and Black Power Politics*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 171. Amiri Bakara's version of Black Power focusing on cultural revolution within the African American community championed just this sort of discursive counter-public.
- ³² W.W. Baker, Letter to Frank L. Stanley, Sr., File "General B", Box 1, October 1, 1968.
- ³³ Frank L. Stanley, Sr., "A Dream Deferred", Address to Western State University in Bowling Green, Frank L. Stanley, Sr., File "Speeches 1968-1969", Box 6, March 4, 1969.
- ³⁴ Harold Cruse, *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual*, (1967), 184.
- ³⁵ Frank L. Stanley, Sr., "The Imperativeness of Image Building", Address to the National Insurance Association, Frank L. Stanley, Sr. Papers, File "Speeches 1968-1969", Box 6, July 24, 1968.
- ³⁶ Harold Cruse, 184-185.
- ³⁷ Frank L. Stanley, "The Imperativeness of Image Building" Address to the National Insurance Association.
- ³⁸ Tracy K'Meyer, 1-3. In many ways, both rhetorical positions contained elements of truth. Segregation in businesses and other public spaces, as well as legal segregation in schools, was never as strong as it was in the deep south. Because of this, and because of the vibrancy of local activism, demonstrations and tactics emblematic of the traditional southern movement, the 'heroic movement', were successful with a minimum of the violence or backlash often found in the deep south. However, the resistance of local governments and white residents to de facto segregation in education, as well as continued and worsening segregation in housing was stringent and often violent in ways typical of northern civil rights. What this paper argues is that the focus of civil rights activism so largely on on change in these issues of housing and education identifies the movement with northern struggles more than southern struggles.
- ³⁹ Thomas Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty*, 281.
- ⁴⁰ Peniel Joseph, *The Black Power Movement: Rethinking the Civil Rights – Black Power Era*, (New York: Routledge, 2006), 2-4.
- ⁴¹ Tracy E. K'Meyer, 77-110.
- ⁴² Ibid, 48.
- ⁴³ Boyle, *Arc of Justice*.
- ⁴⁴ Tracy E. K'Meyer, 63-65.
- ⁴⁵ William Chafe, *Civilities and Civil Rights: Greensboro, North Carolina, and the Black Struggle for Freedom*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 159.
- ⁴⁶ William Chafe, 171.
- ⁴⁷ Gerald Smith, "Direct Action Protests in the Upper South: Kentucky Chapters of CORE",
- ⁴⁸ Ruth Bryant, Interview with Kenneth L. Chumbley, July 24, 1977, University of Louisville.
- ⁴⁹ Tracy E. K'Meyer, 114, 183.
- ⁵⁰ Ruth Bryant, Interview with Kenneth L. Chumbley.
- ⁵¹ Tracy E. K'Meyer, 183-184.
- ⁵² Ruth Bryant, Interview with Kenneth L. Chumbley.
- ⁵³ Ibid.
- ⁵⁴ Ibid.
- ⁵⁵ Tracy E. K'Meyer, Catherine Fosl, *Civil Rights on the Border: An Oral History of the Civil Rights Movement in Kentucky*, (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2009).
- ⁵⁶ Ruth Bryant, Interview with Kenneth L. Chumbley.
- ⁵⁷ Tracy E. K'Meyer, 181-182.
- ⁵⁸ C.H. Parrish, Interview with Dwayne Cox and William Morison, December 14, 1976, university of Louisville.
- ⁵⁹ Maurice F. Rabb, Interview with Dwayne Cox, August 15, 1977, University of Louisville.

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- ⁶⁰ Frank Moorman, Interview with Ken Chumbley, August 17, 1978, University of Louisville.
- ⁶¹ Ibid.
- ⁶² Lyman Johnson, "Letter to the Editor", Frank L. Stanley, Sr. Papers, Box 1, "C General" Files, may 10, 1969.
- ⁶³ Peniel Joseph, 2.
- ⁶⁴ Ibid, 2-3. Sugrue's *Sweet Land of Liberty* 425-434 and Self's *American Babylon* 217-25 also speak to the effects of black power on community affiliation and increased agency. This was vitally important for African Americans living in highly segregated city centers that had been gutted by urban renewal projects and then largely abandoned by the federal programs designed to assist them. Sugrue on p. 427 refers to this as "community nationalism".
- ⁶⁵ Robert Self, 217-218. Thomas Sugrue, 354-355.
- ⁶⁶ Tracy E. K'Meyer, 183.
- ⁶⁷ Ruth Bryant, Interview with Kenneth L. Chumbley. Tracy E. K'Meyer, 182.
- ⁶⁸ Tracy E. K'Meyer, 182-185.
- ⁶⁹ Ruth Bryant, Interview with Kenneth L. Chumbley.
- ⁷⁰ Ibid. Tracy E. K'Meyer, 185.
- ⁷¹ Ibid, 185.
- ⁷² Sylvia Mangahan, "Letter to the Editor", Frank L. Stanley, Sr. papers, Box 1, File "C General", May 10, 1969.
- ⁷³ William L. Van Deburg, *New Day in Babylon: The Black Power Movement and American Culture 1965-1975*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 213.
- ⁷⁴ Tracy E. K'Meyer, 182.
- ⁷⁵ Ibid, 182.
- ⁷⁶ Ruth Bryant, Interview with Kenneth L. Chumbley.
- ⁷⁷ Mrs. Marie Turner, "Letter to the Editor", Frank L. Stanley, Sr. Papers, Box 1, File "C General", April 2, 1968.
- ⁷⁸ Nat Tillman, "1966 Was Shaped By 'Black Power', Backlash", *The Louisville Defender*, January 5, 1967, A1.
- ⁷⁹ Ibid, A1.
- ⁸⁰ Kwame Ture and Charles Hamilton, 98-120.
- ⁸¹ Robert Self, 249. What the rhetoric and actions of Mayor Reading in Oakland established is a shift in the focus of the white establishment towards not just an acceptance of some civil rights publics and rejection of others based on their rhetoric, but a severe narrowing of the groups deemed acceptable to work with. During the housing discussions in Louisville in 1967, the same trend holds true. This exclusivity in turn weakens the community position of those city hall does work with, leading too often to the label of "sellouts", "Toms", or worse. See also Komozi Woodard, *A Nation Within a Nation: Amiri Bakara (LeRoi Jones) and Black Power Politics*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 74-84. William F. Chafe, *Civilities and Civil Rights: Greensboro, North Carolina, and the Black Struggle for Freedom*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), 149, 240.
- ⁸² William F. Chafe, 28.
- ⁸³ Maurice F. Rabb, Interview with Dwayne Cox, August 15, 1977, University of Louisville.
- ⁸⁴ Ibid.
- ⁸⁵ Ruth Bryant, Interview with Kenneth L. Chumbley.
- ⁸⁶ William F. Chafe, 22-23, 28.
- ⁸⁷ Ruth Bryant, Interview with Kenneth L. Chumbley.
- ⁸⁸ Tracy E. K'Meyer, 102-110.
- ⁸⁹ Maurice F. Rabb, Interview with Dwayne Cox.

Chapter II

- ⁹⁰ Kwame Ture and Charles V. Hamilton, 155-156.
- ⁹¹ Peniel E. Joseph, *Waitin' Til the Midnight Hour: A Narrative History of the Black Power Movement*, 153. Peniel E. Joseph, *Dark Days, Bright Nights: From Black Power to Barack Obama*, (New York: Basic Civitas Books, 2010), 15.

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- ⁹² Komozi Woodard, *A Nation Within a Nation: Amiri Bakara (LeRoi Jones) & Black Power Politics*, 78-80. Of course police brutality was only the immediate cause of unrest, as Peniel Joseph correctly attributes the uprising to “floundering Great Society Programs.” Peniel E. Joseph, *Waitin’ Til the Midnight Hour*, 183.
- ⁹³ Peniel E. Joseph, *Waitin’ Til the Midnight Hour*, 182.
- ⁹⁴ Nat Tillman, A1.
- ⁹⁵ “Letters to the Editor: Stop It!”, *The Louisville Defender*, January 12, 1967, A6. As this Louisville resident says, “I supported Lyndon Johnson...I believed he would promote a far reaching “war on poverty” here in the US to raise the lot of Americas [sic] poor, especially poor Negroes.” Yet the escalation of the Vietnam War has led his administration to “cut his “war on poverty” funds depriving our poor of absolutely necessary money.” The African American faith in the federal government was adversely affected by the decrease in social programs and the rising tide of Vietnam.
- ⁹⁶ Thomas Sugrue, 358.
- ⁹⁷ *ibid*, 358.
- ⁹⁸ Whitney M. Young, “To Be Equal”, *The Louisville Defender*, January 5, 1967, A6.
- ⁹⁹ “Youth Center to Conduct a training Drive”, *The Louisville Defender*, January 5, 1967, A1.
- ¹⁰⁰ Tracy K’Meyer, 154-155.
- ¹⁰¹ Thomas Sugrue, 357. The erosion of support for the federal government among African Americans, Sugrue implies, was caused by slow and uneven implementation of civil rights legislation and fiscal cuts to Johnson’s Great Society Programs.
- ¹⁰² *ibid*, 357.
- ¹⁰³ Frank I. Stanley, “Negative Approach to a Serious Problem”, *The Louisville Defender*, January 5, 1967, A6.
- ¹⁰⁴ *ibid*, A6.
- ¹⁰⁵ Frank L. Stanley, Sr., “While the City Burned Mayor Schmied Golfed”, *The Louisville Defender*, May 30, 1968, A1.
- ¹⁰⁶ “Local Anti-Poverty War keeps Its Major Projects”, *The Louisville Defender*, January 19, 1967, A1.
- ¹⁰⁷ Thomas Sugrue, 398.
- ¹⁰⁸ *ibid*, 398. “Study Shows Marked Increase Among Minority Employment in Government”, *The Louisville Defender*, January 19, 1967, B5.
- ¹⁰⁹ “Stepped Up Civil Rights Activity Predicted Locally Despite Gains”, *The Louisville Defender*, January 5, 1967, A1.
- ¹¹⁰ “Rights Group to Hold First Meeting”, *The Louisville Defender*, January 5, 1967, A1.
- ¹¹¹ “Housing Group to Meet on ‘Best Possible’ Law”, *The Louisville Defender*, January 5, 1967, A1.
- ¹¹² Ruth Bryant, Interview with Kenneth L. Chumbley.
- ¹¹³ *Ibid*.
- ¹¹⁴ *Ibid*.
- ¹¹⁵ Frank L. Stanley, Sr., “Negative Approach to a Serious Problem”, *The Louisville Defender*, January 5, 1967, A6.
- ¹¹⁶ *ibid*, A6.
- ¹¹⁷ Whitney M. Young, “To Be Equal”, *The Louisville Defender*, January 5, 1967, A6.
- ¹¹⁸ Frank L. Stanley, Sr., “The Die is Cast”, *The Louisville Defender*, January 12, 1967, A6.
- ¹¹⁹ Walter W. Hutchins, *The Louisville Encyclopedia*, 450.
- ¹²⁰ Tracy E. K’Meyer, 45.
- ¹²¹ Gayle Griffith, “Parents Scorn Race Plan; Negro Quits School Board”, *Louisville Courier-Journal*, May 28, 1968, B1.
- ¹²² Kwame Ture and Charles V. Hamilton, 171.
- ¹²³ *Ibid*, 168.
- ¹²⁴ Lyman Johnson, interview with Regina Monsour, November 9, 1977, University of Louisville.
- ¹²⁵ A.D. Williams King, “‘Open Housing’ Must Be Attained: Law Important For Future Generations”, *The Louisville Defender*, February 16, 1967, E7.
- ¹²⁶ Whitney M. Young, “To Be Equal”, *The Louisville Defender*, January 5, 1967, A6.

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- 127 Tracy E. K'Meyer, 111-113.
- 128 Tracy E. K'Meyer, 113.
- 129 Whitney M. Young, "To Be Equal", *The Louisville Defender*, January 5, 1967, A6.
- 130 Lyman Johnson, interview with Regina Monsour, November 9, 1977, University of Louisville.
- 131 Gary B. Watrous, "Louisville Survey West: Final Report", (Preservation Alliance of Louisville and Jefferson County, Inc. 1977), D-38.
- 132 Tracy. E. K'Meyer, 114.
- 133 John L. Anthony, "Changing Patterns of Louisville's Black Residential Areas", Paper presented at Conference of Southeast Division of the Association of American Geographers, November 19, 1976, University of Louisville Archives, File "Blacks-Housing", 1,4.
- 134 Kentucky Commission on Human Rights, "Fair Housing: Myth vs. Fact", University of Louisville Archives, File "Blacks-Housing", 1968.
- 135 Tracy E. K'meyer, 115.
- 136 Charles H. Calloway, "Letters to the Editor: Housing Law", *The Louisville Defender*, January 12, 1967, A6.
- 137 "Housing Law Appears Likely; Weak Police Powers Feared", *The Louisville Defender*, February 2, 1967, A1.
- 138 Frank Stanley, "Revision of Public Accommodations Law is a 'Backward Step'", *The Louisville Defender*, January 19, 1967, A6.
- 139 Frank Stanley, "An Explosive Lull", *The Louisville Defender*, February 2, 1967, A6.
- 140 John L. Anderson, "Changing Patterns of Louisville's Black Residential Areas", 8.
- 141 Ruth Bryant, Interview with Kenneth L. Chumbley.
- 142 Ibid.
- 143 "Housing Law Appears Likely; Weak Police Powers Feared", *The Louisville Defender*, February 2, 1967, A1.
- 144 Tracy E. K'Meyer, 116-120.
- 145 Clarence Matthews, "Aldermen Receive Revised Open Housing Ordinance; Jail Sentences, Fines Out", *The Louisville Defender*, February 16, 1967, A1.
- 146 J. Mansir Tydings, "Rights Movement May Be Sick, Not Dead", *The Louisville Defender*, February 16, 1967, B6.
- 147 Ibid, B6.
- 148 Ibid, B6.
- 149 Tracy E. K'Meyer, 125-126.
- 150 "Street Demonstrations Threat Brings Rebuttal From Prominent Citizens", *The Louisville Defender*, March 2, 1967, A1. "Louisville in Limelight As Demonstrations Loom Again", *The Louisville Defender*, March 2, 1967, A1.
- 151 Clarence L. Matthews, "Louisville on Verge of Passing Housing Law; Objections Voiced As Demonstrations Commence", *The Louisville Defender*, March 9, 1967, A1.
- 152 Ruth Bryant, Interview with Kenneth L. Chumbley.
- 153 Ibid.
- 154 Tracy E. K'Meyer, 186.
- 155 *Kentucky's Black Heritage: A Supplement to Current Texts on Kentucky History* (Frankfort, Kentucky Commission on Human Rights; 1971), 127-128.
- 156 *Kentucky's Black Heritage*, 128.
- 157 "Louisville Survey West: Final Report", E-3.

Chapter III

- 158 Kwame Ture and Charles V. Hamilton, 162.
- 159 Lyman Johnson interviews.
- 160 Nat Tillman, "1966 Was Shaped By 'Black Power', Backlash", *The Louisville Defender*, January 5, 1967, A1.
- 161 "More Racial Unrest Feared", *The Louisville Defender*, January 12, 1967, A8.
- 162 Ibid, A8.
- 163 Ibid, A8.

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- ¹⁶⁴ Ruth Bryant, Interview with Kenneth L. Chumbley.
- ¹⁶⁵ Peniel E. Joseph, *Neighborhood Rebels*, 5. Joseph's conception of black power extends far beyond civil rights, calling it one of the most important forces in shaping the urban landscape of postwar America. He also argues that black power grew out of a self-determinism shaped by African American's marooned position in decaying city centers that, through discriminatory laws and traditions, they were unable to escape. It was in this landscape, in city centers such as Louisville, that the modern American cityscape was created, largely through the crucible of a civil rights struggle rooted in black power rhetoric.
- ¹⁶⁶ Thomas Sugrue, xxi.
- ¹⁶⁷ Tracy E. K'Meyer, 187.
- ¹⁶⁸ Manfred G. Reid, Sr., Interview with David Cline, June 6, 2006, University of North Carolina.
- ¹⁶⁹ Tracy E. K'Meyer, 187.
- ¹⁷⁰ Manfred G. Reid, Sr., Interview with David Cline.
- ¹⁷¹ "Absence "Sways" Civil Service Board", *The Louisville Defender*, vol. 36, no. 11, May 30, 1968, A1.
- ¹⁷² "Negro Officer Accuses Police Group of Racism", *The Louisville Defender*, vol. 36 no. 12, June 6, 1968, A1.
- ¹⁷³ "Rioting Breaks Out in Louisville; State Police, Guard Called to Help", *The Courier Journal*, vol. 226 no.149, May 28, 1968, A11.
- ¹⁷⁴ Ruth Bryant, Interview with Kenneth L. Chumbley.
- ¹⁷⁵ Ibid.
- ¹⁷⁶ Lyman Johnson, interview with Regina Monsour, November 9, 1977, University of Louisville.
- ¹⁷⁷ Tracy E. K'Meyer, 192-193.
- ¹⁷⁸ Ibid.
- ¹⁷⁹ Ruth Bryant, Interview with Kenneth L. Chumbley.
- ¹⁸⁰ Ibid.
- ¹⁸¹ Ibid.
- ¹⁸² Ruth Bryant, Interview with Kenneth L. Chumbley.
- ¹⁸³ Ibid.
- ¹⁸⁴ Tracy E. K'Meyer, 188. Ruth Bryant, Interview with Kenneth L. Chumbley.
- ¹⁸⁵ Lyman Johnson, interview with Regina Monsour, November 9, 1977, University of Louisville.
- ¹⁸⁶ Ibid.
- ¹⁸⁷ Ruth Bryant, Interview with Kenneth L. Chumbley.
- ¹⁸⁸ Tracy. E. K'Meyer, 188.
- ¹⁸⁹ Ibid, 188.
- ¹⁹⁰ Ibid, 188.
- ¹⁹¹ Manfred G. Reid, Sr., interview with David Cline.
- ¹⁹² Tracy E. K'Meyer, 189.
- ¹⁹³ Ruth Bryant, Interview with Kenneth L. Chumbley.
- ¹⁹⁴ Anne Moore, "Airlines Officials Spike Carmichael Rumors", *The Courier Journal*, vol. 226 no.149, May 28, 1968, A11.
- ¹⁹⁵ "Rioting Breaks Out in Louisville: Police, Guard Called to Help", *The Courier Journal*, vol. 226 no.149, May 28, 1968, A11.
- ¹⁹⁶ John Finley, "Crime Commission Urges Riot Probe, Visit By Mayor", *The Courier Journal*, No. 152, May 31, 1968, B1.
- ¹⁹⁷ Ibid. Paul M. Branzburg, "How It All Began: Witnesses Say Disorder Was Sparked By Rumor", *The Courier Journal*, vol. 226 no.149, May 28, 1968, A11.
- ¹⁹⁸ "Guard Ordered to Riot Duty As West End Looting Flares," *The Courier Journal*, vol. 226 no. 149, May 28, 1968, A11.
- ¹⁹⁹ Paul M. Branzburg, "How It All Began: Witnesses Say Disorder Was Sparked By Rumor", *The Courier Journal*, vol. 226 no.149, May 28, 1968, A11.
- ²⁰⁰ Paul M. Branzburg, "How It All Began: Witnesses Say Disorder Was Sparked By Rumor", *The Courier Journal*, vol. 226 no.149, May 28, 1968, A11.

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- 201 Ibid, A11.
- 202 "Rioting Breaks Out in Louisville: Police, Guard Called to Help", *The Courier Journal*, vol. 226 no.149, May 28, 1968, A11.
- 203 "Police Reports Outline the Story of the Night's Outbreaks of Violence", *The Courier Journal*, vol. 226 no.149, May 28, 1968, A11.
- 204 Ibid.
- 205 "Rioting Breaks Out in Louisville: Police, Guard Called to Help", *The Courier Journal*, vol. 226 no.149, May 28, 1968, A11.
- 206 Ruth Bryant, Interview with Kenneth L. Chumbley.
- 207 Ibid.
- 208 Ibid.
- 209 "Riots Flare Anew in Louisville's West End", *The Courier Journal*, vol. 226, no. 150, May 29, 1968, A1.
- 210 Ibid, A1.
- 211 Ibid, A1.
- 212 "Protesters Ask Removal of Guard", *The Courier Journal*, vol. 226, no. 150, May 29, 1968, A6.
- 213 Ibid, A6.
- 214 Ibid, A6.
- 215 Ibid, A6.
- 216 Ibid, A6.
- 217 Kathleen Arnold, "Official Tells of Escape From Besieged Bank", *The Courier Journal*, vol. 226, no. 150, May 29, 1968, A6.
- 218 Ibid, A6.
- 219 Ibid, A6.
- 220 Paul M. Branzburg, "View at 28th and Greenwood: Police Lit the Fuse", *The Courier Journal*, vol. 226, no. 150, May 29, 1968, A7.
- 221 Ibid, A7.
- 222 "Guard Leaves Trouble Area; Curfew is Lifted By Schmied", *The Courier Journal*, Vol. 226, No. 151, May 30, 1968, A1.
- 223 Anne Moore, "Operation 'Cool It': Clergymen, Settlement Workers Join Efforts to Sooth [sic] Ragged Tempers and Allay Fears", *The Courier Journal*, Vol. 226, No. 151, May 30, 1968, A13.
- 224 Ibid, A13.
- 225 Ibid, A13.
- 226 Frank L. Stanley, Jr., "While the City Burned Mayor Schmied Golfed", *The Louisville Defender*, Vol. 36., No. 11, May 30, 1968, A1.
- 227 Ibid, A1.
- 228 Ibid, A1.
- 229 Cecil Biye, "West End Riot Laid to Officer Clifford's Reinstatement; East End Trouble Predicted", *The Louisville Defender*, Vol. 36, No. 11, May 30, 1968, A1.
- 230 Paul M. Branzburg, "Bystanders Dislike Violence, But 'It Might Get Us Recognized", *The Courier Journal*, Vol. 226, No. 151, May 30, 1968, A13. " 'I don't approve of destroying property," said Mrs. Doris Kirby, 35. 'But it seems like that is the only way to open people's eyes. I'm with them down on the corner. They are my people.'" Others interviewed repeated similar statements. Others recommended carrying the violence to white neighborhoods while others disagreed saying that if that occurred, "the white man is going to come here and tear us up. That is going to start a war." Throughout *The Courier Journal* coverage of the riots, Paul M. Branzburg was the only writer who consistently sought out and reported the views and opinions of individuals from the West End.
- 231 Tracy E. K'Meyer, 191.
- 232 Ibid, 191.
- 233 Paul Bulleit, "Curfew Violation Charges Against 49 Filed Away", *The Courier Journal*, Vol. 226, No. 151, May 30, 1968, A16.
- 234 Tracy E. K'Meyer, 190. Rod Wenz, "Price Tag of Riot Placed at 200,000 First Day", *The Courier Journal*, Vol. 226, No. 149, May 28, 1968, A7. "Riot Victims Eulogized Amid Charges of Murder", *The Louisville Defender*, Vol. 36, No. 12, June 6, 1968, A1.

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- 235 Rod Wenz, "Insurors [sic] Will Honor Riot Claims", Vol. 226, No. 151, May 30, 1968, B18.
- 236 Manfred G. Reid, Interview with David Cline.
- 237 Ibid.
- 238 "Eerie Calm Pervades 28th, Greenwood", *The Courier Journal*, Vol. 226, No. 153, June 1, 1968, B4.
- 239 "Riot Victims Eulogized Amid Charges of Murder", *The Louisville Defender*, Vol. 36, No. 12, June 6, 1968, A1.
- 240 Tracy E. K'Meyer, 190.
- 241 "Couple Told Son's Death Will Be Studied", *The Courier Journal*, Vol. 226, No. 152, May 31, 1968, B1.
- 242 "Riot Victims Eulogized Amid Charges of Murder", *The Louisville Defender*, Vol. 36, No. 12, June 6, 1968, A1.
- 243 Tracy E. K'Meyer, 190.
- 244 Lyman Johnson, Interview with Regina Monsour.
- 245 "Stiff Opposition Threatens Eugene Robinson's Appointment", *The Louisville Defender*, Vol. 36, No. 12, June 6, 1968, A1.
- 246 "Robinson Asks for Support From Bishop C.E. Tucker", *The Louisville Defender*, Vol. 36, No. 12, June 6, 1968, A1.
- 247 Tracy E. K'Meyer, 191.
- 248 John Finley, "Crime Commission Urges Riot Probe, Visit By Mayor", *The Courier Journal*, Vol. 226, No. 152, May 31, 1968, B1.
- 249 Ibid, B1.
- 250 Tracy E. K'Meyer, 191.
- 251 John Finley, "Crime Commission Urges Riot Probe, Visit By Mayor", *The Courier Journal*, Vol. 226, No. 152, May 31, 1968, B1.
- 252 Ibid, 192.
- 253 Frank L. Stanley, Jr., "While the City Burned Mayor Schmied Golfed", *The Louisville Defender*, Vol. 36., No. 11, May 30, 1968, A1. John Finley, "Crime Commission Urges Riot Probe, Visit By Mayor", *The Courier Journal*, Vol. 226, No. 152, May 31, 1968, B1.
- 254 John Finley, "Crime Commission Urges Riot Probe, Visit By Mayor", *The Courier Journal*, Vol. 226, No. 152, May 31, 1968, B1.
- 255 John Finley, "Crime Commission Urges Riot Probe, Visit By Mayor", *The Courier Journal*, Vol. 226, No. 152, May 31, 1968, B1.
- 256 Ruth Bryant, Interview with Kenneth L. Chumbley.
- 257 John Finley, "Crime Commission Urges Riot Probe, Visit By Mayor", *The Courier Journal*, Vol. 226, No. 152, May 31, 1968, B1.
- 258 "Carmichael Rumor Squelched by Aide", *The Courier Journal*, vol. 226, no. 150, May 29, 1968, B24.
- 259 Ruth Bryant, Interview with Kenneth L. Chumbley.
- 260 "Black League Paid Expenses for Cortez", *The Louisville Defender*, Vol. 36, No. 12, June 6, 1968, A1.
- 261 Ibid, A1.
- 262 William F. Chafe, 184-197. Throughout, Chafe's narrative of the riot in Greensboro beginning on May 21, 1968, bears striking resemblance to the events in Louisville only a week later. The reaction of Greensboro city officials with the accusations of conspiracy and a "Black Panther plot" and the existence of an FBI agent provocateur are especially relevant.
- 263 425 F.2d 453: United States of America, Plaintiff-appellee, v. James Richard Cortez, Defendant-appellant, United States Court of Appeals, Sixth Circuit, April 30, 1970.
- 264 Ibid.
- 265 Ibid.
- 266 Tracy E. K'Meyer, 193.
- 267 Ruth Bryant, Interview with Kenneth L. Chumbley.
- 268 Manfred G. Reid, Interview with David Cline.
- 269 Tracy E. K'Meyer, 194.
- 270 Ibid, 192.

Conclusion

²⁷¹ Kwame Ture and Charles V. Hamilton, 35.

²⁷² "Three Negro Militants Accused of Dynamite Plot", *The Courier Journal*, Vol. 226, No. 154, June 2, 1968, A16.

²⁷³ "Three Negro Militants Accused of Dynamite Plot", *The Courier Journal*, Vol. 226, No. 154, June 2, 1968, A1.

²⁷⁴ "Three Negro Militants Accused of Dynamite Plot", *The Courier Journal*, Vol. 226, No. 154, June 2, 1968, A16.

²⁷⁵ "Three Negro Militants Accused of Dynamite Plot", *The Courier Journal*, Vol. 226, No. 154, June 2, 1968, A16. "Guard Reduced", *The Courier Journal*, Vol. 226, No. 154, June 2, 1968, A16.

²⁷⁶ "Three Negro Militants Accused of Dynamite Plot", *The Courier Journal*, Vol. 226, No. 154, June 2, 1968, A16

²⁷⁷ "Louisville Summer --- 1968; What Really Happened? Many See Cover Up For Racial Justice", Issued as a Public Service by Kentuckians Against the Kentucky Un-American Activities Committee (KUAC), October 24, 1968, Louisville Courthouse Records.

²⁷⁸ Ibid.

²⁷⁹ Ruth Bryant, Interview with Kenneth L. Chumbley.

²⁸⁰ Catherine Fosl and Tracy E. K'Meyer, *Freedom on the Border: An Oral History of the Civil Rights Movement in Kentucky*, (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2009), Bill Allison Interview.

²⁸¹ William F. Chafe, 194-195.

²⁸² Cecil Biye, "Lawyers Appeal Change of Venue", *The Louisville Defender*, Vol. 36., No. 44, January 23, 1969, A1.

²⁸³ Ruth Bryant, Interview with Kenneth L. Chumbley.

²⁸⁴ Ibid. Tracy E. K'Meyer, 197.

²⁸⁵ Lyman Johnson, Interview with Regina Monsour.

²⁸⁶ Tracy E. K'Meyer, 197. Manfred G. Reid, Interview with David Cline.

²⁸⁷ Tracy E. K'Meyer, 197-198.

²⁸⁸ Ruth Bryant, Interview with Kenneth L. Chumbley.

²⁸⁹ Manfred G. Reid, Interview with David Cline.

²⁹⁰ Manfred G. Reid, interview with David Cline.

²⁹¹ Tracy E. K'Meyer, 196-197. Ben Johnson, "Black Six Trial Enters Second Week", *The Louisville Defender*, Vol. 38, No. 16, July 2, 1970. Ben Johnson, "Directed Verdict Ends Trial of 'The Black 6'", *The Louisville Defender*, Vol. 38, No. 17, July 9, 1970.

²⁹² Ruth Bryant, Interview with Kenneth I. Chumbley. Bryant claimed that the trial of the Black Six was the first such trial that laid the groundwork for all the others. Though the short timespan between the indictments in Louisville, the charges of Police Chief Paul Calhoun in Greensboro, and the Chicago Seven make this unlikely, they do not disprove the claim.

²⁹³ "A Dream Deferred", Frank L. Stanley Sr. Papers, File "Speeches 1968-1969", Box 6, March 4, 1969.

²⁹⁴ William F. Chafe, 198.

²⁹⁵ Ibid, 198.

²⁹⁶ "The Potential of Black Women", Frank L. Stanley, Sr. Papers, File "Speeches 1968-1969", Box 6, July 30, 1969.

²⁹⁷ Manfred G. Reid, Interview with David Cline.

²⁹⁸ Kwame Ture and Charles V. Hamilton, 185.

Interviews

Manfred G. Reid, Sr., interview with David Cline, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, June 6, 2006, transcript.

The following interviews were accessed through the University of Louisville Archives and Special Collections African American Oral History Collection.

C.H. Parrish, interview with Dwayne Cox and William Morison, University of Louisville, December 14, 1976, tapes 208 and 209, transcript.

Dr. Eleanor Young Love, interview with Kenneth Chumbley, University of Louisville, October 2, 1978, tapes 646 and 647, transcript.

Frank Moorman, interview with Ken Chumbley, University of Louisville, August 17, 1978, tapes 602 and 603, transcript.

Lyman T. Johnson, interview with Dwayne Cox, University of Louisville, May 6, 1976, tape 167, transcript.

Lyman T. Johnson, interview with Regina Monsour, University of Louisville, November 9, 1977, tape 437, transcript.

Maurice F. Rabb, interview with Dwayne Cox, University of Louisville, August 15, 1977, tapes 404 and 405, transcript.

Ruth B. Bryant, interview with Kenneth L. Chumbley, University of Louisville, July 24, 1977, tapes 592 and 593, transcript.

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