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LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

GROWING DIVERSITY:
URBAN RENEWAL, COMMUNITY ACTIVISM, AND THE POLITICS OF
CULTURAL DIVERSITY IN UPTOWN CHICAGO, 1940-1970

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

PROGRAM IN HISTORY

BY
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CHICAGO, IL
AUGUST 2015
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<tr>
<td>CCUO</td>
<td>Chicago Commission for Urban Opportunity</td>
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<tr>
<td>CMC</td>
<td>Chicago Mountain Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DUR</td>
<td>Department of Urban Renewal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ERAP</td>
<td>Economic Research and Action Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HHUC</td>
<td>Hull House Uptown Center</td>
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<tr>
<td>JOIN</td>
<td>Jobs or Income Now</td>
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<tr>
<td>MUPC</td>
<td>Montrose Urban Progress Center</td>
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<tr>
<td>OEO</td>
<td>Office of Economic Opportunity</td>
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<td>SDS</td>
<td>Students for a Democratic Society</td>
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<tr>
<td>STREETSG</td>
<td>Socialization, Training, Recreation, Education, Employment, Technical Services</td>
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<tr>
<td>UCC</td>
<td>Uptown Chicago Commission</td>
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INTRODUCTION

In 1970 the legendary Chicago author and media personality Studs Terkel released *Hard Times*, a book based on oral histories about the Great Depression. Terkel interviewed dozens of people, drawing out their memories of how they survived the 1930s. As always, he carefully selected a broad range of perspectives that traversed race, class, and geography. Terkel found some of his richest sources in Chicago’s Uptown neighborhood, where he had many close friends. Indeed, Terkel became so enamored with the low-income, marginalized, and activist residents of Uptown that he moved there in 1977. Terkel was taken by some of his Uptown *Hard Times* respondents enough to return to them time and again, for books and radio or television shows about work, race, music, and even death.

One such case was that of Buddy Blankenship, a West Virginian who migrated to Uptown in the mid-1960s. Blankenship was a life-long coal miner before being pushed out of Appalachia by a constricted labor environment. He joined thousands like him in Uptown—poor southern and Appalachian whites with very similar circumstances, but also Puerto Ricans displaced by nearby urban renewal projects, American Indians seeking sustainable employment away from the reservation, and Asian Americans who purchased apartment buildings and operated restaurants, among many others. Uptown, as Terkel was fond of saying, was Chicago’s premier multicultural port-of-entry. Blankenship told Terkel about his tough life in the southern mountains, about his long walk to a tiny
school, about his backbreaking mine work that he started as a teenager, and about the cruel company bosses, and the death and maiming he witnessed over the years. He told these poignant stories in the peculiar southern mountain accent: saying ‘it’ as ‘hit’ and ‘mines’ as ‘mans.’ Blankenship spoke in clipped sentences, and Terkel’s microphone picked up his shortness of breath—a doctor diagnosed Blankenship with black lung not long after his arrival in Chicago, an often fatal fibrosis caused by long-term exposure to coal dust. Although most of the migrant’s story centered on the 1930s, his reflection on his life of the proceeding forty years made the ultimate impact. Terkel chose to open the edited published version of the conversation with Blankenship’s plain but elegiac statement, “I’ve been in depression ever since I’ve been in the world.” Blankenship’s was a quintessential Terkel story, presenting a distinctive cultural angle to the point of romanticization, a sympathetic tale of the struggle to beat a stacked deck. It was also a quintessential Uptown story.¹

“Growing Diversity: Urban Renewal, Community Activism, and the Politics of Cultural Diversity in Uptown Chicago, 1940-1971” examines the development of one of the nation’s most culturally and economically diverse neighborhoods. This character resulted from a historical process centered on the shifting politics of cultural diversity itself. Boosters, urban renewal and redevelopment advocates, community activists, and low-income residents defined diversity on their own—often competing—terms. These dynamics manifested in urban planning and architecture, working-class and middle-class

leisure, radical community organizing, and film. Beyond the demographic development of social and economic heterogeneity, “Growing Diversity” traces the ways that historical processes influenced the ways that people defined and used the ideal of cultural diversity. In Uptown no conception of diversity ever completely prevailed, and the conflicts and cross-fertilization of ideals inscribed itself on the infrastructure of the neighborhood and the consciousness of its residents.

Significant social, political, and cultural forces converged in postwar Uptown. As such, this work follows in the tradition of urban histories built upon neighborhood studies that aim to illuminate broad topics by way of the investigation of a limited space. University of Chicago sociologists were among the first to produce scholarly neighborhood studies, in the first quarter of the twentieth century. This Chicago School viewed space in cities in terms of urban ecology, where the neighborhood acted as a field or container for social and economic phenomenon.\(^2\) Postwar ethnographers and sociologists asked new questions of the neighborhood, such as those concerning urban renewal and domestic migration.\(^3\) More recently, urban historians have depicted neighborhoods as emblematic of major national and global themes, such as the rise of the nineteenth century ‘slum,’ racial residential succession in the 1960s, working class whiteness and homeownership, and middle-class liberal attempts of intentional black-

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white integration. Some sociologists, meanwhile, continue to explain the neighborhood as both a ‘container’ and agent of social themes. Even Uptown has attracted space-based studies of distinct social and political themes, such as southern and Appalachian white migration, resistance to residential displacement, and gentrification.

“Growing Diversity” adapts these models to the critical study of the concept of postwar urban diversity. Historians of the period are beginning to turn greater attention to instances of intercultural and interracial interaction in the modern city. Topics centered on multiracial coalitions after the mid-1960s continue to attract scholarship, as historians revise presumptions about the strict racial separation of the New Left and “identity

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politics” in the late-60s. Other scholars have located important interracial and multiracial efforts among liberals in the preceding and proceeding decades. Both of these aspirations for diversity occurred in Uptown—the liberal drive for cosmopolitanism and racial harmony, and the persistent calls for multiracial coalition-building in the wake of the New Left and the emergence of the black power movement. The neighborhood focus of “Growing Diversity” allows for explorations of the ways that these conceptions of diversity interacted and influenced the other.

The space to which the descriptor “Uptown” relates varies according to its source, and the time of its use. In the 1920s the City of Chicago adopted community area boundaries suggested by University of Chicago sociologists. The researchers carved the city into what they considered 75 cohesive areas. They declared “Uptown” to be the space bounded by Irving Park Road on the south, Lake Michigan on the east, Devon Avenue on the north, and Ravenswood Avenue on the west. By doing so the sociologists and city officials legitimated a recent branding effort by boosters of this lakefront area, who envisioned a commercial and residential enclave on par with Manhattan’s Uptown and Times Square. Unofficially, however, the northern section of the community area never fully identified itself with the central and southern sections. Many residents north

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of Bryn Mawr Avenue either turned their interests to Uptown’s northern neighbor, Rogers Park, or considered themselves a distinct community. When business and civic elites met in 1955 to address Uptown’s postwar challenges, they defined Uptown—which they dubbed a “city within a city”—on a scale smaller than had the University of Chicago sociologists. Therefore, the “Uptown” of the urban redevelopment era consisted of the area bounded by Irving Park Road to the south, Lake Michigan to the east, Bryn Mawr Avenue to the north, and Clark Street to the west. The population of this area ranged from about 90,000 to 75,000 after 1940, with some of the city’s densest blocks in the center, and much less dense small apartments and single family homes on the southeast and northwest perimeter. These boundaries also roughly mirrored those of the most important geographic unit in Chicago—the political ward. Uptown included the entirety of the 48th ward.


Uptown between 1950 and 1970 experienced and contributed to four overlapping themes that helped define postwar northern and Midwestern cities: dramatic demographic
change, neighborhood conservation and urban renewal, solutions for poverty, and the rise of New Left-inspired community activism. Each of these themes has their distinct roots and legacies on local, national, and international scales. Taken together, they forged a crucible for Uptown’s distinctive—and contested—self-identification with cultural diversity.

Uptown experienced volatile population shifts after World War II. Developers and speculators overbuilt the neighborhood’s rental stock in the decade before the Great Depression. An abundance of vacant and affordable Uptown apartments awaited veterans who desperately sought housing in the immediate years after the war. Uptown’s relative distance from concentrations of black residents—and Chicago’s strictly separated dual housing market—ensured that Uptown attracted white apartment seekers. Profits motivated landlords to subdivide apartments, creating overcrowded fire traps. The population boom was short-lived, as developers built new middle-class and stable working-class housing on Chicago’s fringes and in the suburbs. Once again vacancy soared in Uptown’s low-rent housing stock. Through much of the 1950s and 1960s, however, these vacancies beckoned newcomers to the city—particularly low-income whites from the South and Appalachia like Buddy Blankenship, but also American Indians, Japanese Americans, and Puerto Ricans. In this regard, Uptown was not the typical northern or Midwestern residential neighborhood undergoing white-to-black “racial succession.” Indeed, less than 400 hundred African Americans called Uptown home through the mid-1960s, living almost exclusively on a single street dubbed the

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9 The topic of the anxieties of white homeowners over the specter of black in-migration dominate the historiography of postwar urban residential race relations. See Hirsch, Making the Second Ghetto; Seligman, Block by Block; Nicolaides, and My Blue Heaven.
“Segregated Block.” “Growing Diversity” highlights the ways that multiracial low-income migration interacted with notions of racial succession otherwise forged by the much more well-known black-white binary relationship.

The second major urban historical theme that emerged in postwar Uptown—middle-class and elite desires for neighborhood conservation and urban renewal—developed as a response to the steady in-migration of low-income newcomers. Self-appointed stewards of Uptown worked to define and limit “blight” and infrastructural deterioration in the 1950s and 1960s. As with many other communities in the 1950s, commercial institutions provided the economic impetus for Uptown urban renewal. Several important institutions committed resources to the cause, including large neighborhood banks, real estate firms, middle-class apartment and co-op associations, and hospitals. The insurance industry was especially powerful in Uptown, with the headquarters of three of the nation’s largest firms located in the community. Although commercial interests bankrolled efforts to attract urban renewal, liberals with idealistic conceptions of urban diversity articulated the plans and proposals. This coalition formalized in 1955 with the formation of the Uptown Chicago Commission (UCC), and evolved through the 1960s as it persistently campaigned for the attention of urban renewal agencies. No figure personified liberal urbanism more than the UCC’s first executive director. Albert Votaw was a Quaker conscientious objector during World War II and an important young intellectual for the radical left through the 1940s. Yet, as with so many other leftists, Votaw moved towards liberal-centrist ideas of modernization and the perfection of existing socioeconomic structures. Votaw’s departure from Uptown
marked an important shift in the UCC message, from diversity-friendly conservation towards calls for massive clearances that would have unsettled Uptown’s increasingly diverse population.

The redeveloper-liberal alliance was not without its tensions. By 1965—even before the emergence of radical anti-displacement activists—these strains had limited the UCC’s impact. This growth-backed liberal urbanist vision was borne partly from intellectual and cultural currents, and partly from pragmatism in a competitive marketplace for redevelopment designation and funding. As such, “Growing Diversity” contributes to recent scholarship on the intellectual and cultural facets of urban renewal, which diverges from conceptions of urban renewal as only a method for economic growth and the control of space.10

Through 1960 UCC leaders concerned themselves with the social condition of Uptown as much as the infrastructural and residential. Because of this, a renewed interest in confronting poverty emerged as the third significant urban theme in postwar Uptown. Neighborhood liberal urbanists were the first to address this issue, beginning in the late-1950s. The same people who drafted spatial urban conservation and renewal plans also proposed social and cultural programs thought to be capable of easing newcomers’

“adjustment” to the city. “Growing Diversity” adds to recent scholarship on liberal conceptions of postwar poverty and inequality through the 1960s. Uptown produced several schemes for poverty reduction, including a proposal for a center dedicated to concentrated social services for rural migrants to Chicago. These efforts preceded the much more well-known federal and municipal War on Poverty and Model Cities programs, which also had strong presences in Uptown after 1965.

Postwar poverty, as with demographic change and urban renewal, has long attracted the attention of urban historians. Recent trends in this literature include a greater focus on the local experience of campaigns against economic inequality in the 1950s and the subsequent War on Poverty.11 “Growing Diversity” adds to this literature, as liberal urbanists and bureaucrats longed to realize in Uptown an abatement of economic inequality that could serve as a model for the city of Chicago and beyond. Uptown, however, was no mean emblem for postwar neighborhood poverty. Instead, the cultural and social markers of Southern and Appalachian white depravation complicated dominant narratives of urban poverty otherwise based on racial biases. Nevertheless, Uptown provided those addressing poverty a unique place where the two major fronts of the War on Poverty collided—dense aging cities and Appalachia. While the histories of these two arenas are well-established, they rarely converge.

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Liberals and War on Poverty workers and officials were not the only people who came to Uptown after 1965 seeking to ameliorate economic inequality. The fourth—and least appreciated—defining theme of Midwestern and northern postwar cities involves the rise of radical community organizing. The Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) was the impetus for radical activism in Uptown. The SDS commissioned the Economic Research and Action Program (ERAP) in 1964, in an effort to test theories about the structural nature of economic inequality. The SDS initiated several ERAP projects in cities throughout the North and Midwest, where progressive college students and ex-students lived among the poor and worked to organize them against abusive landlords and inattentive government officials. The Uptown ERAP—named Jobs or Income Now (JOIN)—emerged as one of the most successful and noteworthy locations. JOIN organizers were particularly interested in organizing what they believed to be a racist, or at least unenlightened, low-income Southern and Appalachian white community. If successful, the anti-racist community movement could have served as a critical component of the much sought after “interracial movement of the poor” expounded by the SDS and other New Leftists. JOIN did not meet these lofty goals, even though organizers did inspire a small but dedicated cadre of local “indigenous” radical leaders who confronted welfare mismanagement, landlord neglect, and police brutality through protest and civil disobedience. Indicative of the increase of Uptown’s non-white population, the indigenous element of JOIN was much more diverse than outside ERAP organizers could have imagined.
Scholars have traced the rise and fall of the New Left from the movement’s very beginning. SDS members wrote the first drafts of the organization, and even in Uptown ERAP organizers released in 1970 a thick book that details the efforts to build JOIN.\(^\text{12}\) Early histories of SDS, in general, and ERAP, in particular, depict the movement as mostly noble, sometimes naïve, and somewhat fundamentally flawed. The most vocal and media savvy SDS members and prominent university chapters received most attention. Furthermore, many prominent histories of the New Left favor the anti-war activities that defined the group after 1965.\(^\text{13}\) The community organizing drives, such as JOIN, have received much less attention, with the notable exception of Jennifer Frost’s *An Interracial Movement of the Poor*.\(^\text{14}\) “Growing Diversity” contributes to the slow but steady reexamination of the marginalized aspects of the New Left. Instead of typifying the New Left as a diffused constellation of political and cultural impulses, “Growing Diversity” gives 1960s radicalism a spatial component. As such, this fourth theme of the postwar American city materializes less unexpectedly and highlights the impact of the first three themes.

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These four major themes were often in tension and conflict in Uptown. However, none is absolutely antithetical to any other. A neighborhood level examination of each reveals many unexpected similarities to and influences on others. For example, New Left organizers held many of the same class and cultural biases about poor Southern and Appalachian whites that Albert Votaw’s liberal urbanism held a decade earlier; and some New Left radicals found a welcoming—but short-term—home in liberal Uptown War on Poverty programs. Such crosswalks between significant themes in urban history become visible through training a lens on a neighborhood space across time. Yet the neighborhood is more than just a container or boundary in which social factors become visible. The neighborhood itself—the physical and cultural landscape, the sediments of demographic shifts, and the spatial relationship to the metropolitan area—often becomes an actor.

In the mid-1950s, liberal members of the Uptown Chicago Commission boasted about the neighborhood’s diversity of culture, economic status, and residential stock. In 1969, a cynical newspaper reporter opened his article: “If 20 casual visitors had to nominate a Chicago neighborhood for oblivion, the Uptown community near the Wilson Avenue L station might get 20 votes. It is seedy, dreary, congested, despairing—a multiracial poor people’s patch, Appalachia in Chicago. Crumby taverns, shabby resale shops, broken glass and broken hopes are its trademarks.” Social, economic, political, and cultural changes marked this divide that stretched over two decades. “Growing Diversity,” while local in narrative focus, incorporates the impact of national and global forces of the 1950s and 1960s.

Uptown was, at times, emblematic and even typical of postwar neighborhoods facing disinvestment and poverty, urban renewal, and community activism. More often, however, several of the area’s relatively peculiar characteristics made Uptown an exceptional distillation of otherwise scattered themes that percolate in urban and cultural history. A density of affordable and available housing guaranteed the arrival of newcomers to the city. Heterogeneous land use, which included a distinct landscape of cultural attractions and commercialized leisure, ensured that people with interests in the neighborhood would contest both space and the definitive character of Uptown. Distance from Chicago areas open to African American residency, ironically, kept otherwise diverse Uptown predominantly white through the 1960s. Events in the preceding decades, however, prefigured the diversification of the community’s racial composition from the 1970s onward. This social reality of diversity developed in the Uptown crucible of significant postwar urban themes, alongside the constructed and contested abstract ideals of diversity.
CHAPTER ONE

THE “CITY WITHIN A CITY”

Imagine sitting on the Chicago Transit Authority’s Howard Line, sometime in the early 1950s, as the train rumbles into the daylight just north of the downtown Loop. Seated on the east side of the northbound train, you peer through the back porches and fire escapes of Lincoln Park and Lakeview. Soon, you crane your neck to get a glimpse into the outfield of Wrigley Field. Then, after a tight S-curve, the landscape suddenly changes. To your left, you briefly see the substantial headstones of Graceland Cemetery that stretch across the greenery. Now, as you near the Wilson Station, the hulking CTA train barn dominates your view. The train stands at Wilson for a while, long enough to truly take in the vista. Ahead is the largest movie theater you’ve ever seen, foregrounded by the blinking lights of smaller theaters, ballrooms, and lounges. A white and stately triangle bank building contrasts the glitz. To your immediate left, and stretching far to your right towards the barely-visible lakefront, the buildings are the densest anywhere outside the Loop. Below you, along Broadway and down Wilson Avenue, scores of people make their way to stores, small apartments, flop-houses, or shot-and-beer joints. Just out of sight are the opulent homes of Buena Park, and the bucolic, spacious front yards of Lakewood-Balmoral. You’re lucky: North Shore Electric’s “Electroliner” pulls up beside you, on its swift run from the Loop to downtown Milwaukee. The train looks like something out of one of those popular spaceman shows on television, with its
tangerine and green metal façade wrapping around the engine. You’ve seen enough to know that this place is unique: vibrant, diverse, and maybe a little intimidating. You’re in Uptown.

In the 1950s, those intent on reviving Uptown as a neighborhood attractive to middle-class shoppers and residents, likewise, took a long look at the surrounding cityscape. They found a socially and economically diverse community that differed from other areas hoping to thwart the trends of suburbanization and disinvestment. The Uptown redevelopment movement did not spring forward with a clear plan of action in hand. Redevelopment grew from a combination of the social realities of Uptown and the prevailing—yet variable—renewal efforts occurring in Chicago and throughout the nation after World War II. As they organized and plead their case, Uptown boosters formulated a redevelopment ethic that enlisted community assets such as the heterogeneity of housing stock, exoticized commercial leisure, and social diversity. If, they argued, a “city within a city” like Uptown could be preserved, then it would hold valuable lessons for city neighborhoods everywhere.¹

¹ Using the phrase “city within a city” to describe specific urban neighborhoods has not been uncommon throughout the twentieth century. Boosters often embraced this term as a way to promote the unique and marketable aspects of their communities. For Uptown boosters, the term related not only to the range of services and urban amenities within a contained space, but also a corollary density and the area’s economic, residential, and cultural heterogeneity.
The “Three Uptowns”

In 1950 87,345 people lived in the roughly 1 ½ square mile area that covered Uptown, making it one of the densest in Chicago. The economic, residential, and cultural diversity that defined Uptown comes as little surprise, given this density. Redevelopment-era Uptown consisted of three distinct but interlocking communities: “Low-Rent Uptown,” “Silk-Stocking Uptown,” and “Commercial Uptown.” These three Uptowns reflected not only a physical space, but also a conceptual one. The spatial expressions of social, economic, and cultural forces presented both promise and challenge for those working towards redevelopment after 1950.

The first Uptown, a slice of dense apartment and hotel housing in the central and southeastern portions of the area, provided the backdrop for those entering the neighborhood from the south. Low-Rent Uptown included a six-block square residential area informally known as Sheridan Park, bounded by busy Broadway and the Elevated rail tracks on the east and Clark Street on the west, and situated between St. Boniface’s Cemetery and Graceland Cemetery on the north and south, respectively. The slight

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2 Redevelopment-Era Uptown (to 1965), consisted of the area bounded by Irving Park Road (south), Bryn Mawr Avenue (north), Clark Street (west), and the lake (east). Although the officially-recognized “Uptown Community Area” extended north to Devon Avenue, redevelopment officials had a more limited conception of the neighborhood. The northern-third of Redevelopment-Era Uptown “seceded” in 1980 and formed the official Edgewater community area. This is all described in the introduction. Uptown population is tabulated from: United States Population Census, 1950. Minnesota Population Center. National Historical Geographic Information System: Version 2.0. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota 2011. Total population is from Census tracts 34, 35, 26, 27, 28, 22, 23, 25, 19, 20, and 21 in the City of Chicago. The actual number of people living in Uptown almost certainly exceeded the Census count, given the documented difficulties in accurately counting residents in low-income and transient areas—a designation perhaps no more apt for central Uptown. Only the Census tracts 125 and 130 on the city’s Near West Side and tract 113 in Lincoln Park rivaled the density of the central Uptown tracts.

3 These are my terms and conceptual boundaries.
diagonal alignment of the east-west borders created in Sheridan Park narrow, angled one-way streets on a slight grade, a rarity in a flat city typified by a seemingly unrelenting grid. Here solid brick four- and six-flat apartments dominated the landscape. Victorian single-family homes dotted some of the blocks, a remnant of Uptown’s early days as a sleepy, elite railroad suburb. With more than 12,000 residents in 1950, Sheridan Park was the tenth-most populated census tract in Chicago. In the 1950s thousands of low-income whites migrated to Sheridan Park from the South and Appalachia, pushed out of the region by agricultural and mining mechanization and overpopulation. Uptown civic elites did not identify this particular social and cultural dynamic until well into the 1950s, but they did generally consider the transient, low-income tenants of Sheridan Park apartment buildings a source of blight.

Several apartment buildings and residential hotels loomed over the Wilson and Lawrence train stops adjacent to Sheridan Park’s east and north. This portion of Low-Rent Uptown included single room occupancy (SRO) and cubicle residential hotels, two sources of significant anxiety for the neighborhood’s middle-class and elites. Among the most visible of ultra-low income housing was the Wilson Men’s Club Hotel, a vacant department store at Wilson and Racine converted into a cubicle residency in 1929. A businessmen’s and property owners’ group, the Central Uptown Chicago Association (CUCA), resisted the opening of the hotel, despite the purchaser’s $140,000 investment and his promise that the hotel would function more like a YMCA than a “flop house.”

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4 Paul Siegel, “Uptown Chicago: The Origins and Emergence of a Movement against Displacement” (PhD Diss., University of Illinois at Chicago, 2002), 52-53.
The onset of the Great Depression, however, insured a market for ultra-low rent housing. Men paid a modest weekly rent to sleep in seven-foot square spaces enclosed by paneling and topped with chicken wire. In 1940, 122 men lived at the Wilson. Residents ranged in age from 19 to 79, with an average of 46 years of age. Sixty-seven were native Midwesterners, and 30 where born in Europe or Canada. Only four had begun their lives in the South: an advertising salesman from Kentucky, a soda jerk from Arkansas, a baker from North Carolina, and an unemployed Tennessean. All but 25 of the Wilson Hotel men listed the same address as in 1935, a statistic that calls into question assumptions of the rootlessness of ultra-low-income renters. Eighteen were divorced, nine were widowed, 55 were otherwise single, and 25 were married but living on their own. Job titles mostly included generic laborer, porter, and janitor, but also orchestra musician, cabinetmaker, and railroad brakeman. A printer reported the highest salary—$2,950—but 25 residents reported less than $100 annual income. Many indicated “additional income sources,” probably retirement funds. Five men worked for the Works Progress Administration.\(^5\)

The Wilson Men’s Hotel frequently attracted media attention, specifically whenever resident behavior violated the law. The frequency of the stories indicated the

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degree to which many of the residents lived on the margins of social and legal norms. Men at the Wilson were often pressed to crime by financial hardship, addictions, and broken families. In 1944 a resident confessed to robbing his former boss of $712 in winnings after a chance encounter at Sportsman’s Park racetrack. The next year a judge sentenced a resident to 90 days in jail for attacking an Uptown doctor who refused to prescribe him pain medicine. An unlucky 66-year old man staying at the Wilson Hotel faced charges of failure to support his wife: after 16 years of estrangement, she happened to spot him at the Wilson El station. One particularly sensational story centered at the Wilson during this time involved a 53 year-old former street car driver, who was charged with repeatedly “seducing” a 16 year-old girl he had once met on his street car.6

The most common characteristic held by the Wilson Hotel men was not marginalized behavior or even low income; it was their race. The cubicles were home only to whites. This racial restriction was no accident, as the hotel owner openly enforced an all-white policy. One factor in the decision to ban African Americans from the Wilson could have been pressure from the CUCA, which was at that time aggressively pursuing the containment of Uptown’s small black population, as well as insuring that no additional African Americans moved into the neighborhood. The racial restriction of even ultra-low-rent housing in Uptown created an environment that resulted in one of the greatest concentrations of white poverty in the nation. As clearance and redevelopment

constricted integrated ultra-low rent housing throughout the region’s “Skid Rows,” many whites filtered into Uptown.

Uptown’s black community was small, but the oldest such between suburban Evanston and Chicago’s Near North Side. Through 1960, between 200 and 500 blacks resided on the 4600 block of Winthrop Avenue, a curved and abbreviated lane dubbed the “Segregated Block” that runs parallel to Broadway between Wilson and Leland Avenues (See Map 2). Uptown’s black community coalesced as early as 1920, when a handful of service workers employed by area elites began buying and renting out Winthrop Avenue buildings. In 1931, after almost three years of effort, Uptown’s white business community proudly announced an agreement signed by 1,500 property owners—representing 90 percent of the owners between Montrose Avenue and Argyle Avenue, from Clark Street to the lake—that pledged not to sell or lease any more property to blacks for 20 years. These boosters particularly boasted of the pledge as a forward-thinking measure to halt any potential “colored invasion” as seen on Chicago’s South Side; press accounts noted the economic growth benefits of insuring segregation. The CUCA enforced the restrictive covenant through most of the 1940s, stating that no black person could buy, own, or rent property “except in a block that is inhabited entirely by

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7 Evanston’s black community developed around domestic workers employed by wealthy whites along the lakefront, stretching north into more distant suburbs. See Andrew Wiese, Places of Their Own: African American Suburbanization in the Twentieth Century (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009).
Negroes”—ostensibly containing black residency to the lone Winthrop block established before the covenant.8

Leaders of the redevelopment movement worked to maintain the Uptown color line through at least 1960. The most glaring example of this bolstering of segregation occurred when the members of the leading redevelopment organization protested an advertisement that could have been construed as an effort to begin ‘block-busting’ an

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area adjacent to the Segregated Block. Redevelopment advocates wrote to the Chicago Tribune, complaining that the ad’s request for a “colored buyer” served only to create panic among nearby property owners—thus driving down asking prices. The seller, also contacted by Uptown boosters, eventually retracted his call for a black buyer after explaining that he placed the ad in a moment of financial distress.9

The 4600 block of Winthrop was not exclusively black in 1940. Twenty-four non-blacks, from six families, lived in an apartment building on the block’s northeast corner. All these residents moved there no later than 1935, and constituted a mix of incomes, marital status, and race. Abe Diamond, a 55-year old tailor shop owner, lived in one apartment with his 50-year old wife Bessie. The Diamonds were naturalized American citizens born in Poland and Russia, respectively. Their neighbors included the extended Bryson family, whose room sharing was more typical of central Uptown. The single Bryson matriarch was supported by the $1,200 salary of her shoe salesman son Edward, her waitress daughter Mary, and Mary’s husband Rudolph—a Mexico-born file clerk for a railroad company. The lodger Carlos Orozco, a welder and native of Nicaragua, offset some of the Bryson’s rent.

The remainder of the block consisted almost entirely of African American families and single boarders. Service occupations like janitor, porter, and housekeeper dominated the block, but the community was not without a professional class that included a doctor and an engineer. Jesse Green, a Mississippi-born chauffeur, reported

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9 Siegel, “Uptown Chicago,” 166-168. The property in question was on the 5000 block of Winthrop Avenue, which eventually did become the first block open to blacks after 1960.
the highest income of Winthrop blacks in 1940—$2,080 per year. Two residences on the west side of the middle of the block, more typically, held housekeepers and janitors with salaries ranging from $100 to $500 per year. All of these residents, except the youngest children, were born in Kentucky, Tennessee, or Georgia, but had lived at the same addresses for at least five years. Across the street, the Jones family held similar low-paying jobs, despite some of them being relatively well-educated. Although Dempsey Jones, 34, only finished 8th grade, his wife Adele was a high school graduate. The disparity of the couple’s education could be attributed to their birthplaces. Adele was an Illinois native, where blacks had greater schooling opportunities than in Dempsey’s native Mississippi. Either way, the Joneses worked as a janitor and part-time maid. Along with children Joanne, 5, and Dempsey, Jr., 4, Dempsey’s sister Corrine, 27, lived in the apartment. Corrine had finished two years of college and earned $700 per year as a waitress. Edward and Nancy Collier bought a six-flat building on Winthrop in the 1940s, using Edward’s savings first from being a cook at a YMCA and then from the family’s restaurant in the adjacent Rogers Park neighborhood. Once in Uptown, the Colliers converted their garage into Collier’s Fried Chicken, which remained a neighborhood institution through the 1970s. Nancy Collier, one of ten children born in Mississippi, became a staple of the Winthrop Avenue community. Collier later told her family that a young Lou Rawls spent much time on Winthrop Avenue in the 1950s,

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visiting his father who lived on the block. Some former residents claim these visits inspired Rawls’ Grammy Award-winning single “Dead End Street” (1967).\(^\text{11}\)


Silk-Stocking Uptown contrasted starkly with the social realities of the Wilson Men’s Hotel and the Segregated Block. This second of the Three Uptowns consisted of a population whose clout far outpaced its numbers, especially in the residential blocks of two sections that bracketed central Uptown. Buena Park, on the southeast corner of Uptown near the lakefront, earned the reputation as Uptown’s “Gold Coast” from its very pre-Depression beginnings. Here, on a few irregular blocks pastorally designated as “Terraces,” the white elite and upper-middle class built large and often ornate single-family residences on large lots. Renowned architects such as George Maher, Louis Sullivan, and a young Frank Lloyd Wright placed in Buena Park stunning examples of homes in Beaux Arts, Arts and Crafts, and Prairie styles. Apartments were rare in Buena Park, where the density and demographics resulted in a character much closer to upper-class early-century suburbs than postwar inner-cities. Many corporate executives and civic leaders who made the six-mile commute to the Loop called Buena Park home — including the head of the powerful Chicago Land Clearance Commission, Ira Bach.

The other portion of Silk-Stocking Uptown was less wealthy, but no-less influential when it came to neighborhood redevelopment. Lakewood-Balmoral, representing the northwest corner of Uptown, consisted of large single-family homes on wide blocks. Like Buena Park, homeowners composed the majority of Lakewood-Balmoral residents. The homes were of a substantial but sober late-Victorian and Arts and Crafts-style that reflected the upper-middle-class white Anglo-Saxon Protestant
population of the district. Well maintained stone two-flat duplexes also dotted the blocks on the southern edges of Lakewood-Balmoral. If Buena Park was Uptown’s “Gold Coast,” then Lakewood-Balmoral was its stable “old money” interior neighborhood. A disproportionate number of those active with Uptown redevelopment called these areas home.

The relative affluence of Silk Stocking Uptown and neighborhoods surrounding the area accentuated the low-income nature of Low-Rent Uptown (see Map 4). In 1950 Sheridan Park, the Central Kenmore-Winthrop Corridor tract that included the Segregated Block, and the crowded Broadway Corridor between Lawrence and Montrose held the densest concentrations of rental units. The 1949 household median income of these areas ranged from 63 to 74 percent of the citywide income. Census tracts associated with Silk Stocking Uptown and those hosting lakefront co-ops, by contrast, boasted between 93 and 102 percent of the citywide median household income. The tracts in Uptown’s neighboring communities fared even better, as a whole. The tract to the north of Uptown with the lowest income still represented 94 percent of the citywide rate, while those to the west and south recorded 88 and 77 percent, respectively. Traveling further in each direction, the ratio of median income to citywide income grew smaller, until arriving in the central Lincoln Park area slated for clearance.

Changes in Uptown’s median income became evident in 1960, and indicated the anxieties perceived by redevelopers during the 1950s. Most of the Low-Rent areas slipped income levels. Income in Central Uptown declined from 64 to 59 percent of
citywide income. South Winthrop-Kenmore Corridor income fell from 78 to 71 percent of the city, while the Broadway Corridor witnessed a decrease from 69 to 63 percent. Other Low-Rent tracts fared better. Central Winthrop-Kenmore Corridor income dipped just slightly from 74 to 72 percent, while Sheridan Park’s rose one percentage point to 75 percent. Income level change in the areas that redevelopers deemed threatened by blight showed mixed results. The North Kenmore-Winthrop Corridor decreased from 93 percent to 84 percent of the citywide median. Silk Stocking Lakewood-Balmoral and Buena Park, however, actually became more affluent in the 1950s, rising to 120 and 130 percent of the citywide income, respectively.¹²


Several demographic and housing characteristics of Low-Rent Uptown created concern among redevelopers. Conventional wisdom of neighborhood conservation and urban renewal advocates held that leading indicators of blight and incipient blight included density and physical deterioration. In 1950, the standard metric of
overcrowding—persons per room per occupied household—was a factor throughout Uptown, excluding Buena Park and Lakewood-Balmoral (see Map 5).\textsuperscript{13} In Sheridan Park more than 1,000 households hosted more than one person per room, which translated to about 20 percent of the tract. The Central Kenmore-Winthrop Corridor covered about one-half the area of Sheridan Park, yet held 1,400 households of one or more person per occupied room. No other census tract in all of Chicago exceeded 1,200 such households. The lakefront blocks extending north from Uptown into Rogers Park were crowded, but to a lesser extent. Otherwise, as with median income, central Uptown appeared an island of redeveloper concern amidst a North and Northwest Side sea of normalcy. By 1960 the overcrowding indicator for Sheridan Park dipped to 830 households, while that of Central Kenmore-Winthrop dropped even more drastically to 728. All but one of the city’s most overcrowded tracts—the lone outlier being Sheridan Park—were in the Black Belts of the South and West Sides. This change graphically reflected the crest of Chicago’s dual housing market, which restricted blacks to overcrowded areas while whites enjoyed much greater relative freedom to move into less crowded areas of the city and the burgeoning suburbs.

\textsuperscript{13} This standard for “crowded” is outlined in, “Census Statistics on Housing for Chicago: 1950, 1940,” (Chicago: Chicago Community Inventory at the University of Chicago), 30.
Redevelopers believed that overcrowding and transiency inevitably resulted in deterioration and dilapidation. Demographics from 1960 show reasons for concern. Over 70 percent of the residents of Central Uptown and the Broadway Corridor had relocated
there between 1954 and 1960. All the overcrowding and tenant turnover, argued redevelopers, caused blight through the wear and tear on housing stock. “Deteriorated” and “Dilapidated” were the two categories that were most expected to indicate incipient blight and blight, respectively. By 1960 a particular form of blight—that of dilapidated residential hotels rooms lacking baths—was increasing throughout Central Uptown, at nearly the highest rate for the entire city. More than 1,800 dilapidated residential hotel rooms were in Sheridan Park in 1950, ranking only behind the West Side Skid Row and a few overcrowded portions of the South Side Black Belt (see Map 6). About one in six housing units in adjacent North Winthrop-Kenmore were considered deteriorated, showing how the incipient blight of apartments presumably accompanied the more advanced blight of residential hotels.

The housing characteristics that alarmed redevelopers had roots in the years before the postwar housing shortage, intense apartment conversions, and migration of rural people. A block-level survey of Chicago land use in 1939 particularly uncovered high rates of transiency and crowding in Uptown. Sixteen blocks, in most Uptown areas outside of Buena Park and Lakewood-Balmoral, consisted of residents with a mean residency of one year or less—easily the greatest concentration on the North Side and among the highest in the entire city. Over 40 percent of the dwelling units of the 4800 block of Broadway, for example, housed 1 ½ or more persons, while seven other blocks
scattered throughout central Uptown had 30 to 40 percent. No other area of the North Side came close to this cluster of crowding.\textsuperscript{14}

\textsuperscript{14} Chicago Plan Commission and the Works Progress Administration, \textit{Volume One of the Chicago Land Use Survey} (Chicago: Chicago Plan Commission, 1939).

Despite the residential turnover and crowding, however, late-1930s Uptown was by no means a slum or even alarmingly ‘blighted.’ Only one block of Broadway, across from the Wilson Station, consisted of more than 60 percent dwelling units in need of
major repair. The rate of needed repairs for all other Uptown blocks was indistinguishable from the surrounding North Side. The vacancy rate for only the North Winthrop-Kenmore Corridor (12 to 15 percent) stood out from the rest of the North Side. Several blocks had at least ten conversions—no surprise given the sheer number of housing units in the area—but Uptown had far fewer conversions than neighboring Lakeview. An amalgamated “housing condition” standard that combined plumbing facilities and crowding identified only a few truly troubled blocks in Uptown. The 4700 block of Racine in east Sheridan Park and the 4600 block of Kenmore in Central Uptown consisted of over 80 percent units that met the standard. A few other blocks around the Wilson Station had over 70 percent of such units. Certainly Uptown stood out from the rest of the North Side in this regard, but probably so because of the concentration of SROs and rooming houses—which the survey nevertheless found to be in good condition. The “housing condition” in Uptown was a far cry from the situation in black communities on the South Side.15

By 1960, however, one particular housing concern set Uptown apart from other blighted and near-blighted sections of the city, and reveals a specific aspect of redeveloper anxiety in the 1950s. Although most Uptown apartments were crowded on a by-household basis, the same area had among the highest vacancy rates for the city (see Map 7). This vacancy rate was a legacy of the intense apartment conversions that occurred during the crisis of housing availability after the war, through the early 1950s.

Military demobilization and a return to civilian work in the cities fueled the initial burst of apartment conversions. For thousands of non-black young men and married couples, housing options in Chicago consisted of sharing apartments, putting your name on a long list for temporary federal housing, or renting a cramped room carved out of a larger apartment in Uptown. So many chose Uptown that several streets in the neighborhood became known as “honeymoon lane” by 1950. Although the 1939 survey showed a rather even distribution of one- through six-room apartments, by 1960 one- and two-room units accounted for over 50 percent of Uptown housing. Uptown population had increased at 2½-times the overall rate for the city through 1950. Yet as new housing became available for non-blacks in Chicago and the suburbs, Uptown’s population declined by over 10,000, or 12 percent, between 1950 and 1960. The profitability of unauthorized apartment conversions and a continual (if diminished) stream of newcomers to the city still compelled property owners to continue conversions. Almost 6,000 units were added to Uptown between 1950 and 1960, but only 747 from legal conversions and new construction. Converted or not, 13 percent of Uptown dwellings sat vacant in 1960—twice the rate for the city.\textsuperscript{16}

Given the high vacancy rate of shoddily-converted and low-rent apartments, those invested in redeveloping Uptown observed the low-income people living in the dense

areas and shuddered at the prospect of their even greater numbers. A host of factors that emerged in the 1950s placed Uptown on the verge of receiving a substantially larger influx of low-income newcomers. Locally, urban renewal displacement in Lincoln Park meant that thousands of poor Puerto Ricans and whites were in need of low-rent apartments. A major migration of low-income whites from Appalachia and the South led to a drastic rearrangement of Uptown’s cultural landscape. Hundreds of American Indians began to cluster in Uptown in the mid-1950s, pushed from reservations to the city by federal incentives and a general search for income. All told, the density of available low-rent housing, the high rates of transiency, and the aging building stock formed the foundation of redevelopment desire and activity in postwar Uptown.

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The financial, retail, and leisure attractions of the area made up the third of the Three Uptowns. Like Low-Rent Uptown and Silk-Stocking Uptown, Commercial Uptown defined much of the neighborhood’s character from its very beginning. The intersection of rail and road transportation, the surrounding residential density, and a location central to Chicago’s growing North Side made Uptown a prime location for retail and commercial development. Through the 1940s, Uptown real estate was among the most valuable of any location outside of the downtown Loop. A 1942 survey of the
foot values of street corners found the highest prices at singular intersections in Englewood and Lakeview. Every one of the eight major intersections in Uptown, however, registered values of $500 to $3,000—easily the densest concentration of notable values outside of the Loop. Commercial Uptown included financial institutions like banks and office buildings. The Uptown National Bank building exemplified the economic power centered in the area. Uptown National was the neighborhood’s most prominent landmark, a nine-story, white marble-clad, neo-classical monument to finance on Lawrence and Broadway in the center of Uptown. Less glamorous but well-capitalized financial institutions called postwar Uptown home, as well. Two large insurance companies maintained their national headquarters in Uptown. Just east of Uptown National Bank, Kemper Insurance based their operations in a terra cotta-clad tower just east of Uptown National. Nearby, Combined Insurance Corporation spread across three buildings. With access benefits similar to that of the Loop—but without the soaring rent—Uptown provided an excellent option for corporate headquarters like Kemper and Combined. Large retail and department stores formed another key portion of Commercial Uptown. Goldblatt’s occupied the triangle building across from Uptown National, on the neighborhood’s most heavily traveled corner. Dozens of retailers lined Broadway, running the length of Uptown.

Auxiliary retail strips bisected Broadway at Wilson, Argyle, and Bryn Mawr. Each of these had a unique character that helped define postwar Uptown. Wilson Avenue

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ran directly through dense, low-income Low-Rent Uptown. Working-class taverns, pawn shops, day labor agencies, and small retail stores dominated the street. Four blocks north, Argyle Street shops catered to Uptown’s Jewish residents—the neighborhood’s largest “ethnic” population through about 1950. Synagogues rested on the blocks just to the north and south of Argyle. In 1946 the Jewish population of the North Winthrop-Kenmore Corridor that included Argyle Street crested at 3,708—more than 61 percent of the population. The Jewish population declined steadily after 1946 through most of Uptown.19 Bryn Mawr Avenue, the northern border of urban redevelopment-era Uptown, retained an Art Deco character even after the war. The Belle Shore Apartments anchored this stretch of store-front retail shops and cafes. The western boundary of Uptown, Clark Street, consisted of another auxiliary commercial strip. The stretch boasted a pronounced Swedish character and the best-organized merchant’s group in the area, the North Clark Businessman’s Association.

Commercialized leisure—restaurants, taverns, lounges, concert halls, and theaters—honeycombed the entirety of Uptown. For many in Uptown and certainly beyond, these components of Commercial Uptown defined the area. Entrepreneurs maintained spaces that appealed across the class spectrum. Shabby bars served the large working-class and low-income population, a considerable source of stress for middle-class and elite voices calling for urban redevelopment. Classier joints, like Irv

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19 The next largest Jewish concentration in Uptown was in Buena Park, with 1,539 residents (47 percent). Erich Rosenthal, *The 1950 Survey of Rogers Park, West Ridge (West Rogers Park), and Uptown: A Study of Population Shifts and Boys’ Clubs Needs* (Chicago: Young Men’s Jewish Council, 1950), 24-27.
Benjamin’s, catered to those more inclined to prime rib or seafood. The character of leisure most prominent in Uptown fell between these poles, in what is best described as lower-middlebrow entertainment. At the southwestern edge of Uptown, professional wrestling called the Rainbo Gardens home in the early-1950s. A typical fight card from 1952 pitted Nature Boy Buddy Rogers against Ruffy Silverstein, with an undercard of Nanjo Singh—“famed for his cobra hold.” If wrestling was not your preferred distraction, perhaps your interest would be piqued by the Silver Palm Burlesk on Wilson or the Du Bonnet Lounge on Argyle (featuring a comedian-pianist and the “vivacious” Sharon Howe). Uptown’s small but commercially-active Asian population operated restaurants and lounges that enhanced the neighborhood’s reputation for “exotic” entertainment. Honolulu Harry’s Waikiki Beach, which started on Broadway before moving to a larger home on Wilson, kept a house band and hula dancers to which guests enjoyed tropical dishes and cocktails. Howard Chinn’s New Wilson Village advertised “the finest Cantonese dishes prepared by expert chefs using age old formulae.” Although the population of Uptown remained more native-born than almost any other Chicago neighborhood, its uncommon concentration of exoticized commercial leisure ironically gave it a reputation for diversity that urban redevelopers seized upon.\(^\text{20}\)

The most visible aspect of Commercial Uptown was the large concert halls and movie theaters, each of which fought for attention with ostentatious architecture. The Uptown Theatre was king among these. Movie industry giants Balaban and Katz built the

\(^{20}\) The description of 1950s Uptown leisure is based on a typical “Pleasure Pages” section of the Edgewater-Uptown News, January 15, 1952.
massive 4,000-seat theater in 1926—the year after the construction of the iconic Uptown National Bank on the opposite corner of Lawrence and Broadway. An ornate Spanish-revival and rococo façade and opulent eight-story lobby was Uptown’s pre-Depression gilded age incarnate. Just to the south of the Uptown, past the jazzy Green Mill lounge, the smaller but still grand Riviera Theater hosted concerts and dances. Down Lawrence, the Aragon Ballroom and its cloud-adorned ceiling rose alongside the elevated train tracks. Once a prewar mecca for the world’s most renowned big bands, the Aragon attempted a jazz ballroom revival in the 1950s.

Glitzy lounges, theaters, and ballrooms once thrived during Uptown’s Jazz Age. The Chicagoan, a short-lived journal modeled after the New Yorker, frequently updated readers from the time of Uptown’s intoxicating pre-Depression cultural landscape. One 1927 account of Wilson Avenue began,

A city within a city…The heart, liver, and lungs of Uptown Chicago…Hotels, skyscraping apartments of the kitchenette variety, big movie palaces, banks, department stores, specialty shops, big dance halls, a bathing beach, streets filled with cars, sidewalks crowded with eager-eyed youth…A myriad of flashing lights, bobbed stenographers, shop girls with the shortest skirts in the world…Drug store cowboys, and girls, flirts of both sexes…Legs, legs, legs, and arms, too…Fat legs, thin legs, fancy legs, plain legs, pretty legs, ugly legs…No corsets.21

Another Chicagoan Uptown dispatch, titled “Adventures in Insomnia: Those Wilson Avenue Hells,” dealt specifically with the neighborhood’s buzzing nightlife. The author followed the “clerks and stenographers and salesmen and young married folk” to places

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like the “chop suey parlor” and the Green Mill—already described as “ancient in its stand, [but] a young and lively club.” The observer also gave other less-sophisticated clubs notice, such as the Lido, where the crowd “hears an 8-piece band, shrugs its shoulders, chews its gum, inspects the no-drinking labels on the fizz-water bottles and so lasts the evening out until three or four a.m.”

By the 1950s, Uptown’s days of Gatsby-like nightlife were well-passed. Yet the legacy remained. These pre-Depression grand theaters and ballrooms, along with several other smaller live entertainment venues, gave Uptown a patina of Jazz Age glory. As with the exoticized middle-brow restaurants and lounges, urban redevelopment activists endeavored in the 1950s to enlist this cultural characteristic in their efforts to conserve and renew Uptown.

Not all of postwar Uptown fit neatly into the categorical “Three Uptowns.” Seams, trails, and nodes dotted and traversed the cultural and social landscape. Two important transportation routes—Broadway and the elevated train tracks—stitched together the “Three Uptowns” and guaranteed the neighborhood’s visibility for the thousands of metropolitan and regional travelers who passed through the area each day. Public spaces such as sidewalks, train stations, and parks provided points of contact in the heterogeneous “city within a city.” Public schools—particularly the two large elementary

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schools in central Uptown—proved to be manifestations of middle-class and elite anxiety over the fate of the neighborhood.\footnote{For a useful theoretical approach to urban landscapes built around trails, seams, and nodes, see Kevin Lynch, \textit{The Image of the City} (Cambridge: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 1960).}

One of the most important of these hybrid spaces in urban redevelopment-era Uptown was the Edgewater Beach Hotel and Apartments, a combination of residential and commercial structures. The Edgewater Beach anchored the northeastern corner of Uptown and sat directly on the lakefront. Edgewater Beach was the neighborhood’s greatest symbol of the pre-Depression gilded age, consisting of three ostentatious high-rises, acres of beachfront property, multiple swimming pools, several lounges and restaurants, and—during its heyday—a radio station and a seaplane dock. The luxury hotel design firm Marshall and Fox built the property in three phases: first a crucifix 400-room, nine-story hotel in 1916, and then a 600-room 18-story hotel annex in 1924, and finally a 12-story apartment building north of the hotel complex in 1929. Each of these designs announced with flair the developer’s intentions, with Spanish Revival stucco and Mediterranean details. The hotel complex was “Sunrise Yellow,” and the apartment building was a complementary “Sunset Pink” (see Figure 2). Hollywood stars, politicians, and visiting baseball teams regularly stayed at the hotel, and the dance halls featured performances by the likes of Paul Whiteman, Tommy Dorsey, and Benny Goodman. Like much of Uptown, Edgewater Beach suffered a gradual loss of status after the 1930s. The 1951 expansion of Lake Shore Drive cut off the hotel and apartments from the priceless lakefront beaches.
For a brief period, which coincided with the urban redevelopment era of the 1950s, the Edgewater Beach desperately attempted to regain its relevance. The Hotel Corporation of America purchased the property in 1957 and branded it alongside its other prewar glamor hotels that included the Hotel Roosevelt in New York City, the Mayflower Hotel in Washington, DC, the Hotel Cleveland in Cleveland, and the Somerset Hotel in Boston. The Edgewater Beach’s tropical façade and opulent spaces were readymade for the Polynesian and Caribbean fads that emerged in the mid-1950s. The Hotel Corporation presciently renovated one of its large dining rooms at the hotel into “The Polynesian Room,” a tiki lounge that hosted local and touring “exotic” acts. Middle-class guests of the Polynesian Room sipped umbrella drinks while listening to the slack-key guitars and ukuleles of acts with names like “Bernie Ching and the Smiling Irishmen.”

The Edgewater Beach Apartments became a co-op in 1949, hoping to attract those in the middle-class bucking the trend towards suburbanization.

Uptown co-ops represented an interstitial, aspirational space that did not directly correlate to any of the Three Uptowns. Besides the Edgewater transformation, developers built or planned large lakefront apartment co-op buildings in the optimistic years.

24 Harry’s ran afoul of the UCC in the late 1950s—it seemed a bit rowdier than the Polynesian Room. There were several shoreline motels built in the northern section of Uptown in the 1950s, most with tropical themes. Patrick Steffes, “Chicago’s Shoreline Motels—North,” Forgotten Chicago, http://forgottenchicago.com/features/chicagos-shoreline-motels-north/.

immediately following World War II. Builders of these co-ops sought to project an economically stable and urbane image onto the Uptown cityscape. As such, the co-ops combined the dense tenant character of Low-Rent Uptown with the desire for a class-element deemed more acceptable by community elites. Eugene Matanky, an early backer of Uptown redevelopment plans, financed the construction of a 530-apartment co-op building on Marine Drive, across from the northern tip of Lincoln Park on the lakefront. One block north, the firm Holsman and Holsman proposed the Argyle-Marine co-op apartments. The plans for Argyle-Marine called for a $2.4 million project with five nine-story buildings of two- and three-bedroom apartments. Each building would be spaced and angled in a manner so that all but 18 of the 180 apartments would enjoy a lake view. Ample green space between the towers minimized density, tying the plot more to the expansive park to the east than the tightly-packed residential spaces in every other direction. A promotional brochure included an artist’s rendering of an open-floor apartment furnished with International design furniture (see Figure 3). The co-op called for a $4,500 down payment, with the remaining $13,500 paid in monthly installments—which worked out to between $95 and $135 per month. These rates placed the Argyle-Marine Apartments in the realm of middle-class and upper-middle-class projects blossoming in places like Chicago’s Old Town and New York City’s Morningside Heights. The Argyle-Marine project never came to fruition, but the adjacent 15-story Aquitania, built in 1923, followed Edgewater Beach’s lead and voted to become a co-op.26

Figure 2. Postcard of the Edgewater Beach Hotel (left) and Apartments (far right) (ca. 1930). Edgewater Historical Society, Chicago.


The Birth of the Uptown Chicago Commission and the Claim for Civic Legitimacy

A singular organization of redevelopers emerged in the 1950s, dedicated to attracting and managing Uptown redevelopment. The kernel of the Uptown Chicago Commission (UCC) formed in March 1954, when Alderman Allen Freeman of the 48th Ward convened the Uptown Neighborhood Conservation Council. According to Freeman the Council aspired to “develop common goals and interests” of the relevant civic organizations of the neighborhood. These goals included maintaining living standards, enforcing zoning and building regulations, the proper planning for land use, and “to publicize Uptown as a fine residential neighborhood.” Steps towards these items involved halting blight’s spread from certain blocks, obtaining assistance from governmental agencies, and creating a “permanent citizen’s council.” These programs placed the Uptown Neighborhood Council squarely in the tradition of neighborhood conservation efforts happening throughout American cities in the early age of urban redevelopment.

The Uptown Neighborhood Conservation Council remained a caucus of businessmen and politicians, and thus had limited reach across the community. On November 5, 1955 these leaders met representatives from additional institutions at an Edgewater Beach Hotel dinner. There came into existence the UCC. Early commitments to the UCC included bank executives, co-op residents, large churches, hospitals, and executives from corporations headquartered in Uptown, most notably Kemper Insurance.

27 Memorandum to Organizing Committee for Neighborhood Conservation in Uptown, from Allen J. Freeman, March 5, 1954. UCC, Administrative, Correspondence File of Morris Braun, 1954-1956. UCC Collection, CHM.
and Combined Insurance Company. By the end of 1955 the UCC had collected over $12,000 for operating costs, ranging from $5 individual membership dues to contributions of $500 from the Edgewater Beach Apartments and Hotel and $750 from the Uptown National Bank.28

The UCC drew upon previous and ongoing neighborhood redevelopment schemes flourishing throughout the country. Redevelopment efforts in the 1950s included a variety of public and private projects that fell all along the spectrum of small scale rehabilitation to massive clearance. Public financing and the will for master planning fluctuated with political and economic factors. The decade after the war ushered in movements that were at times innovative and experimental, yet sometimes short-sighted and negligent of the social needs of residents living in areas deemed in need of redevelopment and conservation.

Many of these early redevelopment methods came of age in Chicago, and directly involved people who were later part of UCC programs. Thanks to an intense lobbying effort on the part of downtown Chicago interests, the Illinois Blighted Areas Redevelopment Act of 1947 declared slum clearance a “public good” and thus allowed for the use of eminent domain in land acquisition. The law created a group of local bureaucracies that could purchase real estate at market rate, clear the land, relocate those displaced, and then sell the land at a discount price for development by private enterprise. The law gave relocation the least concern: only 15 percent of the cleared land could be

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28 Treasurer’s Report, January 1, 1956. UCC, Financials, Treasurer’s Reports, 1956-1981. UCC Collection, CHM.
turned over to the Chicago Housing Authority for the construction of public housing. Despite these limitations Chicago civic leaders believed the law thrust the city to the forefront of the national dialogue on the challenges faced by postwar cities. Congress confirmed this sentiment with the passage of the National Housing Act of 1949, which the lawmakers explicitly modeled on the Illinois Act. Title I of the Housing Act allowed the Federal government to “write down” the acquisition of tracts of land in conjunction with local public agencies. The land would then be sold at-cost to private developers.29

One of the first tests of the new renewal opportunities happened on Chicago’s Near South Side, when several institutions such as Michael Reese Hospital and the Illinois Institute of Technology created the South Side Planning Board (SSPB) in 1949. The SSPB was committed to coordinating the clearance and redevelopment of proximate low-income and mixed-use neighborhoods. Leaders of the SSPB—which included finance executives, urban planners, and University of Chicago sociologist Louis Wirth—considered these majority-black communities “blighted” at best and “slums” at worst. The SSPB rejected calls by the Chicago Plan Commission for incremental rehabilitation and spot clearance, advocating a radical intervention on the scale of square miles instead of block-by-block. Nearby institutions in the Loop poured funds and political capital into the SSPB. Loop retailers presumed the growing black “slums” were destined to strangle their profitability, as customers would refuse to make the journey through the deteriorating and threatening areas in order to shop. By 1950 the SSPB had overseen the

acquisition and clearance of a vast tract of land near the lakefront. Two large housing complexes funded by the New York Life Insurance Company followed.

Very few displaced residents could afford the new housing built upon the land they once called home; Chicago officials inconsistently and begrudgingly addressed the relocation mandates of the Federal Housing Act. As a result thousands of low-income African Americans moved to areas already experiencing tension between white homeowners and black newcomers. Therefore, controversy over relocation of displaced residents emerged alongside the earliest experimentations of building middle-income housing on top of cleared “slums.” When the Chicago Land Clearance Committee (CLCC) announced plans to simply rehouse displaced residents in new public housing, the race relations committee of the federal Public Housing Administration (PHA) became alarmed by the city’s specious claim. The PHA concluded that 11,126 families (80 percent of them black) would need to be relocated from the clearance sites approved by the Chicago city council. Yet, 7,800 of these families were ineligible for public housing—therefore leaving them to fend for themselves in Chicago’s racially-restrictive housing market. Activist groups documented and publicized the shortcomings of CLCC relocation policies. The NAACP provided the federal Housing and Home Finance

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30 The formation and expectations of the SSPB are spelled out in Michael Carriere, “Chicago, the South Side Planning Board, and the Search for (Further) Order: Toward an Intellectual Lineage of Urban Renewal in Postwar America,” *The Journal of Urban History*, Vol. 39, no. 3 (2013), 411-432. The most comprehensive account of the land acquisition, clearance, and relocation of the SSPB plan is by Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto*, 117-134. One Chicago official particularly perturbed by Federal regulations for proper relocation of displaced residents was Ira Bach, Uptown resident and head of the Chicago Land Clearance Commission. As later noted, Bach’s wife Ruth was active in the Uptown Chicago Commission during its first 10 years of existence.
Administration (HHFA) with statistics and detailed stories about displaced residents. For example, the complaints documented the ways that CLCC relocation officers steered displaced residents towards predatory rental companies that required exorbitant apartment search fees or hidden costs only revealed after signing a rental contract. As early as 1950, critics had taken to referring to urban renewal as “Negro removal.”

The city of Chicago did not always seek the large-scale demolition of troubled areas. Even before the burst of redevelopment plans in the 1950s, the city sometimes promoted plans for conservation and rehabilitation over clearance and relocation. In 1943, officials devised a long-range master plan for the management of Chicago’s built environment. The plan created five categories for the intensity of intervention deemed necessary. “Blighted” areas consisted of at least 50 percent residential structures built prior to 1895 and more than 50 percent of substandard dwelling units. Officials recommended massive clearance and reconstruction of blighted areas, sooner than later. “Near-Blighted” areas were defined as having either but not both of the “Blighted” characteristics, while “Stable” areas had 50 percent or more residential structures built between 1915 and 1929, and “New Growth” areas represented places of 50 percent or more of residences built after 1929. One-quarter of the city and most of its population—1.65 million people over 56 square-miles—fell into the “Conservation” designation in-between Near-Blighted and Stable. The age of residential structures mattered most for the Conservation designation. As long as 50 percent or more of the residential structures

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were built between 1895 and 1914, an area qualified as a Conservation district regardless of the cost or condition of that housing. Still, officials were particularly concerned with pockets of blight and incipient blight within Conservation areas. Plans called for the rehabilitation and stabilization of the Conservation zone for a period of 30 years, in order to devote greater resources to slum clearance and blight abatement. For Uptown, all but the Buena Park mansions fell into a vast Conservation belt that stretched from central sections of Lincoln Park north to the Chicago-Evanston border.32

As part of the 1943 master plan, the Chicago Plan Commission collaborated with the University of Chicago in formulating the Woodlawn Plan. This proposal recommended an intense and integrated saturation of conservation, spot-clearance, and rehabilitation in the Woodlawn community, just south of the University of Chicago campus and the Midway Plaisance. The university had a particular interest in the stabilization of Woodlawn, which was still almost exclusively white yet demonstrated the housing and demographic characteristics of other South Side areas that were beginning to attract more African Americans. City officials concurred and deemed Woodlawn a representative example of a conservation area, and hoped to demonstrate there the effectiveness of coordinated urban planning on a neighborhood level. The pilot program outlined overlapping efforts to eliminate poor structures on an individual basis, improve mass transportation and parks, enforce traffic and zoning standards that would divert

32 Meltzer Associates, Community Change, 10-11.
vehicles from residential areas, facilitate the private rehabilitation and de-conversion of apartments, and stimulate coordination among community organizations.\footnote{33 The Chicago Plan Commission, A Program for Community Conservation in Chicago and an Example: The Woodlawn Plan (Chicago: Chicago Plan Commission and the Woodlawn Planning Committee, 1946).}

The ideas behind the Woodlawn Plan aimed to inoculate the area from factors experts believed accelerated the slide of an area from one deemed worthy of conservation to one doomed to blighted or slum conditions. A lack of community resources encouraged asocial behavior and prevented the establishment of cohesive community self-help, reasoning went. Unregulated car traffic resulted in substandard and unsafe living conditions along busy roads, thus deflating land values and pushing residents to less-dense suburbs. If, as the Woodlawn Plan called for, private financing could halt blight, then public policy would need to facilitate coordination among churches, civic groups, and business associations on the neighborhood level. However, public officials soon deemed the gradualist reliance on private financing not up to the task of conservation. Planners shelved the Woodlawn Plan, as the neighborhood continued to lose white residents and thus became an even greater source of anxiety for the University of Chicago.

In lieu of comprehensive planning and funding, conservation and rehabilitation movements continued to appear, despite the failure to implement the Woodlawn Plan. Progressive white middle-class residents in the Hyde Park-Kenwood community—which included the University of Chicago campus and the area due north—organized for the
cause in 1949. The Hyde-Park Kenwood Community Council (HPKCC) hoped to stem
the flight of middle-class and elite white families out of the area—a movement largely
fueled by anxieties over the influx of low-income blacks displaced from clearance
projects throughout the South Side. HPKCC tactics included increasing pressure for
housing code violation enforcement and a managed incremental integration of the area
through the recruitment of middle-class black families. The program stemmed from a
“feeling of the inevitability of interracialism” among committee members. 34

Concurrently, University of Chicago’s South East Chicago Commission (SECC)
spearheaded the drive to expand Title I slum clearance to include neighborhood
conservation. This movement called for public financing for not only clearance and
redevelopment, but also for the stabilization of relatively sound neighborhoods that were
‘threatened’ by blight. The Illinois Urban Community Conservation Act (1953)
confirmed that blight prevention was a public good, thus triggering a state regime of
written-down purchases of blighted property. The Federal government once again
mirrored the Illinois legislation, in passing the Housing Act of 1954. Urban redevelopers
had erected a potent public-private apparatus that made possible the acquisition of ‘slum’
buildings and properties seen as incipient slums, or ‘blighted’ under the accepted
language of the day. With this new legal process in place, the University of Chicago’s
SECC exerted control over the community-based HPKCC. SECC redevelopment plans,
produced by urban planner Jack Meltzer, called for a combination of clearance of large

sites and spot clearance that resulted in a reduction of overall density yet an increase of middle-income housing, and only minimal public housing.\(^{35}\)

The stymied Hyde Park community-centered redevelopment hopes found expression throughout the country, despite the end result of renewal designed and implemented by institutions and professional planners. The Housing Association of Boston, for example, concluded in 1953 that no amount of public funding and policy could check the spread of blight in that city. Only small scale but persistent rehabilitation spurred by vigorous citizen participation would be up to the task. An HHFA study agreed, stating that the magnitude of relocation was too large and that only spot-clearance spearheaded by community input could work. The study specifically criticized recent massive clearance schemes in the city, such as that of the West End immortalized by Herbert Gans in *The Urban Villagers*.\(^{36}\) In Philadelphia, planners chose against the massive clearance and write-downs made available by the 1949 Federal Housing Act. The strong-willed city planner Edmund Bacon pushed for private sector partnerships that facilitated the rehabilitation and de-conversion of dense housing areas of the city’s older districts. Bacon’s plans specifically called for broad community input on redevelopment projects. The Philadelphia approach was so much a departure from what had been seen in


Chicago and New York, that *Architectural Forum* titled an article about it, “Clearing Slums with Penicillin, Not Surgery.”

Where the nascent Uptown redevelopment movement would fall along the spectrum of rehabilitation and clearance remained to be seen. Before any plans came the official incorporation of the UCC, soon after the fateful dinner at Edgewater Beach. The interim UCC board hired a full-time executive director, Albert N. Votaw, and a part-time administrative assistant, Dorothy Coningsby, to oversee the organization’s growth. On December 19, 1955 representatives of the UCC—dubbed the “Committee of Five”—met with officials from the vast City of Chicago urban redevelopment empire to introduce their resources and goals. Membership of the committee represented the true power behind the UCC: Edward Dobbeck, Vice President of Uptown National Bank; Henry Dubin, architect and builder; Charles Bromann, president of the Association of Food Dealers; Myer Hatowski, realtor and attorney; and executive director Votaw. The Committee of Five left the meeting with several suggestions from the Community Conservation Board (CCB), the most important city agency for the initiation of financial assistance for neighborhood redevelopment. Among this advice was the “importance of bringing together an area committee which would be representative of all segments of the

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area.” The city officials offered vague assurances that they would consider any well-composed proposals to declare Uptown a conservation district.  

Politics complicated the UCC’s early navigation of the murky waters of Chicago urban redevelopment. Civic leaders across Chicago were in the earliest stages of deciphering the governing style of Richard J. Daley, elected mayor in 1955. Democratic Party heavyweights deposed Mayor Martin Kennelly in 1954, dissatisfied with his allegiance to business over traditional party supporters such as precinct captains and organized labor. Alderman Freeman had even less standing with the new Daley administration than he did with that of Kennelly. Freeman was a key member of the city council’s “Economic Block,” a caucus of five aldermen committed to independence from the Regular Democratic Party. Some of the members of the Economic Block saw themselves primarily as progressive ‘good government’ activists. Others, like Freeman, sought to tie more closely the city’s future to business interests. In a particular challenge for the UCC’s prospects at City Hall, Freeman was a Republican. Even further complicating the situation, Martin Kennelly made his home at the Edgewater Beach Apartments.  

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38 Report of Meeting between the Uptown Chicago Commission “Committee of Five” and Community Conservation Board on December 19, 1955. UCC, Projects, Urban Renewal, March 1953 to March 1959. UCC Collection, CHM.

Urban redevelopment in 1950s Chicago relied upon a delicate interplay between neighborhood, municipal, and federal policy and funding. After the initial boom of clearance and rebuilding on the Near South Side and in Hyde Park, the city found its redevelopment reserves nearly depleted. An already intense competition among neighborhoods for re-designation as a conservation area—the key step to triggering local and federal funding—became even more heated. By May 1957 the city’s urban renewal bureaucracy was considering 10 proposals for redevelopment from neighborhood groups such as the UCC. Given the competition for dwindling resources, the city expected proposals that would satisfy federal requirements. One such requirement was that the sponsoring neighborhood organization should represent the community deemed in need of conservation or redevelopment.\textsuperscript{40} This factor, along with presenting a request for action clearly distinguishable from the proposals from the many other communities, resulted in the twin characteristics of the UCC’s drive for Uptown redevelopment in the 1950s. On the one hand, the committee strived to present itself as a grassroots movement. The UCC fostered community support and simultaneously promoted its supposed representativeness to a wider audience. On the other hand, Albert Votaw and his publicity campaign told a general story about Uptown that highlighted the neighborhood’s unique character in relation to other areas vying for redevelopment and conservation. All told, \textsuperscript{40} “4 More Areas to Join Fight on City Blight,” \textit{Chicago Tribune}, June 24, 1956. “Downs Tells Conservation Leaders to ‘Get in Line,’” \textit{Chicago Tribune}, February 3, 1957. “Renewal Plan Studied for 10 More Areas,” \textit{Chicago Tribune}, May 2, 1957. “Takes First Steps to Conserve Uptown Area,” \textit{Chicago Tribune}, September 29, 1957. For descriptions of Chicago’s competitive urban redevelopment environment of the 1950s and early 1960s, see Amada Seligman, \textit{Block by Block: Neighborhoods and Public Policy on Chicago’s West Side} (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), 75-87. For the changes in Chicago urban renewal policy from 1946 to 1962, see Jack Meltzer Associates, \textit{Community Change}, 20-38.
members of the UCC presented themselves as representative of an economically and culturally diverse community that could serve as a model for other neighborhoods, and even large cities as a whole.\textsuperscript{41}

Before the UCC could claim the legitimacy necessary to gain attention from the CCB, executive director Albert Votaw first had to define the UCC’s mission and promote it to a broader segment of Uptown. Votaw drafted a fact sheet about the UCC in January 1956. Under the heading, “Who Are We?” he explained, “All people living in our neighborhood: individuals, churches, businesses, banks, property owners; organized to help ourselves.” Under “Why Are We?” he summarized that the UCC intended to “safeguard the assets of the area” by collecting and disseminating information about the condition of the neighborhood and identifying “bad spots and potential sources of blight.” Other points included increased police protection, litter removal, better street lighting and traffic control, and building code enforcement.\textsuperscript{42}

The charter board members of the UCC recall both the economic-based “growth coalitions” and the civically-engaged cultural institutions that typified many urban renewal efforts of the 1950s.\textsuperscript{43} Those of a financial caste selected to serve three-year

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\textsuperscript{41} The UCC was keenly aware of the competitive marketplace for limited city funds for urban redevelopment. In a 1960 memo to a UCC board member, Votaw summarized seven other funded or pending community conservation efforts, including the financial and institutional details for each community conservation organization. “Memorandum from Albert Votaw to Edward Pabst,” January 25, 1960. UCC, Projects, 1960 Planning Program. UCC Collection, CHM.

\textsuperscript{42} Untitled press release, January 2, 1956. UCC, Administrative, Board of Directors Goals and Objectives, 1956-1982. UCC Collection, CHM.

\textsuperscript{43} Harvey Molotch, “The City as a Growth Machine: Toward a Political Economy of Place,” \textit{The American Journal of Sociology}, Vol. 82, no. 2 (September 1976), 309–332; Andrew E.G. Jonas and David
terms included a realtor, a representative of a company that owned large apartment buildings, and executives from four banks and three insurance companies. Others on the board who represented institutions with vested interests in Uptown included the manager of the Edgewater Beach Hotel and the minister of a prominent Lakewood-Balmoral church. Two PTA members seemingly brought a more grassroots presence, yet one of these was actually the most clout-heavy member: Buena Park resident Ruth Bach, president of the Stockton Elementary School PTA, was also the spouse of Ira Bach, head of the powerful CLCC.44 Uptown residents who formally joined the UCC indicated the middle-class and elite foundation of redevelopment. A list of new members from December 1956 is overwhelmingly populated by residents of Buena Park, Lakewood-Balmoral, and the lakefront co-ops—specifically the Edgewater Beach Apartments.45

The redevelopers backing the UCC initially drew most directly from gradualist, community-centered conservation efforts such as the Woodlawn Plan. Yet they understood the need for financial and political support, specifically from the city of Chicago. The UCC boosters needed to make a strong case for the full designation of Uptown as a conservation area—a move required before any federal or local funds would become available. Promotional tactics would be a critical aspect of early Uptown


redevelopment. The UCC visionaries sought to make the cultural and economic diversity of Uptown an asset; they argued that Uptown’s diversity made it both distinctive, and a potential model for redevelopment and conservation of the city of Chicago as a whole—and beyond. But this UCC tactic involved a politics of diversity: middle-class and elite UCC members carefully, and at times ambiguously, defined and enlisted neighborhood heterogeneity. They found the general ethic of diversity useful, but questions remained about how they would handle more problematic aspects of diversity, like those represented by the Wilson Men’s Club Hotel or the Segregated Block. Tactical choices had to be made in the conservation of the “city within a city,” and this negotiation involved individuals with a variety of backgrounds and expectations.
CHAPTER TWO

ALBERT VOTAW AND LIBERAL URBANISM

A newcomer became the voice of the Uptown Chicago Commission (UCC) during its first five years of existence, despite all the UCC leaders and members from the well-established financial, political, and cultural fabric of Uptown. Albert N. Votaw accepted the board of directors’ offer to become the commission’s first executive director in 1955. In an era that saw professional planners at their height of power, the UCC chief was cut from an untraditional cloth. Although well-educated, Votaw held no degrees or certifications in urban planning. Yet he was not without relevant experience in conservation and redevelopment. During his time in Uptown Votaw promoted a vision of liberal urbanism. As a liberal, he believed that redevelopment was possible through the perfection and expansion of the economic structures in place. Like many planners, Votaw called for public funding and policies to be used to prime private solutions to problems in aging cities. As an urbanist, Votaw considered the density and heterogeneity of the city as assets more than challenges. Uptown’s particular economic, residential, and cultural diversity mingled with Votaw’s liberal urbanism to create an era of redevelopment that brimmed with potential despite considerable barriers.

The Strange Career of Al Votaw

Albert Votaw’s life leading to his employment as UCC executive director offers a rare opportunity to investigate the intellectual and cultural dynamics of the urban
redevelopment in the late-1950s. Scholars too often depict the actions of organizations as faceless, stripped of the minds and experiences of the people who composed them. Even recent work that centers the ideological and cultural foundations of postwar urban redevelopment fails to depict the complexity of individual actors.\(^1\) Certainly, limitations in sources are to blame for these shortcomings as much as historian bias or oversight. Yet Albert Votaw’s prodigious writings about the social, political, and cultural condition of the nation from the late-1940s through the mid-1950s are an excavatable foundation for the early years of Uptown redevelopment. Votaw served as the public face of the UCC in its formative stages, using his considerable skills to formulate and communicate an approach to redeveloping a heterogeneous neighborhood that many believed could serve as a model for cities facing disinvestment and decentralization. Furthermore, Votaw’s particular path to urban redevelopment reveals important themes related to the challenges of “saving” the postwar city. On the one hand, Votaw’s life before he came to Uptown confounds assumptions about urban redevelopment leaders: his radical leftist early ideas seemingly contradicted his later commitment to middle-class market-based control of space. On the other hand, this same background provided a path that led to interaction

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with—and even, at times, embrace of—the economically and socially diverse Uptown “city within a city.”

Albert N. Votaw was born in 1925 in suburban Philadelphia to a prominent Quaker family that traced its Pennsylvania heritage to the days of William Penn. His grandfather, Albert H. Votaw, served as secretary and journal editor for the Pennsylvania Prison Society, a prison reform advocacy organization founded in the late-eighteenth century. Albert N. Votaw’s father, Ernest, had a long and noteworthy life as a social progressive. During World War I this young conscientious objector lawyer endured the wrath of pro-war fervor. The citizens of Media, Pennsylvania, forced Ernest Votaw’s resignation from the city assessor’s office under threat of tar-and-feathering, citing his support of pacifistic Quaker publications. Ernest Votaw lived in Europe for several years after the war, organizing relief efforts and serving as an instrumental figure in the founding of the American Friends Service Committee. His law career featured several left-leaning activities, such as legal counsel for the Public Works Administration, a long stint with the Department of Labor, membership in the National Lawyers Guild, and volunteer legal services for the American Civil Liberties Union.2

Albert N. Votaw’s mother, born Galja Barish in 1897 in Russia, arrived in the United States in 1914 to visit her father. The outbreak of World War I and then the Bolshevik Revolution prevented her return. She completed her degree at Simmons College before becoming a social worker in south Philadelphia in the 1920s. Her

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advocacy for mental health programs and family planning brought her in contact with activists like Ernest Votaw, whom she married in 1923. Galja Votaw’s public profile was on par with those of her husband and father-in-law. In the 1930s she hosted a living room recital for Marian Anderson, the prominent African American singer routinely barred from concert halls due to her race. Galja also received considerable publicity for her full recovery from injuries from a car accident that left her paralyzed for three years. She served as the president of the area League of Women Voters and was a locally well-known lecturer on topics ranging from global politics to the keys to a happy marriage. In 1948, she and her husband created something of a scandal by being suspected to be the only two Media residents to vote for Progressive Party presidential candidate Henry Wallace.3 Throughout the 1950s Galja Votaw also gave talks about pre-Revolutionary Russia and wrote occasional “personality sketches” of local residents for the Chester Times.4

Upon graduation from high school Albert N. Votaw attended the alternative two-year work-college Deep Springs College in rural California. The Army drafted him in 1943 soon after his eighteenth birthday, but he received conscientious objector status due to his Quaker faith. Votaw spent the war years in various camps of the Civilian Public

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3 Interview with Marianne Votaw, September 12, 2014.

Service (CPS), which accommodated conscientious objectors from the traditional peace faiths such as the Quakers, Amish, Mennonites, and Church of the Brethren. In between stints of soil conservation, trail maintenance, and land surveying in camps from New York to North Dakota to Tennessee, Votaw volunteered as a medical test subject for scientists at Yale University, where he became dangerously ill after doctors repeatedly attempted to induce jaundice. Here he was not only exposed the effects of jaundice—and in an earlier experiment, frostbite—but also to the first English translation of Jean-Paul Sartre’s existentialist classic *No Exit* (1944). Sartre’s play must have particularly resonated with Votaw, especially the character of Joseph Garcin—a pacifist news editor executed for treason.⁵

Votaw’s CPS experience pushed his political ideas even further to the left than those of his progressive parents. Several CPS camps served as hotbeds for radical activity, largely due to the socially-engaged tendencies of the Quaker residents. Conscientious objectors protested the racial segregationist policy in the southern camps, and efforts to unionize camp workers often ended in hunger strikes and other acts of civil disobedience.⁶ By the end of the war Votaw was a proud member of the Socialist Party with a profound interest in existentialist thought. He quickly became one of the youngest and brightest voices within a radical leftist intellectual circle that included luminaries

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Dwight Macdonald, Daniel Bell, C. Wright Mills, Paul Goodman, and Irving Howe. Votaw’s Quaker faith and CPS tenure made him an attractive figure for intellectual radicals seeking to redefine the political left in the immediate postwar years. Many leaders of this movement were rocked by the Soviet Union’s pact with Nazi Germany and its descent into totalitarianism under Stalin. Once a problematic yet promising beacon for socialists and communists worldwide, the Soviet Union by 1942 became a thorny issue for the American left. The likes of Macdonald, Mills, and Bell were compelled to answer for the Soviet Union’s transgressions, while navigating a wartime course between the traditional socialist and communist aversion to nationalistic war and the hope for the Soviet Union’s survival through a military victory. As an anti-Stalinist, pacifist conscientious objector, Votaw’s socialism came out of the war uncompromised.  

Albert Votaw burst onto the radical intellectual scene in January 1946 with “Towards a Personalist Socialist Philosophy,” an essay in a multi-author series that defined the left’s postwar struggle to evolve. Dwight Macdonald’s *politics*—one of the “little journals” in which intellectuals tested their ideas in the late-1940s—published the “New Roads in Politics” collection of essays in 1945 and 1946. Macdonald described the series as a forum to “criticize the dominant ideology on the left today—which is roughly Marxist—in the light of recent experience.” That “recent experience” included Marxism’s failure to deliver a just society and the general pessimism resulting from

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7 Most of the radical intellectual left eventually supported the American war effort, at least as a method to ensure the survival of the Soviet Union. Macdonald was the most noted hold-out, maintaining his pacifism throughout the war. His journal *politics* served as a platform for critique of war conduct of both the Americans and Soviets. Gregory B. Sumner, *Dwight Macdonald and the Politics Circle: The Challenge of Cosmopolitan Democracy* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1996), 42-62. For a broader discussion of the twilight of the Old Left, see Maurice Isserman, *If I Had a Hammer... The Death of the Old Left and the Birth of the New Left* (New York City: Basic Books, 1987).
Auschwitz and Hiroshima. Votaw joined writers of note in the series, including Paul Goodman, Will Herberg, and Nicola Chiaromonte. Macdonald’s keynote essay for the project, “The Root Is Man,” remains the most comprehensive exploration of the issues facing the intellectual left after the war, a work that prompted Czesław Miłosz to describe Macdonald as, “a totally American phenomenon in the tradition of Thoreau, Whitman, and Melville—the completely ‘free man,’ capable of making decisions at all times about all things, strictly on the basis of his personal and moral judgment.” Yet Votaw, only 21 years-old and still to complete his college degree, wrote perhaps the clearest and most direct expression of the radical left’s postwar intellectual and political crisis.

In “Towards a Personalist Socialist Philosophy” Votaw issued a call for the left to reorient itself around the potential and dignity of the individual. This proposal sought to make socialism relevant to an audience mired in existential anxiety brought on by mass society, modern war, and the atomic bomb. Votaw anticipated the foundations of the New Left and similar efforts to achieve personal fulfillment through political action, most clearly stated in C. Wright Mills’ “Letter to a New Left” (1961) and the Students for a Democratic Society’s *Port Huron Statement* (1962). Channeling the French existentialism that had caught his eye during the jaundice experiments, Votaw depicted late-1940s society as one that, “reduces man to an entity, a certain minute quantity, which is bought, sold, transferred, aided, or crushed by vast, amoral collectives over

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which he has no control and of whose functions he is totally ignorant.” Even trade unions, once thought by the left to be the vehicle for emancipation in the United States, now snuffed individual voices, Votaw argued—a jab that foreshadowed Mills’ later critique of the “labor metaphysic.”

Exhibiting a cultural conservatism endemic to leftists like Macdonald and Bell, Votaw indicted consumerism and popular culture as accomplices in modern society’s oppressive ways. Votaw testified in a near-religious tone, “The curse of standardization, homogeneity, and conformity lies in us; it is a sin to be different.”

Votaw envisioned a solution of “federalism in government” on a global scale, allowing for “non-totalitarian” economic planning derived from localized workers’ councils. Carried to its fullest realization, Votaw’s vague plan would “specifically repudiate the concept of national sovereignty.” With this vision—somewhere between anarchism and socialism—people would be free to become psychologically and spiritually fulfilled on an individual level without the fear of totalitarianism. Votaw reinforced his disdain for centralized power in a subsequent dispatch for politics, a recap of leftist protests in wartime CPS camps. He blamed the failure to establish sustained camper-led organizations on the conservative tendencies of peace church leadership and the filial obedience campers felt towards their central churches, which resulted in a conformist conservatism he termed the “service philosophy.” Votaw ominously concluded that, “The situation in CPS may well be almost directly analogous to the type of society emerging after the war. The service philosophy will be the demand for full

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production, for internal ‘peace,’ and for the fulfillment of American obligations.” If Votaw’s international federalism solution in his first essay comes off jejune, then the predictions in his second essay proved precocious.10

Votaw moved to Chicago at the conclusion of his wartime civilian service, where he enrolled in the University of Chicago to complete his bachelor’s degree. By moving to Hyde Park, he became involved in one of the richest intellectual and cultural environments to emerge after the war. Votaw developed a circle of friends who had contact with faculty members like Daniel Bell and David Riesman. He immediately moved to the front of left wing campus activism. He served as the chairman of the campus Socialist Club in 1947 and 1948. On February 12, 1947, Votaw led a protest against mandatory military service that culminated in burning draft cards.11 With a modest background and no benefit from the GI Bill, he relied upon a string of part-time jobs to pay living expenses. Besides driving a taxi, Votaw also tended bar at the Beehive Lounge on 55th Street, a lounge on its way to becoming one of the most renowned jazz and blues venues in the country.12 Behind the bar—unable to drink alcohol due to the jaundice experiments—Votaw’s appreciation for folk and blues music developed. For the remainder of his life he was quick to mention that he was Huddie “Leadbelly”


12 For a description of the Hyde Park entertainment scene in the late 1940s, including the Beehive, see Camille van Horne, “Goodnight and Goodluck,” Chicago Maroon, November 9, 2011.
Ledbetter’s favorite bartender at the Beehive. Votaw’s musical tastes were diverse. Family and friends remember his devotion to the Grand Ole Opry radio broadcast during his Hyde Park days.\textsuperscript{13}

In between serving drinks to Leadbelly and burning draft cards, Votaw’s classroom prowess drew considerable attention. Faculty selected him for a long residency in Paris, where he researched the postwar intellectual mood of French youth. In 1949 the \textit{Chester Times} published a ‘local boy makes good’ feature about Votaw’s explorations of the existential vanguard. The newspaper reported on the “nice-looking blond six-footer’s” year in Paris writing a book on the intellectual phenomenon. He described to the reporter the tenets of existentialism—of which he “understood thoroughly but by no means am I convert”—and the lifestyles of those Parisians most endeared to it. Votaw light-heartedly depicted the disenchanted youth who stalked Sartre throughout the Left Bank.\textsuperscript{14} His 231-page manuscript, titled \textit{The Ethics of Freedom}, was never published but his Parisian research resulted in two lengthy and dark analyses of existentialism.

In Paris Votaw shifted focus more towards existentialism than socialism. The \textit{Chicago Review}, a journal featuring the work of University of Chicago intellectuals, released Votaw’s contemplation of Sartre and Italian writer Ignazio Silone. He started this essay with an extended rumination on the moral state of modern political perspectives. Votaw surmised that “until recently,” three paradigms held sway:

\textsuperscript{13} Interview with Clare Votaw, September 12, 2014; Interview with Bert Horowitz, September 14, 2014.

liberalism, social evolutionism, and Marxism. This final movement once held the most promise, he argued, because it combined a comprehensive analysis of the world and a utopian solution. But Stalinism and World War II undermined Marxism. In the remainder of the Chicago Review essay Votaw explained the ways that postwar existential literature struggled to emerge as a valid perspective in place of the discredited ones of an earlier time.¹⁵ The British start-up Horizon printed Votaw’s “The Literature of Extreme Situations” in September 1949. Here he outlined the reasons for the resonance of literary depictions of torture and confinement. Votaw specifically argued that the trend of fictional concentration camps grew out of more than just a direct rumination on recent wartime trauma. Instead, the concentration camp symbolized the Western world’s general existential crisis. Indicative of his interest in psychology, Votaw concluded, “Amorphous and enervated, the masses reach a point where only the concentration camp state can control their actions and bring some sort of order—be it an absurd order—out of the chaos into which an overly bureaucratized society falls when it stubbornly clings to the ineffective machinery of liberal democracy.”¹⁶

Upon completion of his research Votaw applied to work for the Federal government’s European Cooperation Administration, which administered the Marshall Plan on the continent. The application spurred a thorough Federal Bureau of Investigation background check. Nine special agents from California to Connecticut interviewed those who had contact with Votaw. Almost exclusively, they described him as a brilliant young


man of conscience who advocated a socialist evolution through legislative and Constitutional means. They often pointed to Votaw’s voluntary medical wartime service as proof of his patriotism. Others explained that his socialist views included adamant anti-communism. Only one person had less than effusive praise for Votaw. A former professor from Deep Springs College questioned his integrity and judgment, citing his work as a bartender as inconsistent with the Quaker views that exempted him from military service. The critic concluded that, “Votaw’s judgment is as bad as Henry Wallace’s.” Investigators also noted the activism of Votaw’s father, and that brother Gregory was currently under investigation for an anti-conscription letter he sent to President Truman. “Towards a Personalist Socialist Philosophy” received a reading from the FBI, and the investigation file included Votaw’s chairmanship of the college Socialist Club, the draft card burning protest, his membership in the Young People’s Socialist League, and his subscription to the left-leaning *PM* newspaper. Yet the political and cultural environment of the late-1940s was not that of the Red Scare that developed a few years later. There was still room for a socialist in government work, at least with the ECA. 

Just before leaving for Paris Albert Votaw married Gerda Wagner of Lisle, Illinois, a German-born divorcée and Women’s Auxiliary Corps member. The *Chester Times* reported that Gerda was to accompany Votaw to Paris but provided no subsequent updates on either, until the feature on Votaw one year later—which made no mention of Gerda. Instead, later accounts of Votaw’s Parisian tour indicate his making the

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acquaintance of his future second wife, Estera Fenjves. Known also as Etzi, Fenjves was born into a Hungarian Jewish family in present-day Serbia. Her mother was an artist and her father a newspaper editor. The Nazis sent the Fenjves family to Auschwitz in 1944, where Estera’s mother died along with several other family members. Estera and her father were eventually liberated from Bergen-Belsen; he died a few months after the war. Albert reunited with Etzi in the United States in 1950 after he divorced Gerda Wagner, and they were married three years later.\textsuperscript{18} Albert Votaw had a muse for his exploration of existential pessimism. Etzi also proved to be his intellectual match. She regularly bested Votaw and his University of Chicago friends at Scrabble, despite only recently learning English—her fourth language.\textsuperscript{19}

Meanwhile, as with many leftist intellectual radicals of the time, Votaw’s political philosophies drifted towards the center. Even as far back as a February 1947 manifesto in \textit{Pacifica Views}—the journal of CPS residents—Votaw backed down from the call for global revolution via personal fulfillment typified by “Towards a Personalist Socialist Philosophy.” So powerful were the conformity-inducing cultural forces that authentic self-actualization was near-impossible, he now believed. Votaw dismissed one approach to this dilemma—anarchistic, anti-modern communal life. Instead, revolutionaries intent on creating an economically and existentially just society should abandon the


\textsuperscript{19} Interview with Bert Horowitz, September 15, 2014.
requirement for their “heroes” to be personally fulfilled. Votaw concluded that leftists must embrace the world, foibles and all, or risk irrelevance.

A revolution will be made, if it is made, by ordinary people, people who beat their wives, who get drunk, who can’t write poetry and don’t even want to; it will be made by people who are being ground down by the economic demands of a permanent war economy and who are basically incapable of making an adjustment to this society because they are alienated from it. These people will come to a revolutionary position and join with us not because we are heroes but because in trade unions, in co-ops, in all sorts of organizations and cultural groups—yes—in political parties, we are fighting to establish the institutional vehicles for freedom right there with these people—dirty and compromising as they may be.

As a eulogy for his earlier hope for simultaneous personal and political fulfillment, Votaw may as well have evoked the famous final words of socialist martyr Joe Hill:

“Don’t mourn, organize.”

A career for Votaw as a freelance leftist intellectual proved unfeasible, as the environment became less tolerant of radical ideas. A conflict between Votaw and the editorial board of Measure: A Critical Journal, published by the University of Chicago Committee on Social Thought, proved to be the endpoint of this phase of Votaw’s life.

He submitted to Measure an essay entitled “The Political Failure of the French Resistance” in February 1950, which was received with interest by the board of editors. Yet the draft remained in limbo for over six months after editors asked Votaw to rewrite the introduction to the essay. The editors were concerned that the piece came off as an

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apologia for socialism; they specifically felt that the article would unsettle the prominent theologian and editorial board member Jacques Maritain.21

Financial difficulties prompted Votaw to hound the editors for payment to compensate for their months-long retention of the manuscript without a final decision. Votaw went as far as writing directly to University of Chicago chancellor Robert Hutchins, who also sat on the Measure editorial board. In asking for a final decision from Hutchins himself, Votaw concluded his letter: “I realize that this request is unusual and unfair; I do not, however, believe that it is any more unusual or any more unfair than the treatment to which I have been subjected by your editorial board.” Editor Al Folsom eventually claimed that Measure was unable to contact Votaw in the preceding months about their decision to not print the essay in any form. Votaw explained his inaccessibility by noting that he had been working 70 to 80 hours per week. Finally, Measure issued a $50 check to Votaw as compensation for his attempts to edit the essay. In thanking the staff for this payment, Votaw elliptically concluded, “Possibly the endorsement on the back of the check, however, will help you understand my own sense of urgency.”22

21 Otto von Stimson to Albert Votaw, February 9, 1950. University of Chicago. Committee on Social Thought. Records. Correspondence, Measure, 1946-1952, General Correspondence, U through V. Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library (UCCL), Chicago; Memo from John Nef to Measure Board of Editors, October 19, 1950. Records of the University of Chicago Committee on Social Thought, Correspondence, Measure, 1946-1952, General Correspondence, U through V. Special Collections, UCCL.

22 Albert Nicholson Votaw to Robert M. Hutchins, October 11, 1950. Records of the University of Chicago. Committee on Social Thought. Correspondence, Measure, 1946-1952, General Correspondence, U through V. Special Collections, UCCL; Albert Votaw to Alice White, October 26, 1950. Records of the University of Chicago Committee on Social Thought, Correspondence, Measure, 1946-1952, General Correspondence, U through V. Special Collections, UCCL. Votaw’s comment about the check endorsement remains a mystery. He could have been referring to costs associated with divorcing Gerda Langer, according to family member speculation.
The type of financial stress cited by Votaw in his correspondence with Measure also contributed to his move towards less controversial work. He pursued a writing career centered on more tangible and marketable issues. By 1951 he was stringing newspaper leads for the Chicago City News Bureau (CCNB), a pool of story-chasers created by Chicago’s competing daily newspapers in 1890. Despite the seemingly unglamorous nature of uncredited beat reporting in comparison to leftist theorizing, the CCNB was an established haven for writers on the make. Future journalists and authors Mike Royko, Seymour Hersh, Kurt Vonnegut, and even the pop artist Claes Oldenburg spent time with CCNB in the 1950s. The CCNB represented the romanticized golden age of print journalism, where a fraternity of energetic and streetwise reporters quested for the full story no matter the ramifications. The bureau served as the inspiration for the noir film Call Northside 777 (1948), in which a CCNB reporter works to free an innocent man from prison through a series of articles. Obviously, most CCNB work involved the more mundane tasks of monitoring city hall, the police blotter, and the criminal courts in order to produce basic information digestible by the major dailies.23

The work exposed Votaw to the horse-trading underbelly of Chicago politics. The role of a reporter crusading for good government must have appealed to the young social critic. Votaw parlayed his CCNB position into a series of freelance articles on the Chicago machine and organized crime for the paragon of American center-left journals, The New Republic. Votaw wrote several pieces for The New Republic through 1953,

specializing in the shenanigans of Chicago politicians. Topics included the corrupt and violent relationship between the Democratic Machine and the Teamsters, and the racial politics of the police-protected underworld ‘policy’ gambling racket. In a particularly acerbic article, Votaw needled the corrupt Democratic Machine, Mayor Kennelley’s ineffectual reforms, and an Illinois Republican Party incapable of fully taking advantage of the shortcomings of the two. That Illinois’ liberal lion Adlai Stevenson was at the height of his prominence only made Votaw’s The New Republic dispatches more valuable to a national audience.24

In the early 1950s Albert Votaw also frequently wrote for The New Leader, a politics and culture journal started by Daniel Bell in 1942. Bell originally maintained The New Leader as a strident socialist organ, but when he left the journal in 1946, the new editorial staff moved its message towards the center. As with The New Republic, Votaw wrote updates about the idiosyncrasies of Chicago politics. But the editors allowed his writing to breath. Votaw’s New Leader articles often started with blow-by-blow accounts of political intrigue, but concluded with tangentially related cultural observations. For example, a 1955 piece covered the complicated local political culture created by a Republican governor, a weak Democratic mayor, and the prominent Adlai Stevenson. Writing almost in a stream of consciousness, Votaw transitioned from this political accounting, to describing Southwest Side residents disgruntled about problems with water service during a heat wave, to the fates of Chicago’s baseball teams (the Cubs,

Votaw concluded, drew fans regardless their record while the White Sox were barely attracting decent crowds during their 1955 pennant run.\textsuperscript{25}

Votaw muted his dark perorations on existentialism and his calls for border-busting socialist revolution in his \textit{New Leader} articles. Contributor notes under his articles boasted about his time in Paris—but not as an observer of intellectual society. Instead, the editors described Votaw solely as a former worker with the Economic Cooperation Agency. Finally, in a September 1955 article on the limitations of Stevenson’s liberal reforms, Votaw expressed a political pragmatism well removed from the intellectual radicalism he espoused only a few years before. After casting doubt on Stevenson’s ability to unite the liberal-centrist and activist-leftist wings of the Democratic Party, Votaw concluded:

> Whether or not this position is valid depends on whether or not the country is considered ready for another wave of reform. The Roosevelt Revolution of the Thirties was an exciting era; it was also a tiring one. The war was not the only reason the New Deal was formally interred. Reform had played itself out; the Jacobin experiments of "bureaucrats and professors who never met a payroll" were replaced by the type of fumbling, Thermidor-like corruption that became identified with the second Truman Administration. It may seriously be asked if, even were the leadership to come forward, the country is capable of sustaining another great spasm of reform.\textsuperscript{26}

The surge in urban redevelopment in Chicago provided a new outlet for Votaw’s interest in city politics and modern society. He was present at the earliest stages of neighborhood conservation while a resident of Hyde Park. As one of the several Quaker members of the Hyde Park-Kenwood Community Council, he offered his specialized


\textsuperscript{26} Albert N. Votaw, “How Liberal is Adlai Stevenson?” \textit{The New Leader}, September 14, 1955.
skills to the service of the organization’s public relations committee. Those who wrote
the first drafts of HPKCC history boasted about being a proving ground for the imminent
director of the UCC. Votaw’s drift towards the center seemed complete when in 1955
he ended a decade as a freelance intellectual and accepted the director’s position for a
foundation financed by Ernest G. Shinner. This Chicago philanthropist and real estate
developer earned his fortune by working his way from apprentice butcher to meat market
retail magnate. Like the young Votaw, Shinner embraced international diplomacy over
Cold War saber-rattling, and like many of the de-radicalized left he viewed American
society as a leading light in the modern world. The Shinner Foundation funded a wide
range of liberal causes, including books such as Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr.’s The Coming
of the New Deal (1958) and The Politics of Upheaval (1960).

With Votaw at the helm, the Shinner Foundation focused on urban
redevelopment. The foundation published Arresting Slums through Private Enterprise in
1956, a tract possibly ghost-written by Votaw. Although the booklet appeared under
Ernest Shinner’s name the writing style resembled that of Albert Votaw, with turns of
phrase such as, “The speed with which the slums are created hangs like the sword of
Damocles over the heads of city governments everywhere.” Despite the title, the booklet


28 In a letter to the Chicago Tribune, Shinner condemned the Cold War strategy of alliance-making
in the name of halting Communism. Instead he called for an embrace of the United Nations and a policy of

29 Arthur M. Schlesinger, The Coming of the New Deal: The Age of Roosevelt, Volume II (New
did not advocate the *laissez-faire* market-led urban renewal that would soon be the focus of Martin Anderson’s *The Federal Bulldozer* (1964).\(^{30}\) Shinner and Votaw instead called for Federal subsidies for neighborhood conservation on par with suburb-enhancing projects like highways and insured single-family home mortgages. The foundation specifically proposed the “Urban Redevelopment Finance Corporation,” a Federal Housing Administration-level agency that would subsidize apartment rehabilitation and the construction of high-density housing for the middle-class.\(^{31}\)

By 1955, when on the verge of being hired by the Uptown Chicago Commission, Votaw had evolved from radical leftist intellectual to liberal centrist pragmatist. He was not alone in such a transition. His two most prominent mentors, Dwight Macdonald and Daniel Bell, likewise openly embraced liberalism. In a well-publicized debate with a pessimistic Norman Mailer about the comparative shortcomings of the Cold War antagonists, Macdonald declared in 1952, “I choose the West.” Macdonald shifted focus more towards cultural than political criticism, offering withering critiques of middlebrow culture and frequently bemoaning the lassitude of modern American literature in comparison to that of Britain. It took Michael Harrington’s *The Other America* (1962) to resuscitate a degree of Macdonald’s old fighting political spirit: Macdonald’s lengthy and effusive review of the book in *The New Yorker* found a receptive reader in John F.

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Kennedy, via Macdonald’s close friend and Camelot insider Arthur Schlesinger, Jr.\textsuperscript{32} Daniel Bell deradicalized to an even greater degree through the 1950s. In a series of essays that culminated in a 1962 collection, Bell famously declared an “end of ideology.” Like Votaw’s 1955 \textit{New Leader} denouncement of radical intellectualism, Bell discounted the aggressive rhetoric of the seemingly-extinct Old Left in favor of liberal pragmatism: “The young intellectual is unhappy because the ‘middle way’ is for the middle-aged, not for him; it is without passion and is deadening. Ideology, which by its nature is an all-or-none affair, and temperamentally the thing he wants, is intellectually divatalized, and few issues can be formulated any more, intellectually, in ideological terms.”\textsuperscript{33} The similarities between Bell and Votaw—which included a divorce at a young age and an expressed desire to shift career trajectories at least in part for practical financial reasons—may have been based on more than a shared interaction with the zeitgeist. Bell was on faculty at the University of Chicago in the same program in which Votaw was enrolled during his pivot from socialism to existentialism.\textsuperscript{34}

\textsuperscript{32} For a comprehensive narrative of Macdonald’s intellectual evolution, see John Rodden, “Dwight and the Left,” \textit{The American Prospect}, February 20, 2006.


\textsuperscript{34} Bell was a sociology department lecturer from 1945 to 1949. Bell ended his “cloister” at the University of Chicago in favor of an editor position with \textit{Fortune} and eventually Columbia University. According to his biographer, Bell acknowledged that his struggle to support his ex-wife and daughter on paltry salary in Chicago influenced his shift to \textit{Fortune}, which offered him $12,000 per year—triple his Chicago salary. Howard Brick, \textit{Daniel Bell and the Decline of Intellectual Radicalism} (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1986), 252. Votaw’s widow recalled that, likewise, the birth of two daughters and the need for a steady salary largely motivated his acceptance of the Uptown Chicago Commission executive directorship and its $9,000 salary. \textit{Dammarell, et al vs. The Republic of Iran, et al}, 142.
The careers of two other intellectuals associated with the radical intellectual left indicate that the centralizing drift of Macdonald, Bell, and Votaw was not preordained, however. Paul Goodman maintained and even deepened a commitment to nonconformity. His book *Communitas* (1947), written with his architect brother Percival, anticipated the activist planning critiques of urban renewal that emerged a decade later with the likes of Herbert Gans, William Whyte, Jr., and Jane Jacobs. The New Left and aspects of the Sixties counter-culture embraced Goodman’s anarcho-communist pedagogical theories, most clearly expressed in *Growing Up Absurd* (1960). Michael Harrington, whose time as a graduate student at the University of Chicago coincided with the stays of Votaw and Bell, pursued an ascetic ground-level exploration of those left behind the postwar prosperity of American capitalism, culminating in the landmark *The Other America*. As Bell noted, the alumni of the late-40s radical intellectual left followed a variety of paths, from science to humanities faculty to visual arts. If asked about his fellow traveler Albert Votaw, Bell would have added to that list, ‘urban redevelopment.’

The aspects of Votaw’s background that attracted the interest of the founders of the UCC were clear. As a former newspaperman, he maintained valuable skills and contacts needed to promote Uptown’s interests in the competitive marketplace of Chicago urban redevelopment. The particulars of his journalistic experience—investigating and writing about political corruption—gave him substantial competency in the inner-workings of Chicago policy making. This knowledge could help the UCC navigate the labyrinth of city commissions, regulations, and bureaucratic rivalries that defined local urban redevelopment. Finally, Votaw’s work with the HPKCC provided

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35 Bell, *End of Ideology*, 375.
insight into one of the most influential and instructive urban redevelopment projects the nation had yet seen.

We may never know the extent to which the economically and socially elite founders of the UCC were aware of Votaw’s youthful days of leftist intellectual radicalism. Biographies that accompanied UCC promotional materials referred to his degree from the University of Chicago, his journalist background, his experience with the HPKCC, his work with the Shinner Foundation, and even personal interest items such as “former taxi driver.” No one with the UCC—Votaw included—highlighted his pioneering conscription protest, or his calls for existentialist-infused socialism and the dissolution of national boundaries. Needless to say, in an era in which wartime service bolstered male legitimacy in the public sphere, Votaw suppressed his World War II conscientious objector status. The UCC also solved the inconsistencies about his time in Paris. His work for the ECA in 1948 apparently related to urban redevelopment much more so than his nights sneering at existentialist groupies at Les Deux Magots.  

However, components of Votaw’s radical past did not evaporate, despite expungement by himself and the UCC. Albert Votaw’s unease with centralized power, his internationalist sympathies, and—most significantly—his engrained acceptance of at least a degree of economic and social diversity, frequently surfaced in his actions as UCC executive director.

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36 Votaw biographies never mentioned his wife Estera or his young daughters. This is curious because promotional materials for civic actors—male and female—very commonly refer to spouses and the number and ages of children.
Getting To Know Uptown; Getting Others To Know Uptown

The UCC tasked Votaw with housing inspection and code enforcement as a primary method of establishing initial legitimacy. Teams of volunteers “inspected” the exteriors of apartment buildings in the dense, low-income blocks—a method adopted from the HPKCC. In a September 1956 letter updating the Community Conservation Board on progress on the work with which the CCB had asked of the UCC, Votaw
explained that “enforcement [of housing codes] is our chief conservation weapon at the present.”

During one of his informal “sidewalk inspections” of the neighborhood, Votaw had an encounter that demonstrated his willingness to experiment with urban redevelopment tactics. He recounted the moment in a letter to Meyer Hatowsksi, a real estate developer and UCC board member. Votaw was evaluating a deteriorated apartment building near Hatowski’s Margate Terrace project when he “found himself in contact with” a street gang known as “The Peacemakers.” The gang had recently changed its name from “The Sinners,” Votaw learned, because its members were in the process of “getting off the street” after a series of arrests and fights with rivals. Votaw continued, “I was invited to a meeting of the Peacemakers, and they made me an ‘honorary member’ (which means, I suppose, that I don’t have to carry a switch-blade or wear a jacket) and have confided in me from time to time about their desire for a club room, for recognition, and for various other needs which appear to be more psychological than financial or physical.” He concluded that, after a youth counselor suggest that he maintain contact with the Peacemakers, he was, “led to believe that in a year or so we may see, in microcosm, a real successful conservation effort on all levels—physical and social—which will not only help alleviate your problems as an investor in the community, but give us inspiration and help in developing this general type of program even farther.” In his characteristically wry sense of humor, Votaw closed the letter, “Anyway, I thought

you might enjoy learning of some of my efforts to become a delinquent.”

While not exactly a return to his call almost a decade earlier for “dirty and compromising” revolutionaries from outside elite intellectual circles, Votaw’s interest in working with the Peacemakers signaled at least a degree of legitimacy for the redevelopment rhetoric about social diversity.

From 1955 to 1957 Votaw used his growing competency about Uptown to publicize the UCC to a broader audience. In doing so he presented Uptown as a neighborhood on the brink, not yet a slum nor even blighted in most blocks. He explained in a press release to an Evanston radio station that slum prevention was a “new and very exciting type of work,” and wrote to his former Sun-Times colleagues that the UCC was engaged in the rehabilitative advocacy once embraced by HPKCC. Votaw told the Edgewater-Uptown News that the UCC redevelopment ideal rested upon conservation of Uptown “before it becomes blighted.” He echoed conventional ideas of blight and incipient blight that singled out areas of considerable dilapidation, age, and legal and illegal conversions.

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38 Votaw to Meyer Hatowksi, July 18, 1957. UCC, Administrative Correspondence Involving the Board of Directors, July 1957 to December 1957 and undated. UCC Collection, CHM. Votaw did not specifically identify the Peacemakers as a southern or Appalachian gang. However, later accounts of the Uptown Goodfellows and the Young Patriots—politically southern white street organizations—traced their Uptown origins to the Peacemakers. “Harassment Main Issue as Residents, Police Cmdr Meet,” Chicago Sun-Times, February 21, 1969; and Todd Gitlin and Nanci Hollander, Uptown: Poor Whites in Chicago (New York City: Harper Colophon Books, 1970), 375-395.

Votaw also promoted what the UCC viewed as the uniqueness of its vision for Uptown, in relation to assumptions about urban redevelopment projects that resulted in massive clearance, relocation, and the antipathy of surrounding communities. In a ready-for-press lengthy statement sent to the *Edgewater-Uptown News*, Votaw introduced Dorothy Eckholm of Sheridan Park. He described Eckholm as a valuable UCC member who provided the “citizen’s point of view.” Votaw revealed an “odd twist” to the story: Eckholm was a rooming-house operator—the very constituency that benefited from low-income tenancy and thus expected be hostile to redevelopment plans. Votaw explained that the UCC intended to rehabilitate and conserve even the much-maligned transient housing stock of Low-Rent Uptown. Demonstrating an awareness of an increasing acrimony over displacement caused by clearance, he concluded that, “Unless good, clean rooming houses and other similar facilities are provided for these people, you will create new slums as fast as you clear the old ones.”

Votaw mentioned that Eckholm was a block club member for the UCC. For the UCC the formation and allegiance of block clubs represented the key to legitimacy in the eyes of neighborhood residents and urban redevelopment officials. The UCC fostered a handful of block clubs throughout the neighborhood. Residents of the stretch of four- and six-flats of the 4800 block of Kenmore frequently met in the renovated New Lawrence Hotel, in the shadow of the Aragon Theater. A block club formed on tranquil Margate Terrace, on a street similar to 4800 Kenmore but adjacent to the park-side co-ops. Votaw was particularly keen to promote the activities of the club from the 4600 block of Kenmore.

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Winthrop. Most believed that the Winthrop block club was Uptown’s oldest, predating even the UCC by many years. But the main reason that publicizing the block club benefited UCC interests was that it represented the “segregated block.” The 4600 Winthrop club embraced its role in community stewardship, becoming perhaps the only block club of the time to actually achieve tangible results. After the laborious task of clearing a vacant lot that attracted illegal dumping, the block club raised $250 that they committed to purchasing playground equipment for the space. Eventually, the playground came to fruition. With block clubs consisting of African Americans, rooming house operators, and white middle-class apartment dwellers, Votaw could legitimately claim that the UCC was on its way to representing the economically and socially diverse “city within a city.”

Votaw took every opportunity to promote to the press the “unique” social diversity supposedly driving Uptown redevelopment. He invited the local NBC television affiliate to cover the UCC’s second annual meeting in 1957, featuring the usual business-like board elections, as well as a comedy skit performed by UCC members and an “ex-show girl from New York.” But the meeting’s main attraction, according to Votaw, was the “gathering together in a room of such a widely different group all concerned with one problem—how they can live together in one neighborhood.” Votaw continued the sell: “At the meeting will be Christians, Jews and Buddhists; members of all racial groups;

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owners of private homes built by Frank Lloyd Wright and Louis Sullivan; rooming house operators; residents of the Edgewater Beach Apartments; bankers; etc., etc.™

Votaw and the UCC also realized—in order to convince city hall and the general public that Uptown deserved redevelopment—that some publicity about the neighborhood’s blight and incipient blight would be necessary. Two campaigns in 1956 and 1957 served this purpose. In presenting the aspects of Uptown that the UCC found less-than-desirable, the fledgling organization walked a fine line between raising alarm and undermining its carefully crafted message of inclusivity that crossed Uptown’s considerable class and cultural boundaries. In this process, the UCC revealed an antagonism towards uses of space that fell outside its vision for Uptown.

The first publicity campaign of this manner involved an October 1956 UCC-led “blight tour” of the neighborhood. Votaw copied a memo to his considerable local media contacts that announced a bus tour for “business and community leaders…for a closer look at the in-roads of blight.” Such blight tours were common for Chicago redevelopers seeking attention for their communities. For example, an Englewood conservation group hosted 30 city officials and media members on “a tourist’s look at problems confronting redevelopment” the same week as the UCC’s tour. Leaving from the Edgewater Beach Hotel—in the resort’s shuttle bus—20 people viewed trouble spots between Bryn Mawr Avenue and Irving Park Road. The UCC’s initial survey of the area served as source

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42 Votaw to Karin Walsh, City Editor, Chicago Sun-Times, May 14, 1957. UCC, Projects, Correspondence with the Press. UCC Collection, CHM.
material for the tour, as it passed a “known” brothel on Leland and “over-crowded slum-like buildings.”

The bus rambled past the taverns and SROs along Wilson Avenue. In a neighborhood that hosted an astounding 154 bars and taverns, Wilson Avenue served as the epicenter of drinking establishments that appealed to low-income residents of Uptown and beyond. This concentration of poverty, transiency, and alcohol had long served as a source of anxiety for Uptown redevelopers. The two-block stretch of Wilson west of the train station, particularly, seemed to be a tangible marker of the indigenous forces that seemingly stood in the way of Uptown’s return to pre-Depression glory. Accordingly, the UCC made intervention into the area an early priority. The commission worked with the Chicago Police Department in a high-profile crackdown on criminalized behavior on Wilson Avenue, which culminated in the spring of 1957. The UCC honored two patrolmen at its annual meeting, highlighting the officers’ role in the campaign to rid Wilson of “panhandlers, drunks, bums, and derelicts.”

The tour was a manifestation of the UCC message that Uptown blight threatened the best the neighborhood had to offer. The blight tour elicited enough media interest to warrant Votaw’s reply to a reporter about the lessons learned from the stunt. Votaw

43 “City Officials Tour Englewood Area,” Chicago Sun-Times, October 9, 1956.

44 The customer base for Uptown taverns extended dozens of miles north. With all but one community between Evanston and Waukegan “dry,” many suburban residents to the north drove or rode the train directly to Uptown for libations. Military bases in North Chicago and Fort Sheridan provided a particularly stable customer base.

conceded, “I’m afraid what we discovered was pretty well determined in advance.” In his letter, Votaw guarded against letting the blight tour typify Uptown as a lost cause, reminding the reporter that a recent Community Clearance Board survey of Uptown concluded that the area was “basically sound” with “very little physical dilapidation.” This note implied that it was the people—not the buildings—that posed the greatest challenge to redevelopment.\footnote{Votaw, “Memo to Picture Desks,” October 11, 1956. UCC, Projects, Press Releases, July 1956 to December 1956, UCC Collection, CHM; Votaw to Genevieve Flavin, \textit{Chicago Tribune} Metro North Side Section, October 26, 1956. UCC, Projects, Press Releases, July 1956 to December 1956, UCC Collection, CHM.}

The second UCC campaign to publicize Uptown blight directly confronted entrenched criminalized leisure of elements of Commercial Uptown. Votaw and the UCC learned that the Normandy Lounge, located adjacent to the Aragon Ballroom in the heart of Uptown, had changed management in May 1956. The Chicago Police Department believed that the “Outfit” organized crime organization now held “considerable interests” in the Normandy, as part of a growing network of underworld activity in Uptown.\footnote{Police notes obtained by the UCC name prominent mobsters Sam Giancanna, Sam “Hot Dog” Liscandrello, and Joey “Caesar” DiVarco as principles behind the Uptown Syndicate operations, which included control of the Silver Dome, also adjacent to the Aragon, as well as numerous other taverns in the vicinity. The concentration of commercialized leisure in Uptown attracted from its pre-Depression development considerable mob interest, most famously in Al Capone’s involvement with the Green Mill. Informational File on the Chicago Police, February 1966 to April 1970 and undated, UCC Projects, UCC Collection, CHM.} The UCC not only monitored the protracted undercover investigation throughout 1957, but also conducted its own independent surveillance operation. Both investigations found a haven for “B-girls,” women who worked in concert with taverns to solicit drinks from customers. Authorities viewed B-girl presence as an indicator of mob-controlled prostitution and gambling. The police and UCC investigation resulted in several
September arrests and a November closure. Votaw characteristically leveraged the subsequent arraignments for maximum publicity for the UCC. Vice squad busts at small taverns generally warranted little media coverage in 1950s-Chicago. However, thanks to Votaw’s sustained press release campaign, newspapers covered even the most preliminary of Normandy hearings, coupling the relatively mundane news item with the UCC’s dogged efforts to redevelop Uptown. Genevieve Flavin, on whom Votaw relied for publicity about the UCC blight tour, presented the Normandy story as one about the UCC’s activism more than one about criminal activity. Her December 1957 Tribune article described the “motorcade” of interested Uptown parties that made the trek to the criminal courts building on the West Side. Newspaper coverage of the Normandy affair culminated in a Sun-Times editorial praising the effort to outlaw B-girls. A cartoon by Pulitzer Prize-winner Jacob Burck accompanied the article, depicting a provocatively dressed woman being hurled out of a tavern. Burck, not coincidentally, lived in Uptown and had recently become active in the UCC.48

The media’s reporting on the Normandy affair, however, did not fully conform to Votaw’s vision. The Tribune acknowledged that the Karzas family—longtime owners of the Aragon—also owned the Normandy. But Votaw maintained that the media and police were being much too lenient with the Karzas family. Although the Karzas’ agreed to suspend the Normandy’s lease upon the prosecution of further criminal activity, Votaw

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nevertheless implored Flavin to push the story angle about Karzas complicity, complaining that the family, “remains icily in the background collecting in excess of $600 per month.” The Normandy affair concluded in March 1958 when, two days after the final convictions, a bomb destroyed the shuttered tavern.\textsuperscript{49}

Votaw frequently mentioned in internal memos inconsistent and ambiguous police enforcement in Uptown, complaining that officials acted only after monumental complaints from citizens and the UCC. Although he never stated so directly, the former investigative reporter might have suspected something deeper than simple incompetence. Such concerns would have been confirmed by the most notorious Chicago police scandal to date, which erupted in Uptown in 1959. The Summerdale precinct, which covered the northern half of community, garnered headlines in even the \textit{New York Times}, and became synonymous with corruption after a burglar confessed to working in concert with patrolmen and detectives. Eight Summerdale policemen were convicted of covering for dozens of burglaries stretching from Uptown to North Shore suburbs, while several others were demoted or re-assigned. Investigators removed four truckloads of stolen goods from the suspects’ homes. The Summerdale Scandal served as a major embarrassment for the Daley administration, and fueled the career of the mayor’s most viable political foe, state attorney Ben Adamowski. Daley responded by reorganizing the Chicago Police Department internal investigation process and appointing a new, outsider police chief. The scandal was so impactful that the city permanently renamed the

\textsuperscript{49} Press Release, April 1, 1958. UCC, Projects, Press Releases, February to November 1958. UCC Collection, CHM.
Summerdale precinct. The 1960s began with the reputation of Uptown police at an unprecedented low.\textsuperscript{50}

Votaw and the UCC protested against depictions of Uptown as a completely lawless community through publicity efforts that highlighted the progress made against all odds. While the ladies charged in the Normandy affair represented to the UCC a class of women outside its vision for Uptown, Votaw concurrently promoted a story about a woman much more in-line with redevelopment. Votaw sought to gain attention for the UCC’s gender diversity through a carefully orchestrated press campaign about member Bettye Resnick, a model-turned-housewife active in her block club. In promoting the story to the newspapers, Votaw depicted Resnick as, “young, good looking and a block leader for the Commission.” He noted that, as a former model, Resnick could supply dozens of photographs of herself, which would be ideal for a Sunday feature in a lifestyle or women’s section of a newspaper. As was his habit, Votaw offered the press a ready-made story about the 32-year old Resnick, complete with a narrative frame and extensive quotes from the subject. Votaw quoted Resnick about her pre-UCC days.

I was a real empty-headed blonde, you might say. I didn’t have an idea in my head, and I didn’t care about any of the things that bother me now. Oh sure, I believed in the PTA because my kids are at school. But I didn’t attend any of the meetings because all they seemed to do was sit around and talk.

Resnick went on to describe her conversion to civic engagement upon attending a UCC meeting as a favor for a friend. She embraced her block leadership role, and found that

she enjoyed speaking in front of groups and the “opportunity to meet with and discuss with civic leaders and experts on a level of equality of interest.” Votaw closed the article by again highlighting the relative diversity of UCC members, who “only have in common their desire to live safely in surroundings of their choosing.”

The Resnick story appeared in the Tribune Sunday Women’s Section and, according to Votaw, resulted in a flood of inquisitive and positive letters to the UCC. The narrative revealed two key manners in which the UCC viewed itself in the community. First, Votaw’s focus on Resnick’s appearance and domestic motherhood suggests a cultural conservatism that leaned toward the middle-class gender normativity of the 1950s. As a “housewife,” Resnick represented the UCC’s desire for an increase in the number of nuclear families in the area. While fulltime housewives were in large numbers in Resnick’s Buena Park and the new lakefront co-ops, they were not nearly as common in the much more densely populated low-rent sections of the neighborhood. Despite the rhetoric of diversity, Votaw and the UCC indicated a class bias that marginalized working-class and low-income households reliant upon salaries from both men and women.

The second UCC self-perception revealed by the Resnick story reflected a persistent effort to appear as a grassroots urban redevelopment organization. Votaw and

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51 Votaw to A.M Kennedy, Editor Chicago Tribune Sunday Magazine, September 24, 1957. UCC, Projects, Correspondence with Press UCC Collection, CHM.

52 Eugenie Wells, “From Model to Block Leader: That’s Bettye Resnick’s Story,” Chicago Tribune, November 1, 1957. The final story closely follows Votaw’s draft, with the addition of three photographs of Resnick—two publicity photos from her modeling career and one of Resnick posing in front of an oversize map of the UCC’s 1957 conservation plan. Votaw to A.M. Kennedy, Editor of Chicago Tribune Sunday Magazine, November 4, 1957. UCC, Projects, Correspondence with Press, CHM.
several members of the UCC board of directors knew well redevelopers’ struggles to defend conservation and renewal on the Near South Side and in Hyde Park.\textsuperscript{53} The lack of transparency in decision-making, the callousness of developers, cost over-runs, and the controversies over relocation spurred a backlash against ‘experts’ in the redevelopment and urban renewal arena.\textsuperscript{54} Promoting Resnick’s block club activism made the UCC seem like an organization built upon the groundswell of citizens, not a top-down scheme orchestrated by big-money interests and professional planners. By emphasizing that the UCC fostered Resnick’s interaction with “experts,” Votaw again presented the UCC as an innovative and sympathetic promoter of urban redevelopment that could serve as a model for similar projects.

The UCC’s publicity efforts culminated in the summer of 1957, when Votaw formally asked the Community Conservation Board to declare Uptown a conservation district. The key to this proposal was a comprehensive, long-range rehabilitation plan, which requested $3 million from the city for more advanced surveys and funds for “spot clearance” of condemnable buildings that the UCC identified as sources of blight. The 11-page plan included a map that roughly correlated to the unofficial “Three Uptowns.” Underneath an opaque red layer, “Family Housing” covered Lakewood-Balmoral, the lakefront co-ops and small apartment buildings, and elite Buena Park. Cloaked in yellow, running the north-south spine of Uptown, was “Transient Housing.” The UCC notated the

\textsuperscript{53} The UCC maintained subject files on Chicago urban renewal projects and conservation organizations in Hyde Park, the Near South Side, Lincoln Park, Englewood, and a few communities elsewhere in the country.

\textsuperscript{54} For more about the backlash against urban planning experts in the late-1950s and early-1960s, see Zipp, \textit{Manhattan Projects}, 26-27; and Klemek, \textit{The Transatlantic Collapse of the Urban Renewal Order}, 90-117.
zoning classifications for the area, which indicated the concentrations of Commercial Uptown. The proposal’s prospective second map was much more forthcoming with the UCC’s vision. Here the red area related to blocks that the UCC hoped to become “residential islands.” These sections of “stable” housing would be conserved through traffic realignment, in a nod to conventional urban planning that privileged segregated land use. Much of the “Transient Housing” section remained in yellow, this time indicating the area that composed the location of an intense planning study that was a key to the UCC proposal.55

The call for residential islands unveiled a contradiction in redeveloper rhetoric about a plan that could at once spur renewal and retain idealistic economic diversity. UCC leaders accommodated a community-wide heterogeneity, stretching over the entire two-square miles of Uptown. Yet, their proposal actually envisioned a segregation of low-income housing within that area. Just a few street realignments and strategically placed parks—in the place of blighted frontier properties—would effectively isolate Lakewood-Balmoral, the Marine Drive co-ops, and Buena Park from the dense pockets of converted apartments that fueled redeveloper anxiety.

Ten stars dotted the proposal map, innocuously and even euphemistically indicating locations of “spot clearance.” All but two of these stars, as expected, lay in the “Transient Housing” zone. The UCC proposal called to replace these blighted areas—ranging from the size of a single lot to two acres—with parking lots, school expansions, and playgrounds. The UCC envisioned the greatest concentration of spot clearance in the

low-rent south-central section of Uptown, in the two narrow blocks between the elevated tracks and Broadway. Votaw and the UCC planners also doomed spaces adjacent to Stewart School, two lots along the troublesome Wilson Avenue in Sheridan Park, and three other lots in central Uptown. One spot clearance star corresponded with a large apartment building just south of Buena Circle, a cul-de-sac in a low-rent area along the CTA tracks. Votaw had recently boasted that this building was the first in Uptown to go into city receivership, thanks to sustained UCC efforts to encourage building inspection and code violation enforcement. Of the requested $3 million, $2.3 million was to be dedicated to spot clearance. The UCC did not provide details as to how these spots were selected, who was involved in the selection process, and what relocation assurances would be implemented.

In his cover letter of the plan, Votaw nevertheless leveraged Uptown’s economic and social diversity in an attempt to set the proposal apart from the herd of urban redevelopers.

I should like to call to your attention that our proposal, perhaps unique among neighborhood proposals, envisages a program for an area containing a wide variety of housing types and residents. Uptown is literally a city within a city. A conservation plan for Uptown could provide clues and lessons for the city as a whole which, like Uptown, must find some way of developing a healthy environment for all sorts of widely different groups.

In a separate submission of the 1957 plan directly to Mayor Daley’s office, UCC board president and prominent banker Ed Dobbeck echoed Votaw’s characterizations of the proposal. Specifically, Dobbeck informed Daley that the UCC had no plans to construct a

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56 Votaw to John Bowers, October 31, 1957. UCC, Projects, Urban Renewal, 1953 to 1959. UCC Collection, CHM.
“Chinese Wall” separating Uptown from other communities. Instead, the commission hoped to stabilize Uptown by improving all types of housing in the area, from single-family homes to rooming houses. In closing, Dobbeck requested a half-hour meeting with Daley to personally introduce the 1957 plan.\footnote{57 Edward Dobbeck to Richard J. Daley, September 24, 1957. UCC, Projects, Urban Renewal, 1953 to 1959. UCC Collection, CHM.}

The Mayor’s office agreed to meet, and on October 18, 1957 the UCC put its best face forward in City Hall. Joining Dobbeck and Votaw in the delegation was, Mark Kemper, vice president for investments at Uptown-based Kemper Insurance; Americo Cuneo, trustee of the Cuneo family estate;\footnote{58 The Cuneo family’s extraordinary wealth was based on a publishing empire founded in the 1940s. Although none were Uptown residents, the estate had significant interests in the neighborhood—most notably the Cuneo Memorial Children’s Hospital. John Cuneo was a close friend to Richard J. Daley, and UCC leaders hoped the relationship would result in city hall access. “John Cuneo, Printing Firm Owner, Dies at 92,” \textit{Chicago Tribune}, May 1, 1977.} a PTA leader; a parish priest and a Protestant minister; Republican alderman Freeman; Democratic ward Chairman Frank Lyman; and model-turned-housewife-turned-block-club-leader Bettye Resnick. In a press release that accompanied the visit, Dobbeck took yet another opportunity to promote the UCC vision of manageable diversity: “Uptown, like the city of Chicago itself, must learn to live with all these different groups in such a way as to maintain a healthy environment for family life.”\footnote{59 Press release, October 18, 1957. UCC, Projects, Press Releases, May 1957 to October 1957. UCC Collection, CHM.} This delegation marked the high-water mark of elite consensus in redevelopment-era Uptown, even as its almost exclusively white, male, middle-class and upper-class composition undermined UCC claims of diversity.
As UCC leaders awaited word from the CCB, Votaw continued to make the case for the redevelopment plan. He restated the unique and progressive aspects of the plan in a letter thanking the *Chicago Tribune* for its continual coverage of the UCC-CCB relationship. Four facets of what Votaw termed “The Uptown Proposal” held the most promise, for the city as a whole, he argued. First, he stated, “instead of saying, as every other proposal does, that the way to conserve a neighborhood is to get rid of everybody who isn’t of a relatively high social status and dump these people on surrounding areas, our proposal suggests ways and means of conserving a densely-populated, highly-transient area in such a fashion that it does not exist as a menace to more stable adjacent areas.” Second, Votaw explained that the plan, “radically reduces the problem of relocation” by simultaneously spurring de-conversion and adding new housing. Third, he claimed that many of the de-converted six-flats would attract middle-income residents—the brass ring of all postwar urban redevelopers. Finally, Votaw wrote, “unofficial assurances from potential redevelopers” indicated that investors were willing to pay $3 per square foot of cleared land in Uptown—a startling difference from the 50 cents and $1.25 paid per square foot in the Hyde Park and Lake Meadows renewal areas, respectively.\(^6\)

\(^6\) Albert Votaw to Paul Hubbard, Editor, Neighborhood Section, *Chicago Tribune*, September 15, 1958. UCC, General Correspondence, News Releases and Related Materials, Correspondence from Binders, January to December 1958. UCC Collection, CHM.
In the late-1950s UCC leaders, specifically Albert Votaw, evaluated Uptown and articulated a vision for redevelopment that made room for a dense diversity of housing and land use. Exigencies of the competitive urban renewal marketplace also led them to promote Uptown redevelopment as a laboratory for middle-class and elite approaches to the general urban challenges of decentralization, suburbanization, and deterioration. Redevelopers tied Uptown’s fortunes to elements of their plan that they presumed set them apart from other neighborhoods: proposals and publicity centered on economic diversity and community representativeness. Purposefully or not, then, UCC leaders positioned themselves within a burgeoning reaction against the massive scale, expert-led renewal projects that were marred by controversies and inefficiencies resultant from demolition and relocation.

In 1958—not long after Al Votaw and Ed Dobbeck pleaded with Mayor Daley to consider Uptown redevelopment in the name of model diversity—reform-minded editors of Fortune published the collection of essays, The Exploding Metropolis. The book was, after the Goodman brothers’ Communitas, an early volley against outside ‘planning from above.’ In “Are Cities Un-American?”—the lead essay in The Exploding Metropolis—William Whyte, Jr. offered a full-throated defense of urban vitality and heterogeneity. Whyte dismissed massive renewal projects involving modernistic high-rises and superblocks as “dull and lifeless” and “bleak new utopias.” Based on a survey of 600 middle-class city-dwellers in Chicago, Philadelphia, and New York City, Whyte argued that the diversity of urban landscapes and populations held significant appeal to people often presumed to be headed to suburbia. Specifically, he detailed the “All Class
Community” where, despite some challenges, parents preferred to raise a family in an environment “closer to reality,” where their children would be “exposed to all kinds of people, colored and white, old and young, poor and rich.” And the heterogeneous, vibrant neighborhood held appeal to adults, as well: “They like the heterogeneity, the contrasts, the mixture of odd people.” Whyte concluded that although many of these residents might not ever go to a nightclub, they did like the idea that one was close by if they ever did chose to do so.61 In New York City’s West Village—home to Exploding Metropolis contributor Jane Jacobs—future New York mayor Ed Koch lead efforts to maintain the racial diversity of local schools, to retain the “desirable experience of attending a racially mixed school.”62

But one major weakness in UCC plans to date, and of the general reform impulse represented by Whyte and Jacobs, was the inability to engage low-income people potentially affected by redevelopment plans.63 Besides the 4600 Winthrop Block Club, working-class and low-income participation was near zero in Uptown. The UCC developed a self-serving and attention-grabbing expression of ‘diversity,’ a circumscribed politics of social, economic, and cultural realities in Uptown. The 1957 UCC plan languished at City Hall. Uptown was well down the list of neighborhoods being


62 Klemek, The Transatlantic Collapse Urban Renewal, 150.

63 Despite Whyte’s extolment of the “All Class Community,” other essays in The Exploding Metropolis display severe class biases. Daniel Seligman indulged in a relatively biased depiction of low-income southern and Appalachian white migrants, explaining that even poor blacks are better city-dwellers than what one anonymous Chicago official described as “white hillbillies...from the Ozarks.” Daniel Seligman, “The Enduring Slum” in Whyte, editor, Exploding Metropolis, 95.
considered as conservation districts. Votaw and the UCC leaders would need to adjust their approach. Yet, if the work to enlist diversity in the name of redevelopment had been challenging to this point, then the task was about to become exponentially more difficult. Just as redevelopers seemed to have found their conceptual footing, a new type of diversity redefined the cultural landscape.
CHAPTER THREE
NEWCOMERS

It is established knowledge that the southern white newcomer has different motivations and values from those associated with urban living. He resists authority which is in conflict with his individualism associated with his pattern of rural family life affecting no one but himself and his family…Because of this cultural pattern, the newcomer may not be able to verbalize his needs. Indeed, he may not even recognize them.¹

The social and economic elites of the Uptown Chicago Commission (UCC) viewed themselves as stewards of what they hoped would be a rebirth of Uptown’s pre-Depression prosperity. Yet demographic and cultural dynamics beyond their control came to Uptown in the mid-1950s. Uptown’s availability of low-rent housing and access to unskilled job opportunities made the area one of the primary destinations for thousands of working-class and poor whites pushed out of the South and Appalachia by shifts in the regional labor economy. These migrants presented a direct challenge to elite and middle-class aspirations for a diverse yet docile redeveloped Uptown. The UCC attempted to control Uptown’s shifting cultural landscape by asserting itself as experts on the vexing issue of southern and Appalachian white migration. Euphemistically referred to as

¹ Uptown Chicago Commission, “Proposal for Welfare Center for Newcomers (Demonstration Project),” undated. UCC Projects, Pilot Project for a Welfare Center for Newcomers, October 1957 to December 22, 1958. UCC Collection, CHM.
“Newcomers,” these low-income sojourners prompted complex middle-class and elite notions of whiteness and cultural behavior in a diverse urban setting.²

The Roots of the Southern and Appalachian White Working Class in Uptown

The twentieth century witnessed three distinct phases of southern migration. Millions of low-income southern whites and blacks moved to cities during and just after World War I. Two regions attracted the vast majority of southerners during this initial migration. African Americans largely relocated to the Northeast and Midwest, a massive population shift remembered as “The Great Migration.” While thousands of southern whites also moved to the Northeast, many more made their way to the industrial centers of the Midwest. Large colonies of southern whites formed in neighborhoods near industrial jobs in Detroit, Cleveland, Northwest Indiana, and Chicago’s West Side. The reduction of stable job opportunities restricted migration during the Great Depression, with the exception of the movement of whites from the Southern Plains and Mid-South to the West Coast. The Dustbowl ballads of Woody Guthrie and the “Okie” fiction of John Steinbeck made this second phase of twentieth-century southern migration highly visible.

With World War II and the renewal of industrial production, the third and largest wave of

² In this chapter I specifically refer to both southern and Appalachian white migrants, as opposed to a more generalized designation of ‘southerners.’ This is an effort to reflect the important regional differences of migrants from the mid-south and Deep South, and those from the upland south and Appalachia. When my sources, at least implicitly, refer to people from an identifiable region, then I use either the corollary terms ‘southern’ or ‘Appalachian.’ But when they refer to migrants from the area stretching from Texas to West Virginia, I use the descriptor ‘southern and Appalachian whites.’ Eventually, many of these Uptown migrants developed a ‘southern’ group identity that encompassed Appalachian identity, but in the 1950s migrants were more likely to think of themselves as Alabamans, or West Virginians, more so than ‘southerners.’ The US Census considered that the South consisted of Oklahoma, Texas, Arkansas, Louisiana, Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, Georgia, Florida, South Carolina, North Carolina, West Virginia, Virginia, and Kentucky. As such, all ‘hillbillies’ were southerners (with the exception of a few counties in far southwestern Pennsylvania), but not all southerners were ‘hillbillies.’
southern migration commenced. Both blacks and whites streamed to employment
opportunities in the urban Midwest and West through the 1960s, this time joined by
departing Appalachians.

Uptown had its own history of southern and Appalachian white migration. There
were some important differences from the migrant population on Chicago’s West Side,
which far outnumbered that of Uptown’s until the 1950s. Most of the newcomers there
originated from west Tennessee, far from the Appalachian counties that generated so
many Uptown migrants. Uptown also had its own racial situation, where the color line
was maintained with little overt racism, thanks to isolation from ‘threatening’ black
populations. Many white southerners and Appalachians called Uptown home by 1940,
but not to the degree in some of the other colonies of migrants. People born in Kentucky,
Tennessee, and West Virginia—the three states that later produced the bulk of migrants
to Uptown through the 1960s—appear throughout the 1940 Census tracts of central
Uptown. Six-hundred eighty-seven white Kentuckians, Tennesseans, and West
Virginians lived in the dense blocks surrounding the Wilson train station. Fifty-two lived
within a block of the small African American community on Winthrop.

On the 1100 block of Leland Avenue—the northern border of the ‘Segregated
Block’—Kentucky-born Charles and Mary Hanner shared an apartment with their grown
son George, their daughter Louise, and her three brothers-in-law. Befitting Uptown’s

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3 The nearest significant population of African Americans lived five miles south in the ‘Little
Hell’ or Cabrini neighborhood. Blacks also lived in segregated blocks in Evanston, two miles north.
Through 1950, dozens of blacks lived in integrated temporary veteran’s housing on Chicago’s far northwest
side.
burgeoning diversity, Louise had married into a Persian family. The Hanners and their children moved to Uptown before 1930, when they lived on Magnolia Avenue a few blocks west of their 1940 address. Charles owned a barber shop, and Louise progressed from work as a cashier in 1930 to that of a stenographer in 1940. She reported a very respectable salary of $1,020 for the year. Her 23-year old brother, despite only two years of high school, listed his profession as a part-time accountant. Louise’s Persian brothers-in-law drove cabs, washed cars, and worked for the New Deal’s National Youth Administration.4

The upstairs neighbors of this extended Kentuckian-Persian family were more representative of Uptown’s general population, with renters born in Canada, Michigan, Iowa, and Illinois. A few European-born people lived on the 1100 block of Leland. A 38-year old Mexican citizen rented a room on the corner of Leland and Broadway. Most of the Leland residents fell into low- and middle-income status, reporting salaries between $300 and $800 per year.5 Professionals and tradesmen with larger incomes dotted the block, such as a railroad foreman, an orchestra organist, and a photograph engraver. All five of the apartment buildings were occupied exclusively by renters.6

The nature of the Leland Avenue Kentuckians suggests reasons for Uptown’s southern and Appalachian whites going largely unnoticed through the mid-1950s.

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4 The NYA provided modest income to people in their late teens and early-20s, in exchange for paraprofessional training.


6 Information about the 1100 block of Leland Avenue is from the 1940 United States Census, Chicago, Cook County, Illinois. Enumeration District 103-3091, page 1A.
Redevelopers eventually correlated transiency, poverty, and insularity to southern and Appalachian white migrants. But the Hanners had lived in Uptown for more than a decade, and the head of the household boasted a stable if modest trade. The Hanner children were anything but indigent or insular, with Thomas’s nascent accounting career and Louise’s gainful employment and interracial marriage. Furthermore, the Hanners lived on a heterogeneous block of Midwesterners and European immigrants, unlike later migrants who would raise their visibility by clustering in blocks dismissed as “Hillbilly Ghettoes.”

Chicago’s social scientists, social workers, and community groups drew upon established scholarship on general migration in an attempt to understand the postwar southern population shift. Chicago had long been a center of thought on migration and urban adjustment. Beginning in the early twentieth century, sociologists at the University of Chicago defined their young profession by creating a scholarly language about migration. Ideas about migration dovetailed with the general Chicago School perception of the industrial era city. Initially Chicago School adherents focused on European immigrants. William Thomas’ and Florian Znaecki’s epic *The Polish Peasant* established a rational framework for understanding adjustment—or maladjustment—to modern Chicago. With the decline of European migration after World War I, Chicago School researchers of migration turned to studying the long term adjustment to the unfamiliar social, economic, and cultural forms of the American city. Scholars concluded that traditional institutions, such as the local parish and the ethnic benevolent society, often conflicted with the more heterogeneous attractions like labor unions, street gangs, and
commercialized leisure. The availability of the latter presumably threatened the sustainability of the former. With the diminution of these traditional social forms, migrants lost contact with support systems and became vulnerable to urban “disorganization”—a key ingredient to the rise of crime, illness, and general disorder.\(^7\)

The most prominent postwar sociological voice on Appalachian white migration emerged from outside of the Chicago School. Roscoe Giffin, a Kokomo, Indiana, native who trained at Iowa State University, gained prominence soon after assuming in 1949 the chair of the sociology department at Kentucky’s Berea College. Giffin—not only a Quaker like Albert Votaw, but also a member of the pacifistic and interracialist Fellowship of Reconciliation—first encountered Appalachian whites during a 1949 study of the consolidation of five Kentucky school districts.\(^8\) Part of Giffin’s early research focused on the accelerating emigration from the depressed region. When the Cincinnati Mayor’s Office commissioned a study in 1954 on the exploding Kentucky-born

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\(^8\) The Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR) was on the vanguard of radical civil rights activism after 1945. FOR members worked closely with the Congress on Racial Equality (CORE), even initiating multi-racial experimental living arrangements known as ‘ashrams’ in the 1940s and 1950s. See Paul H. Dekar, *Creating the Beloved Community: A Journey with the Fellowship of Reconciliation* (Telford, PA: Cascadia Publishing House, 2005).
population of the city, Giffin had positioned himself as an expert on the Appalachian
social and cultural norms about which non-southerners were beginning to be wary.
Giffin’s report for the city superimposed his rural observations onto the urban
newcomers. He concluded that the cultural foundations of Appalachian life limited
migrant adjustment to urban norms. Giffin viewed industrialization and competitive
society as advanced and ideal. Due to isolation and cultural legacies, rural Appalachians
missed out on the modernizing aspect of industrialization, and never developed the
competitive spirit needed to survive and thrive in the twentieth-century city. Giffin
blamed anti-modern Appalachian culture for instilling beliefs incompatible with modern
urban society. The mountaineer was too reliant on tradition and family, and his fatalistic
and fundamentalist religion stunted pragmatic secular development. Giffin cautioned
against any social services that might result in the retention of rural culture, advocating
instead for robust publically-funded job training and housing initiatives. 9 The Cincinnati
study garnered attention in other cities grappling with southern and Appalachian white
migration. 10 Giffin’s institutional home in Kentucky, his pioneering work on Appalachian
migration, and the initial burst of publicity for the Mayor’s committee made him a
scholar in demand. When the city of Chicago initiated the Institute on Cultural Patterns

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9 Bruce Tucker, “Roscoe Giffin and the First Cincinnati Workshop on Urban Appalachians” in
Down Home Downtown: Urban Appalachians Today, edited by Philip J. Obermiller (Dubuque, Iowa:

of Newcomers in 1957, it was Roscoe Giffin who penned the introductory paper on southern and Appalachian white migration.¹¹

Chicago’s southern and Appalachian white population developed in a different manner than that studied by Giffin. Distance from the sources of migration resulted in longer sojourns, and Chicago’s much larger and more diverse population meant a new host of challenges for the newcomer. Southern and Appalachian whites began migrating to Chicago upon the very founding of the city in the early nineteenth century. Industrialization eventually drew thousands to the factories, particularly after the restriction of European immigration during World War I. When the third wave of twentieth-century internal migration commenced in 1940, pockets of southern and Appalachian white population formed in areas near industrial labor. The Calumet region of southeast Chicago and northwest Indiana hosted an Appalachian community so significant that it produced the pioneers of Bluegrass music. The Kentucky-born Monroe brothers moonlighted from their Hammond, Indiana, factory jobs as popular musical entertainment in the honky-tonks that sprouted in the shadows of steel mills and refineries. Local radio stations programmed ‘Hillbilly,’ ‘Mountain,’ or ‘Old Fashioned’ music for several hours each day and promoted the Monroe brothers’ performances. Eventually the pickers parlayed their northwest Indiana popularity into record deals, national radio play, and enshrinement in the Country Music Hall of Fame.¹²

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¹² Tom Ewing, The Bill Monroe Reader (Champaign: University of Illinois, 2000), 57, 78.
Uptown was not the first neighborhood of Chicago to be identified with southern or Appalachian white migrants. Many honky-tonks and storefront churches called Englewood on the South Side home in the 1940s and 1950s, particularly near the intersection of 63rd and Halsted. And so many white southerners lived in the low-rent apartment district along West Madison from Ashland to Kedzie that the stretch assumed the nickname “Tennessee Valley” in the 1940s. For the most part non-southerners noted these colonies as curiosities, islands in a heterogeneous archipelago of second-and-third generation European immigrants.

“Tennessee Valley” attracted the first dedicated sociological study of southern whites in Chicago. Lewis Killian, a stridently antiracist white Texan and protégé of Louis Wirth and Ernest Burgess, completed a two-year study of the area in 1948 as part of his dissertation at the University of Chicago. Killian’s conclusions departed from those of his contemporary Roscoe Giffin. He described southern white cultural norms as malleable and adaptive to social and economic exigencies of the urban north. Killian refused to take surveys of southern white migrant attitudes at face value, preferring instead in-depth participant analysis. Killian underwent months of drinking with working-class southern whites in West Side honky-tonks, then followed them to storefront Holiness churches on Sundays, all along drawing them into long conversations about their everyday lives. In his dissertation and several journal articles produced in the early 1950s, Killian explained that southern white migrants assumed a distinct group consciousness in the north after having their differences marked by the dominant host culture. Southern whites faced an array of challenges in Chicago, specifically a ‘loss of
prestige’ and an unfamiliar and unsettling confrontation with greater freedom and power among African Americans.

Killian found most Chicago southern whites as overtly racist in talk but accepting of the relative freedoms of northern blacks in action. When in like company, southern whites were quick to verbalize a strict racial hierarchy. But a practical attitude of ‘When in Rome…’ eventual prevailed, according to Killian, contradicting Giffin’s depiction of intractable, regressive cultural traits. One told him,

I can’t see that you can do anything about the niggers up here. You see, in the South you can count on collaboration. You know that other people feel like you do, and if you start anything you can count on them. But up here you can’t depend on that. You can’t be sure that people will back you up, and you might even get hurt if you started something.

Southern whites recognized their diminished racial privilege in Chicago, as they situated themselves between the prejudices of non-southern whites and their own racist perceptions of African Americans. They seemed resigned to the fact that blacks had more freedom in the North, and only physically policed the color line on the one small patch of turf they could defend—the sanctum sanctorum honky-tonk tavern. In general Killian found the racist bravado to be vulnerable to new attitudes brought on by life in the urban north, concluding an article with the southern white’s observation,

You know, the last time I was in Tennessee I went to a restaurant. They served coloreds but they made ‘em go in the back door and eat in the kitchen. I said to my husband, “That sure does look funny after you’ve lived in Chicago, don’t it?”

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Southern white resentment about the loss of absolute racial privilege confirmed some stereotypes. Yet Killian steadfastly maintained that the depictions of the inherently anti-modern, violent, unhealthy migrant were inaccurate stereotypes generated from superficial assumptions about cultural behavior. Killian doubted that the southern white migrant had the power or even desire to impose brash racist views on the urban North. For example, he refuted the theory that southern whites instigated and led the Detroit Race Riot of 1943.14

**Southern and Appalachian Whites Go Uptown**

National and regional economic factors dramatically changed the nature of Uptown’s southern and Appalachian white population after 1950. Mechanization of mining undercut stable blue-collar jobs in the southern mountains, where a high birth rate already pushed younger people to migrate. Southerners who sojourned to the major manufacturing areas on Detroit, Cleveland, and the Calumet region also fell victim to streamlined industrial practices. Faced with the prospect of returning to an even more dire employment situation back South or the relative abundance of unskilled or seasonal labor opportunities in another northern city, many chose the latter. The numbers are staggering. Eastern Kentucky mining employment dropped from 47,000 to 25,000 between 1950 and 1955; twenty percent of the Kentucky population was on Federal relief in 1959. Giffin

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estimated that 800,000 left the southern mountain states between 1955 and 1960.\textsuperscript{15} Mechanization of agricultural labor in the Mid-South also stimulated movement. In 1940 14 million southerners lived on farms; by 1970 the number of southern farmers fell to 3 million. Altogether the South, where the labor economy relied so heavily upon mining and agriculture, lost in the 1950s over 3 million whites and 1.1 million blacks to other American regions.\textsuperscript{16} The third wave of southern migration after 1950 was of such a magnitude that much of the available affordable housing in the urban Midwest suddenly filled with low-income whites and blacks from Appalachia and the South.

Chicago received 26,859 migrants from Appalachian counties between 1955 and 1960, the third highest number after Atlanta and Washington, DC. That these whites only made up six percent of all migrants to Chicago in that period suggests another reason for the rather late ‘discovery’ by elites and social workers. Southern or Appalachian whites represented 14 percent, 15 percent, and 19 percent of migrants to Detroit, Cleveland, and Cincinnati, respectively. These figures explain why the initial burst of non-southern interest in white migration centered on those cities, before finding voice in Chicago. That the southern or Appalachian white migrant was just one of many newcomers to Chicago was one of the unique dynamics of that population in Uptown, another being the diversity of originations. Only 31 percent of Chicago’s Appalachians arrived from the three regions that produced the most migrants to the area (parts of West Virginia, Kentucky, or


Alabama). The character of southern and Appalachian migration to other northern cities was much more likely to be dominated by a single state or two: 40 percent of Cleveland newcomers came from three regions in West Virginia and 64 percent in Cincinnati arrived from three Kentucky regions. This disparity undermined the assumption that social work solutions in Cincinnati or Detroit—two early sites of attempts to understand the challenge—could be ported to attempts to understand the southern and Appalachian white migration to Uptown.¹⁷

Low-income whites migrating to Chicago after 1950 faced limited housing options. Much of the city’s low-rent housing was in the Black Belt. Even if southern or Appalachian whites were willing to live as a minority among African Americans, they would not have been able to secure housing in the already critically overcrowded low-rent sections of the Near South Side. New housing in the suburbs and Chicago’s northwestern and southwestern fringes was out of the lower-working class price range. Uptown, with an established cluster of small and affordable apartments and convenient access to transportation, served as a beacon to the postwar white migrant of limited means. Uptown’s distance from large populations of African Americans also probably played a role in its popularity with white migrants—both southern and otherwise. By

¹⁷ Clyde B. McCoy and James S. Brown, “Appalachian Migration to Midwestern Cities” in The Invisible Minority: Urban Appalachians, edited by William W. Philliber and Clyde B. McCoy (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1980), 61, 65. McCoy and Brown divided the Appalachian region into 26 State Economic Areas (SEA). I’m using ‘Uptown’ and ‘Chicago’ somewhat interchangeably here, even though southern whites obviously did not live exclusively in Uptown. But the 1957 survey of Uptown’s southerners (discussed below) reveals a similar diversity of West Virginians, Kentuckians, and Alabamians. This Appalachia-focused methodology results in yet another way to view the magnitude of ‘southern’ white migration to Chicago in the 1950s. McCoy and Brown exclude migrants from SEAs in western Tennessee, which other surveys identified as a major source of Uptown’s white newcomers.
1960 a few hundred whites from the South resided in areas of growing black populations in Austin and Englewood, but more than 1,000 alone moved to a small area in the heart of Uptown. Social workers came across scores of whites who relocated directly from the changing West and South Sides, where Lewis Killian had recorded so many coarse racial attitudes among southern whites.

No precise figure exists for the number of southern and Appalachian whites who moved to Uptown during the 1950s. The 1960 Census recorded people’s regional home in 1955. Central Uptown proved to be heavily populated by whites who had lived in the South five years prior. Yet the raw numbers of this snapshot of migration—just a few thousand—believe the volume of Uptown southern and Appalachian whites. Census data did not capture those who moved before 1955, nor did it account for the untold thousands who originated in the South but moved to Uptown from industrial regions such as Detroit or the Calumet region. Furthermore, the Census occurred in April, when many southerners and Appalachians migrated back home for agricultural work. Surveys of local public schools give a more accurate picture. Stewart Elementary School in central Uptown reported the city’s highest volume and percentage of new students between 1953 and 1955. Nearby Stockton Elementary accepted the third highest percentage.\(^{18}\) Surveys of the late-1950s revealed blocks of Uptown’s most dense districts almost entirely populated with southern and Appalachian whites. On the highest end of estimates, one

\(^{18}\) Minutes of the Meeting of the Mayor’s Subcommittee on Welfare Center for Newcomers, June 21, 1957. UCC, Administrative, Welfare Committee, May 1957-December 1958. UCC Collection, CHM.
A private social service agency estimated that by 1960 40,000 southern whites lived between Irving Park Road and Devon Avenue.\(^\text{19}\)

Once in Uptown migrants usually found gainful employment—at least in the 1950s. Although most of these jobs were not of the stable, long term variety of working-class migrants of years past, the employment picture beamed in relation to the southern job crisis. Uptown newcomers recounted the ease of finding work in nearby small factories like the Bell and Howard telephone plant in near-suburban Skokie and the LaSalle Candy Company to the south of Uptown. Lectric Metal in Evanston and small factories in further-suburban Morton Grove hired many southerners, as did Uptown’s own Combined Insurance Company and Kemper Insurance. More traditional blue collar jobs in Chicago’s industrial areas were available to Uptowners, considering access to regional and metropolitan railways, if one was willing to face a commute to 125\(^{\text{th}}\) and Stony Island on the Far South Side.\(^\text{20}\)

The cultural shifts in Uptown’s landscape revealed the magnitude of working-class southern and Appalachian white migration to the neighborhood. Dozens of taverns catering to the migrants blossomed along the busiest streets—some owned by southerners or Appalachians, but most by long-time Chicagoans looking to capitalize on the population shift. By 1960 southerners owned and operated the main bowling alley and several restaurants. Uptown newcomers described how their daily errands brought them

\(^{19}\) This estimate came from the Southern Mountain Center, established in the early 1960s by the Kentucky-based Council of the Southern Mountains. The Center did not provide the estimate’s methodology, and it might be assumed that an inflated number served to bolster its claims for relevancy.

into almost exclusive contact with fellow southerners or mountaineers. This interaction with familiar people, combined with the relatively favorable employment options for unskilled labor in late-1950s Chicago, counterbalanced the dilapidated apartments, harsh weather, and hostile nativist attitudes that challenged the migrants. One Uptown southern white described the central area as, “just a real nice neighborhood, really nice, you know.”

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Defining and Solving the “Problem” with Southern and Appalachian White Migration

The social and economic elites of the UCC felt otherwise. The population explosion of working-class southern and Appalachian whites coincided with the conservation group’s own formation and strides towards relevancy. The UCC did not initially correlate Uptown’s festering ‘urban crisis’ specifically to southern or Appalachian whites. The first wave of housing surveys, the effort to “clean up” the Wilson Avenue entertainment district, and the highly-publicized campaign to close the notorious Normandy Lounge each revealed anxieties over working-class or marginal cultural behavior, in general. Neither the UCC nor the local media who covered these early initiatives singled-out southern and Appalachian whites as sources of social problems. But the UCC sustained residential and cultural surveillance as the working-class community rapidly assumed a southern accent in the late-1950s. Reactions to similar burgeoning concentrations of low-income southern whites in the urban north

21 Guy, From Diversity to Unity, 74-76.
joined the UCC in formulating a language to describe the supposedly deleterious impact
the newcomers were having on the urban social fabric.

Suspicion and hostility towards rural white migrants has deep roots in American
culture. Newcomers to the West Coast from the Southern Plains and Mid-South faced
prejudice and even legal persecution during the 1930s. People as diverse as local sheriffs
and Frankfurter School critical theorists questioned the fitness of ‘Okie’ migrants.
Slapstick cultural depictions of Appalachian poverty preceded any actual interaction with
southern whites. One such depiction, Disney’s cartoon short “The Martins and the Coys”
(1946), was so over-the-top that it prompted a hail of denouncements from journals
ranging from Time to the New Republic. Anti-southern white sentiment simmered in
Detroit. An infamous 1951 Wayne State University poll asked residents to identify
“undesirable” groups they wanted to see leave the city. “Poor southern whites” and
“hillbillies” polled at 21 percent, second only to “criminals and gangsters” but well ahead
of “drifters,” “negroes,” and “foreigners.”

Non-southern postwar elites responded to the blitz of migrants into ‘their’
neighborhoods with a series of journalistic exposes about the phenomenon. Taken
together, the tropes and conclusions of these responses formed a discourse on urban
behavior, cultural and social control, and poverty, and prescriptive whiteness. Among the
first and clearest journalistic salvos came from a December 1956 article in The Reporter,

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University Press, 2004), 164-165.

23 Harkins, Hillbilly, 178.
a middlebrow bi-weekly dedicated to promoting the virtues of postwar American liberalism. James Maxwell began “Down from the Hills and into the Slums” with what quickly became a conventional framing device for examinations of poor white southern and Appalachian migrants. Maxwell recounted a seemingly unremarkable complaint about migrant behavior in the city: too lazy to hold a job, always drunk, “they absolutely refuse to accommodate themselves to any kind of decent, civilized life.” Having set up his reader to expect a standard, racialized account of black, Puerto Rican, or Mexican migrant behavior, Maxwell revealed that the complaint comes from an Indianapolis woman, and that she is speaking of southern whites. “Her term for them was ‘hillbillies.’”24

Maxwell weaved essentialist descriptions of poor Appalachian white bodies and behavior throughout his summary of the migration. He described them as “tall, loose limbed, and angular, with the blond hair and ruddiness often associated with the English race.” These “mountaineers” were inherently suspicious of authority, and clung to their anti-modern cultural practices as a defense from the bewildering and hostile urban north. A Cincinnati police office explained that most Appalachian migrant crime resulted from the newcomer’s ignorance of the law. This official, yet anonymous source—another foundational motif of literature on low-income Appalachian migrants—told of mountain culture acceptance and toleration of statutory rape and incest. The migrant struggled to grasp why northern police officers dared to be so intrusive into their sex lives. Migrant workers were so poorly trained, impudent, and sickly that they were virtually

unemployable. “A Cincinnati doctor” reported that between 80 and 90 percent of southern white boys failed military draft physical examinations. Roscoe Giffin’s Cincinnati Mayoral study proved to be the only glimmer of hope for the migrant Appalachian.

Media interest in low-income white southerners and Appalachians debuted in Chicago in a big way in 1957, with Norma Lee Browning’s four-part *Chicago Tribune* series about the city’s southern and Appalachian white migrants. Browning was a high-profile reporter for the *Tribune*. Her journalism was a mix of investigative exposé and human interest stories inflected with exoticism. In a book that compiled and expanded much of her early work, Browning explained, “I have made friends with crooks and con men, with prostitutes, dope addicts, and an assortment of shady ladies from all walks of life; from quacks to queens I have met the big names and little names that make the news.” Browning earned national attention and awards for a series of articles on medical swindlers in 1949. She followed those stories up with accounts of her travels through the rural Midwest and upland South, which she eventually turned into a book chapter titled, “Seers, Soothsayers, and Hadacol.” The appeal of most of Browning’s subjects derived from unexpected, often sensationalized, juxtapositions of modern postwar America with anti-modern subcultures and behavior. She was a natural choice to write about the seemingly sudden appearance of thousands of poor southern whites in the nation’s second largest metropolis.²⁵

Browning’s first installment, “Girl Reporter Visits Jungles of Hillbillies,” began:

‘You better be careful going into those places. You may not come out alive to write your story.’ This was a crime investigators warning to a Tribune reporter preparing to prowl the junglelands of a strange breed of people pouring into Chicago by the truckloads. Their hangouts advertise “Hillbilly Music.” Best you stick to calypso.

Like Maxwell’s opening, Browning prefaced her expose by toying with stereotypes of primitiveness and danger, inverting the often Africanized image of the ‘jungle’ and the racialized word ‘breed’ and applying it to, ironically, native-born whites. Browning warned against viewing working-class white space the way one would view other ‘exotic’ cultural behavior, in this case the calypso lounges that were a major fad in the urban North during the late 1950s. Like Maxwell, Browning translated Giffin’s depiction of anti-modern mountain mores into lurid examples of violence, rape, incest, mental disabilities, poor hygiene, honky-tonk dens of depravity, and rent-skipping. Browning’s “Hillbilly Jungles” dotted the Chicago landscape, from Lewis Killian’s field site on the West Side, to Englewood, and to Uptown’s Wilson Avenue.

Browning’s next installment ran through the remainder of standard media themes about low-income white southern and Appalachian migrants—resistance to healthcare, inability to manage money, truancy, and teen pregnancy. She shifted the focus of the second article directly to Uptown, where she found citizens heroically dedicated to uplifting the migrant. UCC executive director Albert Votaw struck a paternalistic and pragmatic note.

26 See Chapter Four for a discussion of the calypso fad.
There’s only one thing to do. We have to face the fact that they’re here and their numbers will increase. We can’t stop the cities’ industrial expansion. We will continue importing migrants for jobs. But we’re going to have to develop techniques and the agencies to teach these rural people how to live in the urban community.

Mrs. Thomas Saltiel, Uptown PTA leader and UCC board member, added an even more compassionate tone to Votaw’s reflections. Saltiel called for “more tolerance” and an understanding that it was the cultural, not biological, background holding back white southern and Appalachian migrants.27

Saltiel was not alone in assuming a sympathetic (if not paternalistic) stance towards low-income southern white migrants. Newscaster Frayn Utley, of WNBQ-TV, took to the airwaves in September 1957 to consider the thousands of southern blacks and whites and Puerto Ricans streaming into Chicago each month. She explained that migrants came to Chicago unprepared for the crowded living conditions, easy credit, and expectations of cleanliness and hygiene. Utley placed much of the burden for adjustment on the residents and institutions of Chicago; she praised the Mayor’s Committee on Newcomers and Park District programs for migrants. She concluded her commentary, “This is everyone’s problem. We’d better come up with some answers or we’ll build tragedy for newcomers and catastrophe for the rest of us.”28 Captain John Fahey, chief of the Town Hall police precinct that covered the southern half of Uptown, often depicted newcomers as misunderstood. For example, he told the UCC board of directors that

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28 Frayn Utley: Commentary, WNBQ Channel 5, 10:45 pm, September 17, 1957 [transcript]. Greater Chicago Church Federation (GCCF), Newcomers Program, 1954 to 1957. GCCF Collection, CHM.
southern whites were not responsible for much of the blame placed on them for criminal or anti-social behavior. He reasoned that the thrust of newcomer programs should encourage migrants and established residents to become “better acquainted” with one another.  

Fahey reiterated this perspective in a *US News and World Report* article on Uptown.

> These are fine people, and they are coming along. They don’t commit any more crime than other people who are poor as they are. They are just like other immigrants who used to come here from Europe. At first, they had to learn to live in a big American city, too. Now the old immigrants are on their feet and have forgotten.

Even leaders of the UCC at times went out of their way to defend southern white migrants against hostile attitudes. In 1961, during a period that some within the UCC attempted to foster a better relationship with migrants, board president and Uptown National Bank executive Ed Pabst penned a remarkable letter to 25 local and national media outlets. The letter began, “Your valued news service wouldn’t refer to a Negro as a ‘nigger.’ Why, then, should it castigate another minority with the appellation of ‘hillbilly?’” Pabst declared that Chicago was “blessed by the arrival” of white southerners, and that “these people are AMERICANS…in every finest meaning of that term.” “Above all,” he continued, “they DON’T want to be singled out as a group with an name which they consider an insult and is inaccurate in any case since few of these people actually come from the ‘hills.’” Before concluding with an account of the ways in

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29 Minutes of the Board of Directors Meeting, December 11, 1961. UCC, General Correspondence, News Releases and Related Materials, Correspondence from Binders, November 1961. UCC Collection, CHM.

which the UCC was working to alleviate the difficult transition for migrants, Pabst suggested “that the simple word ‘Southerner’ would be sufficient.”

Editor reaction to Pabst’s appeal was mixed. The *Chicago American* appreciated Pabst’s sentiment, but declined a change in policy. The editor explained, “The term ‘hillbilly’ refers only to a certain type of indigent, uneducated person, not necessarily from the south.” Thus, the paper would continue to use the word when describing those whose behavior indicated a failure to assimilate and the retention of “clannishness…even after he’s had a chance to change.” A *Chicago Daily News* editor went even further in taking Pabst’s protest into consideration. An editor admitted to Pabst, “It was never the intention of the *Daily News* to use the word ‘hillbilly’ as a derogatory term. Perhaps it has been too handy a device to describe a social group and has been over-done.” Yet, the editor noted that white southern migrants often used the term amongst themselves, and that “hillbilly music” was a recognized genre. He concluded that he would instruct *Daily News* reporters to use common sense and good taste when considering use of the “objectionable expression.”

Editors at the *Sun-Times* felt differently—to the degree that the paper published a reaction to Pabst’s request in the editorial section. The *Sun-Times* commentator noted that although the paper did not use “hillbilly,” there should be no shame in doing so. The hillbilly, with his or her “undiluted Anglo-Saxon blood,” should be proud of the appellation: “He or his ancestors came from the hills. So what? So do the

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Scottish Highlanders, renowned in song and in story. His birthright is that of a free, untrammeled man. His origins are of pre-Revolutionary Anglo-Saxon stock.”

The writer closed with a statement that called into question Pabst’s motivations, a suggestion that the attempt to police the discourse on southern white migration was more about the reputation of Uptown than the newcomers flocking there. Indeed, Pabst’s aversion to the ‘hillbilly’ marker perhaps related to redeveloper desires for low-income southern whites to fully shed the cultural behavior elites found so objectionable. The Sun-Times editorial ended, “It isn’t the hillbillies who ask not to be called hillbillies. Is it, grandpa?”

Browning herself assumed a more sympathetic stance in her final two installments of her “Hillbilly” series. Nevertheless, her overall project unleashed a flurry of reader mail. “Thousands” of angry letters denounced Browning’s depiction of southern and Appalachian whites.

The response prompted a new series of articles about the original series—a news item reporting on a news item. Two articles specifically explored the roots and implications of the very word “hillbilly.” Browning reassured “respectable” southern folks that “hillbilly” only referred to uncivilized and disruptive rural whites. Browning penned a short article that highlighted “the good ones”—southern or Appalachian migrants whose cultural and economic behavior conformed to acceptable modern urban standards. Between the original four-part series, the string of reactions to upset readers, and an additional four-part series recounting Browning’s visit to “Otter Holler,

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Appalachia, USA,” the Tribune ran at least 14 articles about cultural conceptions of southern and Appalachian whites in the spring of 1957. If not front page news, then stories about poor southern and Appalachian whites were almost daily reading.

Figure 5. Editorial Cartoon for "Hillbilly 'Invaders' Shock, Terrify Chicago with Primitive Habits," Charleston (WV) Gazette, March 6, 1957.

The Cold War and global decolonialization brought to fore concern about the social condition of underdeveloped’ populations, as seen in the work of the likes of Oscar Lewis. Appalachian poverty also became more visible in the 1950s, as one of the ‘pockets’ of poverty as explained by John Kenneth Galbraith. Social science consensus considered the culture of rural southerners and Appalachians to be incompatible to modern industrial capitalism. This incompatibility became highly visible once migrants were confronted with the urban environment outside of the South. The ‘cultural lag’ theory resuscitated ideas of social disorganization made famous by the Chicago School before 1935. Postwar ghettos, however, were seen as qualitatively different than the
prewar ‘ethnic’ ghettos studied by the Chicago School. Neighborhoods like Uptown confounded traditional ideas of “zones of transition,” which were thought to serve as assimilative spaces for first and second generation immigrants. Instead of prompting cultural adjustments, Uptown only exacerbated anti-modern social behavior, according to students of the southern and Appalachian white migration.35

**Surveying the Uptown Newcomers**

Whatever the national or international implications of the white southern and Appalachian migration, non-southerners concerned with the issue continued their investigations on the ground-level. Social workers and community groups in Chicago undertook an effort to understand southern and Appalachian white migrant social and cultural behavior. Like Cincinnati, the City of Chicago initiated a series of conferences and subcommittees dedicated to confronting the supposed social disorganization caused by migrants—referred to as ‘newcomers’ in more neutral language. City officials and social workers first attempted a comprehensive migrant initiative designed to work with all newcomers to Chicago. Towards this goal, the mayor’s office created the Committee on New Residents in August 1956. The city staffed the committee with a mix of social workers and city and county officials from departments such as Public Welfare and the Chicago Housing Authority. After several bi-weekly meetings and a major two-day symposium, the group announced its major objectives:

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1. Stimulating public and private agencies to a full awareness of the needs of those newest residents of the city.
2. Demonstrating whatever practical, if untraditional, methods of reaching and working with those residents at the nearest neighborhood level.
3. Developing and distributing factual data about the new residents themselves, and information which will be useful to them.
4. Creating a sympathetic understanding by the Old Resident for the struggles of the New Resident.36

The Mayor’s committee divided focus among American Indian, Black, Mexican, Puerto Rican, European, and southern white newcomers. Although skin color made for profound differences in the experiences of these groups, the committee instead approached the issue by highlighting their shared characteristics. Specifically, officials pointed towards the rural background of most of the newcomers.37

One major result of the city’s program to understand migration was the decision to open service centers for newcomers. While the commission envisioned a number of service centers throughout Chicago, initial discussions revolved around the best neighborhood for a pilot project. Commission members debated the criteria for such a location. Some advocated for a site of homogenous newcomers, acknowledging the varying needs of migrants based on race and ethnicity. Several spoke in favor of a pilot center in a black, segregated area, so that results could be achieved without the need for complicated variances related to race. Elaine Switzer of the Metropolitan Welfare Council conversely made the case for Uptown and its relatively heterogeneous migrant


37 The ‘Europeans’ referenced by the Office of Migration Services included Displaced Persons from Eastern Europe, mostly Hungary.
population. Switzer reported on her contact with the UCC, and noted that the redevelopment group actively sought to engage the issues related to migration in their neighborhood.\footnote{Minutes of the Meeting of the Sub-Committee on Welfare Service Center for Newcomers, June 13, 1957. UCC, Administrative, Welfare Committee, May 1957 to December 1958. UCC Collection, CHM.}

Switzer’s advocacy for an Uptown pilot center was a result of months of the UCC asserting itself as an authoritative voice on the matter. In correspondence to the committee, Albert Votaw cited the influx of southern and Appalachian whites to the neighborhood, as well as its attempts to manage Uptown’s ethnic diversity. Votaw originally introduced Uptown’s migrant situation in a December 1956 letter to Fred Hoehler, the chair of the Mayor’s Committee. He described Uptown’s longstanding heterogeneous population, pointing towards the established Winthrop Avenue African American population and the “most part already urbanized” Asian Americans of Uptown. More recent newcomers provided a greater challenge, according to Votaw. He acknowledged that Uptown migration was primarily of a southern white variety. Also, “Spanish-speaking people,” mostly Puerto Ricans displaced from Lakeview and Lincoln Park, were filtering into Sheridan Park and other low-rent blocks. Hundreds of American Indians moved to Uptown in the mid-1950s, either seeking work on their own or as part of the Bureau of Indian Affairs relocation program.\footnote{Votaw to Fred Hoehler, Chair of Mayor’s Committee on New Residents, December 14, 1956. UCC, Projects, Information File on the Chicago Commission on Human Relations, March 8, 1956 to 1975 and undated. UCC Collection, CHM. See Chapter Six for greater detail about American Indian migration to Uptown.}
The UCC simultaneously initiated its own independent research on Uptown newcomers. Uptown redevelopers had several reasons to engage what they viewed as a migration crisis in the 1950s. In accordance with conventional urban planning principles, they worried that increased transiency and even denser concentrations of renters of older housing stock inevitably accelerated the rate and geographic spread of blight. Potential racial conflict also concerned redevelopers. In his December 1956 letter to Hoehler, Votaw expressed assumptions that southern white racism would clash with Uptown’s other non-white migrants, particularly Puerto Ricans. If migrants were more efficiently acclimated to the urban environment, then the corresponding decrease in social disorganization would presumably lessen the threat of what Votaw referred to as a “racial situation.”

Furthermore, if the UCC did truly envision itself as a grassroots organization, then it needed to eventually count a degree of low-income migrants as allies. Finally, in the competitive marketplace for redevelopment in Chicago, the UCC sought every potential edge on its competition. If the UCC could develop a plan to manage a diverse population of migrants, then the program could serve as a model for the city, as a whole, thus securing both legitimacy and financial attention.

As part of a potential pilot center, the Mayor’s Committee on New Residents commissioned a survey of southern and Appalachian white migration to Uptown in May 1957, to be administered by the UCC. The committee selected Bert Schloss, a University of Chicago sociologist who previously conducted a survey of southern migrants in nearby Lakeview, to conduct the survey. The UCC, however, had little contact with the

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40 Votaw to Hoehler, December 14, 1956. UCC, Projects, Information File on the Chicago Commission on Human Relations, March 8, 1956 to 1975 and undated. UCC Collection, CHM.
population whom it intended to survey. A few people within the redevelopment orbit provided assistance in laying the groundwork for the project. The head of the Uptown Boys Club dealt with dozens of southern and Appalachian youngsters. Ruth Bach, in her capacity as head of the Stewart School PTA, knew second-hand the magnitude of transiency at the school. Reverend B.E. Edwards, a Tennessee native, Stockton Elementary teacher, and the preacher at the storefront Lake Shore Baptist Church, was the most direct line to the migrant community. Martin Server, one of the UCC’s earliest members, was not only active with the Boys Club, but was also the largest rooming house operator on the North Side. His property ownership business put him in contact with hundreds of low-income migrants. He told the UCC stories like that of lenders who preyed on migrants, or a pregnant migrant housewife who never left her apartment. Server suggested that his building managers would be the best source for interviewing migrants, since they “function to virtual housemothers to these kids who are now homesick as all get out, left alone while the husband [and apparently the wife] is out trying to make a living.” The UCC had the names of two southern women who could be survey material. One woman who was active in helping UCC create a play lot on Winthrop Avenue, “worked like a dog for her youngsters, [and] still considers the South ‘home.’” Another “once managed [a] run-down building and tried to get the owner to spend money.”

UCC volunteers fanned out across low-rent Uptown with Schloss’ survey in hand and this limited familiarity with the migrant population. Schloss instructed the

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41 Memo for Sources on Southern White Round-Up, undated. UCC, Administrative, Welfare Committee, May 1957 to December 1958. UCC Collection, CHM.
interviewers, “It is important that interviewees are put at ease before actual interview begins. Since this population is suspicious and often antagonistic toward strangers, especially officials, direct questions should be avoided.” The “suggested” questions involved work status, car and furniture ownership, rate of relocation, number of recent visits to the South, general impressions of Chicago, and leisure and associational activities. Schloss required interviewers to ask questions of both the husband and wife, if possible. Also, he instructed volunteers to also rate the “reliability” of subjects, and to note the condition of their apartments. Schloss’ surveyors tallied a mere 53 interviews, a tiny sliver of a sample of the thousands of southern and Appalachian migrants. Incidentally, the survey closely resembled the geographic breakdown of Uptown migrants that researchers later established. Thirteen hailed from Alabama, nine from Tennessee, eight from Kentucky, seven from West Virginia, five from Virginia, four from South Carolina, three from Mississippi, two from Arkansas, and one each from Florida and Georgia.

Schloss penned an introduction to the final survey results. This narrative hewed to the familiar tropes of cultural maladjustment and social disorganization. In a series of uncited generalizations, Schloss noted migrants’ lack of competitive spirit, disrespect for education and medical officials, a streak of individualism and nonconformity and—among “some”—a misunderstanding of the concepts of rape and incest. On the migrants’ Uptown homes, Schloss acknowledged that the housing stock was in “much better shape” than low-rent districts on Chicago’s Near West Side.

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42 Questionnaire for Southern Whites, undated. UCC, Projects, Information File on the Chicago Commission on Human Relations, March 8, 1956 to 1975 and undated. UCC Collection, CHM.
The survey, limited as it was, revealed diverse reactions to the urban north, at times confirming Giffin’s theory of cultural deficiency, and at times contradicting it. Seventy-four percent (39) were satisfied with their housing. Ninety-one percent (48) had “no problems” finding work, and 45 of those 48 were happy with their jobs. Seventy-two percent (38) visited ‘home’ within the last year. Thirty-eight also had willingly sought medical care while in Chicago, and were open to new treatments and immunizations—a sharp rebuke of middle-class and elite assumptions about sickly migrants suspicious of modern medicine. Forty-seven percent (25) were fine with making Chicago their permanent home, provided they maintained a job with good pay. Schloss noted a sharp gender divide in this response: men were many more times probable to want to return to the South, while women were much more open to staying in Chicago. Such sentiment appeared in other depictions of southern and Appalachian white migration. The *US News and World Report* story about Uptown claimed that women adjusted to city life more readily than most men, as they enjoyed modern domestic technology and wider array of options for part-time work than in the country.43 Years later, sociologists confirmed this dynamic through oral histories of early Uptown migrants. Many women from this research remembered that upon migration they enjoyed Chicago’s greater variety and access to shopping, the potential for shared child-rearing resulting from population density, and even the relaxed gender norms as compared to the conservative South.44


Some survey results validated theories about unhappy and uprooted migrants.

Forty-four percent of respondents (23) who planned to eventually leave Chicago, regardless of the circumstances. Fifty-three percent (28) expressed an “adamant” desire to relocate to the South when financially possible. Only 28 percent (15) attended church in Chicago, even though 100 percent claimed they regularly attended services when living in the South. Respondents were evenly split on the impact of the weather on their residential choices.45

UCC members presented the survey findings at a June 1957 luncheon in the lobby of the Sheridan-Plaza apartments. Votaw invited 51 people who he believed could serve as a foundation for an approach to Uptown migration. The invitation list included the expected civic and business leaders, many of whom were already involved with redevelopment efforts. Leaders of several religious institutions attended, ranging from Catholic to Buddhist. Also invited were representatives from service groups like the local Boys and Girls Club and the PTA. Civic officials had a strong presence, with people from the Chicago Public Schools, the Park District, and the Metropolitan Welfare Council. Richard Smykal, commissioner of the powerful Community Conservation Board, was invited but did not attend, but he sent a representative. The head of the Mayor’s Committee on New Residents, however, did appear, indicative of Votaw’s ongoing efforts to position Uptown as a central point for the city’s program for migrants.46


46 Invitation list for New Resident Program luncheon, June 1957. UCC, Projects, Information File on the Chi Commission on Human Relations, March 8, 1956 to 1975 and undated. UCC Collection, CHM.
Of course, Votaw trumpeted the UCC efforts to ‘confront’ migration through press releases. Votaw declared in a missive to the daily newspapers, “Uptown residents, organized by the Uptown Chicago Commission, have decided to stop talking and to do something about the problems associated with the Southern White in-migration to the city.” These problems, or “charges which have been leveled at the group,” included school transiency, poor housekeeping, “irresponsibility,” and “low morals.” Careful to sound a sympathetic tone, Votaw explained, “Mountain folk, their friends call them. Hillbillies is the term to their detractors.” He conceded that the Schloss survey revealed much of the criticism to be accurate. However, the report also pointed to some traits that, if “some way could be found to speed integration,” would prove beneficial to urban living. This untapped potential related to “family solidarity, tolerance of dissenters, and a relaxed attitude towards competition.” Votaw then described the UCC’s five-point plan for confronting the migration problem in Uptown. The approach included obvious tasks like additional surveys on housing and employment, enforcement of standards for low-rent housing, a study on school transiency, and an increase in youth and leisure services on the street level.

One major point of the program, however, indicated the UCC’s willingness to directly involve southern and Appalachian whites. Echoing previous generations of social reformers who sought to go beyond simply coercing migrants to adjust on the host’s terms, Votaw called for “an organized attempt to seek out local, Southern white
leadership for an organization and education of this group by its own members." 47 Such sentiment had appeared previously in UCC planning for a newcomer program. Judge Cecil Smith, a Tennessee-born municipal judge familiar with the UCC from his seat on the housing court, urged the UCC to raise funds and awareness for its newcomer program by “enlisting the support of well-known singers and singing groups within the Southern White group to encourage participation in urban life.” 48 Votaw’s outreach to the Peacemakers, which occurred just before he began formulating a newcomer program, also indicated the hope for cooperation.

However, Votaw soon departed from the sympathetic tones of the UCC newcomer program, opting instead to focus on the theories that conformed to Roscoe Giffin’s depiction of newcomers as carriers of an anti-modern and anti-urban culture that needed reform. Lost in the subsequent depiction of Uptown was the more complex and sympathetic conclusions of not only Lewis Killian, but also significant portions of the UCC’s own survey. This tactical decision revealed the unintended consequences of the Schloss report. The UCC constantly walked a fine line between presenting Uptown as a neighborhood “on the brink” of ruination, and a neighborhood worthy of conservation and redevelopment. In 1957 Votaw and elements of the UCC enlisted the plight of the southern and Appalachian white newcomer in this narrative. Relying on well-established—but generalized—discourse on poor white southern and Appalachian

47 Albert Votaw Press Release, July 1, 1957. UCC, Projects, Press Releases, May 1957 to October 1957. UCC Collection, CHM.

migrants, Votaw mostly presented the migrant as maladjusted, unhappy, and even hostile to their new neighborhood. The Schloss survey results, limited in scope as they were, contradicted many assumptions. The high percentage of migrants who claimed to be rather satisfied with their surroundings, housing, and employment never found a place in UCC publicity. For purposes of legitimacy and attention from the Chicago urban renewal regime, the UCC needed the migrant to be much more of a problem than suggested in the Schloss survey.

Votaw doubled-down on the theme of the maladjusted and dangerous newcomer. Preexisting sensational generalizations of migrant behavior converged with Votaw’s propensity for aggressive publicity campaigns to create the most prominent piece on southern and Appalachian white migrants ever published. With February 1958 Harper’s essay entitled “The Hillbillies Invade Chicago,” Albert Votaw returned to publishing for the national audience of a liberal periodical. Uptown thereafter assumed centrality in the social and cultural meanings of southern and Appalachian white working class migration. Votaw’s essay so effectively distilled standard tropes that it remains the most-cited example. No discussion of low-income southern or Appalachian whites—migrant or otherwise—concludes without first summoning Votaw’s essay. For those sympathetic to the plight of migrants, Votaw remains a perfect villain. With a global circulation in the hundreds-of-thousands and a well-established upper-middlebrow cultural reputation,

49 Harkin depicts Votaw’s essay as “the most example of such fear-mongering): Harkin, Hillbilly, 176. Bibliographic mentions of “The Hillbillies Invade Chicago “ are too many to list, but see especially: Hartigan, Racial Situations, 34-36; Herbert Reid, “Regional Consciousness and Political Imaginations: The Appalachian Connection in an Anxious Nation” in Dwight D. Billings, Gurney Norman, and Katherine Ledford, editors, Backtalk from Appalachia: Confronting Stereotypes (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1999), 316-317; and Gregory, Southern Diaspora, 76-77.
Harper’s provided a vehicle for middle-class and elite anxieties about low-income southern and Appalachian whites theretofore unimaginable.

Votaw’s three-page depiction of Uptown’s newcomers appeared in an issue that also contained prominent intellectuals like Arthur C. Clarke and George Kennan, indicating the cultural and social centrality that the theme assumed. “The Hillbillies Invade Chicago” departed little from the standard form of the journalistic subgenre. Like Maxwell, Votaw foregrounded his discussion in the racial environment of the urban North, informing the reader that Chicago’s “toughest integration problem” has “nothing” to do with African Americans. Low-income whites presented a much more profound challenge to modern urban standards. Votaw cited an unnamed Chicago police sergeant: “In my opinion, they are worse than the colored. They are vicious and knife-happy. They are involved in 75 percent of the crime in our area.” A “municipal court judge” was blunter, confiding in Votaw that “you’ll never improve the neighborhood until you get rid of them.”

Votaw directly cited Browning’s lurid depictions of migrant leisure, sex, and violence. He confirmed Giffin’s notion that the newcomers were culturally programmed to resist authority and avoid public health and education standards, making them unemployable and a thorn in the side of schools. Votaw quoted a southern preacher in Uptown, probably B.W. Edwards, who faulted fatalistic religion for retarding adjustment to the modern city. Votaw held out hope that the well-publicized expansion of the

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50 Albert Votaw, “The Hillbillies Invade Chicago,” Harper’s Monthly (February 1958), 64-67. The judge Votaw referred to was possibly Cecil Smith, who the UCC used as an informal advisor on southern white migration.
Southern Baptist Convention’s home missions into the urban North would provide more appropriate cultural moorings for the migrant.51

The problem of whiteness and middle-class conformity emerged throughout the essay. Votaw foregrounded the depiction,

These farmers, miners, and mechanics from the mountains and meadows of the mid-South—with their fecund wives and numerous children—are, in a sense, the prototype of what the “superior” American should be, white Protestants of early American stock; but on the streets of Chicago they seem to be the American dream gone beserk.

Votaw subheaded his conclusion, “A Disgrace to Their Race?” The answer was an implicit, ‘Yes.’ But Votaw found the white rural newcomer redeemable. Any social programs directed to southern whites must recognize these anti-modern cultural traits, and “prod the newcomers to help themselves.” With the proper planning and a willing clientele, elites and the migrants can work together to fulfill the newcomer’s destiny as “the descendant of the yeoman Jeffersonian democracy.” Only the question remained whether “he can develop this desire to belong and to get ahead—before he packs up once and for all and heads for home.”

Votaw’s poetic conclusion framed a pragmatic motivation of “The Hillbillies Invade Chicago”: it was publicity for the UCC’s attempt to position itself as an authority on urban migration. Votaw outlined the Uptown newcomer pilot program, summarizing the proposal to develop assimilated southern white leadership, resources for urban

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adjustment, higher tenancy standards, reduced truancy, and the extension of youth
delinquency programs. “The Hillbillies Invade Chicago” showcased Votaw’s
sophisticated writing style, honed in the radical leftist journals, countless press releases,
and city news desk copy in the years before his arrival at the UCC.

As with Norma Lee Browning’s Tribune series, Votaw’s impressions of southern
white migrants drew criticism from the South. A Charleston, West Virginia, columnist
summarized Votaw’s depiction and facetiously concluded, “As you’ve undoubtedly
realized by now, it’s a very innerestin’ article which brings national attention to the
headaches our migrating cousins are giving Chicago’s city fathers.”

Votaw’s essay can largely be read as an advertisement for the UCC’s aspirations
to neighborhood stewardship. At the time, the Mayor’s Committee on New Residents
remained mired in bureaucracy as it mulled over the decision on where to place the pilot
center. The redevelopers of the UCC forged ahead with an idea for an independent
newcomer center. In October 1958 Votaw released an official proposal for a pilot
program for a center dedicated to newcomers located in Uptown. The pilot project closely
followed the languishing newcomer center proposal from the Mayor’s Office of New
Residents, but on a scale and mission specifically tailored to Uptown. Votaw introduced
the pilot center as an integral part to an “overall program for conservation of the Uptown
neighborhood.” As such, the service center would engage the migration challenge for

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52 George Lawless, “The Egg-Heads Look at Hill-Billy Ways,” The Charleston (WV) Gazette,
both the newcomer and the established resident. Programs would speed assimilation, and encourage current residents to forgo the call of suburbia.\(^{53}\)

Here Votaw expressed the standard racialized discussion of poor southern and Appalachian whites in much more polite terms, than he had in his Harper’s essay. He explained that while integration and assimilation were often understood to be an interracial issue, the challenge was “equally serious” within races. As for the issue at hand for established residents, Votaw noted that when these integration problems occur, neighborhoods tend to split into a “slum” and a “gold coast.” As a result, the “typical family” that the UCC hoped to retain was “in but not of the city.” Always careful to portray Uptown as ‘on the precipice’ more than ‘unredeemable,’ Votaw claimed that, “Despite heterogeneity, Uptown continues to want to act like a unified neighborhood.” He vaguely wrote that elite activism in the UCC, the PTA, and churches somehow ensured their contact with low-income newcomers.

Votaw outlined the ways in which the UCC pilot center would engage the newcomers. An “unpretentious storefront” would serve as the base of operations for a small staff, which would do most of its outreach in the “rooming houses, laundromats, and taverns” of low-rent Uptown. Beyond basic advice about available social services, the center would undertake an ambitious cultural mission. Specifically, activities for the newcomer would, “Strengthen his own cultural individuality by helping him understand which of his values can and should be retained.” Concurrently, the center would “develop tolerance and sympathy” for low-income southern whites among established residents.

Programs would foster an appreciation of (acceptable) “cultural values of the newcomer.” The result of the center’s inter-cultural work would be a “socially integrated and heterogeneous” community. Votaw envisioned a staff of four for the pilot center. The male project director needed community work experience, and would earn a salary of $8,500. The assistant director—specifically a female position—would be paid $7,000. Presumably, the gender divide among senior staff would correlate to outreach methods designed for men and women on a separate basis. Two other administrative assistants of unspecified gender rounded out the staff. One important goal was to cultivate some of these staff members from within the newcomer community. If realized, the UCC pilot center would have a larger staff than the UCC, itself.\(^{54}\)

Votaw did not wait for city approval and funding for the newcomer pilot center. Instead, he aggressively pursued financing from foundations and federal sources. He explained the proposal to prominent University of Chicago anthropologist Sol Tax, who replied that the center might serve as a critical locus of research on white poverty and urban adjustment. Tax specifically suggested that foundations might be interested in funding the center if it facilitated studies that compared white migrants to blacks and American Indians.\(^{55}\) Votaw sent the pilot center proposal to several major foundations,

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\(^{54}\) UCC, “Experimental Center for Newcomers in Uptown: A Proposal.”

\(^{55}\) Sol Tax was a progressive anthropologist who pushed the discipline to be more respectful and reactive to the cultures it studied. His approach, “action anthropology,” went beyond observation and even participant-observation in encouraging anthropologists to personally learn from contact with other cultures, as well as helping that culture solve its own problems. In 1957, he founded the journal *Current Anthropology*. Tax was most known for his scholarship on Fox Indians. In 1961 he convened the American Indian Chicago Conference, a pan-tribal meeting that helped spark the “Red Power” movement. “Sol Tax, Anthropology,” *The University of Chicago Chronicle*, Vol. 14, no. 10 (January 19, 1995).
including the McCormick Foundation—whose executive director lived in Buena Park. His letters received lukewarm replies, if at all. Votaw wrote to the federal Department of Urban Renewal, thinking that the newcomer center might qualify for funding as a demonstration project for redevelopment. Washington officials, however, replied that although the proposal was valiant, similar social work efforts had been in place in cities for decades and thus it the center would have little new to uncover. As with the 1957 conservation proposal, UCC had much greater success in expressing redevelopment aspirations than realizing them.56

In their perpetual search for financing and legitimacy, UCC leaders veered into projects and proposals that involved Uptown’s diverse cultural fabric. When the arrival of low-income southern and Appalachian whites weltered this idealized fabric, then redevelopers sought to adapt their tactics and message. Elites relied upon established—but problematic—social science and media assumptions about the ‘Hillbilly.’ The racial, economic, and cultural condition of Uptown’s most prominent newcomers remained an enigma of otherness. The UCC’s involvement in the general municipal efforts to engage the migration challenge, and its specific 1958 pilot center proposal, revealed the lengths to which redevelopers would go to conserve Uptown as a model of urban heterogeneity. But these proposals for social urban renewal remained expressions of middle-class and elite perceptions of newcomers. The UCC, regardless, continued to pursue redevelopment promotion through cultural means. And the growing low-income population of Uptown continued to generally ignore the UCC message.

56 UCC, Projects, Pilot Project for a Welfare Center for Newcomers. UCC, Projects, Press Releases January to November 1961. UCC Collection, CHM.
CHAPTER FOUR
REVEREND KUBOSE’S JUDO EXHIBITION

By all accounts Gyomay Kubose was the hit of the 1960 Uptown Folk Fair. His judo exhibition, an encore from the 1960 Fair, left the boys in attendance parading through central Uptown, mimicking Kubose’s martial art moves. The boys chopped the air as they flailed across Broadway and struggled to keep their balance as they unleashed roundhouse kicks under the rattle of the El platform. Kubose was busy that night at the fair. Only Lithuanian dancers, a brief American Indian powwow, baton twirling, and Kim-On Wong’s “Oriental Fire Dance” provided a break between judo and his Japanese traditional dance performance.¹ Most knew Kubose not just as a martial artist or folk dancer but as Reverend Kubose, founder of Uptown’s Chicago Buddhist Church. And his Folk Fair performance was not his first foray into civic engagement. In October 1958 Kubose joined a multiethnic party of clergymen that called upon Mayor Richard J. Daley on behalf of the Uptown Chicago Commission to promote the 1957 neighborhood conservation plan. The UCC not only coordinated the clergy visit to City Hall, but also produced the diversity showcase known as the Uptown Folk Fair (1959-1962). The UCC’s cultural programming, specifically the enlistment of idealized cultural diversity and ethnic exoticism in the name of urban renewal, revealed a unique strategy to conserve the city in the name of urban vibrancy and heterogeneity. By 1958 the UCC was

frustrated with the City of Chicago’s lack of action on the 1957 Uptown redevelopment plan. Policy insiders who called Uptown home informed the UCC’s early planning efforts, particularly Chicago Land Clearance commissioner Ira Bach and Uptown alderman (1959–1963) and former head of the South Side Planning Board Morris Hirsh. Yet early UCC requests for renewal funds went nowhere. The City’s Community Conservation Board had yet to declare Uptown an official conservation area. In a report to his Board of Directors, UCC executive director Albert Votaw explained that the Chicago urban renewal apparatus “confused and confounded even the most knowledgeable sources.” No one seemed to know—or admit—exactly who made which decisions. The lack of a coherent plan, Votaw insightfully concluded, “invites sub-rosa clouting expeditions” that “easily transform the program into a series of political payoffs.”

Uptown National Bank president and charter UCC board member Edward Dobbeck wrote to Mayor Daley in September 1957 that, “We find ourselves casing about in a vacuum.” Dobbeck asked Daley for further guidance and direction before concluding with a description of the importance of Uptown’s conservation. Staying on message, Dobbeck reminded Daley that Uptown was a dense, economically and culturally diverse neighborhood with a unique mix of housing, retail, entertainment, and transit. Both the

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2 Executive Director’s Report to the Board of Directors, August 12, 1957. UCC, Administrative, Reports of the Executive Director to the Board of Directors, October 1956 to December 1980. UCC Collection, CHM.

3 Edward Dobbeck to Richard J. Daley, September 24, 1957. UCC, Projects, Report of Meeting between the “Uptown Committee of Five” and the Community Conservation Board. UCC Collection, CHM.
clergy coalition’s statement of support and the Uptown Folk Fair emerged from UCC frustrations and its promotion of Uptown as a model for urban diversity.

**Redevelopers on a Mission: The 1958 Uptown Clergy Endorsement of the UCC Conservation Plan**

Albert Votaw—never at a loss for ideas for publicity maneuvers—deployed a wide array of tactics intended to create momentum for the 1957 proposal, even in the face of the city government’s apathy. Votaw maintained his prolific press release program. Several times a week he mailed prepared statements peppered with effusive praise about the UCC plan to the *Edgewater-Uptown News* and the major metropolitan newspapers. In a September 4, 1958 press release Votaw bragged about the community’s “avalanche of support” for the conservation-renewal plan. The document pointed towards a previous statement of support from a coalition of 26 Uptown clergymen. The heads of two synagogues, the priests from four Catholic parishes, and ministers from mainline Protestant congregations composed some of the expected aspects of the coalition. The inclusion of several non-Western congregations fit well with the UCC’s promotion of Uptown as an urban haven for cultural diversity.

The UCC had several practical reasons to cultivate church sympathy. As an elite-driven organization seeking to present itself as the voice of the community, the UCC needed to forge connections to Uptown residents. Unlike traditional community booster groups like the merchants of the Chamber of Commerce or the Lion’s Club, the UCC did not have a built-in meeting point with large numbers of people. The churches thus served as an efficient conduit to the type of residents the UCC hoped would provide legitimacy
for its plans. In the competitive marketplace of Chicago urban renewal funding, such ‘community support’ would set Uptown apart from the shortcomings of neighborhood proposals past and present. Furthermore, a culturally and ethnically diverse clerical statement of support made Uptown an even more noticeably unique applicant for support among middle-class and elite whiteness. Time and again the UCC promoted Uptown as a “city within a city,” where successful conservation or renewal would serve as an example for Chicago as a whole.

No Uptown clergy coalition would have been relevant without the inclusion of Dr. Preston Bradley. The founder of The People’s Church was the dean of Chicago ministers, a best-selling author, and a major figure in early religious broadcasting. Bradley, a septuagenarian at the time he lent his name to the statement of support, was a giant among twentieth-century liberal Protestantism. As a young firebrand fresh out of the fundamentalist Moody Bible Institute, he experienced a conversion to a more humanistic and progressive Christianity. In 1912, shortly after his ordination as a Presbyterian minister and being seen “scandalously” exiting a movie theater smoking a pipe, Bradley declared in a sermon, “I am not orthodox about anything. I am thoroughly, completely, adequately, gloriously and triumphantly a heretic.” Soon thereafter Bradley resigned his position and, along with 66 fellow dissidents, chartered The People’s Church at 941 Lawrence, two blocks east of Uptown’s retail and entertainment district. People’s grew in relation to Uptown’s pre-Depression gilded age. Like the Moody Bible Institute, Bradley’s church targeted both the affluent and those vulnerable to the corrosive aspects of the twentieth-century city, such as the thousands of young single men and women who
filled Uptown’s boarding houses, hotels, and apartments. Unlike Moody, The People’s Church avoided hell-and-brim-fire moralizing, opting instead for a less judgmental focus on outreach and a gospel of love and sympathy. People’s made formal its liberal position when it officially affiliated with the Unitarian Church in 1922.4

The young Bradley’s appearance and demeanor brought to mind an energetic but squat William Jennings Bryan. His thick, dark hair exploded from a pronounced forehead. Forever in a bowtie, Bradley had a baritone voice that rolled through People’s packed 1,700-seat mahogany and brick auditorium. The 1926 structure befitted the church’s prominence—a seven-story dark brick behemoth graced with a neo-classical façade. By all accounts a dynamic and spellbinding speaker, Bradley found a natural home on the radio. WGN broadcasted Sunday sermons that reportedly reached up to 5 million listeners at the height of his popularity in the 1940s. Bradley’s career contrasts that of many other media preachers of the era. For example, while Father Charles Coughlin and the Southern Baptist firebrand J. Frank Norris courted racists via radio waves emanating from their Detroit pulpits, Bradley preached against the resurgent Ku Klux Klan and accepted a charter membership with the Chicago Council on Race Relations.5

Preston Bradley’s influence peaked at least a decade before the UCC members hatched urban redevelopment plans. By 1958 Bradley had assumed a grandfatherly

4 “Preston Bradley, 94; Religious Leader,” Chicago Tribune, June 2, 1983.

countenance: bifocals, substantial jowl, and his hair thinning and gray. Attendance at People’s rapidly declined alongside the increase of Uptown’s postwar problems, exposing more and more mahogany seats on Sunday mornings and leaving Bradley’s baritone to echo more than resonate. Just his signature on the clergy’s endorsement carried weight, considering his stature among the generation wrestling with postwar urban conservation and renewal.

Votaw and the UCC went far beyond enlisting just a few representatives from mainline denominations and an aging radio preacher. Reflecting a desire to be seen as a beacon of urban diversity, Votaw also reached out to a multiethnic range of clergy. Reverend P.S. Levonian signed for the Armenian Congregational Church in the northeast section of Uptown near the lakefront. Reverend Paul S. Newey represented the Assyrian Congregationalists a few blocks south in an area the UCC identified as a center of blight. Reverend John Hondras signed for St. Andrew’s Greek Orthodox Church. The support of Reverend Kubose, who recently moved to Uptown from Hyde Park, accentuated the coalition’s diversity.6

Hyde Park influenced the formation of the Uptown clergy endorsement project in ways greater than in its relation to Albert Votaw and Reverend Kubose. Hyde Park religious institutions provided both the major impetus and criticism of the neighborhood urban renewal plan, and Votaw took great care to learn from these dynamics. By 1958 the

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City Council had approved the Hyde Park proposal after several months of protest from those who felt dispossessed or threatened by the $29 million project. The most organized and sustained of these critiques came from the Archdiocese of Chicago, specifically from Monsignor John Egan and his Committee on Renewal. Egan presented his concern primarily as one for the welfare of the entire metropolitan area. He argued that such a massive, single-community approach to urban renewal would only result in a crushing wave of negative side effects upon other communities in need of assistance. Egan particularly worried about the impact on neighborhoods adjacent to Hyde Park. The plan called for the reduction of several thousand lower-income households, which would presumably send former Hyde Park residents—mostly African Americans—seeking affordable housing in nearby areas. Many white Catholics in these neighboring communities already felt ‘threatened’ by the specter of African American migration.

Without a comprehensive plan that addressed both the renewal of communities and investment in the neighboring areas that such renewal would impact, Egan argued, Hyde Park-style urban renewal would result in a sum of greater housing problems and even racial violence.  

Advocates for the Hyde Park urban renewal plan, including the University of Chicago and the more socially progressive Hyde Park-Kenwood Community Council (HPKCC), dismissed the Archdiocese criticism as a blatant attempt to safeguard the

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large, exclusively white parishes immediately to the west and south of Hyde Park. Egan himself once complained to an architect of the Hyde Park plan that, unlike Protestants and Jews, the Catholic Church could not simply abandon its holdings after the white flight that would presumably occur upon the arrival of blacks who had been pushed out of Hyde Park.\(^8\) Progressives like Egan and some of his counterparts in Detroit, Philadelphia, and Boston certainly held social justice convictions that ran counter to urban renewal plans that privileged middle-class housing and the financial interests of major institutions such as the University of Chicago. Yet their ecclesiastical positions also prompted them to be responsive to widespread parish-level resistance to integration.\(^9\)

Broad support for the Hyde Park plan among neighborhood Protestant and Jewish congregations contrasted Archdiocese complaints. The HPKCC and the earliest attempts at an orderly integration of Hyde Park traced its roots directly to church-based activism. Kehilath Anshe Maariv (KAM) Temple, in a western portion of Hyde Park already experiencing an influx of African Americans, asked the Chicago Commission on Human Rights (CCHR) for assistance as early as 1946. Almost simultaneously and unaware of KAM efforts, the 57th Street Society of Friends queried CCHR about a plan for peaceful integration. In late 1949 the first meeting of concerned parties met at the First Unitarian Church. Attendees included representatives from two synagogues, the Nisei pastor of a multiracial Northern Baptist congregation, and a more established “not-yet-interracial” Northern Baptist church. The conspicuous absence of Catholic voices foretold Egan’s


protest. The HPKCC grew directly from these early meetings. The Unitarians even offered free office space for a year, while monthly meetings rotated among churches and synagogues.  

Hyde Park resident Albert Votaw and the UCC closely followed the very significant role of religious institutions in the formation and reaction to the Hyde Park urban renewal plan. The Archdiocese criticism came just as Votaw put finishing touches on the press release for the Uptown clergy endorsement of the UCC conservation-renewal plan. The opportunistic Votaw sought to leverage Egan’s well-publicized objections into a positive for the UCC proposal. Since the Uptown plan called for conservation that would supposedly retain the economic diversity of the neighborhood, it seemed a natural counterpoint to Hyde Park and its relocation problems. An Archdiocese statement of support for the Uptown plan—even as it denounced the Hyde Park plan—could serve as a boon to the UCC’s chances with the city urban renewal apparatus. Likewise, any public criticism of the Hyde Park plan from the UCC would benefit the Archdiocese’s fight on the South Side. After all, the entire basis of Egan’s complaints rested upon the plan’s ripple-effect on other Chicago neighborhoods.

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10 Underscoring the urgency of the Hyde Park progressive religionists, the Peoria Street riots began the same evening as the first meeting of concerned parties at the Unitarian Church—less than two miles away. The harsh realities of urban renewal—specifically land acquisition and the removal of residents—eventually neutralized these early, idealistic progressive Christian and Jewish voices. Most congregations ignored the HPKCC-backed “Brotherhood Committees” that intended to encourage open church membership. Abrahamson, A Neighborhood Finds Itself, 11-20; Hirsch, Making the Second Ghetto, 89-93.

Votaw and the Archdiocese corresponded about these matters throughout the summer of 1958. In a confidential memo to Monsignor J.P. Campbell, Votaw undertook the delicate task of simultaneously asking for Archdiocese support while offering polite criticism towards his Hyde Park neighbors. Votaw emphasized aspects of the UCC plan that differed from that of Hyde Park’s, notably the proposal’s sensitivity to surrounding areas and the emphasis on retaining economic diversity. Votaw definitively stated in one of his numbered lines about the UCC plan, “Relocation—the chief stumbling block of many proposals, is not a problem in Uptown.” Votaw noted that a Catholic endorsement of the UCC’s work would be a much needed “victory” for the Archdiocese. He cited recent Church statements about the Hyde Park that suggested that Egan—whom he copied on the memo—may be backing off his original criticism.

Votaw also embedded in his memo to Campbell a note of urgency about the need for conservation in Uptown, a pointed suggestion that appealed directly to general Catholic anxieties over rapid migrations of minorities into white communities.

There is an acute housing shortage in certain sections of the city. In Uptown, the vacancy rate in rooming house properties is generally about 10%; in some individual cases it is as high as 75%. This condition—active housing shortage in one portion of the city, high vacancy rates in Uptown—cannot continue. The inevitable changes in ownership and tenancy may create such serious social problems—in the absence of any effective counter-force—lack of confidence, panic selling and social disorganization may threaten the future of the area itself.  

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12 Votaw to Monsignor J.P. Campbell, July 2, 1958. UCC, Projects, Community Endorsements for Conservation Work and Miscellaneous, UCC Collection, CHM.
All parties certainly understood that the “certain sections of the city” facing housing shortages were areas crowded with African Americans who were restricted by Chicago’s dual housing market. Votaw held out the specter of mass black migration to Uptown’s vacant, low-income housing as a reason for quick action.

No direct endorsement of the UCC plan came from the Archdiocese, despite Votaw’s sophisticated pleas. The tango between Votaw and the Archdiocese continued for several weeks. An official for the Archdiocese newsletter *The New World*, which served as the mouthpiece for progressive clerical initiatives, pressed Votaw for an official statement on the Hyde Park plan. Votaw restated his general complaint that the plan resulted in the practical depletion of the city’s urban renewal budget, and that such a single-neighborhood focus undermined comprehensive metropolitan renewal efforts. Votaw reminded the Archdiocese that the UCC offered a much more enlightened vision for Uptown conservation: projects that “call for retaining the high density and transiency of the Central Uptown area” and “emphasize the rehabilitation of older buildings so that decent housing can be made available at essentially the same rental schedules as now exist in the area for essentially the same type of residents.”¹³ Votaw not only carbon-copied Monsignor Egan in his high-stakes correspondence with the Archdiocese, but he also included the priests of Uptown’s parishes. The Uptown parishes, especially St. Ita’s, worked closely with the UCC, in stark contrast to the situation in Hyde Park. Despite Votaw’s dramatic warning of potential mass black or Puerto Rican in-migration, the

¹³ Votaw to Monsignor John M. Kelly, September 2, 1958. General Correspondence, News Releases and Related Materials, Correspondence from Binders, January to December 1958, UCC Collection, CHM.
Uptown parishes did not have the acute concern over racial succession of those of parishes closer to nonwhite populations.

St. Ita’s proved to be a reliable and important ally in Votaw’s liberal urbanist vision for Uptown. The Archdiocese of Chicago established St. Ita’s parish in the 1920s just as Uptown’s population boomed. The parish encompassed the northern portion of Uptown, anchored in the middle-class Lakewood-Balmoral section four blocks west of the Edgewater Beach Hotel and Apartments. Appropriate to the status of its surroundings, the parish constructed an eye-catching French Gothic church. Many Chicago parishes built brick-faced churches with sharp bronze and copper steeples. St. Ita’s, however, boasted a granite-clad building with ornate cornices and eaves. Delicate curlicues and spikes topped the corners of the rectangular 120-foot bell tower. The building’s right angles and monochromatic exterior referenced Art Deco design. St. Ita’s reflected the glamorous secular architecture of Golden-Era central Uptown—notably the gleaming Uptown National Bank (1925-1926) and the opulent Uptown Theatre (1925) a few blocks south.

St. Ita’s maintained its affluence through the two decades following World War II, unlike People’s Church. The relatively low-density Lakewood-Balmoral section remained economically stable and generally isolated from the social challenges in central Uptown. As such, St. Ita’s clergy embraced any effort to stabilize central Uptown as a means to preventing what many assumed to be an inexorable spread of postwar ‘blight.’ The parish donated several hundred dollars to the UCC per year, and overwhelmingly provided the greatest number of volunteers for the Uptown Folk Fair and other
promotional events. The St. Ita’s chapter of the Young Christians Council even took time to write a congratulatory letter to Albert Votaw upon the publication of his *Harper’s* article, “The Hillbillies Invade Chicago.” The youth group praised Votaw and his “splendid and authoritative work of reporting this extremely difficult integration problem” and requested more details about the survey of southern whites. The civic-minded youth closed with an enthusiastic offer to support in any UCC newcomer initiatives.¹⁴

While Preston Bradley supplied the clergy coalition star power and St. Ita’s offered foot soldiers, Reverend August Hintz of North Shore Baptist Church performed much of the leg work. The Uptown clergy endorsement came together only after months of Hintz-led UCC efforts. As far back as October 1956, with the conservation plan still in the planning stages, Votaw began working closely with Hintz, who would become the most enthusiastic member of the clergy coalition. North Shore belonged to the patrician Northern Baptist denomination, whose economic, theological, and cultural character starkly contrasted that of the Southern Baptist Convention.¹⁵ Located three blocks from St. Ita’s on a leafy street in Lakewood-Balmoral, North Shore was perhaps Uptown’s largest and most affluent congregation during this early phase of conservation and renewal. Like People’s Church, North Shore grew in conjunction with Uptown’s pre-

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¹⁴ Note from St. Ita’s Young Christian Workers Chapter to Albert Votaw, March 1, 1958. UCC, Correspondence, Correspondence with Churches, January 1, 1958 to March 13, 1959 and undated. UCC Collection, CHM.

Depression Golden Age. By 1945 the congregation counted 2,300 members—said to be the largest among Midwestern Northern Baptist churches. Unlike The People’s Church, however, Uptown’s postwar problems did not have any adverse effect on North Shore Baptist’s lofty status. Even a February 1957 fire that destroyed the original auditorium failed to limit North Shore Baptist’s growth. The congregation had already started fundraising for expansion at the time of the fire, and by 1959 had undertaken $1.2 million in capital improvements in just a few years.16

North Shore, specifically the youthful Reverend Hintz, pursued paternalistic missionary goals. Hintz came to the church after a long international missionary tour through Europe and Africa. Even as North Shore’s fulltime pastor, the South Dakota native regularly visited Baptist missions in Africa and Asia, returning to Uptown to give popular lectures about meeting Dr. Albert Schweitzer in a remote jungle, and confrontations with Burmese Buddhists or Congolese freedom fighters. Closer to home North Shore Baptist opened its doors to Uptown’s nonwhite population and began to reflect the neighborhood elite tendency to promote cultural diversity. The church offered Japanese and Chinese language services weekly.17 In June of 1958, just as Votaw’s push for clergy support reached Hintz, North Shore Baptist hosted a peculiar event with a “combined theme of India and American Indians.” The evening included testimony from

16 “Tell of North Shore Baptist Church Work: 2,300 Members Will Mark 40 Years,” Chicago Tribune, October 14, 1945.

a missionary recently returned from India, followed by a performance from the pan-tribal choir of Bacone College in Muskogee, Oklahoma.18

Hintz applied his missionary zeal to his work with the UCC. He not only joined Votaw in organizing the clergy’s statement of support, but also served on the UCC Board of Directors in 1960.19 Throughout the late 1950s and early 1960s, North Shore Baptist donated $500 to $1,000 annually to the UCC—along with St. Ita’s the only church to make a cash contribution. North Shore appears on UCC contribution lists as far back as 1956, when its gift outpaced institutional stalwarts such as Uptown Federal Savings and Loan, Kemper Insurance, and Goldblatt’s Department Store.20

Reverend Hintz served as Votaw’s liaison to Uptown’s religious community. In his pursuit of clergy endorsements Votaw first identified over a dozen churches that he hoped to be open to lending support, and then wrote to Hintz describing his interactions with each church. For example, Votaw noted that the Armenian Congregational Church was, “a racial church, city-wide membership. I visited [Reverend] Levonian in February, got promise of moral support.” Some churches presented more of a challenge. Votaw described Temple Beth El, which apparently held services somewhere in the Edgewater

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20 1956 Treasurer’s Report. UCC, Financials, Treasurer’s Reports, 1956 to 1981. UCC Collection, CHM.
Beach Hotel, as, “Jewish Reform; I know nothing about it, have never contacted the rabbi, didn’t know it existed until last month.”

Votaw’s initial list revealed his desire for coalition diversity as well as economic and social standing. His notes on Buena Presbyterian Church, of Uptown’s Gold Coast, simply read, “Chairman of trustees is Jack Platt of Kraft Foods [Kraft’s head of advertising].” Yet, Buena Presbyterian’s support was neither guaranteed nor complete. In March 1956 UCC Board of Directors member Edward Dobbeck notified Votaw of that congregation’s “divided opinion” about conservation efforts. The congregation narrowly voted to continue to allow UCC to hold meetings at the church. In September 1958, just as Votaw circulated the clergy statement of support that included Buena Presbyterian, Dobbeck informed Votaw that church member “Dr. Noble is not too warm” to UCC’s work.

Votaw even included churches just outside the neighborhood borders, a geographic reach justified by the assumption that many of these church members lived in Uptown. Not coincidentally these churches also displayed a degree of affluence. St. George’s Greek Orthodox was in the process of relocating to a newly constructed sanctuary outside the neighborhood—a sign of the flock’s economic health, if not bearish view of the neighborhood. The Bethany Evangelical and Reformed Church in the middle-class Ravenswood community attracted Votaw’s interest due to its status as the “largest,

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21 Albert Votaw to August Hintz, October 4, 1956. UCC, Administrative, Correspondence Involving the Board of Directors 1957. UCC Collection, CHM.

22 Edward Dobbeck to Albert Votaw, March 14, 1956. Dobbeck to Votaw, September 18, 1956. UCC, Correspondence, Correspondence of Edward Dobbek, 1956. UCC Collection, CHM.
most influential in Ravenswood.” That Bethany was “very cooperative” certainly helped justify their inclusion in the coalition. Votaw reminded Hintz that these church leaders outside of Uptown would need to be reassured that the UCC’s purposes would, in no way, conflict with conservation forces in their own neighborhoods—a disclaimer that shows Votaw’s sensitivity to the inter-neighborhood rivalries erupting on the South Side over the allocation of funds and the relocation of “renewed-out” low-income residents.23

Hintz drew from Votaw’s list of churches in composing his personal invitation to clergymen to a special luncheon on UCC’s conservation plans. But before the invitations were sent, Votaw wrote to Hintz with contact information for three additional churches. With these additions, he displayed an explicit attempt to cultivate a remarkable range of religious backing. It is here that the Chicago Buddhist Church and Reverend Kubose first came into UCC sight. Votaw probably knew of the church from Hyde Park, as he noted that it was in the process of moving from South Dorchester Avenue to an empty church in central Uptown. Members of the Chicago Buddhist Church were, as put by Votaw, “very civic minded.” In 1958 a UCC member suggested the group accept two “board caliber” Japanese-Americans: Nobura Honda was the president of the Buddhist Church and Thomas Masuda was an attorney and joint owner of a Lakewood-Balmoral three-flat.24

Kubose held a prominent role in Chicago’s Japanese American community. He was born in San Francisco in 1924, and spent most of his youth in Japan training to be a

23 Albert Votaw to August Hintz, October 4, 1956. UCC, Administrative, Correspondence Involving the Board of Directors, 1957. UCC Collection, CHM.

24 Minutes of the Nominating Committee, March 4, 1958. UCC, Board of Directors, Nominating Committee, May 1956 to March 1963 and undated. UCC Collection, CHM.
Buddhist priest. When World War II started Kubose returned to the United States and enrolled in the University of California. The United States government cut short his college experience, as it forced Kubose to spend almost two years in the Heart Mountain Relocation Center in Wyoming. Released from internment in 1944, Kubose migrated to Chicago, where he founded Chicago’s first Buddhist church. In 1958 Kubose followed much of his flock from Hyde Park to Uptown.\textsuperscript{25}

Much of the Chicago Japanese American community arrived directly from the West Coast at the end of World War II, their financial and social standing devastated by the internment experience.\textsuperscript{26} As they found their economic footing, hundreds moved in the 1950s to Uptown’s middle-class blocks and invested in property. Kubose preached an approachable Buddhism, and encouraged non-Asian attendance at his church. A 1960 New Year’s greeting card sent from Kubose to the UCC symbolizes the safe, respectful ethnic character that he projected. A standard Westernized image of candles, holly, and the script ‘Seasons Greetings’ stretches across the top of the card. A verse in Japanese calligraphy runs down the left side, and a typewritten English translation mirrors it to the right. The verse includes the lines,

\begin{quote}
Even as a solid rock
Remains shaken in the wind,
So the wise man remains
Unmoved by promise or blame.
\end{quote}


Kubose served as a popular guest speaker to civic organizations and churches in the Chicago area throughout the 1950s and 1960s. In 1959, not long after endorsing the UCC conservation plan and a few months before his initial judo performance at the Folk Fair, Kubose coordinated a multiracial, “brotherhood” summit at Honolulu Harry’s Waikiki Beach tiki restaurant in Uptown. The luncheon featured a speech by famed African American chemist Dr. Percy Julian. Asian, black, white, and Puerto Rican civic leaders shared ideas about equality and freedom over plates of sukiyaki.27

Votaw and Hintz had much less success in cultivating a relationship with two other churches they attempted to contact. Both of these recalcitrant churches were storefront operations that almost certainly catered to Uptown’s southern white population. Votaw knew neither the name of the pastor nor the official name of a Church of God “gospel center,” yet encouraged Hintz to contact them. One can only imagine the response to the UCC’s overtures from the other southerner-oriented church, Roscoe Avenue Baptist Church, which had recently relocated to a storefront on Sheridan Road. Votaw informed Hintz that the UCC knew of the church because “we have beefed about it as a zoning violation.”28

There was a southern white evangelical presence in the clergy coalition, however. Reverend B.W. Edwards of Lake Shore Baptist on the western edge of Uptown, who had


28 Votaw to Hintz, October 15, 1956. UCC, Administrative, Correspondence Involving the Board of Directors, 1957. UCC Collection, CHM.
served as an ad hoc advisor to the UCC on migrant issues, lent his name to the
cconservation endorsement. Yet, Votaw and Hintz made no effort to point to Edwards’ or
Lake Shore Baptist’s southerness in promoting the coalition. This oversight comes as a
surprise, as UCC leaders had otherwise begun attempts to include southern whites as
elements the Uptown cultural diversity that was to serve as the neighborhood’s saving
grace. What’s more, although relatively small, Lake Shore Baptist was becoming a
critical foothold for the Southern Baptist push into the north. When the Southern Baptist
Convention held its annual meeting in Chicago in 1957—a major turning point in the
denomination’s expansion—Lake Shore hosted several events for visitors. Even the
president of the Southern Baptist Convention preached from the pulpit of the tiny store
front. Edwards’ support of the UCC seemingly presented the perfect opportunity for
Votaw to further burnish the commission’s diversity credentials.29

Reasons for Votaw and Hintz to obscure the southerness of Edwards and Lake
Shore possibly related to tensions from the theological and denominational differences
between Hintz’s Northern Baptists and Edwards’ Southern Baptists. Hintz served as
chairman of the evangelical committee of Church Federation of Greater Chicago
(CFGC), a coalition of dozens of Protestant denominations that promoted liberal and at
times progressive ecumenicalism. The CFGC evangelical committee was specifically
wrestling at the time with the proper approach to the spread of fundamental

29 For a history of the Southern Baptist expansion into northeastern Illinois, see Charles Chaney,
The program for the 1957 Southern Baptist Convention in Chicago is available at Moody Library, Southern
Baptist Annuals, Baylor University Digital Special Collections:
evangelicalism into the North. Throughout 1957, Hintz was in contact with Billy Graham regarding CFGC endorsement of a Graham Crusade in Chicago. Previous Graham Crusades in London and New York drew tens of thousands of attendees for each session, creating unprecedented fame for the preacher. In an era of liberal Christian support of civil rights, Hintz and CFGC members were suspicious of the culturally conservative tendencies of Graham’s southern evangelism. For his part, over several months of courting CFGC support for the Chicago Crusade, Graham claimed that he now included in his message the ways that social responsibility could facilitate personal salvation. Given the story behind Hintz, Graham, and southern evangelism, Votaw’s motivation for minimalizing the Edwards’ and Lake Shore’s southerness becomes clearer.30

Even without publicizing southern white support, the clergy statement appeared on the surface to be a major symbol of positive reaction to the conservation plan. However, as with so many UCC activities, the statement was more façade than total endorsement. A close reading of the statement, in the context of the contested and incomplete construction of the coalition, reveals clergy support to be vague and little more than a publicity stunt. Votaw crafted the document himself after the August 1958 luncheon. There, he apparently received the informal support of clergy in attendance. On August 8, 1958, Votaw sent a draft of the statement of support to the 26 church leaders. The statement’s cover letter informed the clergy that—unless told otherwise within 10

30 Hintz personally met with Graham several times, including during the Graham Crusade in London. Graham did not want to undertake a Chicago Crusade without CFGC blessings. The CFGC eventually ‘allowed’ the Crusade after assurances that Graham’s message was becoming more aligned with ‘modern’ evangelism and less with the Fundamentalism that encouraged a retreat from the social issues of the day. The debate within the GFGC is found in: Evangelism, 1953-1959, Topical File “E,” Church Federation of Greater Chicago (CFGC) Collection, CHM.
days—the UCC would include their name on the statement to be sent to Mayor Daley and the Community Conservation Board. Such an “opt-out” tactic and short timeframe could be seen as misleading.

The final letter of support selectively highlighted only certain aspects of UCC’s conservation plan. Features that eventually proved controversial once made specific, such as spot clearance, received only passing notice in the ecumenical endorsement. Demolition would only come to “deteriorated buildings” and the mention of condemnation was paired with rehabilitation. According to the statement, there could be “in some cases limited clearance of one, two, or five-acre sites.” The major focus of the clergy statement—“the most important single aspect of the Uptown plan”—remained the goal of “providing safe and sanitary, decent housing in a safe neighborhood for essentially the same people who live here now.”

August Hintz went into even greater detail about the progressive and diversity-conscious potential of the Uptown plan, in a separate letter seeking CGCF endorsement. Hintz repeated the claim that the plan would benefit “essentially the same high-density, high-transiency population as live here now.” He continued, “Other projects plan to conserve a neighborhood by eliminating the non-conforming, lower socioeconomic groups; these people are then dumped on surrounding neighborhoods.” Hintz claimed that the UCC envisioned not just a material renewal of Uptown, but also a vibrant social environment that would ease the urban adjustment for “newcomers” and “permit stable

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31 Votaw letter to 26 clergy, August 8, 1958. UCC, Projects, Community Endorsements for Conservation Work and Miscellaneous. UCC Collection, CHM.
family areas to co-exist alongside of high-density, high-transiency neighborhoods.” Such a comprehensive approach to both society and infrastructure, according to Hintz, would neutralize the common renewal problems that centered on relocation. Although neither Hintz nor the UCC ever ventured any details, the renovated and new apartments would somehow be made available to those potentially displaced.\(^{32}\)

As promised in his ‘opt-out’ cover letter, Votaw submitted the endorsement to Daley and the CCB in late August 1958. Simultaneously, Votaw sent to his allies at the *Edgewater-Uptown News* a press release describing the clergy’s letter of endorsement. This press release excerpted sections from the endorsement as direct quotes, yet did not attribute any statements to specific clergy, relating the quotes instead to “they” or “the statement.” Expectedly, the press release highlighted the coalition’s diversity and emphasized the non-disruptive aspects of the conservation and renewal plan.\(^{33}\) In an accompanying letter directly to editor Ed Lerner, Votaw expressed his full vision for the clergy statement. Votaw intended for the endorsement to be the first in a series of endorsements from other civic groups. Soon to follow, he hoped, would be similarly packaged statements from business leaders, politicians, schools, and veterans clubs. Eventually Votaw released a press release that was primarily a compilation of such

\(^{32}\) Hintz to Dr. Henry Shillington, Church Federation of Greater Chicago, September 15, 1958. UCC, Projects, Community Endorsements for Conservation Work and Miscellaneous. UCC Collection, CHM.

endorsements—evidence cited as an “avalanche of support” for the UCC plans.\(^{34}\) In his letter about the clergy statement Votaw asked Lerner for editorial support for this upcoming publicity campaign, requesting prominent placement and even a “‘three cheers’ type of editorial.” Al Votaw—the bespectacled bow-tie enthusiast and Quaker scion—closed the letter, “Is this too much to ask? I hope not. I feel like the quarterback on the evening of the big game.”\(^{35}\)

On October 2, 1958 a delegation of Uptown clergy met with Mayor Daley to urge the city to approve the UCC conservation-renewal plan that had languished for months. Accompanying Votaw and UCC President and Edgewater Beach Apartments Treasurer Horrace Sharrow were the Right Reverend Monsignor G.C. Picard of St. Ita’s, the worldly Dr. Reverend August Hintz of North Shore Baptist, the august Dr. Preston Bradley, and Reverend Kubose of the Chicago Buddhist Church.\(^{36}\) Although the diversity of the clergy may have turned some heads on their way through City Hall, the group reflected a potential cultural base for Uptown urban renewal. Unfortunately, even in its diversity, the coalition only represented middle-class and elite interests. The storefront churches—anonymous and sources for zoning “beefs”—sent no representative to Mayor Daley. Furthermore, the prominent church home for Uptown’s small black community failed to gain the attention of Votaw’s quest for diversity or influence.


\(^{35}\) Albert Votaw to Ed Lerner, August 27, 1958. UCC, General Correspondence, News Releases, and Related Materials, Correspondence from Binders, January to December 1958. UCC Collection, CHM.

The “City within a City” as Spectacle: The Uptown Folk Fair, 1959-1962

Like Votaw’s clergy endorsement project, the Uptown Folk Fair grew from UCC frustration with the glacial pace of city assistance. UCC leaders hoped an annual weekend street festival could highlight the urban vitality that justified investment. In Uptown, this vitality assumed the form of non-western commercialized leisure and an increasingly ethnically diverse population. The UCC hoped the Folk Fair would serve three purposes: fundraising, the promotion of Uptown as a diverse neighborhood worth “saving,” and as outreach to community members yet to enthusiastically embrace conservation and renewal.

The UCC planned the first two fairs primarily through the diligence of its part-time executive assistant Dorothy Coningsby. The paraprofessional came to the UCC after over twenty years in the publishing industry. The UCC press release announcing her hiring also highlighted her tenure as assistant director of the Chicago branch of the American Association of the United Nations. Coningsby’s background in publishing and internationalism fit early UCC efforts to publicize Uptown’s cultural diversity. Coningsby used her experience to recruit for the first two Folk Fairs a broad range of ethnic acts.37

Local elites with existing ties to the UCC and urban renewal made up auxiliary planning committees. Ira Bach’s wife, Ruth, headed the art show committee, for example. Gwen Hirsh, Alderman Morris Hirsh’s wife, hosted planning meetings and assumed the

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37 UCC Press Release, October 18, 1956. UCC, Press Releases, October to December 1956. UCC Collection, CHM.
honorary Folk Fair chair in 1960. The committee set the theme for the inaugural 1959 fair as “Around the World in 80 Minutes,” and promised it to be “the most exciting and unusual event, in that it will uncover and illuminate much of the hidden talent of our community.” The *Edgewater-Uptown News* also embraced the international theme, opening its front-page headline article just before the fair by declaring, “If your mouth waters for foreign delicacies, if your eye is enchanted by exotic dances of China, Iran, South America, and if your curiosity delights in myriad exhibits of arts and crafts, then the Uptown Folk Fair should be your mecca this Saturday and Sunday, August 15 and 16.”

Indeed, Coningsby and the committee assembled an impressive cast of entertainers and attractions, including a dance performed by a cast member of touring production of *The King and I*, Kubose’s judo exhibition, a very popular “Oriental Fire Dance,” a British “Punch and Judy Show,” powwow dancing by local American Indians, a “Chinese Silver Plate Dance,” a hula performance, a demonstration of Mexican dancing and South American guitar, an Irish dance group, and the “Ravenswood YMCA Trampolettes” trampoline squad. A food tent offered samples of Chinese, Italian, Japanese, and Swedish cuisine. Ruth Bach organized a booth for the American Association of the United Nations, which included $25-worth of rented national flags.

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38 Unsigned Form Letter from the Uptown Chicago Commission Folk Fair Committee, July 16, 1959. UCC, Projects, 1959 Folk Fair. UCC Collection, CHM.

Many of these participants in the first Folk Fair were Uptown residents. Given Uptown’s demographics according the 1960 Census, the UCC had reason to highlight cultural diversity. In the Lakewood-Balmoral area, the blocks near Edgewater Beach to the east, and the section east of Andersonville, almost half of the residents considered themselves “foreign stock”—born in another country or having at least one parent born abroad. The Census tract south of Edgewater Beach also boasted a significant percentage of foreign stock. Unlike other areas of Chicago, no single ethnicity dominated these blocks. Swedes and Germans were most prevalent in northwestern Uptown, while Russians, Germans, and Poles had higher numbers in the north-central area. The hundreds of Poles and Russians represented Uptown’s dwindling Jewish population. These tracts in the north were also the most consistently middle-class sections of Uptown, as well as areas of residential stability. In all but two Uptown tracts, at least 200 residents considered their race as “Other,” a designation that covered non-whites, non-Puerto Ricans, and non-blacks. The most likely homes for these more ‘exotic’ ethnicities were north-central Uptown, Sheridan Park, and East Andersonville. In heavily populated Sheridan Park these 621 East Asians, South Asians, Middle-Easterners, and American Indians lived alongside 1,461 whites who had migrated from the South since 1955 and 117 people of Puerto Rican descent. Uptown’s small but well-established African American community—totaling just over 300—lived almost exclusively in the 4600 block of Winthrop in central Uptown.40

The 1959 Fair occurred in the context of a Chicago very much in an international mood. The Pan-American Games were scheduled for the city later that summer, to be what was hailed as the largest international sporting event ever to be held in the United States up to that point. Unfortunately the games proved to be a monumental fiasco. The Pan-American games faltered despite efforts in Uptown’s diversity-oriented world of commercialized leisure. The Edgewater Beach Polynesian Room and Honolulu Harry’s Waikiki Beach hosted visiting athletes from Central and South America. Another international event went a bit smoother in 1959: the highly-choreographed visit to Chicago by Queen Elizabeth II. The Queen visited in honor of the opening of the St. Lawrence International Seaway, a transportation route that many in Chicago assumed would catapult the city to the ‘global’ status of London and New York City. The Pacific world basked in the nation’s middlebrow cultural spotlight during the early run of UCC Folk Fairs. *The Flower Drum Song*, a Chinese-American *bildungsroman*, topped best-seller lists in 1957, and the stars of its Rogers and Hammerstein adaptation graced the cover of *Time* a year later. Congress debated Hawaiian statehood throughout 1959, focusing attention on the territory’s multiethnic culture. Not long after Hawaii entered the union that year, James Michener published one of the biggest fiction sellers of all time, the epic *Hawaii*. Even the conservative *Chicago*

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41 The Mexican pistol team upset locals when it practiced by shooting squirrels in Lincoln Park; the Haitian soccer team went on strike; complaints surfaced about the use of the fetid Cal-Sag Channel for rowing events; and a Brazilian athlete was shot and killed in the suburbs while trying to buy a gun. The *Los Angeles Times* later remembered the Chicago Pan-American Games as “perhaps the worst-staged track and field event ever.”

Tribune praised the work as, “One of the most enlightening books ever written, either fact or fiction, about the integration of divergent peoples into a composite society.”

The emerging Asian American middle class in Uptown allowed the UCC to highlight through its Folk Fair a “model minority.” This status allowed them a spot alongside white ethnics in the UCC’s promotional efforts. In this sense the Folk Fair served as a didactic device directed towards the cultural elements in Uptown that the UCC found less-than pliant to its visions. Fair planners generally neglected Uptown’s African Americans for the first two fairs, giving credence to arguments that mid-century ethnic ‘exoticism’ served to elide conflict over black segregation. Furthermore, Uptown elites marked the thousands of low-income southern and Appalachian white migrants as maladjusted and dangerous, and had considerable difficulty in approaching them about Fair participation. The UCC walked a fine line between deemphasizing Uptown’s low-income character and presenting itself as an authentic voice for the neighborhood. Lurid media exposés of the “hillbillies” came much easier.

Despite these cultural biases, expediency called for the UCC to place the Folk Fair in the middle of Uptown’s growing low-income southern and Appalachian area. The

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43 Chicago Tribune, November 11, 1959. The historian Christina Klein interprets this uptick in middlebrow American interest in Asian culture as a result of changes in the Cold War international environment. Klein argues that Asian-Americans sought an answer to the question, “How can we transform our sense of ourselves from narrow provincials into cosmopolitan citizens of the world who possess a global consciousness?” Asian culture and diversity also stood for a much-less politically explosive synecdoche for the controversies over racial integration related to African Americans. Christina Klein, Cold War Orientalism: Asia in the Middlebrow Imagination, 1945-1961 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 9-16.

44 The 1960 Census did not count “Asia” as category for region of origin. 1940 and 1950 Census information—which includes Asia as birthplace—shows the rapid rise of Uptown’s Asian population in 1950, as reflected in the opening of the Chicago Buddhist Church and the UCC’s facility with securing Asian-American participation in the Folk Fair and conservation-renewal in general.
performance stage, food booths, and art fair filled the parking lot and playground of the venerable Stewart Elementary School. Given the UCC’s inability to include the demographic that lived in the blocks surrounding the venue, the three-day 1959 Fair was unsurprisingly lightly attended. The UCC sold only 1,644 tickets. Although committee members blamed a thunderstorm for low turnout, future planning suggested that they also understood the effects of ignoring the population of central Uptown. The second Fair included an expanded roster of ethnic representation, and some acts intended to appeal to southern whites. Planning for the 1960 Fair continued to embrace international culture, to the point of recruiting more groups with no ties to the community—for example Lithuanian and Greek dancing, a roving bagpiper, and a Belgian booth. As with the clergy coalition endorsement, the UCC willingly stepped outside the community boundaries if potential allies seemed worth it. Pacific culture remained a major feature.

The planning committee grew, and included some non-white members such as Reverend Kubose and several Chinese Americans and Filipino Americans. Committee members, regardless of ethnicity, generally came from either elite Buena Park or middle-class Lakewood-Balmoral. Coningsby and the committee worked hard to focus the Fair’s mission, attempting to embrace both cultural diversity and neighborhood conservation. In a letter to the local American Legion post, Coningsby wrote that organizers hoped to “bring all ethnic and national groups of the community together in a common effort for a

45 “Folk Fair Art Head to Exhibit,” Edgewater-Uptown News, July 12, 1960; Minutes of the First 1960 Folk Fair Meeting, March 14, 1960. UCC, Projects, 1960 Folk Fair. UCC Collection, CHM.
community project, and to focus public attention on the rich contribution each group can make to the Uptown area.”

The UCC drew upon the established local places that had successfully marketed ethnicity to the middle class and elite, most notably the Edgewater Beach Hotel and Apartments. The hotel’s Polynesian Room tiki lounge hosted local and touring acts just as the Uptown Folk Fair committee combed the area for “exotic” entertainment. Ken Nordine, the popular host for many of the Edgewater Beach Hotel’s extravaganzas, also served as an emcee for the 1960 Folk Fair. Nordine had recently achieved minor fame for his 1957 and 1958 spoken word jazz albums. This iconoclast with a golden “voice of God” was in the process of forging a career that consisted of Grammy nominations, a cult following, and reverent acknowledgements from the likes of the Grateful Dead and Tom Waits. But for the summer of 1960, Nordine sonorously introduced “authentic” Austrian Yodeler Heidi Stewart and a “children’s Hawaiian Hula” at the Uptown Folk Fair.

Befitting tentative and uneven attempts by UCC leaders to include southern white culture as a diversity asset, Fair planners tried to enlist entertainment that may have appealed to working-class southern whites. Coningsby wrote to Southern Club president Jake Winston, who lived about two miles south of Uptown in Lincoln Park. Coningsby explained to Winston, “we have a large number of Southern people living in our area and

46 Dorothy Coningsby to Robert O’Rourke, May 13, 1960. UCC, Projects, 1960 Folk Fair. UCC Collection, CHM.

we are anxious to have them represented in our program of folk singing and dancing.”

Winston was a Tennessee native and barber by trade who came to Chicago in 1934, before eventually forming the Southern Club in the mid-1950s. Winston hoped the club would evolve into a fraternal association for southern white men, helping them forge professional and social relationships. The Southern Club held a mailing list of two thousand in 1959. Coningsby’s next approach to white southerners involved a letter to John Marshall, who lived in the heart of working-class southern and Appalachian Uptown. This contact started with an unspecified tip that Marshall and his brother played guitars and sang. Coningsby wondered if the brothers would be interested in performing southern “folk or spiritual songs at the fair.” There is no evidence of Marshall’s response; the brothers never appeared on the 1960 Fair program.

Coningsby also wrote to Municipal Court judge Cecil Smith of the Far South Side of Chicago. The Tennessee native was well acquainted with the UCC, given his frequent hearings of the building code violations with which the UCC inspection team barraged his courtroom throughout the late 1950s and early 1960s. Smith somehow connected Coningsby to Bill Frank, West Side resident, native of rural Illinois and—most remarkably—a blind woodcarver with a studio in the Old Town neighborhood. Hearing that the committee wanted entertainment that would appeal to southerners, Frank offered

48 Coningsby to Jake Winston, April 19, 1960. UCC, Projects, 1960 Folk Fair. UCC Collection, CHM.

49 Berry, Southern Migrants, Northern Exiles, 137. Berry lists the Southern Club president’s name as Jake Winslow, but the UCC correspondence is addressed to Jake Winston.

50 Coningsby to John Marshall, May 18, 1960. UCC Projects, 1960 Folk Fair. UCC Collection, CHM. Nothing is known about John Marshall and his brother Jim, except for their address of 4619 Hazel.
to “simulate a southern drawl, if necessary,” an effort Coningsby felt unneeded. Unfortunately Frank cancelled for unknown reasons just days before the fair, but not before he made it onto the press releases and fair program of events.\(^{51}\)

Coningsby did not reach out to any of the numerous working-class taverns of Uptown that hosted live music. The Drift Inn on Foster and Broadway enjoyed a brief modicum of respectability in 1959, as seen in its advertisements in the *Edgewater-Uptown News* that promoted a stint by Tennessee Slim with his Black Mountain Boys—an example of the “finest hillbilly and mountain music nightly.”\(^{52}\) The Drift Inn’s era of respectability was short lived. The tavern did not advertise in the *News* from 1960 to 1964, and the City temporarily revoked its liquor license in 1962 after a bartender allegedly assaulted a patron with a baseball bat.\(^{53}\) Despite its intermittent advertising run, The Drift Inn never entered the middlebrow orbit of Uptown’s “exotic” tiki bars and calypso lounges, becoming instead increasingly identified with southern white honky-tonk culture. The bar, for example, hosted live radio performances for a country music segment on a low-watt Evanston station, and sponsored acts such as George Jones and Porter Wagoner at Uptown’s Aragon Theater in 1964.\(^{54}\) The lack of interest in using the


Drift Inn suggests a strained relationship between Uptown renewal forces and adherents to working-class culture and leisure.

Even despite the lack of Uptown southern white working-class performers, the 1960 edition of the Folk Fair came closest of any to presenting a vibrant, culturally diverse, and modern image that the UCC hoped would endear its renewal plans to City Hall. In its zeal for media attention and a veneer of cultural diversity, the UCC opened itself up to Fair participants who had the potential to subvert the Uptown elite vision for a community scrubbed of the marginalized tastes and cultural behavior of its low-income majority. Several progressive cultural figures raised the visibility of the Fair. That the UCC secured the participation of left-leaning people at this time reveals that through 1960 the commission was successful in presenting conservation and renewal plans as a departure from those stained by racial and class conflict.

No media personality is more identified with Uptown than Studs Terkel. The author-journalist-deejay-television-host moved to Uptown’s tony Castlewood Terrace in 1977. From there, across four decades he interviewed dozens of community members who the UCC and its elite allies persistently ignored. The 1960 Folk Fair may have served as Terkel’s introduction to Uptown’s urban vibrancy. Terkel’s folksy personae and celebrity status attracted the attention of Dorothy Coningsby. The UCC assistant wrote to Terkel in June of 1960 seeking an emcee for an evening of Fair performances. Formally addressing Studs by his given name Louis, Coningsby explained that the planning committee sought “preferably individuals who like yourself are well known, and can command large audiences.” A subsequent note stated that Terkel wished to be contacted
with the offer a day or two before the event.\(^{55}\) Thankfully for the UCC, Terkel’s schedule allowed him to fill a spot hosting a portion of Saturday night’s festivities. Studs announced a sequence of performances that included Kubose, a twirler, and powwow dancers.\(^{56}\)

Studs Terkel’s progressiveness was no secret to most Chicagoans by 1960. Terkel’s attraction to the subordinate and downtrodden began at an early age when he spent afternoons in Bughouse Square, where labor radicals, hoboes, and fanatical prophets held court. An alumnus of the WPA writers program, Terkel shot to prominence as the host of the WENR free-format radio show “Wax Musuem,” where he introduced white audiences to Mahalia Jackson. His talents transferred well to early television. *Stud’s Place* debuted on NBC in 1949. Despite critical and popular success, NBC cancelled the series in 1952—a network executive presented Terkel with an anti-communist loyalty oath; Studs told him to “fuck off.” In the last episode of *Stud’s Place*, Studs loses his lease and is forced to close the bar that served as the setting for the improvised plots.\(^{57}\) The FBI and the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) kept close tabs on Terkel throughout the 1950s. A 1955 FBI summary of Terkel’s leftist activities depicted him as “active in many CP [Communist Party] front groups as a

\(^{55}\) Coningsby to Louis Terkel, June 6, 1960. UCC, Projects, 1960 Folk Fair, May 18 to June 21, 1960. UCC Collection, CHM.

\(^{56}\) 1960 Uptown Folk Fair Program. UCC, Projects, 1960 Folk Fair, July 23 to August 11, 1960. UCC Collection, CHM.

member, a sponsor, a musician or as an entertainer,” and found him a reliable instrument for far left groups seeking publicity.\textsuperscript{58}

Coningsby also pursued the services of Terkel’s close friend and fellow leftist traveler Win Stracke. The entertainer was very familiar with Uptown, as he spent his

\textsuperscript{58} Despite this alleged potential for subversion the FBI removed Terkel from its Security Index, a list of people to be detained in event of national emergency. Yet details about Terkel from informants and agents placed him back on the Security Index for a short time in 1961. One former agent suspected that Terkel specialized in sending coded messages to local communists through his radio show. The FBI also noted Terkel’s prominent participation in the portion of the AFSC-organized 1961 San Francisco to Moscow Peace Walk that passed by the gates of the Great Lakes Naval Station in North Chicago. FBI File for Louis Terkel (#100-17848). Federal Bureau of Investigation, 92, 111-125. Available at www.vault.fbi.gov/louis-terkel.
boyhood in the Andersonville area along the community’s western border and attended nearby Senn High School. Stracke, a Stud’s Place co-star, had a long and well-known involvement with Old Left politics. Like Terkel, Stracke’s career felt the brunt of postwar anti-communist paranoia, when NBC executives ended his syndicated children’s television show Animal Playtime under pressure fromHUAC and the FBI. As further credit to Coningsby’s honest-yet-tenuous outreach to Uptown’s low-income white newcomers, Stracke also held rural folk music bona fides. Stracke received his musical start on Chicago WLS’ groundbreaking National Barn Dance as a singer with the Cumberland Ridge Runners and the Smoky Mountain Singers.\(^59\) A May 1960 planning committee meeting penciled-in Stracke for an entertainment slot, but the singer eventually failed to participate in the Fair.\(^60\)

The Folk Fair happened during the initial burst of the folk music revival, which had a strong base in Chicago. The Gate of Horn tavern, opened on the Near North Side in 1956, claimed to be the first venue in the United States dedicated solely to folk music acts. The Kingston Trio’s smooth, calypso-inflected rendition of the traditional mountain-murder ballad “Tom Dooley” surprisingly dominated several music charts in 1958. The University of Chicago began a student-run folk music festival in 1961, which doggedly

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\(^59\) David Dicaire, The Folk Music Revival, 1958-1970: Biographies of Fifty Performers and Other Influential People (Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Company, 2011), 31-36. References about The National Barn Dance, popularity in the prewar south—many Uptown migrants (and “hillbilly” music fan Al Votaw) would have been familiar with the Cumberland Ridge Runners (although that does not necessarily mean that the UCC or Coningsby knew this connection).

\(^60\) Fair Planning Committee Meeting Minutes, May 12, 1960. UCC, Projects, 1960 Folk Fair, April 22 to May 17, 1960. UCC Collection, CHM.
focused on “authentic” performers pulled to Hyde Park from areas as close as Bronzeville and as distant as Europe.\footnote{The most comprehensive account of the folk music revival is Robert Cantwell, \textit{When We Were Good: The Folk Revival} (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996).}

Unable to land Stracke—a key player in the folk revival—the 1960 Fair committee settled for the trio of Frank Hamilton, Bernie Schatz, and Bob Winters. Hamilton had recently migrated from California to Chicago, drawn by the emerging folk revival scene on the Near North Side. The singer and guitarist, along with Stracke, gave an immeasurable boost to the revival in December 1957, with their co-founding of the Old Town School of Folk Music in a Lincoln Park space shared with Puerto Rican community organizers. Frank Hamilton immersed himself in the musical folk styles of Chicago, specifically those of ethnic whites. Although Hamilton had recently undertaken an ethnomusciological pilgrimage to A.P Carter’s Appalachian home, the Old Town School initially paid relatively little attention to the mountain music of low-income whites.\footnote{Dicaire, \textit{The Folk Music Revival, 1958-1970}, 31-36.} The early character of the Folk School and the UCC Folk Fair were remarkably in sync. Hamilton forcefully stated that the school embraced folk cultures—emphasizing the plural—and claimed aesthetic diversity as the key to his mission. His frequent laundry lists of ethnicities represented in school performances and musical curriculum read like UCC press releases about the Folk Fair. Hamilton described the school as a “musical United Nations,” reflecting the movement towards “one world of folk”
contemporaneously advocated by folk icon Pete Seeger. Like Seeger, Hamilton avowed progressive politics. He continued his secular missionary work after joining the activist-minded Weavers in 1962.

Figure 7. Program for the 1960 Uptown Folk Fair. UCC Projects, 1960 Folk Fair. UCC Collection, CHM

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63 Benjamin Filene, Romancing the Folk: Public Memory and American Roots Music (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 183-210; Tanya Su-kyung Lee, “Music as a Birthright: Chicago’s Old Town School of Folk Music and Participatory Music Making in the Twenty-First Century,” (PhD dissertation, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, 2011), 114-117, 145-148. The Old Town School of Folk Music attempted to bring Uptown southern whites into its orbit after Frank Hamilton’s departure in 1962. Hamilton’s successor, Ray Tate, was a Tennessee native and initiated a musical outreach program in Uptown upon his arrival. Before taking the school’s reins, Tate fronted the fantastically-named bluegrass trio “The Urban Renewal Boys.”
Another noted progressive who played an even more active role in the early Folk Fairs was Jacob Burck, editorial cartoonist for the *Chicago Sun-Times* and resident of Uptown’s Castlewood Terrace. Burck helped plan and judge the art displays at the 1960 and 1961 Fairs. He had a long and prominent career with the Old Left by the time the UCC called on his talents. Burck immigrated to Cleveland from Poland with his Jewish parents a few years after his 1907 birth. After studying at the Art Students League of New York, he joined the staff of the Communist Party’s *The Daily Worker* as a cartoonist, and frequently contributed to other leftist publications such as *The New Masses*. Burck’s Popular Front-era artwork combined traditional American political cartooning with the bold lines and blocks of Soviet propaganda. His unique use of brushed India ink over ecru paper influenced an entire generation of cartoonists, most notably the World War II artist Bill Mauldin. In a classic pre-*Sun Times* example, Burck’s “Working Class Bulwark” from 1934 depicts the word “UNITY” stretching across the Manhattan skyline. A worker’s army brandishing rifles and battle-scarred flags triumphantly climbs over the word as the Nazi standard and militaristic figures cower below. A rotund man in hat-and-tails flees in terror—a visual nod to the corrupt bankers depicted by Thomas Nast three generations before. Burck’s formal affiliation with the Communist Party ended shortly after a trip to Moscow, where he cut short a mural.

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commission because of his refusal to execute a design that glorified Stalin above the workers.65

Burck began a 44-year career with the Chicago Times (later the Chicago Sun-Times) in 1938, winning a Pulitzer Prize for Editorial Cartoons in 1941. Despite—or because of—being syndicated in over 200 newspapers, Burck attracted the well-publicized attention of the McCarthy-era HUAC, which nearly succeeded in deporting Burck in 1953. Sun-Times editor Marshall Field III publicly intervened on Burck’s behalf and Congress formally vacated the deportation order in 1957, but only after Burck’s syndications sharply declined.66 Burck was active in Folk Fair activities for much of the event’s duration, serving on the layout committee in 1960 and attending several planning meetings in 1961, a fact that the UCC leveraged in promoting the Folk Fair.67

Despite the vibrant program that again included the most popular Fair attraction, the “Restaurant Garden of Many Lands,” 1960 attendance fell well short of expectations. Only 2,300 people visited the Fair, which was once again plagued by rain. Although the UCC broke even on the 1960 Fair, it immediately held meetings with planners and participants in an attempt to improve reception. Representatives from St. Ita’s Catholic Church called for an even greater representation of nationalities and worried that the Fair was becoming too commercialized. Albert Votaw complained that the art fair was too

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generic and did not enhance Uptown’s unique attributes. Instead, Votaw suggested a
greater emphasis on the musical and dancing acts.68 Others advocated a greater presence
of local merchants who, generally excluded from UCC planning from the beginning,
were feeling more and more alienated from the urban renewal coalition. These people
reminded Fair planners that small shop owners “have a stake in this neighborhood, too.”
Some worried about the “unattractiveness” of the Fair site—certainly a reference to its
location in the heart of working-class central Uptown. Perhaps, some committee
members wondered, the event would do better in a park near the lake, adjacent to Buena
Park.69

The 1961 Uptown Folk Fair planners continued their attempts to wed cultural
diversity to urban redevelopment. The UCC made three important changes to the 1961
Fair. First, it relied less on its own Dorothy Coningsby in its planning. Instead, the wife
of new Uptown alderman Morris Hirsh served as ‘honorary’ committee chair, while
volunteers already working closely with UCC on its renewal plans filled much of the
committee. The Wynne Agency, a small advertising firm headed by new Uptown resident
Urania Damofle, executed much of the administrative coordination. Second, the
committee made redevelopment promotion a more explicit part of the Fair. After 1960
the UCC changed course in its visions for the neighborhood, as leaders poured resources
into a new urban renewal plan. The UCC hosted its own fair booth that showed early

68 Memo from Votaw to Coningsby, undated. UCC, Projects, 1960 Folk Fair. UCC Collection, CHM.

renderings from the new proposal and encouraged the formulation of pro-renewal block clubs. Folk Fair press releases declared the theme to be “Old and New” and proclaimed, “Uptown will fuse demonstrations of its cultural past with hopes of material progress for the future.”\textsuperscript{70} Finally, while the 1961 Fair continued to showcase diverse ethnicities whether located in Uptown or not, it also made its first overtures to the African American community. The entertainment committee included Florence Mann of Uptown’s segregated block, and press releases highlighted “Negro spirituals” by the Trinity Community Church.

This new openness corresponded with the UCC’s general outreach to the 4600 block of Winthrop. Throughout the early redevelopment period, the UCC made occasional reference to the Winthrop Block Club, which it cited as one of the neighborhood’s oldest. Early relations between many Winthrop residents and the UCC were warm. For example, two block residents joined the UCC in December 1956.\textsuperscript{71} Besides Florence Mann some Winthrop Avenue African Americans took even larger roles within the UCC. Most notably Adele Jones served a tumultuous two-year stint on the UCC Board of Directors.

The UCC gained less traction with the southern white working class of central Uptown with the 1961 Folk Fair. If southern whites sought a performance that might resonate with their cultural heritage, the closest would have been the Horner Park Do-Si


\textsuperscript{71} Other notable new members in this month included Inland Steel executive Graydon Megan and several Asian Americans. UCC, New Members, December 1955. UCC, Administrative, Correspondence File of Morris Braun, 1954 to 1956. UCC Collection, CHM.
Dancers. The square dance group based its operations out of the Horner Park Fieldhouse, about one mile west of Uptown at the intersection of the middle-class Irving Park, Albany Park, and Ravenswood Manor communities. Like tiki bars and calypso lounges, square dancing enjoyed a surge of middlebrow popularity through the 1950s. Instructional and recreational groups, such as the Do-Si Dancers, sprouted up in all corners of the country. Western square dancing has a long tradition of participation in the rural Midwest, and held no specific greater relation to Appalachia or the Mid-South.72

The addresses of the Do-Si Dancers confirm that these Chicago square dancers lived mostly in areas outside the major settlements of southern white migrants. Regardless, a few members lived in Sheridan Park and were neighbors to southern white migrants, if not white southerners themselves.73

The UCC still avoided reaching out to Uptown’s working-class southern white cultural spaces such as the Drift Inn. Upon its inception the UCC spent considerable resources observing and attempting to control the dozens of working-class taverns in central Uptown. UCC volunteers closely tracked—and reported—liquor license violations, and even packed Municipal courtrooms for hearings involving Uptown taverns associated with illicit activity. There was precedent for using acts booked at more acceptable local clubs for Folk Fair talent, most notably with the inclusion of prominent

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73 Horner Park Do-Si Dancers roster. UCC, Projects, 1961 Folk Fair, July 31 to August 29, 1961. UCC Collection, CHM.
calypso singer “The Mighty Panther,” one of the headliners for the 1961 Fair who also held court at Uptown’s Boom-Boom Room.\textsuperscript{74}

The Panther, an Afro-Trinidadian born Vernon Joseph Roberts in 1921, first rose to fame after his performance before Princess Margaret on her visit to Port of Spain in 1955.\textsuperscript{75} He parlayed his island popularity into a string of night club bookings in the United States, mostly in Chicago through the mid-1960s before relocating first to San Diego then to New York City where he became a fixture in the West Indian community. From 1955 to 1960 the singer was a staple at the Loop’s Blue Angel club, where he produced and stared in a popular Afro-Caribbean review. The previous house calypsonian for the Blue Angel—Gene the Charmer—had abruptly left show business after meeting Elijah Muhammad and changing his name to Louis Farrakhan.\textsuperscript{76}

The Boom-Boom Room, two blocks south of the Edgewater Beach Hotel and Apartments, secured The Panther’s services in summer of 1961 just as plans for the Folk Fair took shape. In a publicity photo that celebrated Panther’s Uptown stint, UCC member Peter Miller of Bisset’s Department Store shakes The Mighty Panther’s hand while holding a contract for the Folk Fair appearance. Bisset’s also used The Mighty Panther to promote its new line of calypso wear, incorporating his musical performance into a fashion show at the Fair. In the photo-op The Panther, in a crisp dark suit and

\textsuperscript{74} Photograph caption, \textit{Edgewater-Uptown News}, August 15, 1960.

\textsuperscript{75} “Trinidad Cheers Margaret at Start of Indies Tour.” \textit{Chicago Tribune}, February 2, 1955.

fedora, smiles into the camera. The media usually depicted the calypsonian in a tropical shirt and a hand-woven straw hat with an upturned brim. But for his Uptown photo he looked more Rat Pack than island peasant.  

The calypso craze of the late 1950s introduced a genre of music most recognizable through its melodic steel drums, rhythmic guitar, and sing-song vocals by heavily accented, grinning Caribbean men. The tropical aesthetic actually belies a cultural expression of material struggle. Born from the Trinidadian carnival tradition, calypso lyrics relate highly personal tales of perseverance and poverty, simmering class disputes, and ribald commentary on gender and sexuality. The Mighty Panther’s recordings exemplified these characteristics. His 1956 album “West Indian Calypso Music” includes songs about a man’s hypothetical choice to let his wife drown instead of his mother; a boy describing his nightly rat bites; an unfaithful wife who burdens her husband with the interracial offspring of Chinese men; and “The Big Bamboo,” a rumination on a woman’s desire for something more than two coconuts and “any old tree.” In all the excitement even the most attentive Uptown fairgoer probably failed to appreciate the irony when, in the shadow of the city’s densest rooming house district, The Mighty Panther crooned his hit about an abusive landlord-tenant relationship

No use to complain  
You wastin’ your breath, you talkin’ in vain  
Because we she get her fees


78 Harry Belafonte’s LP Calypso—the first LP to sell over one million copies—kick-started the craze in the US. Belafonte was never comfortable with the genre’s misogynistic overtones. From 1957 to 1959, dozens of Trinidadian calypsonians hastily cut records and were booked by middle-class white urban lounges.
She don’t care less if your bed have fleas\textsuperscript{79}

The UCC and Frank Bisset corralled The Panther only after the calypso craze faded after 1959. Regardless, Folk Fair promoters counted his appearance a considerable coup in the quest for attractive cultural diversity.

Using attendance as a measure the 1961 Fair proved much more successful than the previous two, thanks largely to pleasant weather. Fair organizers estimated a three-day attendance of 10,000 and declared a profit of over $2,000. The “Garden Restaurant of Many Lands” proved popular as ever, even though the only international flavors were those from Olga Beckman’s Villa Sweden and Howard Chinn’s New Wilson Village.\textsuperscript{80} However, the Folk Fair suffered after 1961 as the UCC assumed a more confrontational stance towards those not fully supportive of its renewal plans. Despite the good numbers from 1961, the fourth—and final—Fair flopped. The UCC optimistically felt the publicity from the new urban renewal plan would translate into a massive interest in what Uptown had to offer. Organizers told the Edgewater-Uptown News that they expected 50,000 people. Less than 5,000 actually showed up. Several reasons besides increasingly polarized views on renewal contributed to the poor turnout. Again, a rainstorm on the opening night literally dampened enthusiasm. Also, the planning committee got an admittedly late start, as it was unable to find a chairperson. The UCC briefly considered canceling the Fair, but assumed the momentum from the renewal plan would make up for...


\textsuperscript{80} Correspondence to the Garden Restaurant Committee, August 1, 1961. UCC, Projects, 1961 Folk Fair. UCC Collection, CHM.
any promotional deficiencies. Furthermore, the program consisted of far fewer culturally diverse attractions, probably reflecting planners’ poor efforts to reach community members.

Paul Goodrich, a vice president at Uptown National Bank, drew the unenviable task of chairing the planning committee. Goodrich suggested themes that led the UCC away from international and domestic diversity. He originally proposed a “Gaslight Era” or “Gay 90s” theme. Eventually, the committee decided on what is best described as a late-nineteenth-century county fair flavor. The 1962 Fair program book depicted images of a generic, white, geographically-neutral local affair. International exoticism and cultural diversity was out, Americana was in. Some ethnic acts made it back yet again, but they were crowded by activities such as a youth bicycle parade and an ice-sitting contest.

Not surprisingly, as the UCC unveiled a 1962 plan to clear large sections of working-class and low-income Uptown, leftist participation in UCC cultural programming ended. The UCC also focused only on Uptown’s mythic pre-Depression golden age and its urban renewal future. The program’s neighborhood history note skips from 1928 to the present, where, “Today the name of Uptown is surging forth again. This time because of the Uptown Chicago Commission, an organization founded seven years ago by a group of dedicated citizens who were interested in maintaining and increasing the prosperity of the area.”

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81 Uptown Folk Fair Program, 1962. UCC, Projects, 1962 Folk Fair. UCC Collection, CHM.
the highest reaches of the UCC in the late-1950s, could not by 1962 even appear in the promotional material for a poorly attended, unimaginative neighborhood festival.

In October 1962 Urania Damofle submitted a scathing after-action report on the 1962 Folk Fair on behalf of the Wynne Agency, which had managed the final two fairs. Damofle recounted the poor planning that plagued the 1962 Fair and criticized the detached UCC leadership. She cited the lack of a clear objective as a major reason for the community’s disinterest in the event. If, as Damofle suggested, the Fair was to serve primarily as an urban renewal promotion, then the UCC needed to fully commit to the goal. In the spirit of Albert Votaw’s prolific employment of public relations, Damofle stated directly, “Urban renewal is a product to be sold, and it must be sold to everyone…as it affects everyone.” With a plain spoken and direct style that would become her hallmark, Damofle disposed of the UCC optimism about community support that it had been selling to the local media. She criticized the UCC for focusing their efforts on “intellectual and social pursuits that appeal to 20% of our society [but] do not appeal to the masses.” Despite over seven years of UCC efforts to cultivate local support and sell its vision to Uptown, Damofle concluded that “We found a community torn apart.”

Paul Goodrich worked to salvage plans for a 1963 Fair. He argued that the event still had the potential to be the “one vehicle” to reach all of Uptown. With greater UCC direction he optimistically claimed that fair revenue could fully support the UCC

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operating budget within five years. Goodrich pointed to the massively popular Fourth of July street fair held by community groups about one mile north of Uptown that reportedly drew 100,000 people—11 percent of them from Uptown.\(^\text{83}\) UCC leader Ed Dobbeck pushed back, arguing that Folk Fair planning and promotion rested exclusively with volunteers and the individual sponsoring institutions. Clearly, Dobbeck wanted UCC power focused on the vexing municipal urban renewal empire, not chasing down belly dancers and yodelers for a weekend street festival.\(^\text{84}\) Hopes for a 1963 Fair languished as the UCC turned its full attention to promoting and defending a new plan for massive urban renewal. Goodrich drafted a theme that soft-peddled the neighborhood’s diversity, which appeared a bit more unruly after Damofle’s report: “To get all groups in Uptown working together, by representing their contributions to the development of the community and by spotlighting their part in the growth of America.”\(^\text{85}\) Invoices for ads from the 1962 Fair program went unpaid. A dispute surfaced over insurance payments for a boy injured at the Fair. Damofle and the Wynne Agency declined the option to produce a 1963 program. In June of 1963 the UCC executive director replied to an inquiring letter with the direct statement, “This year we do not contemplate a fair.”\(^\text{86}\) For its promotional

\(^{83}\) Board of Directors Meeting Minutes, September 10, 1962. UCC, Correspondence, Correspondence from Binders, June to October 1962. UCC Collection, CHM.

\(^{84}\) Board of Directors Meeting Minutes, October 8, 1962. UCC, Correspondence, Correspondence from Binders, June to October 1962. UCC Collection, CHM.

\(^{85}\) Undated memo. UCC, Projects, 1962 Folk Fair, October 29, 1962- April 1, 1963 and undated. UCC Collection, CHM.

\(^{86}\) Dennis Johnson to George Doyle, June 4, 1963. UCC, Correspondence, Correspondence from Binders, May-July 1963. UCC Collection, CHM.
effort in the summer of 1963 the UCC withdrew from appealing to Uptown’s masses. The UCC relied upon a fundraising luncheon headed by Hollywood producer Danny Thomas to generate publicity for its neighborhood stewardship. Thomas, who got his show business start at Uptown’s 5100 Club two decades earlier, offered his advice to UCC redevelopers: “Make it pretty, it deserves to be. Get your schools and streets maintained and teach your kids to run TO the police, not FROM them.”

It would be easy to dismiss the Uptown clergy endorsement for conservation and the Uptown Folk Fair as cynical publicity stunts that attempted to put a non-threatening face on urban renewal. Certainly, Votaw strategically and selectively crafted and promoted the clergy coalition for maximum media exposure. Likewise, the Folk Fair was mostly a biased simulacrum of sanitized urban heterogeneity in the image redevelopment-worthy cities that urbanists like William Whyte, Jr. and Jane Jacobs fostered. However, before the UCC settled on a renewal plan that revealed intentions to reduce the number of low-income residents, elements within the organization honestly aspired to redevelopment through the conservation of Uptown’s cultural diversity. They claimed that urban vitality set the neighborhood apart from other areas seeking urban renewal funds and the suburbs beckoning the middle-class. Far from an invention from

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whole cloth, the UCC’s use of diversity as a promotional device was made coherent by broad cultural trends of the late-1950s. Uptown’s progressive-minded clergy underscored a postwar religious confrontation of urban challenges. The neighborhood’s “exotic” ethnicities, viewed in light of the surge of middlebrow interest in the folk cultures of non-whites and even low-income southerners, offered the UCC a ready-made public relations hook.

The UCC programming of cultural diversity confirmed that neighborhood conservation and urban renewal was ultimately a local affair. UCC leaders looked about their community for its saving graces and found an area of an exceeding diversity of people, institutions, and commercialized leisure. But elite and middle-class discomfort with working-class culture limited UCC conceptions of conservation-worthy diversity. The segregated block sent no signers to the clergy endorsement, and the Folk Fair included Uptown blacks only in 1961. Furthermore, the poor relations between low-income people and redevelopment leaders ran both ways: southern white migrants showed little interest in UCC cultural programming, ignoring almost all of the few requests for participation sent their way.

Taken together, the clergy statement and the Folk Fairs reflected and informed the UCC’s unofficial slogan “A City within a City.” And not just any city, but one that held a model promise of the vitality that civic leaders and planners claimed could only happen in dense urban areas. Indeed, to modify the slogan, UCC use of culture in the late-1950s and early-1960s revealed hopes to conserve and renew Uptown as a “City on a Hill within a City.” For an abbreviated period the UCC—at least publicly—put forth an image
of Uptown as a haven for the coexistence of cultural diversity and neighborhood conservation and urban renewal. After 1960, however, forces much more concerned with the latter than the former began imposing their will within the UCC. Not coincidentally, the demise of the Folk Fair after 1962 reflected this change. The tactic of cultural diversity was losing its spot in the ethic of community redevelopment.
CHAPTER FIVE

“I FEEL TERRIFIC!”

W. Clement Stone, the eccentric founder and president of Uptown’s Combined Insurance Company, sat at his desk in his company’s new Broadway headquarters in front of a film crew. Behind him, along a wood-paneled wall, a bust of Lincoln and a scale replica of Rodin’s “The Thinker” flanked him. Stone, as usual, was dressed and groomed immaculately, if not strangely: dark hair slicked back, two halves of a pencil-thin moustache trailing from each nostril, a polka-dot bowtie, chunky cuff links, and a smoldering Cuban cigar wedged in his stubby fingers. He leaned forward and spoke to the camera. “Hello! This is W. Clement Stone saying: I feel healthy, I feel happy…”—and as his nasally voice reached a near screech—“I feel terrific!” Stone was demonstrating his trademark self-affirmation routine that supported the quasi-religious positive thinking regimen to which he attributed his success.

Adherents to the Uptown redevelopment ethic, many of who maintained close ties to Stone, likewise reassured themselves of the goals they sought to accomplish. Uptown Chicago Commission (UCC) leaders pressed on despite a sluggish response from officials. The more economically-minded people in the commission were determined that the right amount of funding, the right magnitude of expertise, or the right degree of clarity would prevail.
Morris Hirsh and Al Votaw Challenge the “Big Business Boys”

The optimism of Uptown boosters did not come about without challenging moments, even within the redevelopment consensus, itself. The 1959 race for the aldermanship of the 48th ward pitted Morris Hirsh, the former head of the South Side Planning Board and recent Uptown transplant, against three-term “Economic Block” Republican Allen Freeman. Hirsh’s backers promoted him as the “blue ribbon” Democratic candidate, endorsed by the local state senator, the Democratic ward committeeman, and Mayor Daley. He accused Freeman of being a “do-nothing” alderman who kept his office open only a few hours per week. The contender also criticized Freeman for running for higher offices while serving as alderman. Hirsh utilized a media blitz in the weekly Edgewater-Uptown News in an effort to neutralize Freeman’s endorsements from the major citywide dailies. Freeman had good reason to be confident: his list of backers included Dr. Preston Bradley, Reverend August Hintz, Reverend Picard of St. Ita’s, UCC leaders Ed Dobbeck and Jack Langworthy, prominent Japanese Americans Noboru Honda and Thomas Masuda, Edgewater Beach Apartment leader Horace Sharrow, and Clement Stone. On the other hand, the Edgewater-Uptown News and its sister-paper the Sunday Star provided positive coverage of the Hirsh campaign, despite an editorial policy against official political endorsements. News editor-in-chief Leo Lerner was a proud Democrat and outspoken critic of Republicans, from

local officials all the way to the Eisenhower administration. For Lerner, Illinois Senator and liberal stalwart Paul Douglas was the consummate public servant.²

Both candidates claimed a stake in the UCC, even as executive director Albert Votaw remained conspicuously silent on the election. The issue came to a head at a community event unrelated to the campaign, where Freeman claimed credit for the founding of the UCC. Although Hirsh was not in attendance, his wife Gwen and his campaign manager Frank McCallister were. The two active UCC members interrupted Freeman and took him to task. Hirsh kept up the pressure one week later, with charges that Freeman was responsible for the rise in crime and blight in Uptown. He declared, “Only a Herculean effort will bring the 48th ward out of the grip of decay and prevent its present deterioration from becoming complete disintegration.”³ Freeman claimed Hirsh would be a ‘rubber stamp’ alderman, and drew attention to a recent Sun-Times article that praised his own approach to juvenile delinquency. The incumbent challenged the residences of Democratic voters, implying that the Hirsh’s forces were registering rooming house residents who did not legally live in the ward.⁴ Hirsh saved his most aggressive attack for a full-page Sunday Star advertisement the week before the election.

² Lerner was best described as a New Deal Democrat. He frequently used his weekly editor’s column to bash Eisenhower for cynical and superficial policies that favored corporations and undercut gains made by the ‘people.’ Lerner was also critical of Eisenhower’s foreign policy, which he found reckless and wasteful. Lerner honed a folksy style of commentary that brought to mind Will Rogers and Carl Sandburg. For a collection of his essays and commentaries of this time, see Leo F. Lerner, The Italics Are Mine (LaSalle, Illinois: Open Court Press, 1960).


Our do-nothing errand boy alderman, in league with big business in the ward, has the lid clamped tight on the 48th ward to keep things as they are. The big business boys don’t mind the profits from overcrowding and confusion, because they don’t live here and they don’t re-invest their profits here to improve the ward. He parades their names in the papers as his endorsements, although many of them make their money in the 48th ward, and take it home to Winnetka and Wilmette or some other fancy suburb and then they tell the poor suckers in the 48th ward how to vote.  

The Hirsh campaign presented the candidate as a new voice for Uptown redevelopment, a change of pace from the efforts that produced unsuccessful plans like the 1957 conservation proposal and the newcomer pilot center. The rhetoric also suggested Hirsh’s willingness to turn more directly to publicly-funded renewal.

Hirsh’s bare-knuckle populism paid off, but only by the slimmest of margins. The board of elections declared Hirsh the victor after a full day of recounts; the final tally was 8,313 for the challenger and 8,215 for the incumbent. Hirsh carried 42 precincts, while Freeman carried 35. The near-tie belied an electorate split on spatial lines that reflected a growing divide between the economically and culturally homogenous areas and those with higher degrees of diversity. Hirsh dominated Sheridan Park, besting Freeman there 62 percent (1,610) to 38 percent (1,002). Yet the upper-middle-class residents of Lakewood-Balmoral broke even more heavily for Freeman: he won 70 percent (1,896) to 30 percent (815). Hirsh routed Freeman in the precinct that included the “Segregated Block” and the Kenmore Avenue concentration of southern whites, while Freeman easily carried the Edgewater Beach Apartments. The dense precincts along Argyle east towards the lake voted overwhelmingly for Hirsh. The vote was tight in the tony blocks of Buena

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Park and the new Marine Drive co-ops, including the precinct that held Hirsh’s apartment. Daley’s Cook County Regular Democratic Organization machine was beginning the flex its muscle, as evident in this defeat of an entrenched and well-financed and organized three-term incumbent in a ward with a relatively weak legacy of Democratic activity.

Although the Hirsh-Freeman election indicated growing tensions within the world of Uptown boosters, the result also opened the door for greater reception of redevelopment plans in the Mayor’s office. No longer could the city’s failure to designate Uptown a conservation district be simply attributed to partisan politics. The Hirsh era held much promise for the advancement of Uptown redevelopment. He was not only a Democrat but also an urban planner with a sterling education in the subject at the University of Wisconsin and Columbia University, and experience as an executive of the influential South Side Planning Board. Hirsh pushed UCC leaders to go “all the way” in their physical renewal of Uptown. The UCC, despite the election being something of a civil war, could still come out of the turmoil with an advantage.

Instead of recoiling after three years of cool reception in city hall, UCC leaders—many who backed Freeman—coordinated an unprecedented 10-year plan for massive urban renewal in Uptown. One year after the election, on March 29, 1960, UCC leaders

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6 Precinct totals are from “Canvass Affirms Victory of Hirsh!” Sunday Star, March 1, 1959. A precinct map for 1959 is found in the Hirsh advertisement referenced above.


Jack Langworthy of Uptown Federal Savings and Loans, Al Kurtzendorfer of Uptown National Bank, and Alderman Hirsh gathered in the alcove of the plush Charterhouse Restaurant in the Edgewater Beach Hotel. Guests of the “not for publication” lunch included two of the most powerful figures—after Mayor Daley—in the city of Chicago’s urban renewal apparatus: Department of Urban Renewal Commissioner David “Mack” Mackelman and Commissioner of City Planning Ira Bach. The UCC called this summit of powerbrokers in order to discuss a way forward from the forgotten 1957 conservation-renewal proposal. Jack Meltzer, the former head of planning for the University of Chicago’s South East Chicago Commission (SECC), joined the diners.\(^9\) Meltzer had given form to the most successful Chicago renewal effort, in terms of funding at least, with his multi-year community survey and comprehensive long-range plan for Hyde Park in 1958. Like the SECC had done four years earlier, the UCC was in the process of taking a major financial gamble on just such a professional survey and plan.

Jack Meltzer represented the postwar professional planning ideology that sought to take advantage of increased federal spending, through a combination of clearance and rehabilitation. He was born and raised in Hamtramck, Michigan, and—like Albert Votaw—first came to Chicago to complete his Master’s degree from the University of Chicago in 1947. While Votaw burned draft cards and ruminated on existentialism and the fate of socialist utopias, Meltzer pursued an education in public administration and city planning. In 1954, the SECC hired the young urbanist as chief planner. The job thrust

Meltzer to the forefront of urban renewal. His Hyde Park plan envisioned a combination of rehabilitation, traffic rerouting, and blocks-long stretches of clearance and rebuilding. Eventually, most of Meltzer’s plans came to fruition. The most visible result was the clearance of dense storefronts and taverns along 55th street, including the Bee Hive lounge where Al Votaw once poured drinks for Leadbelly. The city sold the land at-cost to New York developer William Zeckerdorf. The investor commissioned renowned Modernist architect I.M. Pei to build two sleek ten-story apartment towers that catered to the middle class. Not long after submitting his Hyde Park plan, Jack Meltzer resigned from the SECC and created his own planning firm, which he christened Meltzer Associates.10

Meltzer did not come cheap. The three-year $60,000 investment far outpaced any other UCC outlay to that point. The list of financial backers for the project revealed the muscle behind Uptown redevelopment. Uptown National Bank and Uptown Savings and Loan pledged $9,000 each over three years. Combined Insurance committed $7,500 and Edgewater Beach Hotel signed on for $6,000. Weiss Hospital, bound by its board to limit contributions to a small percentage of its operating budget, pledged $6,000—thanks to a timely donation from Stone’s foundation. The Bank of Chicago chipped in $3,000. Kemper Insurance made the biggest commitment, to the effect $15,000.11


The financial gamble on Meltzer Associates coincided with another important organizational shift for the UCC. In the spring of 1960, just as the Folk Fair committee crafted its exotic menu of performers, Albert Votaw’s tenure with the UCC ended. Votaw left the UCC amidst a controversy that had an unclear impact on his departure. A strain between Votaw and UCC board members occurred in the wake of a tragic March 1960 apartment fire on the 4700 block of Kenmore, in the heart of Uptown’s dense low-rental area occupied largely by southern and Appalachian white migrants. Fires were becoming all too common in Uptown. Aging and poorly maintained buildings were vulnerable to fires, and haphazard or unpassable apartment partitions made escape difficult in the event of emergencies. The Kenmore blaze was particularly saddening for the Uptown community. An early morning fire swept from the six-flat’s stairwell and into the converted apartments that housed at least 50 people. One young family suffered the greatest consequences. Robert Duckett, 34, his wife Edith, and their two boys, John, 4, and Thomas, 3, lived in one of converted third-floor apartments of the six-flat. Robert attempted to save his two sons, as Edith fled towards a window. Desperate, she leaped from the window, landing on a fence and fracturing several bones. Robert was unable to reach his sons, and soon also jumped, suffering fractures under his severely burned skin. The two young brothers lost their lives. A neighbor, Ariana Vlahos, 55, succumbed to her injuries a few days later.12

The loss of children’s lives guaranteed intense media coverage of the Kenmore fire. The major Chicago dailies reported on the tragedy, and provided the background of

the event that included the illegal conversions and the “mysterious” origin of the flames. Police conducted lie detector tests for three men seen in the area at the time of the fire, which cleared the suspects. An attorney sued the landlord of the building on behalf of Robert Duckett, who fought for his life with 70 percent of his body covered in severe burns. The young father died before any resolution. The most significant media coverage of the fire came in the *Edgewater-Uptown News*. One story centered on the responses from Albert Votaw and Morris Hirsh. The alderman placed the blame on inadequate housing supply and landlord greed: “Regardless of the facts of this particular case, the conditions of the building and the extensiveness of the conversions make fire an ever-present threat. Large-scale housing, whether public or private, is the answer—and this housing must be tailored to the income level of the tenants.” Votaw echoed Hirsh’s statement: “For five years we (the commission) have shown that code enforcement is not enough. Land clearance and public housing are the only answer, although we’d welcome private housing if the rentals would fit the community.”

The mere mention of public housing was anathema to many of the UCC’s financial stakeholders. These bankers, realtors, and property owners expected Uptown to regain status as a premier neighborhood for private financial investment, not one covered by public housing that removed land from the market. On March 23 Jack Langworthy wrote a sharply-worded letter to Ed Pabst, a Vice President at Combined Insurance and

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13 “Landlord Sued for $200,000 by 2 Hurt in Fire,” *Chicago Tribune*, April 2, 1960. The landlord was the longtime maintenance worker at the Town Hall Chicago Police precinct station, which covered the southern portion of Uptown.

fellow UCC board member. Langworthy expressed astonishment at Votaw’s statement. Langworthy fumed to Pabst: “Ed, this concept so completely violates our basic thinking here in Uptown that if I thought for one minute this viewpoint represented even a strong minority in the Commission, Uptown Federal would not only not support the Meltzer three-year program, but would in fact resign its membership from the Commission itself.”

After demanding an explanation from Votaw, Langworthy concluded, “If such an area as Uptown Chicago…with all its natural municipal advantages, is in the need of public housing…then I believe we should turn the entire city of Chicago back to the Indians!”

Votaw retracted his statement, writing a letter to the editor that reiterated the UCC’s promotion of privately-financed housing conservation and renewal in Uptown (even if spurred and secured by the local and federal government). Votaw stated, “At no time and under no circumstances was the statement made that “land clearance and public housing are the only answer, etc.” He concluded the letter, “No responsible person authorized to speak for the Uptown Chicago Commission has made such a statement at any time, under any circumstances.”

There is no record of Hirsh retracting his quote.

Taken at face value, Votaw’s letter to the News suggests that his subsequent resignation was merely a coincidence. Votaw left for a substantially higher-profile job.

No other pushes for public housing exist in Votaw’s mountain of press releases and detailed reports. In fact, Votaw previously forcefully made the case for public funds

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being used only to prime the pump of private redevelopment of Uptown. He reported an
April 1959 conversation with Jack Meltzer at a national conference on urban renewal.
Meltzer told Votaw that the UCC most needed to develop techniques that would compel
absentee rental property owners to rehabilitate their buildings. Votaw whole-heartedly
agreed, and reported to the UCC board: “Our job is not to set the standards that each
individual building must meet. Our job is to work on the environment (and this includes
schools, traffic pattern, recreation and code enforcement) so that market factors begin to
work for the betterment of the neighborhood than against it.”17 These were not the words
of someone committed to large-scale public housing.

However, one cannot help but consider a second scenario, in which Votaw made
an honest slip in message that may have cost him his job. He had long demonstrated a
tendency for unorthodox strategy. He was also a proud alumnus of the Hyde Park-
Kenwood Conference, which had many members who openly called for public housing.
Votaw’s friends and family members remember his interest in public housing before and
after his Uptown days, and he began a career in public housing after he left Chicago.18
Pabst still had kind words for Votaw in the first draft of the UCC’s press release
announcing his successor, noting Votaw’s “sense of dedication which won admiration
and esteem.” The final draft of the press release, however, did not contain Pabst’s quote

17 Albert Votaw, Report on Conference on Urban Renewal. UCC, Administrative, Planning and
Development Committee, August 1957-May 1962. UCC Collection, CHM. Underlined in original.

18 Interview with Claire, Catherine, and Marianne Votaw, September 12, 2014; Interview with
Bert Horowitz, September 15, 2014.
and merely mentioned that Votaw had “resigned several weeks ago.”\textsuperscript{19} Regardless, the departure was not so acrimonious to prevent the UCC from spending $215 on Votaw’s farewell dinner.\textsuperscript{20}

Albert Votaw submitted his final executive director’s report to the UCC board on April 11, 1960. He summarized the commission’s work over the last four years in an optimistic tone.

Not all of these [accomplishments] have been a direct result of Commission action, but the Commission has contributed to them all and to a general upswing in Uptown. The neighborhood has not continued to deteriorate at a runaway pace, some specific improvements have taken place, and the pall of defeatism that hung over the community four years ago has to some small extent dissipated.

Votaw then itemized advances in policing, housing conditions, capital improvements, schools, recreation, and social services. Yet he acknowledged that all of these actions would have only limited impact without achieving the UCC’s ultimate goal—securing a federally-funded major urban renewal program. Votaw praised the institutional financial commitment that resulted in the commissioning of Meltzer Associates but remained concerned about the lagging “grass roots” support for renewal. He specifically pointed to the Folk Fair as one of the, “projects that do not appear directly related to the goals of an

\textsuperscript{19} Press release draft and final version, May 17, 1960. UCC Projects, Press Releases, November 1958 to January 1961. UCC Collection, CHM.

\textsuperscript{20} Treasurer’s Report for Financial Year Ending April 1960. UCC Finances, Treasurer’s Reports, 1956 to 1981 and undated. UCC Collection, CHM.
urban renewal program,” but fostered the community support needed for securing and implementing renewal.\(^{21}\)

Votaw’s departure ended a distinct era for the UCC, one that represented key aspects of liberalism, redevelopment, and urban renewal in Uptown and beyond. In developing the UCC, he established a publicity-focused mission that simultaneously targeted an external audience—the shifting federal and local urban renewal apparatuses—and an internal audience—the heterogeneous Uptown population. As an urban planner, Votaw pushed for physical redevelopment primarily through conservation and deconversion, before turning to greater interventions in 1960. Yet he also aggressively pursued social redevelopment, as seen in the pilot center for newcomers and his concern for public schools. On a larger scale, Votaw’s tenure revealed elemental aspects of mid-century liberal urbanism. As a liberal he embraced the market’s ability to solve the ills of struggling cities, albeit after a jumpstart from public finances and regulations. As an urbanist he valued the social and physical heterogeneity of dense neighborhoods, and doggedly sought to enlist it as asset for redevelopment. These ideological and cultural impulses mingled with the people and built environment of Uptown, creating an approach to redevelopment typified by diversity to a degree greater than other efforts across the country.

Al Votaw left Chicago for good in 1960, taking a position in the St. Louis Department of Land Clearance for Redevelopment. Al and Etzi were extremely unhappy in St. Louis, as his unenviably task of displacing residents for urban renewal projects

\(^{21}\) “Report of Executive Director to Board of Directors,” April 11, 1960. UCC Administrative, Planning and Development Committee, August 1957 to May 1962. UCC Collection, CHM.
weighed heavily on his conscious. In 1966 Votaw began a prominent career as a housing specialist with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Like co-creator of the Uptown clergy coalition August Hintz, Votaw traveled the globe. Only instead of the gospel Votaw brought with him tidings of Western-coordinated economic development. While stationed in Cote d’Ivoire for much of the 1970s, Al and Etzi Votaw hosted dozens of Peace Corps volunteers, some of who came to view them as a surrogate American family. Al maintained a love for jazz, blues, folk, and country music. He particularly enjoyed the work of the Pete Seeger and the Weavers, especially that which venerated the humanity of the working class and downtrodden.

After stints in Bangkok and Washington, DC, USAID summoned Votaw to Beirut, Lebanon, to coordinated housing development in the troubled nation. Votaw’s career—and life—ended tragically at the US Embassy on April 18, 1983, a victim of a terrorist bombing in only his second week in the city. Estera never remarried, and lived in Washington until her death at the age of 83.

In May 1960 the UCC introduced its new executive director, William G. Kruse. The 34-year old lived in Rogers Park, to Uptown’s north. Upon graduation from Maine Township High School in middle-class suburban Des Plaines, Illinois, Kruse served in the US Army Air Corps as a flight engineer. After his military service Kruse worked at

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22 Interview with Clare Votaw, September 12, 2014. Votaw family lore is that Al was the only St. Louis city official allowed to live outside of the city limits, due to the number of threats from residents facing displacement. During these St. Louis years “Pruitt-Igoe”—the infamous housing project—was said to be a “household word.”

Kraft Foods where he made his way from truck driver to the editor of the company’s sales magazine. In 1958 Kruse left Kraft for a full-time position with the Federation of Young Christian Workers, a lay social work organization under the umbrella of Catholic Action. Kruse continued Votaw’s aggressive public relations style as UCC executive director, orchestrating spectacles such as a celebratory UCC “picket” of a recently de-converted six-flat in Low-Rent Uptown. A press photo of the event shows well-dressed, middle-aged white men and women brandishing signs that read “A Slum Undone!” and “Things Are Looking UP in Uptown!”

Kruse’s UCC tenure amounted to less than one year. Given his background and later career, Kruse’s politics may have been unsavory for the UCC’s corporate sponsors who became increasingly suspicious of social progressivism. In 1963, after a short stint as a director of Peace Corps in East Africa, Kruse surfaced as the first executive director of the Austin Community Organization (ACO) in the rapidly changing Austin community on Chicago’s West Side. Monsignor John Egan, the liberal firebrand and committed inter-racialist, formed the ACO to counterbalance white homeowner fears of racial succession and to hopefully manage Austin’s transition into an integrated middle-class neighborhood.

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26 Kruse had a contentious stay at ACO. Many white Austin residents saw the group and its first executive director as outside agitators bent on attracting blacks to the area. Within the ACO, Kruse never found a comfortable niche. He resigned in 1963 after complaints of a lack of clergy support for the group’s mission. Egan asked for Kruse to reconsider to no avail. See Amanda Seligman, Block by Block:
The UCC increased its publicity campaign for massive urban renewal as the release of Meltzer Associates’ plan neared. The UCC’s provocatively entitled brochure, “If All of Uptown Were in Danger of Burning…Wouldn’t You Be Willing To Help?” represented the height of this publicity. The cover of the 12-page booklet consisted of a photograph of Uptown’s central retail district, viewed looking east from the elevated train platform near the intersection of Broadway and Wilson. An artist had retouched the photograph in an effort to dramatize the devastating potential of “blight,” superimposing fire and heavy smoke. Flames engulfed Bisset’s Department store, calypso fashion and all. Across Wilson, the Bank of Chicago was on its way to being reduced to a smoldering pile. Further in the distance, the fire threatened the sturdy brick tower of the Uptown Baptist Church. Smoke obscured the iconic sign atop the church—CHRIST DIED FOR OUR SINS.27

The brochure opened, “The fact is, Uptown is afire…and that fire is blight and decay.” Photographs depicted a rubble-strewn lot, empty storefronts, and a plainly dressed white woman making her way across an apartment’s weather-stained concrete stoop. Additional text furthered the urban renewal cause: “If an individual develops cancer, it must be removed—fast—if the patient is to be saved.” The last few pages offered hope in the midst of this looming apocalypse. The UCC reminded residents that

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progress had been made with code enforcement, new schools, and the formation of block clubs. However, the “cancer” of blight had proved resistant to such minimally-invasive procedures. The reader is reassured that a report by the renowned Jack Meltzer would soon point the way to a much more comprehensive treatment. A highly-professional architectural rendering shows the proposed Sheridan Shopping Plaza, cleared of decay and filled with happy pedestrians. To ensure urban renewal’s success the UCC asked for greater “constituent muscle” and more cooperation between community entities in what it termed a “Congress of Organizations.” Strikingly, the publicity effort expressed a concern for the symbolic burning of Uptown’s commercial interests, as the UCC avoided substantial efforts to end actual fires in Uptown’s low-income housing. The brochure made no mention of preserving Uptown’s diversity.28

The UCC intended “If All of Uptown Were in Danger of Burning…” to condition the public for a positive reception Meltzer and Associates the urban renewal plan, finally released as “Uptown: A Planning Report” on May 1, 1962—72 pages in length, two years in the making, and compiled by over a dozen consultants and staff members. The details of the proposed massive intervention into central Uptown’s environment must have come to a shock to many residents who probably knew UCC only for its vague press releases and occasional publicity events.29

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28 This curious phrase carries a scent of Saul Alinsky’s theory of community power. Bill Kruse had contact with Alinsky’s Industrial Areas Foundation in the later-60s.

29 Plan contributor Norman Elkin had a long career in Chicago planning, as Director of the Coordinating Division of the Chicago Department of Urban Renewal until 1958, up which he was named director of the city’s $1.5 million federally-backed projects in 1961. “Daley Names Director of Urban Study,” Chicago Tribune, January 17, 1961. The other credited authors were, Zina Greene, Glenn Erikson, and Carl Landino.
Figure 8. Lawrence Avenue Portion of the Proposed Section 314 Demonstration Site. Geographic Urban Renewal Photographs, Department of Urban Renewal Photographic Collection. National Archives and Records Administration Still Images Branch, College Park, Maryland.

Housing proposals in “Uptown: A Planning Report” showed Meltzer Associates to be sympathetic to the hope of retaining at least a degree of certain types of diversity. The planners stated the overall objectives for their vision to be, “The maintenance and improvement of diverse environments and housing resources to serve…and serve well…the diverse social and shelter needs of present and future residents.”

Significantly, “Uptown: A Planning Report” defined ‘diversity’ in terms of infrastructure

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and housing options, not in terms of social or cultural behavior. Mixed income housing certainly fell into the “Uptown: A Planning Report” definition of diversity. Obviously, redevelopers continued to stress the conservation of ‘stable’ residential areas such as Buena Park, Lakewood-Balmoral, and the new lakefront co-ops. Furthermore, the report indicated the pragmatism that acknowledged the thousands of non-elites who called the neighborhood home. The Meltzer planners declared, “The prevalence of hotels, kitchenette apartments and rooming houses is not in itself necessarily negative.” Small, dense rentals had indeed stimulated Uptown’s economic growth in the past. The sheer number of these types of units, however, had far exceeded demand in the postwar housing context, according to the planners. One- and two-room rentals only seemed to attract transient occupants, which fueled “undesirable social consequences [that] encourage further deterioration, and in time overwhelming blight.”

The authors of “Uptown: A Planning Report,” however, did not totally place the burden of Uptown’s supposed decline directly onto low-income newcomers. In describing the period of Uptown’s evolution from 1929 to the present, the planners addressed the “sociological changes” in the demographics that had occupied the UCC since the mid-1950s. They cited an “antagonism between established city residents and ‘rural newcomers,’” and noted that taverns and rooming houses had become “emotion-loaded symbols.” Yet the planners were optimistic that the newcomers could become assets for redevelopment, as opposed to perceived liabilities. They explained that “accommodation to city life is always slow and complex” and that “the so-called

newcomer is a young, vigorous, ‘family-oriented’ population, and providing satisfactory adjustment to the urban environment, constitutes a potential source of community vitality over the long pull.”32

The housing section of the “Uptown: A Planning Report,” then, envisioned an Uptown residential community of stable middle-class and elite homes and apartments ringing a dense center of one- and two-bedroom apartments catering to residents of lesser means. The key to achieving this goal was de-conversion. The one- and two-bedroom apartments that were the hallmark of the plan would consist almost entirely of de-converted walk-ups, particularly six-flats. Since so many of the floors in these apartments had been sub-divided in to one-room apartments, de-conversion would theoretically result in scores of new large apartments that would appeal to young couples and middle-income singles.

The challenge for the “Uptown: A Planning Report” housing proposal was not how to manage economic diversity, but the realities of the real estate market. Profit motivation among property owners, since the 1940s, resulted in an overabundance of low-rent small apartments, according to the planners. And nothing in the economic forecast indicated a movement of privately funded de-conversion—even on the limited scale observed in Washington’s Georgetown or in pockets of Chicago’s Lincoln Park. Here, the planners revealed Jack Meltzer’s hallmark call for redevelopment spurred by creative public financing. The firm’s models concluded that de-converted small apartments in Uptown should rent for about $22 per room per month, in order to attract

enough “lower and middle-income families and individuals.” The cost of de-conversion, however, would prevent landlords from seeing any profit at that rate. Therefore, a combination of federal and local funds would be needed to subsidize de-conversion. The planners cited over-arching reasons for public financing, including the prevention of deadly fires in haphazardly-converted apartments like the 1960 tragedy on Kenmore. As such, they hinted at expanding the criteria of ‘public good’ to not just slum clearance or blight prevention, but also to apartment de-conversion. Albert Votaw, who proposed a virtually identical scheme during his short stint with the Shinner Foundation in 1955, must have agreed.\textsuperscript{33}

The plan called for a “brick and mortar” demonstration of de-conversions of apartment buildings along Lawrence Avenue and Lakeside Place, under the auspices of Section 314 of the 1958 Federal Housing Act.\textsuperscript{34} For a model, the plan pointed to a pilot project underway in Morningside Heights on New York City’s Upper West Side. There, the federal government purchased 34 converted brownstones and auctioned them to private developers at discount prices under the promise that the brownstones would de-converted in concordance with city specifications. Once shown to be profitable, the project would spur develop on adjacent blocks.\textsuperscript{35} UCC board member William Meyers recognized these similarities as early as 1961, when he forwarded to UCC president


\textsuperscript{34} Section 314 allowed the federal government to fund up to 2/3 of planning studies or small projects that demonstrated the efficacy of renewal on a larger scale.

Robert O’Rourke a *New York Times* about the brownstone conversion experiment.

Meyers scribbled in the margins of the *Times* clipping, “Why couldn’t a similar organization go to work on behalf of Uptown?”  

Action by Chicago courts apparently with the urgency needed in addressing the housing problem in Uptown, as judges increased pressure on owners of illegal conversions. In January 1962, for example, city officials sued four owners of buildings in an effort to compel them to de-convert their properties. These six-flats in the Central Kenmore-Winthrop Corridor indicated the magnitude of low-rent crowding that alarmed redevelopers. Inspections revealed that the floors had been carved into at least 20 separate apartments. One Clarendon Avenue building crammed an incredible 68 people into 30 partitions. De-conversion, however, did not guarantee a return to normal occupancy standards. In the midst of persistent media coverage of the Uptown conversion crisis, one author of a critical letter to the *Chicago Tribune* outlined the shortcomings of simply compelling de-conversion. Kurt Meisl argued that while de-conversion made good business for construction companies, rehabilitation actually made profit margins thinner for property owners and thus compelled many to allow multiple families to live in the newly enlarged units. Regardless of de-conversion, he argued, the building would continue to be overused. Furthermore, de-conversion would reduce tenant privacy, and the slice into owner profits would result in poorer maintenance. Meisl assumed that

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36 William Meyers to Bill O’Rourke, September 21, 1961. Information File on Urban Renewal, September 1961 to July 1968, UCC Projects, UCC Collection, CHM.

37 “City Sues to Compel Deconversion,” *Edgewater-Uptown News*, January 20, 1962. The addresses of these converted buildings were: 818-820 Leland, 901-903 Lawrence, 833-835 Lawrence, and 4548 Clarendon.
middle-class families would not be interested in moving into areas Uptown that many considered a slum, regardless of the quality of building rehabilitation. Low-income tenants, specifically white southerners and Appalachians, would continue to wear-down the enlarged apartments. Meisl’s conclusion countered the hope that de-converted apartments would change the character of Uptown, and placed the reasons for blight squarely on individual behavior: “Instead of converting and deconverting the buildings, the tenants should be converted to cleanliness.”

“Uptown: A Planning Report,” at first glance, called for the conservation of Uptown’s economic diversity. However, details showed the planners’ dim view of the neighborhood’s poorest and most vulnerable residents. In the midst of drafting the proposal for the high-priority 40-acre middle-income demonstration project, Meltzer admitted to the Department of City Planning that he had no idea how the city would handle relocation. The demonstration project was to test those undefined aspects of urban renewal, as well.

The second priority of “Uptown: A Planning Report” after residential de-conversion carried with it even greater implications for Uptown’s economic and social diversity. This phase, which signaled intentions to go far beyond de-conversion and

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38 Kurt Meisl, letter to the editor, “Does Deconversion Work?” Chicago Tribune, December 18, 1961. Renewal and de-conversion schemes that sought to attract middle-class to projects near blighted or near-blighted areas often failed to achieve developers’ goals. Meisl would have cited such projects of the early 1960s in Philadelphia, Detroit, St. Louis, and Cleveland. For a national perspective on conversion and renewal schemes that aimed to attract middle-class singles and small families to ‘gray’ areas, see Teaford, The Rough Road to Renaissance, 151-160.

39 Meltzer memo to Department of City Planning, October 25, 1961. UCC, Projects, Miscellaneous Papers on 1962 Urban Renewal Proposal. UCC Collection, CHM.
conservation, called for the clearance of dense, low-income housing in the “blighted” core, in exchange for hundreds of parking spots that would accompany the presumed growth of Uptown’s renovated retail and professional district. Meltzer staff called for Winthrop Avenue to be closed and cleared of all structures in favor of 300 parking spaces and a drive-through for the Bank of Chicago—a major underwriter for the “Plan for Uptown.”

Maps 8 (above). Meltzer Associate’s “Plan for Uptown.” 1962 Land Use.

A long-term proposal in the “Uptown: A Planning Report” consisted of a cluster of high-rise office buildings that would be home to Uptown’s three major insurance corporations, Combined Insurance, Kemper Insurance, and the Benevolent Association of Railway Employees. The planners suggested one tower built in a cleared lot just east of the Aragon Theater, a second on the opposite corner of Kemper’s current headquarters on Sheridan, and the third tower at Leland and Lawrence. Open space and parking would link the 10- to 12-story towers of this “Insurance Center.” Private financing would be needed for this phase of “Uptown: A Planning Report.” Meltzer Associates did not go as far to outline the details of the funding, but the proposal recalled the public clearance and private development that resulted in the landmark I.M. Pei apartments in Hyde Park or the Lake Meadows Apartments on the Near South Side. Uptown redevelopers might have been able to attract private financing for building the “Insurance Center” on publically-cleared land. Insurance corporations in both New York City and Chicago invested in such projects, and Uptown’s own Kemper Insurance was a trailblazer in private investments. The architects of the Meltzer team provided conceptual renderings of the Insurance Center. The towers were textbook examples of International Modernism, with symmetrical rectangles with glass-curtain walls.

Another proposal in “Uptown: A Planning Report” called for a drastic realignment of traffic flow through the neighborhood. Since the time of Uptown’s inception, Broadway had been a major trail through the heart of the area, guaranteeing visibility of the dense neighborhood core of housing and commercial sites. Meltzer Associates deemed this defining characteristic incompatible with modern conceptions of
community planning that privileged the segregation of land use. Instead, the planners called for a new four-lane thoroughfare—a widened Racine Avenue—to run north-south on the western edge of Uptown’s business center. Broadway would be eliminated in favor of green space and business plazas, except for a narrow parkway between Sunnyside and Leland. The widening of Racine, the argument went, would alleviate the congestion in central Uptown, which supposedly hampered shopping. It just so happened that the four-lane Racine would blast through a significant portion of low-rent “blighted” housing and taverns on Wilson Avenue and the heavily-converted six-flats of eastern Sheridan Park. If executed as planned, “Uptown: A Planning Report” would have left Uptown’s built environment unrecognizable by 1972.

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41 Planners in Chicago pursued similar reductions of busy diagonal streets through dense areas. One of the most prominent examples is the one-way stretch of Lincoln Avenue between Leland and Lawrence, in the Lincoln Square neighborhood just west of Uptown. The 1977 project retained diagonal parking on one side of the street, but otherwise privileged pedestrian use and created a popular plaza on the mid-point of the one-way stretch. See “Merchants Fear Eviction: N.W. Side Mall: City Plan Faces Foes,” *Chicago Tribune*, March 27, 1977. Today, this tactic is popular among urban planners, once again. “Road diets” look to ‘calm’ car traffic through a reduction of lanes, and enhance street use for pedestrians and bicyclists. Broadway, through in the middle of Uptown, is scheduled for a “road diet” in 2015—although not to the drastic extent proposed 53 years prior. Daryl Holliday, “Protected Bike Lanes Planned for Crowded Broadway Stretch,” *DNA Info Chicago*, August 1, 2013. http://www.dnainfo.com/chicago/20130801/uptown/protected-bike-lane-plans-for-broadway-underway.

42 In their recent chapter on the history of planning in Uptown, Brad Hunt and Jon Devries depict the “Uptown: A Planning Report” as one of “small clearance sites,” “small parks,” and limited street closures that “represented the height of conservation planning in the 1960s, avoiding the tabula rasa clearance of the early 1950s but embracing limited strikes on ‘blight’ in an effort to spur private investment and self-sustaining gentrification.” Although the authors accurately describe the plan’s final intentions, they severely underestimate the magnitude of clearance. The acreage of clearance in the plan was certainly dwarfed by earlier mass clearance schemes, but—as made much clearer in the maps than the plan’s text—the areas designated for demolition were incredibly dense and represented fundamental aspects of the neighborhood’s cultural and social identity. D. Bradford Hunt and Jon B. Devries, *Planning Chicago* (Chicago: American Planning Association, 2013), 125-126.
Several aspects of both content and tone show the plan’s distance from the 1957 UCC conservation proposal. While Albert Votaw drafted and personally introduced the
earlier report, UCC president O’Rourke wrote the preface to the 1962 plan. Executive Director William Kruse left the UCC around the time of the “Uptown: A Planning Report” release, so this naked expression of board power may have been an exigent matter. Regardless, the simple act of contracting a major, outside firm to outline Uptown’s massive urban renewal signaled an important shift away from plans claimed to have been derived from within the community. Now the UCC placed its hopes with professional urban planning backed almost exclusively by major institutions. Before commissioning Meltzer, UCC leaders largely viewed the commission as a rallying point for a groundswell of community calls for conservation and renewal. The institutions that served as the foundation of UCC stayed largely in the background, allowing Votaw and the network of block clubs, committees, and fundraising events to desperately beg for the attention of the city urban renewal regime. However, marshaling $60,000 to hire Meltzer Associates ushered in a new era of Uptown redevelopment. As in Hyde Park, when the University of Chicago and the SECC occluded the Hyde Park-Kenwood Conference, the big-money concerns grabbed control of the process after a few years of a much more community-centered movement prepared the way. In Uptown, however, these two forces were represented within the UCC itself. The parallels are obvious: Votaw, the one-time member of the HPKCC public relations committee, gave way to Jack Meltzer, the former head of the SECC planning division.

**The Positive Mental Attitude of Mid-Century Modernism**

Combined Insurance Company one was on the earliest and most enthusiastic UCC supporters. Several senior Combined executives served on the commission board of
directors, and the company supplied many volunteers for UCC projects like the Uptown Folk Fair. Combined founder and president W. Clement Stone funneled thousands of dollars towards neighborhood conservation and urban renewal, from the company’s profits and his own philanthropic fund. In his outlook and material support, Stone was both an embodiment of and active agent in the optimistic age of Uptown redevelopment.

W. Clement Stone was born on the South Side of Chicago in 1902. His father died when Stone was an infant and left behind substantial gambling debts, which plunged young Stone and his mother into poverty. Stone’s sales career began early: he became a newspaper boy at age 6 in an effort to supplement his mother’s dressmaking business. He moved with his mother to Detroit as a 16 year-old and dropped out of school in order to assist her work as an independent insurance agent. Stone honed a sales method built on persistent positivism that wore down potential clients. Meanwhile, he became obsessed with Horatio Alger novels, identifying with the protagonist’s journey from rags to riches through sheer determination. Before Stone was out of his teens, his life began to imitate art. His cold call sales tactics—which he optimistically termed “gold calls”—translated into steady profits. In 1922, after moving back to Chicago, Stone used his $100 in savings to open his own insurance company. His business plan called for specialized insurance plans sold to the masses. The approach proved more incredible than anything out of any Horatio Alger novel. By 1928, Combined Insurance Company boasted over 1,000 agents nationwide.43

Stone followed many other small but growing corporations in establishing Combined’s headquarters in Uptown in the 1920s. The Depression provided an ideal opportunity for Stone to expand, as he bought several insurance companies. By the end of the 1940s Combined was based in three buildings near the Edgewater Beach Hotel, before moving to a sober brick six-story location on Broadway just north Argyle. Uptown’s declining commercial environment had no impact on Combined’s nationwide fortunes: Stone’s company reported earnings of $2.6 million in 1962—just in the first half of the fiscal year.44 Although Stone, who lived in the posh suburb of Winnetka, assumed a relatively detached personal connection to Uptown redevelopment, Combined executives were central to the early years of the UCC. Stone encouraged, if not expected, civic engagement from his staff. Combined was as a steady financial contributor to the UCC operation, as was Stone’s personal non-profit foundation that he administered with his wife, the Jesse and W. Clement Stone Foundation.

Stone’s prominence rested upon more than his financial fortune. His advocacy for an almost cult-like regimen of optimism gained him local, national, and international renown. Stone had long been an adherent to self-help guru Napoleon Hill’s “Philosophy of Achievement,” a central force in the New Thought movement that held that the path to personal success could be distilled into a few basic truths. To demonstrate this argument Hill interviewed hundreds of leading politicians, scientists, and capitalists, then published

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his findings in best-selling books with titles like *The Law of Success* (1928) and *Think and Grow Rich* (1937). Stone saw in these aphorism-laced biographies many of the facets of his own rise from rags-to-riches.

The budding insurance magnate was so taken by *Think and Grow Rich* that he purchased a copy for each of his hundreds of salesmen, and required that they read it. When he finally met Hill in 1951, according to Stone, he coaxed the writer out of semi-retirement. Hill agreed to resume writing on the condition that Stone fund and manage an institute dedicated to the study of success. Stone termed his particular approach to the field, “Positive Mental Attitude,” more commonly referred to simply as “PMA.” “Science of Success” clubs followed, as did the journal *Success Unlimited*. In 1962, just as Meltzer Associates put the finishing touches on “Uptown: A Planning Report,” Stone and Hill co-wrote *Success through a Positive Mental Attitude*. The book combined anecdotes from Stone’s personal voyage to wealth with adages that the authors claimed could unlock the potential of the common reader. Stone specifically made the case for one’s ability to transcend barriers by simply employing a rigorous optimism.

Many of Stone’s proclamations of positivism could have applied to Uptown redevelopment in general, where boosters hoped determination and clearly-stated goals 45

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would eventually prevail. “Regardless of who you are or what you have been, you can be what you want to be.” “If you want something, go after it!” “We know that every effect has a cause. And thought is the first cause of success in any worthwhile achievement. If you don’t think, you don’t succeed. If your thoughts are based on wrong premises, you fail to get the right answers.” In a parallel to Votaw’s outreach to the Peacemakers, Stone pointed towards the achievements of a “gang preacher” in Brooklyn who was able to relate to “teenage criminals, prostitutes, alcoholics, and narcotic addicts—the Orvals, Dragons, Hell Burners, Mau Maus, Chaplains, CiGis, and others. He inspired them to become decent, law-abiding citizens through a hard-hitting evangelical approach.” The local Boys Club—a center dedicated to reaching boys vulnerable to delinquency that was largely funded by Stone—chartered a Junior Success Club, which started and ended each meeting with a trademark PMA routine.

The president opens with a question: “How is your PMA?”
The group responds, “Terrific!”
Then the president asks: “How do you feel!”
The enthusiastic group response is, “I feel healthy! I feel happy! I feel terrific!”

The boys were not the only people in Uptown who belted out lines like these. Stone required similar acts from his Combined Insurance employees—often with the aid of the company public address system.46

Stone built upon the popular reception of his burgeoning ‘science of success’ industry. In 1964 he bankrolled the research behind the book *The Other Side of the Mind*,

which sought to expand the “New Thought” school by uncovering the potential of “mind science.” Stone’s co-author was none other than Norma Lee Browning, the Chicago Tribune journalist who penned “Girl Reporter Visits Jungles of Hillbillies” in 1957. With a year-long sabbatical from the newspaper and Stone’s financing, Browning traveled the globe to investigate phenomena such as extra-sensory perception, telepathy, yogic power, and “the psychic life of the Aborigines.” Stone himself voyaged to the Shrine of Lourdes to see the miraculous healing powers of the site, and to Haiti to “check on voodoo.” Like the Uptown boosters who were his contemporaries, Stone hoped to enlist cultural diversity in the name of development. Although Browning wrote most of The Other Side of the Mind, Stone contributed interludes that placed “mind science” in the contexts of personal success. He also demonstrated his increasingly strident anti-communism. The Soviets, Stone concluded, were already far ahead of the Americans when it came to propaganda—a basic facet of “mind science.” By understanding the power of subliminal thinking, the West could close the gap quickly, according to Stone: “I have tried, in a small way, to do [my part] by pointing out, both here and in foreign countries, that the power of suggestion, like all power, can be used for good and evil.”

Stone’s self-help philosophy called for individuals to transcend the external barriers to which they attributed unhappiness. People had within them the power—

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47 The development of Stone and Browning’s relationship is unclear. Stone wrote that she first came to his attention with her expose of paranormal con artists in a 1950 Tribune series. Stone also warned of three potentially explosive Soviet “mind science” programs: the development of a “small electronic device” that would store all facts and data needed for the user, thus freeing Soviet agents to tap into much more than the standard 10 percent of their brains; a surgical procedure that would remove a “defense mechanism” in the brain, thus also allowing the use of more than 10 percent of mental capacity; and harnessing the power of brain waves through extra-sensory perception. W. Clement Stone and Norma Lee Browning, The Other Side of the Mind (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1964), 137-142.
through persistence, hard work, faith, and even untapped “mind science”—to succeed in even the most challenging of situations. He attributed a lack of success not to structural or socioeconomic realities, but to self-perception. Stone’s philanthropic work, which included being a member, trustee, director, or chairman of 44 social groups, reflected his veneration of self-help. He was a major contributor to the Chicago Boys Club, joining the board of directors in 1959 and becoming its president in 1964. Stone provided $600,000 for the creation of the Interlochen Arts academy in Michigan, which promptly became one of the nation’s premier musical instruction centers for gifted youth. Support of less traditional social programs mirrored Stone’s eccentricities. When public all-white schools closed in the South in an effort to stall integration, Stone became worried that the students would not be able to graduate and continue to college. He offered to relocate to Chicago and to fund the housing for any such student from Little Rock or Norfolk, Virginia. Despite advertisement in the local newspapers, no one accepted the deal. Stone also made possible “Success Clubs” at Stateville and Joliet prisons, with the goal to facilitate post-incarceration success; Stone’s good friend Dr. Preston Bradley presided over the first ‘graduation’ ceremony in 1963.48

Given his worldview, Stone embraced the ethic of redevelopment in Uptown. His interest in Uptown’s future went well beyond rhetoric. He gave direct credit to

redevelopment efforts for his decision to renovate Combined’s offices in 1958. In 1961 Stone announced a major expansion of Combined’s headquarters on Broadway. The move underscored a PMA-worthy optimism for Uptown redevelopment while revealing some reservations about the insurance tower plaza envisioned by “Uptown: A Planning Report.” A full-page advertisement on the back cover of the 1960 Uptown Folk Fair declared, “Combined Insurance Company of America—it’s executives, employees, and shareholders—have complete faith and confidence in the future of Uptown.

The Combined headquarters construction project was among the biggest in Uptown in years. The architectural design, itself, made concrete many cultural, intellectual, and economic forces that were part of the ethic of redevelopment in Uptown. Stone selected the Chicago firm Epstein and Son to design and build the expansion. Epstein and Son boasted a strong history and important portfolio of recent projects. The firm first became known for eye-catching corporate buildings. Notable early work in Chicago included the Stockyards National Bank (1924)—a near exact replica of Philadelphia’s Independence Hall—and the nearby iconic International Amphitheatre (1934). Epstein and Son adjusted its aesthetic style in the 1950s to align with a growing acceptance of International Modernism, with designs dominated by straight lines,


50 UCC, Projects, 1960 Folk Fair, 1960 Program. UCC Collection, CHM.


52 Although contracting a single company for both the architectural and construction contract is relatively common today, the practice was revolutionary in 1962. Epstein was one of the innovators of the design-build practice, which brought down costs and completion times through a streamlined, single-bid process.
concrete, steel, and glass. Epstein’s Twin Towers Apartments (1950), in Chicago’s Gold Coast, remains a classic example of International Style housing inspired by the likes of Mies van der Rohe. The firm was at the top of its postwar popularity when selected by Combined. After the Chicago Housing Authority contracted Epstein to build a high-rise expansion of the Cabrini-Green project, it delivered five rectangular and austere red brick towers in 1958. One year later, the architects completed the Borg-Warner Building, the first postwar addition to the iconic Michigan Avenue wall of buildings. Borg-Warner showed the extent to which Epstein and Son was willing to break with tradition. The glass façade framed by a minimalistic stainless steel grid sharply contrasted the ornate masonry and brick buildings in each direction.\(^5^3\)

Figure 9 (above). Combined Insurance Company Headquarters Expansion (Exterior).
Figure 10 (below). Combined Insurance Company Headquarters Expansion (Interior). Epstein and Son, Hedrich-Blessig Architectural Photograph Collection, CHM, Chicago.
Epstein and Son created for Combined Insurance a building that reflected Stone’s optimism and the redevelopment ethic in Uptown. The firm placed the six-story building directly adjacent to Combined’s current six-story headquarters. The contrast was striking, despite the proximity and similarity in scale. The prewar building was originally an automobile dealer and repair company, then the home to a pioneering television manufacturer. These uses were responsible for the building’s stately façade and street wall of plate glass windows. Like the rest of Uptown’s prewar building stock, brick and masonry dominated the original 5050 Broadway. The new addition, however, overtly stated a departure from that built environment that Uptown redevelopers found so problematic. Epstein’s design clearly had roots in the Borg-Warner building, dedicated just before securing the Combined contract. Right angles, symmetry, glass, and steel ruled, in keeping with the tenets of International Modernism. The glass cube was divided by thin stainless steel slats that framed the rectangular windows.

While the overall project certainly indicated Stone’s commitment to Uptown, the final design’s details unveiled ambivalence about the neighborhood. The street level consisted of white bricks—an eight-foot barrier of a wall punctuated only by a modest glass door entryway. Epstein and Son extended this wall down the façade of the older building, bricking-in the plate glass picture windows. Thus, although in the community, the street-level aesthetics of Combined’s headquarters left it not of the community. The addition privileged the interior, productive aspect of the company. Open floor offices allowed for flexible work space. Wood-paneling dominated conference rooms with sleek furniture. Modernistic paintings hanged behind receptionists’ desks. A two-level
garage—seamlessly included in the symmetrical design—provided on-site parking for Stone’s gold Cadillac. Unlike prewar brick-and-mortar commercial buildings, the new Combined building allowed only for minimal aesthetic flourishes: the company name stretched across the top of the façade, a concrete marker near the entrance noted the name of the CEO and the dedication date (“A.D. 1962”), and three PMA-worthy words in stainless steel studded the imposing street-level white brick wall—“Service,” “Strength,” “Security.” Given his contributions to neighborhood philanthropy, his support of the local Boys Club, and—perhaps most significantly—his decision to expand his company headquarters in Uptown, it was no surprise that the UCC awarded its inaugural “Man of the Year Award” in 1964 to W. Clement Stone.54

The Combined Insurance headquarters expansion was one in a series of significant Modernist projects built in Uptown through the early 1960s. While Epstein’s design adhered strictly to International Modernism, other renowned architects working in Uptown infused Modernistic principles with aesthetic innovation and even whimsy. In 1948 the Bachman family contracted avant-garde architect Bruce Goff to renovate their unremarkable 1890 two-story wood frame house on Carmen Avenue. Goff’s Bachman Home demonstrated his early investigations of materials considered by many to be undeserving of high design, as well as the flourishes that defied norms of symmetry and congruence. Goff wrapped the house in corrugated aluminum—a clever commentary on the postwar housing crisis that found many veterans living in corrugated Quonset huts. He enclosed the front porch in a simple brick wall consisting of weeping mortar, both


Figure 11. Postwar Modern Architecture in Uptown. Clockwise: Bruce Goff’s Bachman House (1949-1950), Edo Belli’s Cuneo Children’s Hospital (1958), Perkins and Will’s McCormick Boys Club (1958), and Bertrand Goldberg’s Brenneman Elementary School (1960).

Two architects known for modifying the rectilinear and glass-and-steel confines of International Modernism also came to Uptown. Edo Belli’s 1958 addition to the Cuneo Children’s Hospital on the corner of Montrose and Clarendon consisted of a façade of
curved glass, and stone walls flanking the entrances. Belli topped the structure with a roof in the shape of a painter’s palette. A Space Age-worthy walkway of corrugated stainless steel connected the new building to the old hospital across Clarendon. Bertrand Goldberg, in a project that coincided with the construction of his iconic Marina City Towers in downtown Chicago, designed the new Brenneman Elementary School one block south of Cuneo Hospital. The Chicago-born, Bauhaus-trained architect hoped to build an educational environment that avoided the institutionalized anonymity of common boxy schools. The result was a series of 24 classrooms each encased in the sloping concrete that was becoming Goldberg’s hallmark. Each classroom, subtly connected to another, was to bring to mind the traditional single-room schoolhouse, and thus facilitate a more personable pedagogy.  

The high-profile architectural firm Perkins and Will designed a new home for W. Clement Stone’s beloved Uptown Boys Club at Sheridan and Gunnison, completed in 1959 at a cost of $1.2 million. Perkins and Will created a Modernist three-story brick and glass cube faced with stainless steel vertical louvres. A raised stone foundation contained an indoor swimming pool, and the ground floor made room for a gym and an auditorium. Boys Club leaders described the building as, “the most modern…the most beautiful…edifice ever dedicated to youth.” When the building was dedicated, Boys

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56 Like many aesthetically-conscious Modernistic designs, the Brenneman classrooms proved impractical. The roofs leaked and the concrete was a poor roofing material for Chicago’s harsh winters and hot summers. The classrooms were soon encased in a traditional truss metal roof.

57 “Fact Sheet: Final Capital Fund Campaign, Col. Robert R. McCormick Uptown Chicago Boys’ Club,” Uptown 1959, Chicago Boys Club Collection, CHM. Ellipses in original. The McCormick Foundation, established by the founding editor of the Chicago Tribune, provided $500,000 for the new building, thus facilitating the naming of it in Robert McCormick’s honor.
Club officials expressed their optimism for the impact it would have on the teenage boys of the area. Four boys were selected to submit essays describing their goals over the next decade. The Boys Club would award the boy who came closest to his goals a $100 bond.  

Each of these architectural feats represented elements of a Modernistic mid-century ethic that optimistically believed that innovative design could impact the social environment. Meltzer Associate’s “Uptown: A Planning Report” also rested squarely upon this outlook. Expectedly, the renderings produced by Meltzer’s architects included gleaming, unadorned, glass and steel rectangles strategically plotted in open spaces. The Insurance Center specifically aimed to ‘save’ Uptown by providing efficient homes for the financial powerhouses of the area. Yet, the project was prospective, more than anything. Hedging bets, Combined Insurance pressed on with a new modernistic home, regardless.

“Keep Looking Up”

The auditorium of Preston Bradley’s Peoples Church, regular host of UCC programs, had a minimal and sober design that reflected the earnestness of the church’s mission. Two wood-paneled balconies ringed the plain chairs on the floor level. A simple, unadorned stage served as a pulpit. The curved wall behind the stage provided space for some of the few flourishes. Three arched recessions rose from just behind the choir towards the high-ceiling. Although decorative woodwork graced these spaces, they

58 “Ceremony Set for McCormick Club for Boys,” Chicago Tribune, September 3, 1959. One of these boys was Steve Ramis, older brother of eventual actor and director Harold Ramis. Although the Ramis’ lived in Rogers Park, the Uptown Boys Club served the entire north side.
looked more like empty canvasses. During the height of Uptown booster optimism, the congregation initiated a fundraising campaign to fill the middle arched canvas. Bradley announced the project in the church newsletter.

All my life I have been a dreamer and I find, as I reach that inevitable maturity which I think is falsely called “age,” that I continue to be a dreamer. But just dreaming dreams is not enough. I have had the good fortune of having many of my dreams become realities.

Bradley’s dreams became real, at least in terms of funding for the new mural, thanks to a generous donation from an executive at the Congress Hotel, who was a loyal church member.59

Bradley commissioned the highly-accomplished muralist Louis Grell. The Iowa native studied painting as a young man in Germany and Britain’s Royal Academy of Fine Arts. He settled in Chicago in 1917, were he maintained a residence at the famous Tree Studios for four decades. Grell was responsible for many of the pastoral and epic murals that graced the elaborate movie palaces built in the 1920s across the nation, such as a painting of Apollo on the proscenium of the Chicago Theatre. Grell delivered a 22 by 15 foot mural that aligned with Bradley’s populist and positive theology. A Christ-like person stands, arms outstretched on a slight hill in front of a pastoral landscape. Forty people gather around the figure in a semi-circle; they represent forty different cultural, ethnic, and economic classes. There are three classical muses, an African American couple in modern dress, a white businessman in a fine suit and polished shoes standing

next to an overall-clad worker, an American Indian in braids, a judge, a South Asian man in a Nehru jacket, and an Asia couple, among many others.60

Grell’s work reflected the persistent optimism that was also found in the UCC commission for Jack Meltzer and the rise of Modernist architecture in Uptown—as well as the idealized cultural diversity that emerged in the 1950s. Like all modernist efforts, these projects were ultimately quests for order in an increasingly chaotic world.61 Many Uptown boosters hoped the right mix of expertise, inspiration, and economic commitment would provide answers for what they perceived as inexorable blight and a rootless and misunderstood low-income migrant population. But, as Preston Bradley noted, dreaming dreams is not enough.

60 Images and history of “Keep Looking Up” are available from the Louis Grell Foundation, at http://www.louisgrell.com/artworks/peoples-church-of-chicago/#.

CHAPTER SIX
CRACKS IN THE REDEVELOPMENT CONSENSUS

The UCC held its seventh annual meeting on May 26, 1962, at Peoples Church. The pop-folk New Wine Singers provided entertainment, after an invocation from the local Methodist church. Several block clubs and representative groups from Uptown churches and civic clubs filled the ground floor, each seated next to placards with their respective group names written on them. Board president Robert O’Rourke awarded citations to fellow board members and business leaders Ed Dobbeck and Ed Pabst.¹ The program served as the official unveiling of Meltzer Associates “Uptown: A Planning Report,” the ten-year urban renewal proposal two years and $60,000 in the making. Yet the meeting was not the triumphant ascendance of modernist optimism that Uptown boosters hoped. The crowd of 1,500 was smaller than expected, and some of the community members in attendance had critical comments for the UCC’s plan. With the shift in tactics came new challenges for the coalition of economic growth advocates and liberal urbanists.

Meltzer Associates published “Uptown: A Planning Report” soon after the annual meeting. O’Rourke addressed the preface to the “People of Uptown, informing them that the next phase was “up to you.” The UCC hoped this courtesy, along with an invitation for recommendations and comments, would maintain the illusion that massive urban

¹ “1,500 Discuss Uptown Renewal,” The Sunday Star, June 3, 1962.
renewal in Uptown was a collaboration between everyday citizens and elite institutions. In reality, however, the major investment in Meltzer Associates signaled UCC dependency on the outside planning expertise that observers of massive urban renewal had been critical of since the late 1950s. Now, what passed as community collaboration came in the form of UCC leaders convincing Uptown residents to accept the long-range plans and renderings of Meltzer Associates. O’Rourke pointed towards this new type of ‘collaboration’ at the outset of Meltzer’s work in Uptown: “Those things [massive urban renewal] can all be done, if the people of Uptown are behind it. Because if the people want it, the city government will help. But if the people who live here are not for it, it will just be a utopian plan that never gets off the boards.”

O’Rourke’s remarks and his preface revealed more trepidation than optimism, and acknowledged the limitations in the UCC leadership’s assumption that urban renewal could be initiated with a well-funded plan from a renowned expert. The realities of the local and federal urban renewal environment demanded popularity of the plan within Uptown, as well as an effective sell to officials in charge of funding. The Uptown coalition of liberal modernists and growth-minded boosters needed to hold in order for “Uptown: A Planning Report” to gain traction at city hall or in Washington. Under this pressure—and amidst a persistent apathy among the increasingly diverse low-income majority of Uptown—the elite and middle-class core began to unravel.

First among renewal discontents, and the cause for the empty seats in Peoples Church for the annual meeting, was the Income Property Owners Association (IPOA).

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The IPOA, which called for a boycott of the UCC meeting, represented landlords across Chicago. Over three hundred members owned property in Uptown. Knowing the implications of its plans, the UCC had long courted the support of these operators of SROs, rooming houses, and large apartment buildings. Some landlords had come under the UCC umbrella before “Uptown: A Planning Report”—another feather of diversity in the UCC’s cap. But after the release of the plan IPOA representatives accused the UCC of steering housing inspectors to Uptown for reason only of building age. Alderman Hirsh, noting his experience with the South Side Planning Board, denied the accusation and dismissed the claim as a tactic “typical of those which follow publications of any renewal plan or public improvement project.”

Some small businessmen also pushed back on the UCC’s publicity blitz, questioning the “Uptown: A Planning Report” roadmap for economic growth. The Uptown Chamber of Commerce—not a close partner with the UCC to this point—hesitated to endorse the plan. A group of merchants aligned with IPOA asked the Chamber to offer an alternative renewal plan that would avoid the “destruction of local merchants as an undesirable by-product.” This effort, led by the owner of a Sheridan Avenue hardware store, was not the first sign of antagonism between the UCC and small

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3 In 1960 the UCC Board of Directors resolved to make a direct outreach effort to income property owners. The goal was to encourage voluntary housing rehabilitation and code enforcement, create a tenant referral network, offer group insurance rates, and recruit UCC members. UCC Resolution, September 12, 1960. UCC, Administrative, Property Owners Committee, September 1960 to August 1961. UCC Collection, CHM.


businessmen. At a 1961 meeting, the usually supportive Carl Wilson of Wilson Florists cited the UCC’s attitude towards merchants as a reason for tepid Folk Fair support.\(^6\)

Those with social and economic power expressed concern, as well. Members of Buena Park Presbyterian Church had less-than-enthusiastically received the UCC even in its early days. In March 1956, UCC leader Edward Dobbeck notified Votaw about that congregation’s “divided opinion” about conservation efforts. The congregation narrowly voted to continue to allow UCC to hold meetings at the church. In September 1958, just as Votaw circulated the ecumenical statement of support that included Buena Presbyterian, Dobbeck informed Votaw that church member “Dr. Noble is not too warm” to UCC’s work.\(^7\) Some residents of the middle-class Lakewood-Balmoral district also chafed at the UCC’s aggressive depiction of Uptown’s ‘cancerous blight.’ A June 1962 letter to O’Rourke described the “pall” that had fallen over the area since the release of “Uptown: A Planning Report.” O’Rourke comforted the critic by reminding him that he himself lived in Lakewood-Balmoral, and that the plan was open to suggestion and revision.\(^8\) The plan’s bold call to reroute traffic from Broadway drew the ire of the powerful Chicago Transit Authority. Apparently, no one from Meltzer Associates or the UCC consulted the CTA in making the radical transportation proposal. A strongly-  

\(^6\) In an after-action meeting for the 1961 Folk Fair, Wilson noted that the UCC could gain better merchant support if it would “wipe out the impression [they] left with people that night at the Aragon Ballroom.” Wilson probably referred to the 1961 UCC Annual Meeting, which included previews of the “Plan for Uptown.” Correspondence to the Garden Restaurant Committee, August 1, 1961. UCC, Projects, 1961 Folk Fair. UCC Collection, CHM.

\(^7\) Edward Dobbeck to Albert Votaw, March 14, 1956. Dobbeck to Votaw, September 18, 1956. UCC, Correspondence, Correspondence of Edward Dobbek, 1956. UCC Collection, CHM.

\(^8\) Robert O’Rourke to Arthur Neunebel, June 14, 1962. UCC, Correspondence, Correspondence from Binders, June to October 1962. UCC Collection, CHM.
worded letter from the CTA staff engineer exhaustively itemized how the plan would cost the CTA $125,000 in re-routing and at least $40,000 per year in lost revenue. The engineer informed the UCC that the CTA was in the process of drafting a formal protest to the proposal.⁹

The most pointed concern about Meltzer’s plan came from the longtime African American residents of the 4600 block of Winthrop. The project’s backers from the UCC recognized the potential resistance to the clearance of the Segregated Block, and took measures to preempt controversy. In the spring of 1962 the Board of Directors nominating committee reached out to Adele Jones of 4649 Winthrop. The UCC was interested in much more than burnishing its culturally diverse image. Bill Kruse described Jones as, “the principal leader in the Negro community, head of her block club, active in PTA, worked on Folk Fair committee, would be good listen for Commission with Negro residents, especially since plan drastically effects Negro block.”¹⁰ To say Meltzer’s plan “drastically effects” 4600 Winthrop was an understatement bordering on euphemism. Jones accepted the nomination and was elected to serve a three-year term on the board of directors from 1962 to 1964. Within weeks of selection, Jones spoke sharply about “Uptown: A Planning Report” in a board meeting. She explained that many had


¹⁰ Bill Kruse to Graydon Megan, April 24, 1962. UCC, Administrative, Board of Directors Nominating Committee, May 1956 to March 1963, undated. UCC Collection, CHM.
called the block home for more than 30 years and that although the outer appearances of some of the buildings may show age, the insides were beautiful.\textsuperscript{11}

Members of the Winthrop Block Club—the oldest one in Uptown—nevertheless dutifully attended the unveiling of the plan at Peoples Church. During the comment session, a black man stepped from behind a placard marked with “4600 Winthrop.” The \textit{Sunday Star} quoted the unnamed man, “You got us colored people confined in one slum block…where will we go?” Alderman Hirsh replied, “Each family will be treated as an individual unit” in relocation.\textsuperscript{12} Hirsh’s response was less than reassuring, given the UCC’s vigilance of Uptown’s rigid color line seen in the rebuke of the 1960 ad requesting a “colored” buyer for an apartment building in the 5000 block of Winthrop. Absent open housing in Uptown, the displaced would be forced out of the neighborhood. If the pattern for other renewal-caused displacements were to hold, then those displaced would be relocated to communities on the South and West Sides undergoing racial succession. All the rhetoric about preserving the economic and housing diversity in “Uptown: A Planning Report” could not obscure the fact that its implementation would result in the virtual elimination of the neighborhood’s black population.

\textbf{Uptown Redevelopment in the Balance: The “Chicago Tax Revolt”}

Economic and political realities determined the fate of massive urban renewal in Uptown as much as community feedback. The city of Chicago depleted its urban renewal funds by 1960, thanks to cost overruns primarily in Hyde Park. The federal government

\textsuperscript{11} Minutes to Meeting of the Board of Directors, May 21, 1962. UCC, Correspondence, Correspondence from Binders, March to May 1962. UCC Collection, CHM.

\textsuperscript{12} “1,500 Discuss Uptown Renewal,” \textit{The Sunday Star}, June 3, 1962.
could not provide any assistance without matching local funds. Mayor Daley scheduled a bond vote for 1962 that would infuse the city Department of Urban Renewal with $22.5 million. Twenty-six previously designated areas waited funding for completion and four others—including Uptown—hoped to be initiated. Mayor Daley made a specific but characteristically grandiose plea: “With the passage of the urban renewal bonds we can and will remove all slum and blight in the next five or six years.” Daley confidently added that he “was convinced the public wants this kind of activity.”

Redevelopers within the UCC agreed with Daley. They pointed towards $8.5 million in private investment in Uptown that included the remodeling of Uptown National Bank, construction of grocery stores, and the expansion of the Combined Insurance headquarters. Merchants predicted a restoration of Uptown as the largest retail center between the Loop and Evanston. Realtor Eugene Matanky explained that “smart money” was moving into Uptown due to the comprehensive nature of “Uptown: A Planning Report.”

Bond issues in Chicago historically met little resistance. Daley seemingly insured the bond’s success by using his power to schedule the vote for a primary election date, where an expected low turnout would minimize risk. The uneven and often controversial administration of redevelopment in Chicago, however, made room for opposition to additional taxpayer funding. Uptown redevelopers specifically singled-out the bloated budget for Hyde Park renewal as a cause for the depletion of city funds. In doing so, they

unwittingly provided fodder for anyone skeptical of the city’s ability to administer additional renewal funds. In Lincoln Park, the federal government recommended a cutback in the scope of the renewal project for that neighborhood. Washington officials doubted the city’s ability to simultaneously complete the massive work in Hyde Park and continue the clearance and rebuilding in other communities. Although the city promoted the bond vote by attributing these delays to a lack of funding, skeptics could have just as easily concluded that poor planning and mismanagement of funds cast doubt on throwing more money at the problem.

Chicago was also in the midst of the most sustained community resistance to urban renewal the city had yet seen. Just one week before the bond vote, the city announced that the federal government had allocated $26 million to acquire and clear 105 acres for a new University of Illinois campus on the Near West Side. The city committed $10 million to the renewal project. Daley had long coveted a major public university near the Loop, and pressed for the location despite strong community opposition and pleas for a location from areas that actually wanted the development. Florence Scalia, a strong

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15 “City Renewal Error Denied by Hyde Park,” Chicago Tribune, June 12, 1960. This article attributed the Uptown critique of Hyde Park renewal to unnamed sources within the UCC. Alderman Hirsh disagreed with this sentiment that delays in Uptown redevelopment resulted from Hyde Park’s use of almost the entire city renewal budget. Hirsh instead blamed the delay on insufficient community interest in Uptown.


community activist who headed the multiracial, grassroots Harrison-Halsted Community
Group, greeted the announcement with promises of a legal battle.18

Community resistance like that on the Near West Side accompanied the spread of
massive urban renewal throughout the country. A working-class Italian community
fought a losing battle against clearance on Boston’s West End. Many New Yorkers
pushed back against clearance plans in Morningside Heights. A highway proposal in the
East Village provided the impetus for the most renowned salvo against clearance-based
urban renewal, in Jane Jacobs’ The Death and Life of Great American Cities. Even some
professional planners had grown skeptical of the efficacy of massive renewal, advocating
instead rehabilitation.19 Weariness of cost overruns, looming legal battles, grassroots
community resistance, and shifts in professional planning practices made the 1962
Chicago urban renewal bond vote no sure bet.

Both Meltzer Associates and UCC leaders recognized that the feasibility of
“Uptown: A Planning Report” rested on the replenishment of city renewal coffers. The
UCC and its allies correspondingly organized an intense campaign for the issue. The
Democratic and Republican ward offices, civic organizations, and the Mayor’s office
coordinated with the UCC the centerpiece of the campaign—the “Bonds for a Better

18 Thomas Buck, “Plan to Start U.I. Campus in Fall; Aid OK’d,” Chicago Tribune, March 23,
1962.

19 Herbert Gans, The Urban Villagers: Group and Class in the Life of Italian-Americans (New
York City: Glencoe Free Press, 1962); Samuel Zipp, Manhattan Projects: The Rise and Fall of Urban
Renewal in Cold War New York (New York City: Oxford University Press, 2010), 18-22; Hillary Ballon,
“Housing and Urban Renewal” in Hillary Ballon and Kenneth Jackson, editors, Robert Moses and the
Modern City (New York City: W.W. Norton, 2007), 260-2621; Andrew Dolkart, Morningside Heights: A
Christopher Kleneck, The Transatlantic Collapse of Urban Renewal (Chicago: University of Chicago Press,
Uptown” parade held the weekend before the vote. The event served as the signature promotion for the entire city. Forty marching groups, including the “Uptown Chicago Commission Band” and the Nisei American Legion color guard, marched down Broadway past a review stand upon which stood Mayor Daley and 12th District U.S. Congressman Edward Rinnegan. A UCC press release described the parade in breathless detail, albeit lacking the sophisticated style of the departed Votaw.

The Brownies were “Scouting for Uptown;” the senior citizens said “Uptown Is Worth Saving” and “Let’s Renew in ’62;” while family groups proclaimed: “It’s Great to Grow in Uptown,” “It’s Fun to Play in Uptown” and “We Like to Study in Uptown.” There were signs everywhere—red signs, blue signs, green signs and yellow signs, some done by professional artists (residents of the area), but most done by eager youngsters and their parents excited about the big parade, excited about the renewal plans for their Uptown…making it a better Uptown.20

The UCC pulled out all stops for the “Bonds for a Better Uptown Parade.” Executive director Kruse called on Gwen Hirsh to recruit the actresses who played the “Doublemint Twins” in Wrigley gum advertisements. The twins apparently lived in the same co-op building as the Hirsh’s. Kruse suggested the twins carry a sign proclaiming, “Doublemint Twins vote for a Double-Good Uptown!”21

Outside of Uptown and city hall, meanwhile, anti-bond Republican officials and Chicago Tribune editors expressed cautious optimism that the bond issue would fail. This opposition cited a sharp increase in absentee ballot requests that mirrored the GOP’s last positive showing in Cook County in 1958. Yet few seriously expected what became


Mayor Daley’s first noteworthy political defeat since his ascension in 1955. Over 57 percent of Chicago voters rejected the urban renewal bond issue. The coverage of the election’s result revealed the vote’s magnitude. The *New York Times* placed the loss directly at Mayor Daley’s feet, and highlighted the stunning result by repeating Daley’s prediction that the bond proposal would win by a margin of 2 ½ to 1. Politicians on both sides rushed to interpret the vote. Powerful Illinois United States senator Everett Dirksen immediately proclaimed the result a sign of growing discontent with high taxes and spending programs. Democrat governor Otto Kerner dismissed the notion of a “tax revolt” the next day. He echoed Mayor Daley’s explanation that the vote’s proximity to the deadline for income and property tax payments hurt the bond’s cause. Sydney Yates, Dirksen’s opponent for the Senate vote upcoming in November, attributed the bond defeat—and the surprising number of votes for his primary foe, a fringe candidate who focused almost entirely on the tax issue—to voting machine peculiarities.22 Although it would have been little comfort to Daley and Uptown redevelopers, the Chicago bond defeat was part of a wave of voter pushback against metropolitan urban renewal

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spending. Cost overruns and unfulfilled promises resulted in similar votes in St. Louis, Cleveland, and Baltimore from 1960 to 1964.\footnote{Teaford, \textit{Rough Road to Renaissance}, 159-161.}

Uptown did not serve as the bulwark of bond support that Daley had hoped. For a community whose future supposedly relied upon urban renewal, Uptown voters produced only a mild result of 53 percent in favor. Voting fell largely along party lines, when compared to the precinct totals from the 1959 alderman’s race. Reliable Republican precincts in relatively homogenous Lakewood-Balmoral rejected the bond measure by margins up to 40 percent. That voters in well-off Buena Park voted down the proposal suggested that Uptown’s “Gold Coast” was, after all, “turning its back on the slums,” despite UCC rhetoric from five years earlier. Precincts flanking the proposed 40-acre Section 314 voted strongly in favor of the bond. The areas in central Uptown that stood to bear the greatest burden of clearance in “Uptown: A Planning Report” produced some surprising results. Sixty-one percent of the voters in the precinct that covered the Segregated Block voted in favor. Perhaps UCC reassurances that relocation would be an upgrade made in-roads with residents. Precincts with high numbers of apartment conversions and low-income migrants also supported the bond. Yet these results do little to reflect the attitudes of the vast majority of the residents of those sections of Uptown, due to low voter turnout. In central Uptown, home to one of the densest populations in the country, precincts tallied between 70 and 150 total voters. Once again, apathy typified
the relationship between redevelopers and the tens of thousands of low-income and working-class residents in Uptown.  

Map 11. Results of the 1962 Urban Renewal Bond Election by Precinct.

The voters’ refusal to replenish the city’s urban renewal budget meant that none of the Meltzer Associates plan would be implemented any time soon. The city was able to combine some funding with federal money to continue renewal in communities already declared conservation areas, such as Lincoln Park and Englewood. Uptown redevelopers received a temporary boost in February 1963 when the Chicago Department of Urban

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24 Precinct vote totals were tabulated from the election returns from the 48th ward for the 1962 citywide primary election held in the Metropolitan Reference Collections, Harold Washington Library Center, Chicago. Corresponding ward-level precinct maps are at the Illinois Regional Archives Depository, Ronald Williams Library, Northeastern Illinois University, Chicago.
Renewal endorsed the 40-acre Section 314 site by the margin of a single vote. The vote was little more than a preliminary step, however, as federal officials needed to approve the proposal before committing any matching funds. The victory was short-lived. The Illinois State Assembly passed a law preventing the city from using renewal funds in places yet to be officially declared a conservation area.\textsuperscript{25} Some residents hoping for redevelopment soldiered on, as UCC plans once again returned to bureaucratic purgatory. The \textit{Tribune} featured the street and lawn beautifying work of the 5000 Winthrop Block Club. The article concluded with the thoughts of one of the most active members, “‘You have to be forceful to get results,’ Miss Heintz said, noting that block club activities hardly endear the tenants to some of the landlords. But she said the block had been getting good cooperation from police and some other city workers.”\textsuperscript{26}

Meanwhile, private financial institutions continued to balk at investing in Uptown. Jonathan Pugh, a Southwest Side savings and loan executive and member of a panel on redevelopment, said after a tour of the neighborhood that he was “inexpressibly shocked” at Uptown’s deterioration. Pugh faulted the low-income southern and Appalachian whites who dominated Uptown’s residential core, and concluded that no significant capital would come to Uptown until they were removed. Asked where those in question would go, or how they would get there, Pugh replied, “That’s their problem.”\textsuperscript{27}


\textsuperscript{26} Robert Cross, “Residents Won’t Wait for Master Plan,” \textit{Chicago Tribune}, June 27, 1963. The reporter made a point to note that Heintz was a tenant, not a property owner.

\textsuperscript{27} Suzanne Avery, “Uptown Asks Funds, Told to Show Good Investment Potential,” \textit{Chicago Tribune}, May 9, 1963. The news article sanitized Pugh’s language regarding low-income southern white migrants. His reaction to Uptown’s population sparked a heated correspondence between him and UCC
The twists and turns of Uptown’s local political fortunes were only beginning. The drama of the 1963 race to be 48th ward alderman exceeded that of the 1959 election. Once again, the candidates were drawn from the leadership of the UCC, as Hirsh faced a challenge from 40 year-old UCC board president Robert O’Rourke. The election pitted two men who represented different aspects of the redevelopment coalition: Hirsh, the professional urban planner and lakefront co-op resident, versus O’Rourke, who was a business-oriented attorney living with his mother in Lakewood-Balmoral. Both candidates had impeccable credentials, all the way down to their World War II military service. O’Rourke countered Hirsh’s experience as a Signal Corps officer in North Africa and Italy with his own precocious command of a Navy submarine chaser in the Pacific. The independent candidacy of Clarence Lipnick complicated the race. Lipnick ran at the behest of the IPOA. His appearance on the ballot provided an option for voters who looked to use the election as a referendum on the Meltzer plan, which both Hirsh and O’Rourke not only supported but also jockeyed to claim credit for.

This time it was the Republicans who accused the incumbent of being a “do-nothing” alderman. Hirsh initially ran on his record alone, choosing not to directly disparage his challengers. A political ad disguised as a column in Lerner’s Sunday Star traced Hirsh’s experience with the South Side Planning Board through what it termed his centrality to the successes of Uptown redevelopment. The alderman outlined a public-

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private renewal ethic popular with planners like Jack Meltzer. “We are trying through all possible means to develop decent housing for everybody at a decent price, in a decent community. We are trying to do this through the technologies now available, working with the City and Federal governments. It is possible for private interests to work together with public bodies to achieve this kind of program.”

Another advertisement touted Hirsh’s efforts to expand services for the elderly and his “round the clock” work to arrange for vaccinations during a diphtheria outbreak. The incumbent earned endorsements from more prominent Uptown residents than he had in his role of a challenger four years earlier. Besides boosts from the Democratic machine and Lerner’s sympathetic reporting, Hirsh cited support from active UCC members Morris Braun and Reverend Gyomay Kubose.

Hirsh, however, could not overcome O’Rourke’s street-level efforts to raise voter turnout in reliable Republican precincts. The challenger received 49 percent of the vote. Independent Lipnicki earned a surprising 9 percent, leaving 41 percent for Hirsh. Again, a spatial split that coincided with the distribution of economic diversity emerged. Hirsh’s largest victory was in the precinct typified by six-flat conversions in the south-central section of Sheridan Park, where he ran up 72 percent of the vote to O’Rourke’s 13 percent and Lipnicki’s 15 percent. Other strong showings for Hirsh included precincts covering the single-family homes of Castlewood Terrace, the dense apartment sections near the Wilson station, and the long blocks of Kenmore and Sheridan stretching north

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and south of Buena Circle. O’Rourke’s base in Lakewood-Balmoral, however, provided near-landslide results. The Republican also secured 84 percent of the vote from the Edgewater Beach Apartments and a stunning 93 percent in the precinct that straddled Foster Avenue just east of the intersection with Clark Road on the ward’s western boundary. Lipnicki registered at least 15 percent of the vote in several precincts that Hirsh carried easily in 1959. The precinct that included the Segregated Block and one of the major concentrations of low-income southern whites gave Lipnicki his second highest returns: 30 percent went for the independent, 44 percent selected the Democrat, and 27 percent opted for the Republican. Lipnicki’s best results—41 percent—came from the precinct in which he kept his home, which consisted entirely of a Marine Avenue co-op completed in 1962.32

The February election ensured a run-off between Hirsh and O’Rourke, thanks to Lipnicki’s surprising success that held the Republican just under 50 percent. That Lipnicki and the IPOA eventually endorsed Hirsh gave much optimism to the incumbent. Unlike the first round, the April run-off race surpassed the 1959 election in terms of acrimony. Like Allen Freeman before him, O’Rourke accused ward Democrats of suspicious voter registration tactics in low-rent Uptown.” O’Rourke made particularly explosive charges regarding Hirsh’s campaigning in the low-income precinct of Kenmore Avenue south of Buena Circle. The challenger described a “lottery” operated by a Hirsh precinct worker that offered cash prizes for voters who most closely guessed the margin

32 The official vote tally was: O’Rourke 6202, Hirsh 5332, Lipnick 1176. Precinct vote totals were tabulated from the election returns from the 48th ward for the March 1963 citywide election held in the Metropolitan Reference Collections, Harold Washington Library Center, Chicago. Corresponding ward-level precinct maps are at IRAD, NEIU, Chicago.
of Hirsh’s upcoming victory. The worker, according to O’Rourke, supplied directions on how to vote for Hirsh to lottery entrants. As in the 1959 election, Hirsh unleashed a flurry of publicity as the vote neared. The alderman heightened the race’s intensity just days before election day, when he accused O’Rourke campaigners of distributing anti-Semitic flyers. Hirsh, through his bulldog campaign manager Frank McCallister, claimed that illegally-placed O’Rourke posters cost the city $200 per week to remove. Hirsh also appropriated O’Rourke’s practice of questioning the legitimacy of voter registrations. A Hirsh advertising supplement in the Edgewater-Uptown News covered the gamut of the alderman’s accomplishments. One story presented Hirsh as a man of even the most downtrodden people. The item specifically recounted the alderman’s role in combatting the recent diphtheria scare in Uptown’s crowded apartments.

Ald. Hirsh was the big man behind the scenes, the man who got people over to the Welfare Center on Kenmore to get their shots. When Ald. Hirsh went to the Center, he saw more than 1,000 people lined up to get their shots, most of them people that he had told to get over and get them. “There’s Alderman Hirsh!” people were saying, and dozens crowded around him to thank him for notifying them of the danger. One woman with her 4-year old daughter told a reporter, “That’s our alderman Morris Hirsh. I guess he doesn’t ever sleep. We can count on him. I remember once he gave one of my daughter’s friends a quarter so she could go to the movies. He’s a wonderful man.”

With impeccable city planning bona fides, the support of the Daley Machine, a sympathetic endurance of alleged prejudice, and the image of a throw-back paternalistic man of the people, it seemed that Hirsh might rally past O’Rourke.


However, O’Rourke carried the 48th ward with 58 percent of the vote in a turnout that exceeded the 1959 election. Appearances on Hirsh’s behalf by Mayor Daley and liberal U.S. Senator Paul Douglas were not enough to retain the seat.\(^{36}\) One Uptown political pundit attributed O’Rourke’s victory to aggressive street-level campaigning, which held down Hirsh’s margin of victory in Democratic precincts.\(^ {37}\) Citywide, Mayor

\(^{36}\) “Big Guns at Public Rally for Ald. Hirsh Monday,” The Sunday Star, March 17, 1963. The Metropolitan Collections staff has not been able to locate precinct-level election results for the April election for the 48th ward.

\(^{37}\) Robert Lerner, “Politix,” The Sunday Star, April 7, 1963. Lerner—son of founding editor Leo Lerner— noted that former alderman Allen Freeman maintained a strong patronage army from his days in office, which served O’Rourke well. Lerner particularly marveled at the head of the ward’s Young Republicans, who challenged the registration and get-out-the-vote work of a Democratic precinct captain known for distributing food to low-income renters.
Daley’s forces recovered well from the 1962 bond vote rebuke, and proved the bond defeat to be more of a protest than revolt. Uptown voters, however, continued to drift away from the increasing power of city hall and the Democratic Party in Chicago. The northern frontier of Uptown was becoming a conservative stronghold. Forty-eighth ward voters went for Lyndon Johnson in larger numbers than the national electorate: 64 percent voted for Johnson in Uptown, compared to 61 percent nationwide. Yet, extending the trend that dated to at least 1959, voters in the single-family homes of Lakewood-Balmoral departed from the rest of the ward. Republican candidate Barry Goldwater won several northern Uptown precincts—some by margins as high as four-to-one—and was close in several others.\footnote{48th Ward Precinct Totals, \textit{Edgewater Uptown News}, November 10, 1964.}

The American Opinion Library—affiliated with the archconservative John Birch Society—opened just two blocks from Uptown’s northern border. After several confrontational flyers touting Birch ideas appeared in Lakewood-Balmoral and along Broadway, a library representative responded to critics, “We are just a group of patriotic Americans who are tired of having this liberal talk shoved down our throats.”\footnote{Peter Donaghue, “Birch Type Mail on the North Side,” \textit{Edgewater Uptown News}, August 25, 1965.}

Although the new alderman was no less responsible for or supportive of Uptown redevelopment than his predecessor, the rebuke of Daley’s preferred candidate left renewal plans—once again—uncertain. Morris Hirsh opted to stay in Uptown after his defeat, but became inactive in redevelopment efforts. His aggressive campaign manager, Frank McAllister, angrily resigned from the UCC after accusing board members of
undermining Hirsh’s campaign. The liberal wing of Uptown redevelopment looked to be on the way to exile.\textsuperscript{40}

**Kemper Insurance: Fight or Flight?**

Actions by the economic-minded institutions that funded the UCC, as with those of the liberal urbanists, brought challenges to the UCC’s effectiveness in the early 1960s. No entity funded the UCC in the commission’s early years greater than corporate behemoth Kemper Insurance. Company founder James S. Kemper’s early career in insurance was similar to that of W. Clement Stone’s. He entered the field as a junior field clerk at age 18. In 1912 Kemper organized the first group insurance for a lumberman’s union, thus establishing the official name of his company through 1960—Lumberman’s Mutual Insurance Company. Like Stone, Kemper crafted innovative policies that grew the company into a nationwide corporation worth millions, expanding even during the Depression. Two unique Kemper practices particularly spurred the boom. The company was the first to aggressively market automobile insurance. Kemper also fully disclosed its financial investments, which increased investor and customer confidence in the company. Kemper outgrew its Loop headquarters in the late-1920s and looked to the new, abundant, and less expensive floor space in booming Uptown. The company signed a rare 20-year lease in a majestic 1926 office building on the corner of Sheridan and Kenmore. The eight-story building was rivaled in grandeur only by the Uptown Theatre and the Uptown National Bank. The L-shaped tower contained ground-floor retail space fronted by two-story, arched windows. Ornate cream-colored terra cotta framed the windows of

\textsuperscript{40}Eugene Matanky, UCC president, to Frank McAllister, April 26, 1963. UCC, General Correspondence, News Releases and Related Materials, Correspondence from Binders, March-April 1963. UCC Collection, CHM.
the office space above. The building so well suited Kemper that the family purchased it outright in 1939.41

James Kemper, who lived near the stately distant suburb of Barrington, exceeded even Stone in support of the Republican Party. As president of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, he cautioned against American armament on the eve of World War II, and testified before Congress in favor of the 1941 “Dictator Bill” that proposed to limit presidential powers. Kemper served as treasurer of the Republican National Committee during the Truman years. He was a close ally of senator Everett Dirksen, and served on Robert Taft’s presidential campaign committee in 1952. President Eisenhower appointed Kemper ambassador to Brazil, despite supporting his conservative primary opponent. Kemper resigned from the post in 1955, after angering the country’s powerful coffee industry. Kemper returned to Chicago, where he struck up an unlikely friendship with Richard J. Daley. He remained active in politics, becoming one of Barry Goldwater’s most significant supporters in the urban Midwest.42

Mark Kemper, James’ brother and president of the company’s investment operations, became a charter board member for the UCC in 1955. Yet the Kemper family and executives from their company did not become active with UCC projects. When


compared to Combined Insurance and the local banks, Kemper was content to support Uptown redevelopment plans through funding. This financial support was significant, particularly in securing Meltzer Associates, as Kemper’s contributions far outpaced that of any other organization.\footnote{Kemper pledged $6,000 in 1960, in its initial installment earmarked for Meltzer and Associates. Kemper’s contribution to the UCC fell to $1,000 in 1963—a common decrease for contributors, after the completion of the “Plan for Uptown.” List of Donors. UCC, General Correspondence, News Releases and Related Materials, Correspondence from Binders, December 1962 to February 1963. UCC Collection, CHM.}

Kemper Insurance seemed secure in Uptown through the 1950s. The company kept its headquarters in Uptown even after becoming a major player in Loop real estate, with the purchase of the Civic Opera building and its vast office space in 1948. Yet, as redevelopment plans stalled, Kemper began to consider relocation options. “Uptown: A Planning Report,” with its dream of a gleaming Insurance Center and vast parking lots, temporarily eased Kemper anxiety about the low-income population that ringed its opulent headquarters. Alderman O’Rourke and Monsignor Egan joined forces to try to convince Kemper to stay in Uptown. O’Rourke optimistically wrote to Egan about a surge in interest in the UCC among Kemper junior executives, and even a “reversal of fortune” regarding company attitudes towards low-income southern white migrants.\footnote{Robert O’Rourke to John Egan, March 30, 1965. John J. Egan Papers, Uptown Chicago Commission, University of Notre Dame Archives (UNDA), Notre Dame, Indiana.} Yet concerns persisted for Kemper. Complaints about “dubious characters” around Kemper headquarters prompted the UCC’s Dennis Johnson to urge Commander Fahey of the
Town Hall Police District to direct a crackdown on loitering. Fahey’s patrolmen obliged, arresting “over 300 Indians and [giving them] 15 to 20 days on the ‘farm.’”

Singling out low-income American Indians as the source for corporate anxiety was a long way from the role that Indians played in the idealized cultural diversity of liberal urbanism, only five years earlier. Indians were an important promotional aspect for the Uptown Folk Fair’s short run, when Studs Terkel introduced powwow dancers to great fanfare. Yet, the Indian population of Uptown grew past the point of manageability for economic and social elites in Uptown. Many of the first Indian migrants to Uptown settled in the neighborhood upon participating in the federal Bureau of Indian Affairs relocation program. In 1953 the BIA instituted an aggressively incentivized program to support temporary relocation from reservations to cities. This initiative bolstered the federal government’s intent to “terminate” the unique institutional and cultural character of American Indian reservations. Exposure to urban ways of work and life, the reasoning went, would spur assimilation and allow Indians to partake in the spoils of a booming postwar economy. BIA field offices recruited rural Indians to commit to several months of urban job training, in exchange for transportation and housing. Although over 12,000 Indians nationwide participated in the relocation program through 1957, the initiative was wrought with problems. Institutional support for the migrants was inefficient and inconsistent. The job training often only resulted in unskilled, vulnerable positions. Many relocation offices instituted paternalistic and demeaning surveillance of relocatee.

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45 Dennis Johnson, UCC Executive Director, to Frank Kercheval, Kemper Insurance Company, August 21, 1963. UCC General Correspondence, News Releases and Related Materials, Correspondence from Binders, May to July 1963. UCC Collection, CHM. Johnson was UCC executive director for a short time after Kruse’s departure.
behavior. As such, up to 75 percent of the program participants left the city before completing their education or vocational training. Those who remained were left with little social or economic support, and filtered into low-rent and underserved areas like central Uptown.46

Colonies of BIA relocatees in Uptown attracted an even greater wave of newcomers. Of the estimated 16,000 American Indians who lived in Chicago in 1970, up to 10,000 lived in the Uptown—said at the time to be the densest population of American Indians in North America. Uptown was among the most visible of neighborhoods that reflected the nationwide urbanization of American Indians: Between 1950 and 1970 the number of American Indians living in urban areas skyrocketed from 56,108 to 355,738. These astonishing numbers translate to 16 percent and 45 percent, respectively, of the total Indian population.47 The city of Chicago scrambled to address the issue, by including American Indians in the various “newcomer” pilot programs in the late-1950s. Two private organizations in Uptown became dedicated to easing Indian adjustment to Chicago, through social services and the promotion of tribal cultural activities. The American Indian Center (AIC), founded in 1953, moved into an empty Masonic Temple just across from the Sheridan Park. St. Augustine Episcopal Church dedicated nearly all of its social programs to Indian migrants, building upon the reservation missionary experience of the parish’s Father John Powell. The police sweep of low-income and


homeless Indians near Kemper Insurance was severe enough to draw public condemnation from the AIC and Father Powell.48

Policing the Uptown sidewalks proved insufficient for Kemper Insurance. In March 1965, a Kemper representative announced at a meeting of UCC backers that the company would no longer contribute to redevelopment efforts. Kemper, instead, made plans to leave Uptown. An internal survey, obtained by O’Rourke, of employee thoughts about working in Uptown proved particularly damning. They pointed towards the depreciated state of the building, and its lack of air-conditioning and parking. One worker declared the area, “a disgrace to our organization,” and others described Uptown as unsafe and unsanitary and complained about walking around “passed-out drunks in the morning.” Another concluded, “It is imperative that our company move from this decayed, dilapidated, rundown neighborhood before one of the employees is seriously injured, killed, or attacked.”49 Despite sustained pleas from O’Rourke, Egan, and Mayor Daley, in 1965 Kemper announced in its employee newsletter plans to leave the Uptown by 1969.50 The company, though behind schedule, fulfilled this promise by relocating to suburban Long Grove in 1971.

The third of the major Uptown insurance corporations, the Benevolent Association of Railroad Employees (BARE), left Uptown in 1964. BARE had a history similar to that of Combined and Kemper. After incorporating in a one-desk office in

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49 O’Rourke to Egan, March 30, 1965. Uptown Chicago Commission, Egan Collection, UNDA.

Chicago’s Loop, BARE used profits from its rapid expansion to buy a headquarters building in Uptown. By 1938 BARE was paying out annual assets $5 million by 1944—after starting in 1913 with just $6,757 in assets. In 1963, BARE renamed itself Benefit Life Insurance Company and, one year later, relocated to a new office building on the border of Chicago and Evanston. Benefit Life Insurance stayed at 1771 W. Howard Street until 1989, when it moved to Lake Forest, Illinois and once again renamed itself as Trustmark.\textsuperscript{51}

The Kemper saga unfolded during already trying times for the UCC. The commission was without an executive director from October 1963 to February 1964. The board seemingly righted the ship with the hiring of Lee Privatiner, a highly accomplished urban planner whose background combined that of Albert Votaw, Morris Hirsh, and Jack Meltzer. But Privatiner resigned three months into his tenure, explaining, “My skills have never been suited for a ‘holding program.’”\textsuperscript{52} The stalled Uptown redevelopment broke in 1965, when the city—finally, after a decade of lobbying—granted Uptown designation as a conservation area. The declaration came with the caveat that the city had no desire or resources to pursue the type of massive clearance specified in the shelved Meltzer plan. Instead, the city focused on the 40-acre Section 314 de-conversion demonstration called

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{51} “Trustmark Celebrating 100 Years,” \textit{Lake County News-Sun}, March 3, 2013.
\item \textsuperscript{52} Privatiner came to the UCC from the Chicago Community Renewal Program. He was a former editor for the \textit{Hyde Park Herald}, where he was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize for his reporting on urban renewal. He held a graduate degree urban sociology and social psychology from the University of Chicago. “Renewal Expert To Be Commission Director for Uptown Chicago,” \textit{Chicago Tribune}, June 21, 1964; “Director of Uptown Quits,” \textit{Chicago Tribune}, September 27, 1964.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
for by the proposal. The plan called for the city to purchase a square-block area of four- and six-flats on Lawrence Avenue and Lakeside Place east of Broadway, using a federal subsidy. The city would then oversee the demolition of five of the buildings and deconversion of the others. Once completed, the renovated buildings would be sold on the private market.

Figure 12, 13, 14. Lakeside Place and Lawrence Avenue Urban Renewal Demonstration Site. National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), Still Records Branch, Housing and Urban Development Photographic Files, Urban Renewal, Chicago. College Park, MD


Two years passed between the first city approval of the project and a response from Washington. When that response finally came, Uptown urban renewal was yet again delayed. Federal Department of Urban Renewal officials returned the Uptown proposal, after questioning the project’s focus and financial specifics. Washington deemed the expected mortgage for the renovated apartments to be “arbitrary,” and that the proposal neglected to indicate the income level of the area. Even more damaging, a federal official summarized the report for Department of Urban Renewal chief Robert Weaver: “The Chicago people do not appear to have given much thought to a key part of our objective—that is, to rehabilitate for the people in the area.” One-hundred and twelve units would be lost, with all people being displaced. A playground and a parking garage would replace the five buildings slated for demolition.55

Through the mid-1960s, the Uptown redevelopment effort had accomplished a record of continual press releases, an unrealized social service initiative for newcomers, a lightly-attended annual street festival, political end-fighting, a scattering of eye-catching Modernist buildings, and a $60,000 plan for massive clearance that led to city support for a limited model for apartment de-conversion. Meanwhile, the low-income population swelled and many landlords deferred maintenance, expecting a windfall from the urban renewal that redevelopers claimed to be on the horizon. The major gamble on Meltzer Associates and urban planning ‘from above’ had limited immediate tangible impacts, otherwise. Uptown redevelopment proved to be a challenge even for the most optimistic and well-financed boosters.

55 P.N. Bernstein to Robert Weaver, 1967. (NARA), Still Records Branch, Housing and Urban Development Photographic Files, Urban Renewal, Chicago. College Park, MD.
The liberal urbanism that embraced social diversity and rehabilitation over clearance fared little better in providing answers to the Uptown riddle. Even the maven of urban heterogeneity, Jane Jacobs, dismissed Uptown. In her landmark *Death and Life of Great American Cities*—without providing the name—the writer described Uptown as a doomed “dull gray neighborhood.” She depicted the neighborhood in terms of the sensationalist journalism of Norma Lee Browning and Al Votaw.

In Chicago, you can see neighborhoods only a block and two blocks in from the lakefront parkland, far from the settlements of minority groups, well endowed with greenery, quite enough to make one’s flesh creep, and composed of substantial, even pretentious buildings. On these neighborhoods are literal signs of desertion. “For Rent,” “To Let,” “Vacancy,” “Rooms for Permanent and Transient Guests,” “Guests welcome,” “Sleeping Rooms,” “Furnished Rooms,” “Unfurnished Rooms,” “Apartments Available.”...The beneficiaries of this particular impasse, at least for the moment, turn out to be the immigrating hillbillies, whose economic choice is small and whose familiarity with city life is even smaller. It is a dubious benefit they receive: inheritance of dull and dangerous neighborhoods whose unfitness for city life finally repelled residents more sophisticated and competent than they.56

The economic and cultural diversity of Uptown nettled even the messiah of conserving the “messiness” and “street ballet” of dense, heterogeneous, aging neighborhoods.

However, shifts in the perception of poverty, justice, and power were taking hold among many. Grassroots resistance to urban renewal and displacement was relatively slow to develop in Uptown. Yet, just as redevelopers celebrated their long-awaited but limited recognition from the city, another collection of newcomers were filtering into Uptown. For the most part, neither the middle-class and elites nor the low-income residents apathetic to redevelopment had seen anything like these migrants. Related, but

often, contrasting ideals about diversity and the control of space would define the rest of the 1960s in Uptown.
CHAPTER SEVEN
THE WAR ON POVERTY AND THE NEW LEFT IN A COMMUNITY ON THE BRINK

On June 23, 1965, over 800 people sat in the venerable auditorium at Preston Bradley’s Peoples Church. Against the backdrop of Louis Grell’s “Keep Looking Up,” leaders and allies of the Uptown Chicago Commission (UCC) presided over the group’s tenth annual meeting. Audience members included Monsignor John Egan, deep in his efforts to convince Kemper Insurance to keep its headquarters in Uptown. Urania Damofle, the advertising entrepreneur and erstwhile aspiring savior of the Uptown Folk Fair, waited to be officially announced as a new UCC board member. James Kemper, Jr. introduced Mayor Richard J. Daley, an act that showed that Kemper Insurance’s retreat to the suburbs was still no done deal. Daley struck an optimistic note. He evoked a rather metaphysical diversity capable of spurring Uptown renewal, proclaiming, “Why live in Uptown? Because it is the greatest community in religious leadership, because it is a place where all kinds of persons can live in harmony, and because it has good transportation, beaches, parks, and the third largest shopping area in the city.”\(^1\) Daley promised a prompt start to the modest but long-awaited 90-acre urban renewal demonstration project—once approval came from Washington, DC. The meeting

\(^1\) Daley’s enthusiasm got in the way of facts. Uptown had long-ago fallen far from the third-largest shopping area. He also failed to note that the UCC leaders considered a major reason for the lack of renewal progress to be his administration’s almost decade-long refusal to grant Uptown conservation status.
program and Daley’s tone were consistent with the message sounded by Uptown redevelopers over the last decade.

Two of Daley’s comments, however, indicated shifting ground in the discourse of redevelopment and community. He noted that the new Montrose Urban Progress Center—a federally-funded project—would increase programs for Uptown’s low-income and elderly residents. Then, in a line that brought great applause, the mayor sharply criticized protestors outside the meeting who, “attempted to take the laws into their own hands.” The combination of redevelopment advocacy and the Great Society’s War on Poverty also brought new actors: the New Left. The Sixties had arrived in Uptown.²

The UCC had fought for urban renewal for over a decade with limited results. For all their efforts, redevelopers still seemed to be “casing about in a vacuum,” as Ed Dobbeck complained to Mayor Daley in 1958. The electoral defeat of urban renewal bonds, the cracking of the liberal urbanist-growth redevelopment consensus, a carousel of UCC executive directors after the controversial departure of Al Votaw, and problems in Washington over the city-approved clearance and rehabilitation demonstration program all undermined the enthusiasm of the tenth UCC annual meeting celebration. As redevelopers feared, the Uptown poverty problem seemed to them to only worsen. Landlords continued to haphazardly and illegally subdivide apartments, and low-income “newcomers” continued to fill them. Rumors of impending clearance only served to de-incentivize improvements, as property owners preferred to wait for eminent domain

settlements. Yet, even greater challenges were on the way. Poverty, more than growth-friendly redevelopment, took center stage in Uptown after 1965.

Figure 15. Flyer for the UCC 10th Annual Meeting (1965). Peggy Terry Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society.
New Approaches to Poverty in Uptown and Beyond

National and local obsession with the southern and Appalachian white migrant poverty persisted through the mid-1960s. *The Reporter*, a middlebrow arts and society monthly journal, published Hal Bruno’s inelegantly titled but representative article “Chicago’s Hillbilly Ghetto” in June 1964. Bruno followed the general journalistic formula. He introduced white migrant poverty in relation to that of the much more often discussed black migrant, noting the irony along the way. Painting with the broadest brush, Bruno then depicted white southerners and Appalachians in Chicago as tragically maladjusted and rudderless: “They are undernourished, uneducated, unwanted, and unable to cope with a society that does not understand them or their ways. Lacking leadership, organization, or political power, these descendants of the pioneers are a lost people, exploited by landlords, employers, and merchants who put them in bondage to the time-payment plan. With bitterness, some eventually realize that they have landed at the bottom of the pecking order, in the spot occupied by the Negro back home.”

However, Bruno’s exposé revealed shifts in depicting Uptown poverty. While he portrayed the neighborhood as predominantly southern white, Bruno also observed that the newcomers shared the “shabby neighborhood” with a growing number of Puerto Ricans, Mexicans, American Indians, and a few African Americans. Legal troubles were

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3 *The Reporter* was a moderately liberal collection of commentary that covered domestic and international politics, literature, and culture. “Chicago’s Hillbilly Ghetto” appeared alongside an update on the conflict in Cyprus, a critique of mass media advertisements, and several reviews of novels and non-fiction books.

said to arise largely out of contrasts between southern rural and northern urban legal standards, as much as inherent or intractable cultural backwardness. Bruno also noted that most of the “hillbillies” were not from mountainous regions, at all, and that native Chicagoan fears of southern and Appalachian white violence were based much more on prejudice than fact. Alderman O’Rourke, who Bruno quoted at length, also expressed an approach more complex than earlier ruminations on white poverty in Uptown. The Republican acknowledged that the migrants shunned civic duty, but attributed problems such as low voter turnout to the difficulty in meeting residency requirements among the mobile lower-working class. O’Rourke considered much of the supposed maladjustment to urban life to be a “one generation problem” that could be remedied through a concerted intervention in to the lives of migrant children through schools and neighborhood youth programs. Unfortunately, wrote Bruno, middle-class “old settler” parents were removing their children from public schools, fearful of newcomer influences.

In conclusion, Bruno pointed towards the Johnson administration’s commitment to addressing poverty in Appalachia, the ‘source’ of Uptown’s troubles. He gave founding UCC member and Combined Insurance executive William Meyers the last word.

These people are coming here, now, and they face a spiritual and cultural isolation as well as a physical isolation. You have to admire them because they’ve had the guts to move from places where their families lived for more than a hundred years. Their ancestors were the first pioneers in this
country, and they certainly have as much right as anyone to share in the American Dream—whether it’s “down home” or in Chicago.⁵

Even with qualifications such as this, the journalistic obsession with poor white migrants was alive and well, still depicting southerners and Appalachians as maladjusted and suffering, while also tracing virtually all of Uptown’s problems as a product of that phenomenon.⁶

Uptown’s low-income residents—both migrant and established Chicagoans—certainly experienced a general decline in stable employment prospects by the mid-1960s. While newcomers recalled readily available and relatively well-paying jobs awaiting them in the 1950s, surveys, statistics, and anecdotes from the mid-1960s showed otherwise.⁷ Between 1959 and 1963, the number of southern and Appalachian white migrants in Chicago who sought unemployment benefits nearly doubled.⁸ One 1966

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⁸ Even with this sharp increase, the percentage of Chicago public aid recipients with southern or Appalachian white heritage remained miniscule. Only 630 public aid recipients in Chicago were white southerners or Appalachians in 1959. The number grew to 1,040 in 1963. The report concluded that Appalachians and southern whites on assistance posed “no great problem” for the Cook County Public Assistance Department. Cook County Department of Public Aid, “The Southern Appalachian Migrant on Public Aid in Cook County: A Follow-up Study (Chicago: Cook County Public Department of Aid, 1963). Municipal Reference Collection, Harold Washington Library Center (HWLC), Chicago.
study set the Uptown unemployment rate at 27 percent among those seeking work; with those no longer seeking work included, the rate soared to 47 percent. Only 39 percent of adults in Uptown held fulltime jobs. The survey found little correlation between length of time in Chicago and employment.9

Low-skilled manual laborers bore the brunt of the cooling of Chicago’s manufacturing sector in the early-1960s. With the casualization of this labor market came an explosion of temporary day-labor employment agencies in Uptown. Unemployed men lingered in the waiting rooms of firms with names like Manpower, Inc., and Readyman, hoping to be selected for stints in factories and construction projects of all sizes. Day labor agencies exploited the temporary workers through a seemingly infinite schedule of fees. For example, most agencies promised only the lowest of wages, while deducting a fee for transportation to the job and another for cashing the paycheck at the end of the day. Other agencies directed laborers to an affiliated tavern to cash checks—often a certain recipe for spending the entire day’s meager pay. Furthermore, day laborers were also often required to sign an agreement that prevented them from seeking permanent jobs at sites at which they worked as temporary hands. Day labor agencies also provided high-interest, one-day loans.10

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10 For an extensive first-hand account of day labor agency practices in mid-1960s Uptown, see Todd Gitlin and Nancy Hollander, Uptown: Poor Whites in Chicago, 90-93.
The demographics of poverty were shifting in Uptown. Many able-bodied migrants continued to scratch together enough to be considered *arrivistes* to the stable working-class, even as the constricted labor market increased the likelihood of chronic unemployment and underemployment for the aged, alcoholic, or disabled. The low-income, poor, and indigent population of Uptown was also undergoing a steady ‘recoloring’ process. In 1960, only the census tract that contained the Segregated Block was more than one percent African American. Blacks broke the color line in central Uptown in the 1960s. By 1970 five of eleven Uptown census tracts were at least 2 percent African American. The area of the “segregated block” rose from 4 percent to 17 percent black. But the African American Uptown population was not just concentrating. The black population of areas bordering the Segregated Block to the north rose from less than one percent to 4 percent and 8 percent. The black population west of this section of new black population grew from less than one percent in 1960 to more than five percent in 1970. The color line held in middle-class Lakewood-Balmoral, however. The black population in northwest Uptown remained well-below one percent.

The Hispanic population grew at an even greater pace. By 1970, 21 percent of the residents of southeast Uptown claimed Spanish as their mother tongue. Sections stretching west and south of this area were between eight and 18 percent Hispanic.

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11 Sociologist Edwin Harwood, who wrote a University of Chicago dissertation based on his participant-observation of Uptown’s low-income white population in the mid-1960s, argued that the economy provided migrants ample opportunity to enter the stable working class. He faulted social workers and community actors for underestimated southern white rates of adjustment. Harwood concluded that reformers and social workers conflated the poor living conditions of migrants with an imagined poor economic adjustment. Harwood, “Work and Community among Urban Newcomers,” 54-55, 109.
Although the low-income southern white population continued to typify much of central Uptown, migration from the south and Appalachia slowed after 1965. No census tract recorded greater than seven percent of its residents as having lived in the South in 1965. Poverty accompanied the racial diversification of Uptown. The areas with the highest number of African Americans, Hispanics, and southern migrants had poverty levels between 16 and 31 percent by 1970. Conversely, Lakewood-Balmoral, Edgewater Beach, and Buena Park recorded poverty levels of four percent, eight percent, and four percent, respectively. The citywide percentage of families earning below the poverty line in 1970 was ten percent.\textsuperscript{12}

The persistence of unemployment and perceived blight in places like Uptown led many across the nation to reevaluate the causes and remedies for poverty. This postwar ‘rediscovery’ of poverty was not solely a phenomenon of New Frontier social engagement. Before then, the recession of 1957-1958 gave cause to liberal attempts to coordinate a national anti-poverty program. Illinois U.S. senator and University of Chicago-trained economist Paul Douglas pushed through a bill in 1958 that would have created a comprehensive job creation program aimed at “pockets” of poverty in Appalachia and selected inner-cities. Anti-tax sentiment, signs of economic recovery, and Eisenhower’s aversion to anything approaching a second New Deal led the President to

veto to bill.\textsuperscript{13} The conceptualization of poverty pockets paralleled the work of several intellectuals, especially that of John Kenneth Galbraith in his widely-read book \textit{The Affluent Society} (1958). Galbraith acknowledged the overall reduction of the number of people living in poverty since 1940, yet concluded that those left behind in the age of general prosperity indicated a potential crisis for American democracy.\textsuperscript{14}

Beginning in the mid-1950s, sociologists and anthropologists also gave urban juvenile delinquency renewed notice. Some theorists moved away from individualized interpretations for deviant youth behavior, arguing instead that delinquency was a subcultural group reaction to disillusionment and anomie. Eisenhower signaled interest in pushing for a national anti-delinquency program, before retreating in the face of bureaucratic conflicts.\textsuperscript{15} A major grant in 1957 from the Ford Foundation resulted in Richard Cloward’s and Lloyd Ohlin’s influential \textit{Delinquency and Opportunity} (1960), which became a foundational text for the Kennedy and Johnson anti-poverty programs. A consensus emerged within the new generation of “poverty experts,” which emphasized extensive research and demonstration programs that addressed the behavior and

\textsuperscript{13} James T. Patterson, \textit{America’s Struggle against Poverty in the Twentieth Century} (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2000), 92-93.


\textsuperscript{15} Specifically, the long-established Children’s Bureau preferred a traditional case approach, in opposition to the upstart National Institute of Mental Health’s anthropological approach. Noel Cazenave, \textit{Impossible Democracy: The Unlikely Success of the War on Poverty Community Action Programs} (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007), 4.
immediate sociocultural surroundings of people left behind in the otherwise healthy national economy. As such, these sociologists, social workers, and grant administrators avoided deeper structural issues such as wealth distribution, job creation, and barriers to success built on racism and sexism. Cloward and Ohlin’s “opportunity theory,” for example, supposed that the ill effects of poverty could be ameliorated by restructuring the cultural environment of poverty that had formed in response to blocked opportunities.16

Opportunity theory had roots in prewar Chicago School conceptions of cultural maladjustment. Likewise, a renewed spatial focus on poverty on the part of social reformers revived earlier sociological interests in the importance of the neighborhood. The Ford Foundation’s Gray Areas Fund specifically aimed to apply intense social behavior reform to particular communities. The most prominent Gray Area program, the Mobilization for Youth (MFY), targeted New York City’s Lower East Side. Ohlin and Cloward partnered in the project with the Henry Street Settlement House—a representative of the classic social reform movement based on forging deep relationships with a community. MFY also introduced a new focus on the therapeutic potential of participation in social reform programs. The MFY sociologists believed that meaningful work by the poor in anti-poverty programs would alleviate anomie and anti-social responses to blocked opportunity.17

16 O’Connor, Poverty Knowledge, 128-130.

17 For a full account of the formation and eventual political controversy surrounding MFY, see Noel Cazenave, Impossible Democracy: The Unlikely Success of the War on Poverty Community Action Programs (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007).
Not all middle-class and elite commentators on poverty considered cultural and behavioral maladjustment to be the primary causes for distress among the poor. A vocal minority preferred to include critiques of structural issues in their assessments. These experts seemed initially vindicated by the 1957-1958 recession. However, as the economy recovered, governmental and foundation officials strongly favored behavioral approaches.¹⁸ Still, writers like Galbraith argued that economic growth would not alleviate postwar poverty. Although the era of “mass poverty” might be over, they reasoned, a new era of isolated but intractable poverty had commenced.¹⁹

No author more forcefully stated this position than Michael Harrington in his landmark book *The Other America* (1962). Harrington, a Jesuit-trained socialist who lived among the poor as an adherent to the Catholic Worker movement, introduced his structural critique in a 1959 *Commentary* article, “Our Fifty Million Poor: Forgotten Men of the Affluent Society.”²⁰ Harrington expanded the article into *The Other America*, by combining empirical data, sympathetic depictions of the poor, and a passionate call for public crusade against economic suffering. One of the most striking portions of the book described the plight of those caught in the “new slums.” Unlike the immigrant comradery and cohesiveness of “old slums,” the new slums brought together “failures, rootless people, those born in the wrong time, those at the wrong industry, and the minorities.”

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¹⁸ Patterson, *America’s Struggle against Poverty in the Twentieth Century*, 98.


The damaging effect of poverty went far beyond unemployment and even hunger: “The slum, with its vibrant, dense life hammers away at the individual. And because of the sheer, grinding, dirty experience of being poor, the personality, the spirit, is impaired. It is as if human beings dilapidate along with the tenements in which they live.”21

Harrington, like poverty experts who focused on sociocultural ‘maladjustment,’ still considered behavior to be the ultimate expression of economic distress. Yet he incorporated important analyses of macroeconomic structure to this perspective. Based on a Marxian belief that industrial automation would cause unemployment to skyrocket in the near future, Harrington offered his depiction of the “forgotten poor” as a harbinger for harder times for a greater share of the population.

Many of Harrington’s depictions of new slums seemed derivative from the sensational discourse on poor southern and Appalachian white migrants. Indeed, Harrington cited his own experience living near St. Louis’ “hillbilly ghetto.” His description of the neighborhood demonstrated that even the most progressive—at times radical—social reformers held profound cultural biases when it came to low-income white southern and Appalachian migrants. Some passages would have been interchangeable with the dismissive accounts of 1950s Uptown by redevelopers, journalists, and Jane Jacobs. Harrington painted an exotic but depressing picture: “As one walked along the streets in the late summer, the air is filled with hillbilly music from a hundred radios. There was a sort of loose, defeated gaiety about the place, the casualness

of a people who expected little. These were poor southern whites. In some ways, they resembled the stereotype of the happy-go-lucky Negro, and the truth in the description is about the same for both.”22 The similarities between the preexisting journalistic discourse and Harrington’s perspective on the new slums was no coincidence. In his Commentary article, he explicitly cited four recent examples of accounts of poverty that most directly influenced his initial interest in the topic. One example was none other than Albert Votaw’s “The Hillbillies Invade Chicago.”23

President John F. Kennedy’s discovery of The Other America remains a central component to the creation myth for the War on Poverty. With certainty, the President was moved by a lengthy and effusive review of Harrington’s book by Dwight Macdonald—Al Votaw’s mentor back in the seemingly ancient times of the late-1940s radical intellectual left.24 Yet, a sea change in the federal response to poverty was already underway. Kennedy’s politically-expedient 1960 election campaign through West Virginia shined a light on one of the nation’s most telling pockets of poverty. The 1960 CBS-airing of the documentary exposé about migrant workers, Harvest of Shame, brought so many phone calls to the White House that the switchboard failed. Unlike Eisenhower, Kennedy embraced federal funding for youth programs, in a move that led to the expansion of efforts like the MFY. Economists within the powerful Council of Economic Advisers

22 Harrington, The Other America, 99.


24 A standard account of Kennedy’s Harrington/Macdonald-induced epiphany in included in, Patterson, America’s Struggle against Poverty in the Twentieth Century, 97.
soon urged Kennedy to proactively formulate a coordinated “attack on poverty” as a signature element to any reelection campaign. Not long after taking the oath of office aboard Air Force One, Lyndon Johnson turned the emergent federal response into a priority, announcing an unconditional “war on poverty” in 1964.

In Uptown, an influx of entities corresponded with the rise in professional, philanthropic, and governmental interests in urban poverty. Initial efforts centered on job training and direct aid, and avoided structural critiques and solutions based on collective action or agency among low-income ‘clients.’ Instead, this type of poverty work focused on individual solutions for financial woes. In October 1964, for example, an alliance of community organizations and the Cook County Department of Public Aid opened an Uptown location for the Jobs through Better Skills (JOBS) program. Seventy-five presumably young men were selected for a year-long industrial training regimen, then given employment opportunities based on the job placement services from the funding institutions. Only unemployed high school drop-outs were eligible for the JOBS program. Most of those selected were paid $20 per week during the training period, while those deemed to be sole providers for their families received $40 per week.

While JOBS sought to aid unemployed and struggling young men regardless of their cultural background, other new services in Uptown focused attention solely on

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25 O’Connor, *Poverty Knowledge*, 139-140. For more about the President’s Committee on Juvenile Delinquency and Youth Crime, see Cazenave, *Impossible Democracy*, 49-61.

26 “New J.O.B.S. Center Opens in Uptown,” *Chicago Tribune*, October 11, 1964. Besides the Cook County Department of Public Aid, the sponsoring private agencies were the Chicago Boys Club, Chicago Youth Centers, and Chicago Area YMCA. A similar program, also known as JOBS, became a federally-funded War on Poverty program after 1965.
white southerners and Appalachians. Foremost among such programs was the Chicago branch of the Berea (Kentucky) University-based Council on the Southern Mountains (CSM). Founded in 1913, CSM faced periodic funding and membership shortages until Berea sociologist Perley Ayer successfully tapped into the sudden rise in availability of foundational funds in the 1950s. Attention to poverty pockets in Appalachian from Senator Paul Douglas’ commission and the Kennedy administration pushed CSM to the fore of that particular strain of the postwar poverty problem; a $250,000 grant from the Ford Foundation in 1962 fundamentally altered the council’s scope and mission. One new focus for CSM involved studying and explaining the migration of Appalachian whites to cities.27

Those in Uptown toiling over the neighborhood’s own migrant ‘crisis’ took notice. McCormick Boys Club leader Fred Lickerman and Combined Insurance Company executive and UCC founding member William Meyers attended a CSM workshop on urban Appalachians in 1962. Based on their enthusiastic reports, W. Clement Stone, the eccentric millionaire philanthropist and founder of Combined Insurance, pledged up to $5,000 in matching funds for CSM. Since the CSM promoted a style of social work that aimed to uplift individuals by instilling confidence and personal responsibility, the council aligned with Stone’s own self-help “Positive Mental Attitude” quasi-religion. Stone followed the matching grant with the sponsorship of the next urban migration workshop, and funded the travel of several Chicago social workers to the

27 Guy, From Diversity to Unity, 85-87.
meeting. For his efforts, the CSM dedicated to Stone an entire page of its journal, *Mountain Life and Work*. Perley Ayer lauded Stone:

“Behind every good thing in the world there are dreamers who are also doers and who simply believe that good causes cannot fail—they can only be deserted by the faint-of-heart. Without such “never say die” men, the best of us may despair just before the battle was won otherwise. Such a man is W. Clement Stone, president of four major insurance companies, author of *The Success System That Never Fails*, and philanthropist of Chicago, Illinois.”

One year later, the CSM opened its first non-southern location in a storefront on Kenmore Avenue in the heart of Uptown.

Two professional southern social workers staffed the Chicago CSM. Besides walk-in individual counseling, the council offered classes and workshops in the tradition of urban settlement houses. Two college students from the nearby Catholic women-only Mundelein College hosted events geared specifically towards children. In a departure from the strictly assimilationist ideas of Roscoe Giffin, another Berea College product, the Chicago CSM encouraged the retention of aspects of folk culture deemed capable of fostering confidence and community. For adults the council storefront hosted informational workshops on basic city living needs, as well as a “Success and Motivation” class. The success class was, of course, the brainchild of W. Clement Stone,

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who regularly descended from his wood-paneled executive office and walk-in humidor to personally teach sessions, imparting the sage wisdom of PMA.29

A Spatial New Left in Uptown

Exposés of poverty like *The Other America* made room for a variety of reactions. Liberal and non-structural efforts like JOBS and the Chicago Council of the Southern Mountains gained the first toehold in Uptown. However, a left flank formed in the emergent attack on poverty. A small but dedicated and eloquent group of students announced an approach that embraced the therapeutic aspects of social reform—for both activist and the disadvantaged—yet still made room for strident structural critique. Leftist intellectual radicalism slowly reemerged in the early-1960s, after over a decade of quiescence brought on by the flight to the middle by leaders like Daniel Bell, Dwight Macdonald, and, of course, Al Votaw. Mostly middle-class and elite white students gave voice to this New Left, particularly the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS). The SDS formed after becoming estranged from the ‘adult’ League of Industrial Democracy (LID), coming to view this Old Left organization fangless and liberal.30

The founders of the SDS convened a meeting in 1962, with a goal of stating their political philosophy and prescriptions for a more just society. Many had been involved in the southern black civil rights movement, working alongside direct action groups like the Southern Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and the Congress for Racial

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Equality (CORE). The document that the SDS meeting produced—*The Port Huron Statement*—combined structural socioeconomic critique, a diagnosis of middle-class white anomie, an anti-militarist plea, and a call to arms for a “movement” to eliminate economic suffering akin to the black freedom struggle. Although many at Port Huron held a Marxian perspective about the causes of inequality, they carefully avoided using rhetoric that would have pinned them to socialist or communist philosophical rigidity. Instead, the primary author of *The Port Huron Statement*, Tom Hayden, argued that social inequality originated from uneven access to power within the American democratic union. Vaguely, the statement advocated a mass movement that would result in “participatory democracy” for those left behind in the age of affluence.

Factionalism was seemingly built into the SDS. Much of the early activism of the New Left crystalized around issues on college campuses, such as free speech and the influence of the military in higher education. While some members wanted to embrace the role of student as a vehicle for protest, others argued that students must leave the campus and interact with disadvantaged populations. As Hayden succinctly stated, student activists should, “leave all that crap behind and get to where the people are.”

Many of the early SDS leaders were inclined to agree with Hayden. Richard Rothstein,

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for example, remembered the early SDS as “high on analysis, low on action.” In 1963 the national office created the Economic Research and Action Program (ERAP) to address the ‘new’ poverty. As the name suggested, the program designers envisioned a two-front approach: on the one hand, students would use their academic expertise to survey and create reports about poverty and, on the other hand, initiate socio-politically minded community organizing projects. ERAP, however, almost immediately came to be exclusively a community organizing operation. SDS established ten ERAP projects in the spring of 1964, each with just a handful of full-time organizers, minimal funding, and only the loosest of plans of action. All but one of the projects implicitly aimed to organize poor and unemployed whites. This approach was influenced by a growing pessimism about white activist involvement in the black freedom struggle.

The Chicago ERAP project became the most visible and impactful piece of the program, but only after significant adjustments. The first Chicago organizers, led by Joe Chabot, dubbed the project Jobs or Income Now (JOIN). The name, along with start-up funding from the United Auto Workers and the United Packing Workers Association (UPWA), exemplified JOIN’s initial focus on organizing unemployed and underemployed people. This connection to labor also made for relationships with surviving elements of the Old Left in Chicago. Several former well-known leftists agreed to serve

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33 Frost, *An Interracial Movement of the Poor*, 25.
on the JOIN advisory board, many of whom had been members of the Communist or Socialist Party and had been summoned before the House Un-American Activities Committee. Chabot stationed himself at various unemployment offices around the city, handing out leaflets to men applying for, or picking up, unemployment aid. JOIN asked those unhappy with the process (or amount) to attend meetings on the topic; the organizers sought to mobilize workers around the demand for $200 “old age benefits” and $60 per week unemployment.

The strategy found little success. Meeting attendance was small, and those in attendance were often drunk and disinterested in becoming organizers. Yet, Chabot and the dozen students volunteering on their summer break had generated a contact list of more than 1,000 unemployed men. Chabot and most of the other students left JOIN in the fall, and founding SDS member Richard Rothstein inherited the project. Rothstein and his small staff shifted tactics. He determined that men coming in and out of the unemployment office provided “no locus to organize around.” Traditionally, leftist organizing occurred in unions or the shop floor. Minus a contained recruiting field, JOIN had no hope for growing a base. Therefore, Rothstein and the staff sought a spatial solution. They divided the unemployment contact list by neighborhood. Since JOIN originally focused on the predominantly white North and Northwest Sides, the largest

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34 Pending permission from these people, or from their direct descendants, I cannot publish their names. The most complete advisory committee listing is in, “Investigator’s Report, Committee for Jobs or Income Now (JOIN), August 17, 1964, File 986, JOIN, 1964-1968, Chicago Police Department Red Squad (CPDRS) Files, CHM.

35 Assignment Planning Sheet on Committee for Jobs or Income Now, August 17, 1964. CPDRS Files, CHM. For a depiction of the early stage of JOIN in Chicago see, William Wingell, “Student Project to Aid the Jobless,” Presbyterian Life (October 1, 1964), 8-10.
stack of cards rose in the “Uptown” pile. The new JOIN concept was for a “community union,” where the unemployed and economically disadvantaged of a particular neighborhood would organize around shared grievances.\textsuperscript{36}

Uptown hosted the nation’s most direct spatial expression of the cultural and economic tenets of the New Left. Before ERAP and JOIN, SDS activists sought change on mostly a theoretical basis. SDS involvement in the southern black freedom struggle certainly had a grassroots component, as students worked to register voters or serve schools at the local level. But civil rights organizing in the south was often dispersed, and the focus trained upon political and economic goals that transcended space. With the concept of the community union, however, JOIN members settled on a contained field for organizing. Abstract political ideas could then be exercised in material space. JOIN organizers—both new to Uptown and local—thus became urbanists, addressing many of the same concerns as the liberal urbanists and growth-based redevelopers. Later in the 1960s, the New Left became best known for protests against the Vietnam War. Yet, in the interim between the southern civil rights push and the anti-war movement, the community union offered a tangible rallying point.

By October 1964 JOIN moved into a storefront on Ainsle Avenue, just to the north of the center of Uptown. What little JOIN organizers knew about Uptown seemed a perfect fit for the SDS ideology that favored the mobilization of poor and low-income whites in the North. Furthermore, the white southern and Appalachian predominance in

low-income Uptown fed into SDS aspirations of extending the black freedom struggle to the North, by undermining white backlash against the movement. This complex mission was more easily theorized than implemented. Familiarity with Uptown, for Rothstein and the JOIN students, consisted of only a list of names. Their first action was to gain competency in the institutional and social landscape of the community. Building off the contact list, the organizers distributed hundreds of surveys, “to really try and elicit the problems and feelings of the people in the neighborhood.” 37 Rothstein described how outside organizers feared appearing manipulative or prejudiced in the eyes of residents suspicious of poverty workers: “ERAP students were committed to the notion that poor people have always had the big decisions made for them, and the thought that the students, too, might be making decisions for the poor in the guise of helping them was enough to turn the hardest stomach. To many, the very existence of the organizer had paternalistic implications” 38 Befitting this belief that the poor should take an active role in organizing themselves, the few “indigenous” JOIN sympathizers in Uptown conducted many of the surveys.

JOIN benefitted from a drive among SDS leadership to decentralize ERAP. Always fearful of “hierarchicalism,” the national ERAP office disbanded in March 1965. Most of the national office members simply relocated to Uptown and incorporated their significant experience into JOIN. Among the most notable members of this influx was the

37 “Chicago: JOIN Project,” Studies on the Left 5 (Summer 1965), 111.

38 Rothstein, “A Short History of ERAP.”
former head of the national ERAP office, Rennie Davis. JOIN proved to be an important stop in Davis’ rise to prominence in the New Left. He was raised in a small town in northern Virginia, the son of John C. Davis, who served on President Truman’s Council of Economic Advisers. Rennie Davis started his career of activism as a student at Oberlin College, an institution with a well-established tradition of social progressivism and radicalism. While a graduate student at the University of Illinois, Davis joined the SDS chapter, along with budding film critic Roger Ebert. Once in Uptown, he pushed JOIN organizers to expand their recruitment efforts to include the chronically unemployed and ultra-poor. Davis’ thick-framed glasses, conservative haircut, and slight build underscored his intellectual intensity but belied a veneration of white working-class culture and masculine bravado.39

Uptown residents indicated to JOIN organizers an interest in tangible actions like affordable day care and the enforcement of regulations on day labor agencies. JOIN students, knowing that the city of Chicago had targeted Uptown for intense deployment of the War on Poverty, hoped to mobilize residents around a general displeasure with social institutions. Thus, tensions emerged between student organizer and indigenous conceptions of social and political change. JOIN would be defined, over the next four years, by the complex negotiation between middle-class sojourning students and low-income residents on the goals and tactics of the community organizing movement of the poor. The lines of dialogue in this negotiation were never so simple, however. Student organizers came from a variety of backgrounds and brought with them an array of

assumptions and aspirations based on previous experiences. Likewise, the diversity within the Uptown community gave rise to competing perspectives on social change.

Vivian Leburg was born in New York City to German-Jewish parents who fled the Nazis just before the outbreak of World War II. When her parents’ marriage ended, Leburg relocated to Los Angeles with her mother. Being Jewish, a daughter of separated parents, and personally affected by the Holocaust made Leburg feel from her earliest years often like an outsider in American society. Attending the racially-diverse Hollywood High School only heightened Leburg’s sensitivity to ‘others.’ When time came to select a college she accepted a scholarship to the University of California Berkeley, becoming the first in her family to pursue a college degree. Berkeley had gained an image of cultural and political rebellion even as early as 1963, when Leburg matriculated. This reputation attracted Leburg to Berkeley. She remembered, “I chose Berkeley because I knew that there was this political and social dynamism there. I wanted to get away from home, but I also wanted to throw myself into an environment like that. I don’t know if I thought myself as a rebel. I was looking for something. I wanted to enter the world.”

Leburg lived a challenging undergraduate life, partly due to necessity and partly due to willingness. She lived in a cooperative community, where she performed chores in exchange for room and board. Unlike many of her fellow students, she held down several

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part time jobs in order to support herself. One of her jobs, as a tutor, brought Leburg into contact with the low-income African American community in Oakland. She soon became active in the burgeoning civil rights movement in the Bay Area, first as a picketer of Berkeley and Oakland restaurants that did not hire blacks, then as a participant in the massive April 1964 sit-in at San Francisco car dealerships that refused to employ black salesmen. The latter act of civil disobedience ended with police officers dragging Leburg’s limp body out of the showroom, into a police wagon, and off to jail. Leburg spent much of the summer of her freshman year in court, coming out of the experience determined more than ever to make a difference. 41

The Berkeley Free Speech Movement, which erupted during the fall of 1964, only emboldened Leburg’s commitment to social justice. She volunteered to spend the summer of 1965 in Mississippi registering black voters as part of the effort to extend the 1964 Mississippi Freedom Summer, despite the dangers made apparent by the murder of three such activists in the state. Leburg was one of hundreds of local and outside organizers who spent ten days in jail not long after her arrival. Released, she went about registering voters, running a freedom school, and recruiting kids to integrate schools during the upcoming school year. Along the way, Leburg embraced grassroots

41 Rachel DuPlessis and Ann Snitow, *The Feminist Memoir Project: Voices from Women’s Liberation* (New York City: Three Rivers Press, 1998), 30-31. Over 100 arrests were made during the Auto Row sit-ins. Dr. Thomas Burridge, the leader of the protest, was sentenced to nine months in prison. For more about Bay Area civil rights protests of the mid-1960s, see Quintard Taylor, *In Search of the Racial Frontier: African Americans in the West, 1528-1990* (New York City: W.W. Norton and Company, 1999), 290-293.
community organizing as a practice that made real her convictions of racial and economic justice.\footnote{DuPlessis and Snitnow, \textit{The Feminist Memoir Project}, 31; WGBH and PBS, \textit{The Peoples Century: The Young Bloods}.}

As her Mississippi summer concluded, Leburg sensed a growing sentiment among many black activists that the presence of white students hindered the movement.\footnote{Frost, \textit{An Interracial Movement of the Poor}, 25. For more about the strains between white students and black local activists—particularly women—see, David Barber, \textit{A Hard Rain Fell: The SDS and Why It Failed} (Oxford, Mississippi: University of Mississippi Press, 2008), 100-105.} Furthermore, the CORE region in which she worked had become disorganized. Although the director urged her to stay, she suspected that the work would have been little more than as his secretary. She knew that her future as an activist was outside of the black South. Upon her return to Berkeley, she withdrew from school in order to pursue organizing fulltime, and worked in a startup ERAP project in Oakland alongside three other student and ex-student organizers. Conflicts between the organizers undermined the venture, so Leburg withdrew and sought another venue. Soon, she heard Richard Rothstein on a speaking tour stop in Berkeley. She was intrigued by his description of JOIN and, after visiting ERAP sites in Cleveland and Newark, she decided to move to Uptown and become a JOIN staff member. A new romantic relationship with Rothstein served as a motivating factor, too.\footnote{Interview with Vivian Leburg Rothstein, September 5, 2014.}

Like her fellow students and ex-students in JOIN, Vivian Leburg knew little about Uptown beyond its reputation as perhaps the nation’s most visible concentration of poor
white southern and Appalachian people outside of the South. Soon, she added to her knowledge Uptown’s growing racial diversity and the continual push for urban renewal by elites. Yet, nothing—even a summer in the rural Mississippi Delta—prepared her for the neighborhood’s infrastructural neglect and the grinding effects of poverty.

It was—very slummy. The buildings just stank. When it rained a lot, there were rats that would run through the street. You know, it was pretty bad. And on Wilson Avenue there were all these kind of flop houses were you could rent a cot for 25 cents a night, or something. One was called the “Iron Lung”—people called it that! There were a lot of alcoholics, mostly southern Appalachians. A lot of drinking—a tremendous amount of drinking.45

Leburg recognized that the community organizing tactics she learned as part of the black freedom struggle had limited potential in Uptown. In Mississippi, for example, outside organizers worked with preexisting black institutional figures such as ministers and community leaders. In Uptown—even among the culturally distinct white southern and Appalachian population—these established conduits for activism seemed altogether absent. Leburg and the JOIN organizers would need to first build a base of indigenous co-organizers.

Leburg was not the only alumnus of the southern civil rights movement in Uptown. Sandra Cason was born and raised in Victoria, Texas, near the Gulf Coast. Like Leburg, she quickly came to identify with outsiders: she had a single mother, and her upbringing was a great deal more liberal in politics and religion when compared to her peers. As an undergraduate at the University of Texas at Austin, Cason became active in

progressive campus organizations that pushed for desegregation in the area. After graduation she volunteered with SNCC in Atlanta, where she met and soon married Tom Hayden and became known as Casey Hayden. She, perhaps more than anyone, contributed to the *Port Huron Statement* a civil rights movement tone. Hayden arrived in Uptown in 1965, officially “on loan” from SNCC.  

Leburg, Hayden, and other women outside organizers identified a reliable and relatively stable segment of the Uptown population after all, through which they could build the beginnings of a movement: mothers on welfare. Thanks to a serious dedication to organizing efforts based on the will of the poor, JOIN found success in a realm that was never even considered by early ERAP leaders like Rennie Davis and Richard Rothstein. The gender dynamics of both the JOIN students and low-income Uptown mattered immensely. Even when men in JOIN occasionally showed interest in organizing women, the suspicions of husbands prevented any kind of meaningful interaction. Differences in attitudes about Uptown, for locals, also made for a generally more sympathetic audience for women organizers. Since the mid-1950s, surveys and anecdotes indicated that women migrants to Uptown had a greater interest in making Uptown their home, thus leading them to become more invested in improving their social condition. By the end of 1965, several local women were organizing alongside the students, and

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47 Evans, *Personal Politics*, 146-147.
even taking leadership positions within JOIN. These women made an indelible impact on the likes of Leburg.

They showed that if you got the right people involved, then they really could run their own organization. They could be the leaders and the spokespeople, and help develop strategy. There’s a difference between a bunch of college students coming in and figuring everything out themselves, and pulling together people who really don’t have the capacity. But they really had the capacity to lead.\textsuperscript{48}

Like the women student organizers, local women in JOIN found ways to combine their personal background and circumstances with social and political desires, resulting in some of the most important JOIN actions.

The local JOIN women also presented a multiracial diversity that departed from preconceived notions about the “hillbilly ghetto.” White, bouffant-coiffed, Arkansas native Virginia Bowers became active in JOIN in June 1966. Bowers fit the type of Uptown resident that organizers expected to politicize. At the time, she managed the converted six-flat building in which she lived. After a rat bit an infant, Bowers made yet another in a long line of complaints to the building owner. She contacted JOIN, unsatisfied with the owner’s response and recalling the numerous JOIN flyers and newsletters she had seen that decried landlord neglect. When some JOIN members moved to foment a rent strike in the building, the owner fired and evicted Bowers. Soon, she was recruiting other low-income women to activism and even writing articles for the JOIN newsletter, urging political action.

Did you poor people vote? Are you hillbillies like myself registered to vote? We at JOIN want to, in the future, run our own candidates in the 48\textsuperscript{th}

\textsuperscript{48} Interview with Vivian Leburg Rothstein, September 5, 2014.
ward. We will need your support when we are ready for this big step...This election was a protest against the Daley Machine and we should all have a part in it.49

Dovie Thurman was part of a wave of African Americans who moved to Uptown, as the neighborhood color line began to blur. Raised in St. Louis’ Pruitt-Igoe Homes, dependent on welfare, and with a congenital heart disease and a husband in Vietnam, Thurman knew both suffering and perseverance. Before moving to Uptown, she was unaware of the existence of poor white people, or that the injustices of public assistance guidelines could be challenged. Later in life, she described her first interaction with JOIN to her close friend Studs Terkel.

Me and my aunt...we went to apply for welfare. When we were down there, there was a lot of kids—young white kids—passing out flyers and leaflets and making a big noise around the welfare office. And I hadn’t ever seen that, because you didn’t buck-up at the system. This one guy [Rennie Davis] come up to the car...He gave us a leaflet...and I said I was going in to apply. So when we came back out, he said, “Did you apply, sister?” “Uh, yeah” [Thurman re-enacts her reaction to Davis: “‘Sister?’ Huh, yeah, OK”]. And he said, “Well why don’t you come to a welfare committee meeting?” And I read the flyer and it said all these things—“Hate night raids, and people controlling your lives?...” and all these things that I hated.50

Dovie Thurman and her aunt Dovie Coleman—soon known in the community as “Little Dovie” and “Big Dovie,” respectively, or as “The Dovies,” collectively—attended the


JOIN meeting. When Davis introduced the “sisters” he had met at the welfare office, Little Dovie was moved to rise and let loose an impassioned speech against the indignities of the welfare system. It was the first time she had ever spoken in public.

These women forged a formidable activist force dedicated to placing direct pressure on landlords and social welfare officials. Their living conditions pushed JOIN to go beyond surveys, leaflets, and newsletters. Rent strikes came as reaction to deplorable conditions like those in Virginia Bowers’ building. By withholding rent or sending it directly to Mayor Daley’s office, rent strikers won more notice than tangible results. A few rent strikes progressed to full-blown tenants union movements. The residents of a Sunnyside Avenue six-flat organized and won a contract with the building owners. The contract stipulated regular meetings between the tenant’s and landlord and created an arbitration committee for any disputes about maintenance or resident behavior that might arise.51

Political and economic powers moved to undermine JOIN, as the organizers continually confronted landlords and bureaucrats. Protests of the UCC annual meeting and the opening of the MUPC marked the organizers as opposition to the entrenched redevelopment forces. The Chicago Police Department began surveillance of JOIN even before its move to Uptown, concluding that the earliest iteration of the group, “seem[ed] to be concentration of socialists, pacifists, communists, and communist sympathizers.” Investigators uncovered a list of names and affiliations of JOIN’s board of advisors,

which consisted of civil rights activists and veterans of the McCarthy-Era HUAC hearings. After the relocation to Uptown, JOIN organizers aroused suspicion upon introduction to the neighborhood’s institutions. JOIN held one of its first meetings at St. Ita’s Church, after explaining to a clergyman that the topic would be the unemployment situation in Uptown. Police immediately contacted the clergyman, who agreed to notify the detectives of any further contact with JOIN. A staff member from the Chicago Southern Mountain Center called the police after a JOIN organizer paid a visit to learn more about CSM programming—the student had been, “very invasive [sic] about answering questions about JOIN.” Police monitoring of JOIN only increased as the organizers expanded operations to include rent strikes and more frequent War on Poverty protests. The first arrests of JOIN organizers occurred in May 1965 after an MUPC sit-in, and indicated that the Chicago Police would move against the organizers at any moment they deemed necessary.

Undaunted, JOIN opened a new front of activism directed at the public aid bureaucracy. Women like the Dovies and Virginia Bowers viewed welfare as insufficient and unfairly administered, and formed a welfare committee within JOIN. Big Dovie expounded on the committee’s goals in a JOIN newsletter article co-authored with white southerner Mary Hockenberrry: “The Welfare Committee of JOIN started out by helping

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people with welfare problems and grievances. Now it not only helps people with complaints but it also works to get more rights for welfare recipients: the right to privacy, the right of appeal, the right to get all the money they deserve, and the right to get together and demand a voice and respect.\textsuperscript{53} As with the tenant’s rights movement, JOIN women entered the realm of direct action, this time inspired by the civil disobedience of the black freedom struggle.

On July 9, 1965, Uptown resident Dorothy Perez refused to leave a Cook County Department of Public Aid office after officials declined to immediately remedy a payment mistake. Later in the evening, JOIN members came to her support in the impromptu sit-in. The group demanded to see the policy that prevented welfare recipients from immediate redress for payment mistakes, to no use. Officials replied that the office had a policy against making policies available at the request of clients. Perez, a southern white woman married to a Puerto Rican man, was arrested along with Richard Rothstein, Casey Hayden, and Carl Wheeler. Eventually, a sympathetic official intervened and gave Perez a check for the difference of the payment mistake and the group was released on bond. Upset at the treatment, about 40 JOIN members picketed the welfare office the next day.

The JOIN Welfare Committee had achieved a positive result, albeit at the cost of antagonizing a powerful bureaucracy. The next day, the Chicago Police Department raided one of the JOIN apartments. Officers “discovered” drug paraphernalia and arrested

13 people. The day after that, an official with the public aid department informed the judge that he had reason to believe that JOIN was a “subversive” organization, and demanded that the charges against the welfare office protesters be reinstated. The judge agreed. After a short trial in July, he sentenced each of Perez, Rothstein, Hayden, and Wheeler to $200 fines to be paid within 10 days or 40 days in the state prison.54

JOIN leaders found enough sympathy among journalists to counteract any depictions of the group as immoral or anarchic. A Chicago Daily News feature led with a quote from a sympathetic attorney: “These college kids are fantastic.” The article provided a full description of the post-sit in raid from JOIN’s perspective. The reporter went to lengths to list the academic homes of the organizers, and noted Richard Rothstein’s “soft New York accent and amiable tone.” A photograph of a smiling Casey Hayden carried a caption that described the young Texan’s speech as “like a slow pouring liquid.”55 Meanwhile, Rothstein scrambled to lead a successful nationwide effort to raise money for the fines and bond fees levied by the municipal judge.

Not all JOIN organizers considered organizing welfare women to be the quickest path to meaningful socioeconomic structural changes. Some men within the movement openly questioned the effectiveness of actions like the welfare office sit-in. Such criticism grew from the gender prejudices of some JOIN organizers who believed young, poor men best represented a potential revolutionary vanguard. Although never quite this


hostile towards women-led organizing, JOIN ex-student Michael James preferred the social activities of marginalized southern white men to that of women, and sought to meet the potential revolutionaries on the corner or in the honky-tonk.

Michael James was born in New York in 1942, and raised in middle-class Westport, Connecticut. Growing up, James held a fascination with working-class masculine cultural activities like hot-rod muscle cars and full-contact sports. His parents were liberals with a strong distaste for the McCarthy era—to the point of his father boycotting Wisconsin beers in protest of Senator McCarthy’s home state. James adapted his father’s politics to his view of race, and became fascinated by the civil rights movement as a teenager. His prep school exploits in the classroom and on the gridiron led to a football scholarship at Lake Forest College, a liberal arts college in the tony North Shore town of the same name, north of Chicago. In the summer of 1964, James worked as a “participant observer” for a Notre Dame anthropologist conducting research on the southern and Appalachian white migrant population of Uptown. That summer, he learned to play country music on the guitar and drink whiskey under the El tracks, and became more than comfortable in the southern male uniform that consisted of boots, denim, and heavily-pomaded hair. That next year James joined the PhD program in sociology at the University of California at Berkeley, where he became active in the civil rights and free speech movement, along with Vivian Leburg. James was also among the SDS members who attempted to start an ERAP project in Oakland. And, seeking a new
organizing home like Leburg, he dropped out of Berkeley and eventually landed in Uptown with JOIN.56

James’ organizing style differed dramatically from that of Vivian Leburg. Where Leburg sought to work through ‘stable’ people like Virginia Bowers, James embraced the seemingly disorganized segments of the population like hard-living gang members. This style of organizing—one that seeks to politicize the lumpen—also typified Rennie Davis’ outlook. Davis proudly recounted to an SDS newsletter the culturalization process he underwent in Uptown.

My first meeting with the people here was with young guys—most of them unemployed—most high school drop-outs, between the age of 17-22. Most of them with a tradition of violence in their families and most of them very anxious to maintain that tradition. There was an informal gang structure on the corner where we began our office. It was possible to get to know them by going out of your way and I went out of my way the first week—I was virtually drunk all week—the fellows drink all day on that corner. My feeling is that they are the potential revolutionary force in Uptown Chicago, if there can be said to be such a force. They are the force that is least afraid of the police, do have some sense of justice—and are willing to act on that sense.57

Many JOIN women held a different opinion of the rough male element in Uptown. Leni (Wildflower) Zeigler recalled that most were afraid of the corner guys, especially the two who were clearly “after her ass.”58 Organizing tactics did not break simply along gender

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57 Chicago: JOIN Project,” Studies on the Left 5 (Summer 1965), 113.

58 Evans, Personal Politics, 179.
lines, however. Vivian Leburg noted that many women were “attracted” to working for JOIN because of Rennie Davis’ performance of hyper-masculine organizing, and thus fell in line with his approach.⁵⁹

Some prominent JOIN women agreed with Rennie Davis’ assessment of the revolutionary vanguard on the corner, on a theoretical basis. Peggy Terry was born Luvelle Oletta Ousley in 1921. In her youth she moved often with her father, a proud racist and occasional Ku Klux Klan member who worked as a migrant coalminer and oil field worker from Alabama to the hilly part of southeastern Oklahoma known to many as “Little Dixie.” Terry’s father was also a machine gunner in World War I, and he joined the veteran’s Bonus March in 1931 while the family endured the depths of the Great Depression in Oklahoma City. A sixth-grade dropout and married at the age of 15, Peggy Terry developed the social consciousness of a poor person after “reading about herself” in the Grapes of Wrath. World War II had a profound impact on Terry’s life. She worked in a munitions factory while her husband fought in 101st Airborne Division in Europe. The combat veteran returned a changed and troubled man, and became an alcoholic abuser. Terry escaped the marriage, and commenced the life of an itinerant laborer in the South.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Interview with Vivian Leburg Rothstein, September 5, 2014.

She found herself in Montgomery, Alabama, in 1955 during the SCLC-led bus boycott. Terry underwent a revelation akin to Paul’s road to Damascus, when she witnessed a white mob attack Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. upon his release from jail. By 1960, Terry was a fulltime civil rights activist, working for CORE headquarters in Chicago and married to prominent former Communist Party member Gil Terry. She was shameful of her southern, white identity, and consciously avoided any concentration of “hillbillies” as in Uptown. Eventually—pushed by black CORE leaders to ‘organize her own’—Terry embraced her heritage. Divorced once again and on public aid, Terry moved to Uptown just as JOIN settled. She met Studs Terkel in 1963, as the two shared a train trip to the March on Washington. The voyage served as the first of dozens of hours of interviews of Terry by Terkel, and the two became very close over the next four decades.61

Terry’s son, Doug “Youngblood” Terry, was associated with the tough young southern white men whom Rennie Davis viewed as a potential revolutionary force. Given his mother’s radical background, Youngblood quickly became a key connection between JOIN and the street corner. When his mother assumed the editorship of the JOIN newsletter, he began writing a music column that connected traditional and contemporary country music to the revolution. Peggy Terry, also a founding member of the JOIN welfare committee with the Dovies, and Virginia Bowers, became only more militant as

her work with JOIN grew. Her Clifton Avenue apartment quickly became a central location for both welfare rights organizers and street corner revolutionaries.

**A Local Skirmish in the War on Poverty**

The locus of the formal War on Poverty in Uptown was among the first targets of JOIN organizers. Mayor Daley’s Chicago embraced the federal War on Poverty even before President Johnson announced it in 1964. Johnson called on Daley to confirm support for the effort months before his declaration. Daley, shrewdly recognizing the patronage potential of a new layer of federally-funded but municipally-based bureaucracy, gave his unwavering support to Johnson’s proposal. Therefore, it was no surprise that within days of Johnson’s announcement, Mayor Daley presented to the public a fully formed War on Poverty apparatus known as the Chicago Committee on Urban Opportunity (CCUO), complete with a machine-friendly executive director in Deton Brooks, Jr. Throughout 1965 Brooks, with hands-on assistance from Daley, established eight community progress centers, each described as a “supermarket” for the variety of federally-funded poverty programs proposed by the new Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO). With the Progress Centers, the OEO sought to realize the promise of comprehensive community-based poverty work—a legacy, superficially at least, of the rich tradition of neighborhood social work in Chicago. Uptown, generally left behind in the rush for urban renewal on the North and Northwest Side, attracted the Montrose

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Urban Progress Center (MUPC). Each of the seven other progress centers were located in African American communities on the South and West Sides. In exchange for his strong early support for the OEO, the federal government gave Daley virtual free range in managing the War on Poverty largesse in Chicago.63

When the MUPC officially opened in the spring of 1965, JOIN was there to picket. Twenty JOIN members conducted a sit-in during one of the first MUPC advisory committee meetings, specifically protesting the lack of low-income representation. Although reported as “orderly,” the protest moved the committee enough to invite three JOIN members to attend the closed meeting. The protesters rejected the offer, demanding instead that the entire group be granted entrance. The drama replayed itself with later negotiations. The MUPC granted JOIN a permanent spot on the advisory committee. When JOIN adhered to their anti-hierarchical nature and answered with a rotating member, the negotiations fell apart.64

While JOIN members generally viewed the War on Poverty as an insufficient, liberal approach to poverty that failed to address the structural causes of economic inequality, elements funded by the OEO and housed in the MUPC offered an opening for more radical programs. In 1963, the long-established Hull House Association opened a neighborhood center in Uptown. Hull House Uptown Center (HHUC) assembled a board


of directors that included some of the left flank of Uptown redevelopment forces, seemingly in exile after the UCC’s move to clearance and removal-style urban renewal advocacy. Board members included Frank McCallister, the Old Left veteran and unrepentant progressive, and Morris Hirsh, the Democratic alderman ousted by Robert O’Rourke in the bitter 1963 election. Both men were important members of the early UCC; both were now hands-on board members for the HHUC.

Hirsh and McCallister were joined by others on the board who sought to push HHUC towards social action programs, as opposed to the traditional aid and casework approach of the prewar settlement house. Early HHUC projects put forward by the board included opposition to the state “Stop and Frisk” law, a Hirsh-led committee to critique urban renewal plans that would have resulted in displacement, and the recruitment of black families to further Uptown’s integration. HHUC even provided assistance to the longest lasting tenants union in the community, a Clifton Avenue action widely remembered as one of the crowning jewels in JOIN’s organizing efforts. Several Volunteers in Service of America (VISTA) workers—often dubbed the civilian Peace Corps—were assigned to HHUC programs. Some of these volunteers had outlooks as radical as JOIN organizers.65

One HHUC-administered War on Poverty program first appeared non-threatening to the political and economic elites of Uptown. Lead poisoning had long been a problem

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65 For VISTA alumni accounts of progressive and radical beliefs and activities, see Maureen O’Connor, Knocking on Doors: VISTA Volunteers Remember, 1965-1971 (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard Book Store, 2010).
in Uptown, thanks to poorly maintained buildings with toxic chipped and peeling paint.

The MUPC incorporated HHUC staff into a pilot testing program for lead poisoning among Uptown’s low-income apartment children. Keeping with the belief that disadvantaged people provide insight and gained confidence when given positions within social work programs, HHUC partnered with the teenagers and young women of the Socialization, Training, Recreation, Education, Employment, and Technical Services (STREETS) training project. STREETS provided job training for female youth along the lines of secretarial work and sewing. Many of these participants were either disadvantaged or previously afool of the law. Since the MUPC encompassed a broad swath of the North Side beyond Uptown, some participants were from neighboring communities. The Uptown contingency was diverse, consisting of white southerners and Appalachians, whites with deep roots in the region, and a few non-whites. One Puerto Rican STREETS worker was an open lesbian in a self-described and well-known marriage to another woman—Leburg remembers her as otherwise “conservative.”

The more idealistic aspects of the War on Poverty informed the goals of STREETS. The program aimed to help the youth by providing a small salary, structure, and meaningful work—and that work would, in turn, involve outreach to other disadvantaged populations. Part of their service included providing day care for women on welfare who were seeking work. A STREETS worker best explained the program.

I will tell why I take such an interest, I am a teenager, a teenager that has been in trouble, I am the one who has been in the Audy Home [Chicago’s city jail for juveniles], and not too proud of it either, and oh yes, I am a

66Interview with Vivian Leburg Rothstein, September 5, 2014.
teenage dropout. But I have turned out very successful in that long run. I am now what you call a social worker I actually help those in need of help, I help little children, I help grown-ups and oh yes I even try and help my own kind—I help teenagers.\textsuperscript{67}

The MUPC official who oversaw STREETS, Marlene Delotte, wanted to expand the program even further. Delotte hired none other than Vivian Leburg to work with the STREETS workers. Delotte knew about Leburg’s community organizing experience, and was willing to take the political risk of hiring a JOIN member.\textsuperscript{68}

Leburg, HHUC, VISTA volunteers, and the STREETS youth quickly built an impressive lead poisoning testing program. A doctor at nearby Weiss Hospital arranged for donated specimen collection and lab work. Over 1,000 children were initially screened, and dozens selected for further testing. Leburg’s STREETS charges were the conduit for the testing program into the community—they had provided day care to many of the children to be screened. They found a great deal more meaning in their public health work than in their secretarial and sewing classes, as seen in the production of flyers with their own words about the importance of screening. One notice typed by STREETS workers concluded with a sentiment that revealed the program’s potential for change beyond immediate aid to poisoning victims: “When every one hears about the

\textsuperscript{67} New release written by STREETS worker, February 26, 1966. Private Collection of Vivian Rothstein.

problem of chipping paint maybe we can convince landlords to keep the buildings in
better shape."  

The success of the testing project gave fuel to the desire among trainees for more
meaningful work and a greater role in decision making within STREETS. Although
Leburg never considered more than a couple of STREETS workers potential full-blown
JOIN members, she encouraged their aspirations to confront those with power,
particularly landlords and War on Poverty bureaucrats. Leburg went as far as escorting
some STREETS workers to a downtown anti-war protest.  

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69 New release written by STREETS worker, February 26, 1966. Private Collection of Vivian
Rothstein.
70 Interview with Vivian Leburg Rothstein, September 14, 2014.
Figure 16. Flyer for the STREETS Lead Poisoning Testing Project (1966). Vivian Leburg Rothstein personal collection.

While Vivian Leburg made in-roads at the MUPC, Michael James and Rennie Davis—armed with banjo, guitar, and alcohol tolerance—convinced a few of the rough young men to come to JOIN meetings. Legacy elements of the disbanded Peacemakers—the southern white gang that had sought legitimacy and made Al Votaw an “honorary
member” almost a decade earlier—were specifically open to JOIN organizing. Whereas many women in Uptown rallied around the injustices of the public aid system, some young men found political meaning in confronting police brutality. By 1966, men of this mindset created the Goodfellows.

One incident specifically pushed the Goodfellows, and to a lesser extent, JOIN, to directly address police brutality in Uptown. While searching for a robbery suspect, patrolmen entered the apartment of a family sympathetic to JOIN and violently removed a 19-year old boy, badly breaking his arm in the process in front of several witnesses. The boy languished in the infamous Summerdale district jail overnight without medical treatment.\(^{71}\) The attack came on the heels of dozens of other confrontations between local activists and low-income residents, including a clash between an officer and a JOIN activist in which the cop offered to take off his badge and gun and ‘have it out’ with the activist in the alley (only after berating the activist, “You should be in Vietnam.”) One anonymous Uptown resident remembered that this stretch of alleged abuse culminated with a young southern woman claiming that early one morning a police officer handcuffed her, drove her to the lakefront, and raped her.\(^{72}\)

\(^{71}\) Mrs. Alcantar, “Police are BEST Friends?” *JOIN Community Union Newsletter*, July 25, 1966.

\(^{72}\) Guy, *From Diversity to Unity*, 105.
In response, the Goodfellows organized a protest march from the JOIN office to the Summerdale police precinct. Some JOIN leaders urged caution in confronting the police, if not outright abandonment of the protest. Police “Red Squad” surveillance reports confirm that the march was largely a local affair: intelligence officers recorded the names of dozens of ‘known’ subjects marching, only two of whom were outside JOIN
organizers. One local remembered several JOIN leaders nervously waiting in the JOIN office while the Goodfellows led the march. Yet JOIN students worked hard behind the scenes in the days leading up to the march, collecting along with the Goodfellows more affidavits that outlined allegations of horrific police brutality. In a particularly bold move, protesters singled out one police officer who they considered the most brutal. The officer was also widely hailed as the CPD’s most decorated officer. For several years, the newspapers had recounted his heroic exploits. The Goodfellows and their sympathizers held a polar opposite opinion, and literally said as much on the signs they carried to the Summerdale station.

The march grabbed the attention beyond that of the Red Squad. Up to 300 joined the march, including a few black and Puerto Rican allies from the South and West Sides. An even greater number of counter-protesters awaited the marchers near the police station, brandishing signs and hurling at least one brickbat at the protesters—ironically, the only thing approaching violence during the whole ordeal. Major newspapers, including the Tribune, the Daily News, and the Sun-Times, covered the march. The action occurred the same day as the Jesse Jackson-led open housing procession through the all-

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74 Excerpts from several of these affidavits were collected by the Red Squad. Fact Sheet on Policeman [redacted], Badge number [redacted], Aug 11, 1966, from Uptown Goodfellows. File 986, JOIN, 1964-1968, CPDRS Files, CHM.

white Bogan neighborhood on the Southwest Side, a component of Martin Luther King Jr’s Chicago Freedom Movement. Jackson’s protest was the second in a series that included King’s march through Marquette Park one week earlier, which was violently met by working-class white teens and young men, among others. This timing created several opportunities for media commentary on the oddity of marginalized whites marching against what was assumed to be a black or Puerto Rican issue. One headline, indeed, read “Hillbilly Power!” It should be noted, however, that the Summerdale March was not just a “Hillbilly” or even just a white endeavor. The boy whose brutal arrest triggered the march was Latino, after all. And neither the Goodfellows nor the Summerdale marchers were exclusively white or southern.
The Chicago press was not alone in efforts to keep Uptown’s growing radical movement a primarily white affair. Some student organizers, including Rennie Davis, also preferred that the movement maintain a base in the Appalachian and southern white community. Rhetoric for an “interracial movement of the poor” was one thing, realizing it was another. Davis worried that JOIN and Goodfellow overtures to non-whites in and outside of Uptown would alienate low-income southern white recruits. He based this
assumption on a belief that poor southern whites were particularly racist. Davis’ theory reflected the thoughts of many New Leftists. Indeed, such a theory fueled ERAP’s expansion into low-income white areas. Generally cast aside by the black civil rights struggle, whites of the New Left believed they could fight racism by changing the hearts and minds of the, presumably, most racist segment of America’s population.

This constellation of outsider assumptions of southern white racial attitudes and aspirations for the multiracial movement of the poor came to the fore in regards to a fundraising visit by singing superstar Harry Belafonte in the summer of 1966. By the mid-1960s, the calypso and pop star was a mainstay of civil rights and progressive activism. Belafonte was the rare figure who moved between civil rights leaders and the more politically neutral middlebrow cosmopolitanism that became chic in the early-1960s. The entertainer had equal access to Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Billboard Pop Chart.

Belafonte first learned of JOIN from Richard Rothstein during the JOIN leader’s visit to New York in the summer of 1966. Upon learning about the project, Belafonte—as recounted by Rothstein—expressed concern that JOIN could become “simply an organized white backlash.” Rothstein addressed Belafonte’s concerns in a letter not long after their New York meeting. He pointed towards JOIN’s growing alliances with non-whites. Rothstein noted a tenant union rally in Uptown that included African Americans from the West Side, an instance of white southern JOIN members speaking at a Puerto
Rican protest, and a march by Uptown welfare activists to Loop that converged with African American marchers.  

JOIN members coordinated Belafonte’s visit for maximum payoff. The singer made only a quick visit to JOIN headquarters, where he met JOIN members that included Virginia Bowers, Dovie Coleman, and Peggy Terry, some Goodfellows, and Dominga Alcantar—the mother of the teenager whose brutal arrest sparked the Summerdale march. Belafonte lent his celebrity to fundraising efforts in the wealthy suburbs of the North Shore. There, he accompanied JOIN members who told sympathetic upper-income progressives about their daily struggles. The combination of star power and authentic urban voices made an impact. Dominga Alcantar’s testimony moved North Shore resident Jack Korshack to write directly to Chicago Police Superintendent O.W. Wilson. Korshack recounted the arrest story as told by the JOIN visitors. He acknowledged that many might be suspicious of JOIN accounts of police brutality, before concluding with a direct appeal.

It may be that we who live on the North Shore and normally enjoy a quite different relationship with members of the Police Department than do people less fortunately housed, are naïve in our expectation that a Commissioner of a great city could become directly concerned in a single instance such as I have described. I hope this is not so and would appreciate learning the degree of your interest.

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76 Richard Rothstein to Harry Belafonte, July 11, 1966. JOIN Correspondence, May to July 1966, Staughton Lynd Papers, WHS.

The confluence of wealthy whites, student organizers, nonwhite local JOIN members, and one of the nation’s leading celebrities offered a glimpse of the movement’s potential. Belafonte’s visit netted an astounding $4,000 for JOIN.

Rennie Davis’ letter of thanks to Belafonte, similar to the sentiments of Rothstein, reiterated JOIN’s diversity. But Davis also pointed towards the ironic possibility that this multiracialism could undercut JOIN efforts to build a truly mass movement of poor whites in Uptown. The JOIN activities in solidarity with blacks and Puerto Ricans, noted Davis, were beginning to paint it as a “civil rights organization.” Davis continued, “This [reputation] would, of course, be disastrous from the point of view of organizing further Southern whites into JOIN.” Davis explained that it was the indigenous JOIN members and the Goodfellows who were most aggressively pushing to build multiracial alliances—not the outside student organizers.

They continue to press for a more open and aggressive civil rights identification. The students who came to JOIN to try to build a poor white arm of the civil rights movement are placed in a bitter position of being “reactionaries” on this race issue. I have no doubt that the problem will soon resolve itself, but I hope you appreciate the ironies involved.  

Davis’ analysis not only revealed the challenges of politicizing poor whites along progressive lines, but also his own assumptions about the peculiar racial attitudes of Uptown’s southerners and Appalachians.

Belafonte’s visit and his correspondence with Rothstein and Davis unfolded during JOIN’s most challenging days, bracketed by the Summerdale March and the

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78 Rennie Davis to Harry Belafonte, November 9, 1966. Staughton Lynd Papers, JOIN Correspondence, August 1966 to May 1967, WHS.
media and police attention that followed. The Summerdale March grew to mythical proportions for the Goodfellows and Uptown residents sympathetic to their cause. But others doubted the long term benefit of confronting the police, and worried that the official response would outweigh any temporary gains. Vivian Leburg especially differed from the approach. She viewed the march as a desperate move born out of frustration from failing to achieve small but tangible and consistent goals. Looking back almost 50 years, she reflected.

You tend to get more and more militant, more demanding, because—what is your strategy if you can’t make any incremental wins at all? I think I felt then, and feel now, that the whole organizing of the Goodfellows and the marginal guys was partly in response [to falling short of incremental goals], and then you start organizing against the police…well…you know without a coalition that includes more people than just these kids, what are you going to win from the Chicago Police? It was like a crash course to conflict, without a strategy to build anything.  

Reckonings

Vivian Leburg’s analysis of the Goodfellows has the advantage of hindsight. The “crash course to conflict” did, indeed, proceed. Just two weeks after the Summerdale march, Chicago Police raided the JOIN headquarters. Three JOIN members in the office at the time were arrested, including Richard Rothstein and Melody James—Michael James’ sister and director of the JOIN theater program. Police seized marijuana joints, morphine, “pep pills,” hypodermic needles, and “pro-Viet Cong literature.” Leburg suspected that a Goodfellow with legal troubles planted the evidence in exchange for a drop in charges. A few days later, a police officer shot and killed the young brother of a

79 Interview with Vivian Leburg Rothstein, September 5, 2014.
Goodfellow. Witnesses claimed that the officer shot the 17-year old as he fled, unarmed, under the El tracks. The family’s undertaker later told JOIN members of two close-range bullet entry wounds in the back of the deceased’s head. Fearing the loss of his license, the undertaker refused to testify in front of the coroner’s jury, which later ruled the shooting justified.80 Although the police shooting inspired poems and country music ballads among the Goodfellows, police pressure and internal divisions virtually ended the group by 1967.

Figure 19. JOIN Headquarters after the 1966 Police Raid. Chicago Sun Times/Author’s Collection.

80 Gitlin and Hollander, Uptown: Poor Whites in Chicago, 395. The raid and the killing of Ronnie Williams are covered in JOIN Community Union Newsletter, August 29, 1966. Peggy Terry Papers, WHS, Madison.
The young women of STREETS fared little better. The lead poisoning testing project ruffled the feathers of Uptown’s politically-protected slum lords. Indeed, MUPC official Marlene Delotte had suggested that the youth inform tenants of dangerous buildings of the potential for rent strikes. What started as a seemingly benign public health initiative quickly became a challenge to the political system. The STREETS workers were not alone in foregrounding healthcare work during the War on Poverty. In Memphis, for example, OEO workers forged an alliance with St. Jude’s Hospital and created a path-making program that screened for prenatal and postnatal malnutrition among the city’s low-income population. But in Chicago Leburg’s JOIN affiliation, and her accompaniment to the anti-war rally, created even greater suspicion among the CCUO hierarchy beholden to Daley. While the Goodfellows faced down the Chicago Police, Leburg and the STREETS workers met the full power of the Chicago municipal bureaucracy upon which their paychecks depended.

Antipathy to the STREETS social work even crossed party lines, and demonstrated the breadth of resistance to any challenges to political and economic structures in Chicago. Daley’s sworn enemy in City Council, Alderman John J. Hoellen of the 47th Ward, maneuvered to undermine progressive aspects of STREETS or any other MUPC program. Hoellen was an entrenched Republican alderman, representing the Ravenswood neighborhood that bordered Uptown to the west. In 1966, he was in the

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middle of what was a 30-year run in the city council. Hoellen was one of Daley’s oldest rivals, having run against the soon-to-be mayor for Cook County Council in 1955. Hoellen never hid his disdain for Daley, and consistently paraded his anti-machine purity. He once described the mayor’s office as a “cesspool of political activity…teeming with incompetence.”

When it came to potentially radical political activity in his ward, however, Hoellen embraced the type of backroom arm-twisting that he otherwise publically denounced. Since several of the STREETS workers lived in Ravenswood and conducted their activities in his ward, many of the landlord complaints about their activities came to Hoellen’s office. If he could expose and crush alleged radicalism within Daley’s War on Poverty, the publicity would embarrass his old nemesis. Hoellen was also campaigning for the 11th Illinois Congressional seat, and his fellow Republicans across the country were beginning to gain traction with allegations of anti-government activity within OEO. Hoellen offered the testimony of 18-year old dropout and STREETS worker Kathy Morris, as proof of “inappropriate” political activity within Chicago’s War on Poverty. Morris’ statement admitted that she and other MUPC workers had attended the downtown anti-war march, while on the clock, upon the encouragement from staff. The confession was not as direct as Hoellen led on. In later testimony, Morris described how she and her mother first contacted Hoellen because of a late paycheck from CCUO. Hoellen asked her about the inner-workings of MUPC, and told Morris that he had heard

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about her participation in the anti-war march. The alderman then asked her if she liked her job, or if she would like a better one. He also suggested to her mother that he could help her get a coveted position with the phone company. Coincidentally, Hoellen asked if Morris would be willing to sign an affidavit describing her political activities while on the job at MUPC.

Once Morris signed the affidavit under this pressure, Hoellen had his smoking gun. He attached Morris’ confession to his complaint to Daley, and directly cited it when reporters asked about the controversy. Hoellen specifically tied the alleged radical infiltration of MUPC to JOIN. Morris, however, refused to attend a press conference with Hoellen. She also retracted her statement, explaining that she did not understand many of the words it used.  

Hoellen’s shrewd maneuver caught the attention of Daley’s CCUO, who quickly moved to neutralize any embarrassing radicals working for the War on Poverty. Kathy Morris, Vivian Leburg, Marlene Delotte, and Delotte’s OEO supervisor were summoned to the downtown headquarters of CCUO. There they met a several stern OEO officials—including the investigator who had led an earlier effort to oust an OEO employee and JOIN member who had publicly criticized OEO chief Sargent Shriver. An executive

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84 James Osborne was a Virginia-native resident of Uptown who became active with Reverend Morey’s Friendship House. He was hired as a program representative for the MUPC, even as he became active in JOIN. Osborne disrupted a speech by Sargent Shriver during a War on Poverty convention in Washington, DC, and was soon fired on the grounds of “falsifying time cards”—the same charge brought against STREETS workers. “Poverty Worker Fired,” JOIN Community Union Newsletter, June 20, 1966.
from Hull House Association and a court stenographer also joined the proceedings. The investigator grilled Morris about her background, and demanded a full explanation of the information she had given Hoellen. Then another investigator pressed her to describe the anti-war march. Was she a JOIN member? What was written on the sign she carried? A flustered Morris gave no substantive answers. Playing the part of ‘good cop,’ the Hull House official talked sympathetically to Morris, explaining that he, too, had participated in marches during his youth. He asked her if she thought it was right to go on marches while being paid to do something else.85

At this point in the questioning, Leburg intervened. The young radical organizer and the polite liberal Hull House official then entered into a dialogue about the merits of working within—or against—the system. Leburg told him, yes, young people should be paid for political organizing. She noted, however, that this would be impossible, given the interests of the Daley-controlled CCUO. The Hull House liberal, as described by Leburg in a typed account soon after the interrogation, took offense.

He said that I didn’t know what I was talking about. Had I worked on any other War on Poverty Programs? I said yes, in Oakland. He said I was a cynic, that government is meant to and made to change. He said that he had probably spent more time in jail for civil rights arrests than I had, and I said I doubt it, I had spent two weeks and I was sure he hadn’t. He said I was hypocritical and if I didn’t believe in the government then I shouldn’t take their money. I said I didn’t feel that way at all, that the poverty program was conceived of to help change the injustices that exist now.

An account of Osborne’s evolution from Peacemaker gang leader to outspoken radical is in Gitlin and Hollander, Uptown, 378-380. See also, “Shriver Defends Program to the Poor, but He Is Booed,” New York Times, April 15, 1966.

When asked if Hull House would support the STREETS workers suggesting rent strikes to affected tenants, the official replied that an off-the-clock protest march for publicity would be more appropriate. He also suggested that STREETS focus on education for poor people in Uptown. Marlene Delotte noted that Uptown already had schools, and that there was no purpose in duplicating what they should be doing. According to Leburg, the official shot back, “Look, I know more about Southern whites than you ever will. I lived in Tennessee for 14 years and I know that if you lead an illiterate hillbilly to a school, that he wouldn’t want to go to that school any more than Kathy [Morris] does.”86 The exchange between Leburg and the Hull House official encapsulated the philosophical differences between liberal conceptions of the War on Poverty and those of the increasingly radical, further left on the political spectrum.

On September 16, 1966—two weeks after the police raid on the JOIN headquarters and on the heels of the downtown STREETS interrogation—the CCUO fired Marlene Delotte. Ten of the 25 STREETS workers walked off their job in protest. Several others and their allies picketed the MUPC, after changes in the program virtually prohibited all activities unrelated to secretarial or housekeeping “training.”87 The teenage girls and young women, with Leburg as their spokesperson, called the firing the latest in a line of recent interference with their work. On September 21, the board of the Hull


House Uptown Center announced that the lead poisoning testing project had “grounded to a halt.” The MUPC directed the Cook County Board of Health to take control of the program, over strong objections from the Weiss Hospital staff, HHUC board members Hirsh and McAllister, and VISTA workers. Like Rennie Davis’ potential street-corner revolutionaries in the Goodfellows, Leburg and the STREETS girls kicked a hornet’s nest and felt the sting of Chicago’s entrenched political powerbrokers.

Official responses to the Goodfellow Summerdale March and the STREETS lead poisoning testing project were only a culmination of months of suspicions and surveillance. After an initial stage of odd misinterpretations, the Chicago Police Department Red Squad gained a firm grasp on the structure and alleged motivations of JOIN. The intelligence division received a big break when an Uptown resident JOIN member offered to be a double-agent on their behalf. The informer, he told police, was an enthusiastic JOIN supporter in regards to tenant’s rights and welfare activism. He participated in the first MUPC sit-in and was selected to be a delegate to the national ERAP convention in Cleveland. But he became disenchanted by JOIN’s “anti-Americanism” after being invited to the 1965 Washington Peace March. Furthermore, the Mexican American man felt that organizers “used him” to reach other Latinos in Uptown.

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88 Weiss staff specifically cited the Board of Health’s preference to collect blood, instead of urine, which decimated voluntary testing. Hull House Uptown Board of Directors Meeting Minutes, September 21, 1966. Uptown Board of Directors Meetings, Hull House Association Records (HHAR), University of Illinois Chicago Special Collections and Archives (UIC), Chicago, Illinois.

89 The Red Squad, comically, initially traced JOIN to JOBS—the War on Poverty training program. Investigator’s paid an awkward visit to Deton Brooks, Jr., asking him about communist influences in JOBS.
He cited JOIN plans to “infiltrate” neighborhood organizations, which corroborated testimony of representatives from the UCC and the Chicago CSM.\footnote{Upon opening the Uptown office, JOIN student organizers contacted established organizations such as the UCC, Chicago CSM, Hull House, and St. Ita’s Church. Representatives from these groups—except Hull House—willfully shared their suspicions with the Red Squad, and agreed to inform the CPD of JOIN activities. One Chicago CSM representative—although never sympathetic to JOIN—later regretted his cooperation, explaining that FBI investigators visited him and intimidated him into providing information on JOIN to them and the Red Squad.} He concluded his report, “I want to cooperate with your office, because I know that this group is just using the poor innocent people, and that there is more to it than meets the eye. Up to this date, they have not done one thing to help and improve the conditions for the people and neighborhood. I know that I can gain their confidence, and possibly get in the ‘know’ of their plans and operations.”\footnote{Investigator’s Report, May 17, 1965, JOIN and SDS. File 986, JOIN, 1964-1968. CPDRS, CHM.} The informer was so well-trusted within JOIN, that he was one of the few members who met Harry Belafonte on his visit in 1966. Red Squad surveillance only grew more sophisticated, as they made detailed notes of the meeting between Martin Luther King, Jr. and JOIN representatives, and fully documented the Summerdale march. Surveillance eventually included at least one full-blown infiltrator and \textit{agent-provocateur}.\footnote{The infiltrator posed as a law student volunteering legal service for charged JOIN members. File 986, JOIN, 1964-1968. This surveillance and infiltration was just on behalf of the CPD Intelligence Unit. Other probable efforts on the part of precinct police and the FBI have yet to emerge.}

Strains within JOIN regarding theory, tactics, and gender —existent at the very founding—only grew greater under pressure from the Red Squad and the lack of concrete and sustainable victories. These internal and external pressures combined with a third: the
sophisticated and entrenched nature of Chicago politics. Vivian Leburg Rothstein exasperatingly exclaims, even today, “We couldn’t even win a stop sign on a busy street!” In the summer of 1967, she and Rennie Davis were among a handful of SDS representatives selected to visit North Vietnam. When she returned, she married Richard Rothstein and the couple relocated to the western suburb of Cicero. They wanted nothing more to do with attempts at organizing the *lumpenproleteriat* so concerned with mere survival. Instead, the Rothsteins hoped to create a meaningful movement among a more “stable” working-class population. Rennie Davis remained in Chicago after his return, but shifted his focus to organizing the SDS part in protests to be held during the 1968 Democratic National Convention. The MUPC doubled-down on social welfare projects that would not threaten any economic or political institutions. Little Dovie grew her Afro, and took to wearing dashikis, as she and her now-close “hillbilly” friends Virginia Bowers and Peggy Terry struggled to keep the movement alive. Mike James kept the pomade, boots, and guitar and worked to rebuild the Goodfellows and its revolutionary potential. Youngblood contemplated the radical meanings of Hank Williams, while managing a tenant union on Clifton. By 1967, it seemed that the “Sixties” had come and gone in Uptown.

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CHAPTER EIGHT
REVOLUTIONARY UPTOWN AND THE MOVIES

The whole world seemed to be watching Grant Park in downtown Chicago on August 28, 1968. Chicago Police and the Illinois National Guard combated protestors of the Democratic National Convention in front of innumerable camera crews. Two of these crews were connected to the radical community organizing that had taken hold in Uptown after 1965. One—a television advertising-turned-documentary outfit—did not differ much from the many other media in the park. The other—an avant-garde unit filming a major studio drama—was peculiar. If either crew had swung their cameras a few yards one direction or the other, they would have recorded former JOIN organizer Rennie Davis prone on the park grass, holding his trademark thick glasses over his stomach, his white dress shirt and loosened tie splattered with his own blood.¹

The 1968 Chicago police riot was one part political battle, and one part media event. With cameras turned on them, protestors famously chanted, “The whole world is watching!” When the news crews stopped filming and drove off, many pleaded, “Don’t leave! Stay with us!” The days were awash in symbols ready-made for media consumption. Activists enlisted hair, clothing, buttons, posters, and slogans—consider the berets and leather jackets of the Black Panthers or the clinched red fist of the SDS

badges. Places assumed important new meanings, too. Simply uttering the words “Berkeley,” “Kent State,” or “Chicago” pointed to complex events.

Even “Uptown” assumed new meanings in the late-sixties. Urban renewal advocates, social scientists, journalists, and activists had interpreted the low-income community through their own lenses for well over a decade. The late-sixties crest of activities by the New Left, civil rights advocates, and anti-war protestors, however, added dimensions to the meaning of Uptown. Two films created in 1968, in particular, revealed ways that the social and cultural world of Uptown’s poor white southern and Appalachian community assumed new symbolic weight, even as an increasingly diverse population complicated that narrative. The first film, Haskell Wexler’s avant-garde classic Medium Cool, blurred the lines of fact and fiction while relying upon a subplot based in Uptown. The second film, Mike Gray’s minimalistic documentary American Revolution 2, told the story of the headiest days of multi-racial coalition building in the neighborhood. Both films illuminated the dramatic realities related to the revolution in Uptown, Chicago, and beyond, depicting in part the complexity—and limitations—of radical community organizing.

Medium Cool: A Jean-Luc Godard for Uptown

Medium Cool was a well-financed, major studio release that confounded critics and audiences. As the first feature film by acclaimed cinematographer Haskell Wexler, the movie combines a critique of the media and media consumption with a searing portrayal of the repression of political activism. The film is most regarded for the groundbreaking alternation between fact and fiction by way of the cross-pollination of
New Wave and documentary filmmaking. Non-actors play prominent roles; those in the film interact with unscripted reality, and vice versa. Today, *Medium Cool* is among the most respected American films of the second half of the twentieth century, enshrined in the critical canon and recently placed on the Library of Congress National Registry of Film. Wexler’s movie is one of perception and revolution, of hope and tragedy. Neither the film’s production nor its message would have been possible without Uptown.

Haskell Wexler seemed destined to make one of the defining films of the late-1960s set in Chicago. He was born in Chicago in 1922 into a wealthy family. His father was a major player in real estate, owning the air rights for considerable tracts of railroad land in central Chicago. Haskell’s brother, Jerrold, went into the family business and amassed considerable wealth as a financier of high-rise developments. Wexler’s uncle, Samuel Bloomfield, likewise enjoyed financial success as the owner of one of the nation’s largest restaurant suppliers. It was Samuel Bloomfield’s son Michael who played the scorching lead guitar that ushered Bob Dylan into the electric era in 1965, soon after a thankless gig on Broadway in Uptown. After a stint in the Merchant Marines during World War II, where he met Woody Guthrie, Haskell Wexler used funding from his father to open a film studio in suburban Des Plaines, Illinois. The venture hemorrhaged money, so Wexler turned to industrial filmmaking. His major break came in 1953, when he directed the documentary *Living City*. This film traced the economic, social, and political ramifications of Chicago’s early urban renewal period. Wexler’s innovative

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tracking shots, juxtapositions of scenes, and sensitivity to the complexities of the issue earned him an Academy Award nomination for short documentary.³

Through the 1950s and 1960s Wexler emerged as a premier American cinematographer. His early style drew heavily on newsreel and documentary techniques, embracing unconventional camera angles and thoughtful pans and zooms. For dramatic features, he gravitated towards projects with a social message such as *Hoodlum Priest* (1961), based on the life of a clergymen who worked among gang members and juvenile delinquents in St. Louis. Wexler’s own politics continued to move towards the left, as he became an observer, recorder, and participant in the civil rights movement. As cinematographer, he was responsible for the stark and visceral black-and-white style of *Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf* (1964), for which he received an Academy Award. Wexler then worked as cinematographer for the southern race relations drama *In the Heat of the Night* (1966), where he pioneered a lighting style that was more flattering for African American actors than conventional techniques.⁴

By 1968 Wexler had earned the opportunity to direct his own feature, having reached the pinnacle of Hollywood cinematography and flush with critical and popular success. He easily arranged for independent financing—a rarity at the time. His brother Jerrold would co-produce the film, and his cousin Michael agreed to take time away from recording and touring as the star of the Butterfield Blues Band to arrange the score.

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⁴ Callenbach, Johnson, and Wexler, “The Danger Is Seduction: An Interview with Haskell Wexler.”
Working for Paramount, Wexler purchased the rights to a novel about a boy in the city who bonds with animals. Wexler almost immediately gutted the story, and replaced it with a script that incorporated the social, racial, and political strife that seemed, to many, to be pulling America apart at the seams.

*Medium Cool* arrived at a time of profound changes in American film. The experimental élan of postwar European New Wave cinema first gained traction in the underground film community then, finally in the 1960s, with a small but dedicated core of auteurs with access to Hollywood studios. European filmmakers, including Marco Antionini, Federico Fellini, and—most prominently—Jean-Luc Godard, destabilized the absolute separation between fact and fiction or filmmaker and participant. Cinéma vérité, a New Wave strain that utilized the clever inclusion of reality in fictional films, burst onto the continental scene in the late-1950s but only gained the initial interest of cinephiles in the United States.  

For films such as *Medium Cool*, which challenged conventional notions of narrative and perspectival cohesion, shifts in documentary filmmaking joined New Wave cinéma vérité as a creative touchstone. Direct cinema, a largely American movement, also relied upon the advances in technology that fueled cinéma vérité. Lightweight 16 and 33 millimeter cameras and portable, synced microphones allowed documentary filmmakers to more efficiently embed themselves in settings. Direct cinema documentarians aspired to seamlessly melt into the surroundings, unlike the clever postmodernists of cinéma vérité, to the point that the subjects and the viewer ceased to

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5 Michael Renov, *The Subject Documentary* (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2004), 23-42.
notice them. *Primary*, a documentary of the 1960 Democratic Party primary season by
direct cinema pioneers D.A. Pennebaker and the Mayles brothers, is a classic of the
genre. Haskell Wexler’s *The Bus* (1963) remains a lesser-known but nonetheless worthy
example of direct cinema. The film follows civil rights activists on a cross-country bus
trip from San Francisco to the March on Washington. Wexler explained that the subjects
ceased to notice the camera. He became so omnipresent that he became invisible, he felt.
Wexler described how he considered himself a “guy with two heads”—his own and the
permanently affixed camera. He claimed to not sleep for the duration of the trip, and
described his near mystical incorporation into the surroundings as a “sexual feeling.”

These seemingly disparate cinematic impulses—the self-conscious New Wave
cinéma vérité and the resolutely embedded but detached direct cinema—collided in a
series of Hollywood studio films in the late-1960s. Suddenly, filmmakers confronted and
incorporated the philosophical loose ends of both direct cinema and cinéma vérité.
Characters talked directly to the camera in New Wave style, while the narrative structure
might include the story of film being made within a film as a way to destabilize the
camera’s authority. Dennis Hopper’s *The Last Movie* (1969), for example, was a film
about a film made by Peruvian Indians after a fictional Sam Fuller movie location was
abandoned. Norman Mailer’s *Maidstone* (1970) ended with one of the wildest scenes in
the history of American cinema. Rip Torn, playing the brother and bodyguard of the
RFK-inspired Mailer character, viciously attacks Mailer with a hammer in his own
interpretation of the final act. His blows are real, as is Mailer’s removal of a portion of

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6 Callenbach, Johnson, and Wexler. “The Danger Is Seduction: An Interview with Haskell
Wexler,” 3-14. For a history of the direct cinema movement, see Renov, *The Subject Documentary*
Torn’s ear via his bicuspid. The crew leaps towards the fight but remains behind the microphone and camera, firmly in direct cinema mode. Eventually, Mailer’s wife and children realize the fight is not staged, and that Torn is dangerously close to strangling Mailer. The film concludes with the shrieks of the family as they pile onto Torn.7

Medium Cool remains the clearest but most challenging entry into this American synthesis of New Wave, cinéma vérité, and direct cinema. The final product reveals Wexler as a critic of his direct cinema roots—a criticism achieved by building a story around a direct cinema cameraman. It is no coincidence that the virtues of the film rest on the contemporary fracturing of public life brought on by a decade of civil rights protests and resistance, urban unrest, political assassinations, the Vietnam War, and—the true star of Medium Cool—the 1968 Democratic National Convention.

A relatively little-known Robert Forster plays the part of John Cassellis, a hard-charging news cameraman whose technical skill is matched only by his libido and a cynical ability to remain detached from the gritty urban events in which he specializes. The opening sequence encapsulates the void of sympathy embedded in media production, as perceived by Wexler. Cassellis and his trusty soundman, Gus, come upon a car accident on Lake Shore Drive. The two carefully record the scene, walking around the wreckage and a still breathing victim. As they finish filming and walk back to their car, Cassellis says flatly, “Guess someone should call an ambulance.” Adding to this cynicism, Cassellis seems to only hold values related to maintaining independence over

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his work as a cameraman. He is in near-constant conflict with risk adverse news executives, as well as anyone who might stand in the way of getting a great shot.  

Eventually, one of Cassellis’ stories drags him into the social context of the events that make his work so marketable. After an African American taxi driver finds a large sum of money in the back seat of his cab, Cassellis and Gus venture into the black ghetto to follow-up on the story—against the wishes of their bosses. As fate would have it, the cabbie is sharing an apartment with “militants” and advocates of the black arts movement. They are aggressively suspicious of the white newsmen’s motivations. Something of a tense standoff occurs, as Cassellis responds to one woman’s eloquent protest with a sputtering string of, “Listen, sweetie,” and “Hey, honey…” At this point, Wexler breaks with conventional filmmaking perspective, as the actors combine his script with their own improvised monologues about the relationship between mainstream media and the black experience. Two of the militants—played by actual leaders of Chicago’s black arts movement—directly address the camera in consecutive monologues. One concludes, “When you walked in, you brought La Salle Street with you, City Hall, and the mass communications media. And you are the exploiters. You are the ones who distort and ridicule and emasculate us. And that ain’t cool.” We are left wondering, to whom they are speaking: Cassellis, Wexler, or a perceived white audience?

This indicted media power structure soon turns on Cassellis himself. A coworker confides that the news station has supplied the FBI with his footage of the militants. The revelation violates Cassellis’s imagined objectivity and control, and finally reveals him as

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8 Medium Cool, Directed by Haskell Wexler (Los Angeles: Paramount Studios, 2013), Criterion Collection DVD.
more than a mere extension of the camera lens—more than Wexler’s imagined “second head.” His furious reaction, combined with the ironically unauthorized follow-up with the black cabbie, results in Cassellis’s firing. Cast about in the simmering heat of Chicago’s summer of 1968, he soon finds himself first emotionally and then romantically involved with a poor West Virginia migrant in Uptown, Eileen Horton (Verna Bloom). Cassellis initially visits Uptown in order to return a basket containing a homing pigeon, just before he is terminated by the news station. The pigeon belongs to Eileen’s 12-year old son Harold, played by a non-actor and actual low-income West Virginia migrant living in Uptown named Harold Blankenship.

Cassellis’s experience in the heart of low-income Uptown—given in the film as 4444 N. Clifton—unfolds in a strikingly inverse manner than that of his visit to the neighborhood of the black militants. He and Gus are allowed to roam free in the streets, alleys, and staircases of Chicago’s majority-white ghetto, whereas they are accosted at every turn in the black ghetto. In the latter, a young man threatens Gus and Cassellis as they exit a convenience store—and he was not an actor, but an actual street corner guardian unaware of the film being shot. In Uptown, however, the only threat is the potential damage done to the news station car, as a horde of local kids playfully crawl on the vehicle and ignore Gus’s calls for respect. Cassellis follows Eileen into her apartment unchallenged, were she is alone and vulnerable. Unlike black Chicago, there is no manifestation of cultural consciousness in disadvantaged Uptown. Whereas Cassellis remains a foreigner in the black neighborhood, he builds a connection to Uptown. Indeed,
he becomes something of a surrogate father to Harold as his relationship with Eileen deepens.

Figure 20. Black “Militant” Scene from *Medium Cool*. A black arts activist and actor breaks the fourth wall.

Figure 21. Scene from *Medium Cool* in the Streets of Uptown. Local kids swarm the news station car while Cassellis is away. On the post at the left is an anti-urban renewal JOIN poster. Most Uptown scenes in the movie include African American, American Indian, and Latino people, even as the story line includes only white West Virginians.
The Hortons’ background and current situation slowly unfolds, as Wexler depicts them as rootless and oppressed, yet intelligent and likeable. The script offers three versions of the father’s location. He is “in Vietnam” (according to Harold’s response to a social worker); he has “left” the family (as told to Cassellis by Harold); or he is simply “dead” (in a confession by Eileen during a romantic moment with Casellis). While most reviewers and critics interpreted these explanations to conclude that the father had been killed in Vietnam, Wexler retained the inconsistencies as a way to accentuate the unreliability of objective narrative. Regardless, the Horton family appears as a stand-in for liberal and even progressive middle-class white assumptions of Uptown’s low-income residents. They are pious but unchurched. Harold is a victim of overcrowded and poorly managed schools. Eileen holds a decent job (at, fittingly, a television manufacturer) but sends most of her pay back to family in West Virginia. Finally, circumstances have torn the nuclear family asunder. Wexler’s script might as well have quoted surveyors and social workers from the UCC’s earliest efforts to learn about the southern and Appalachian white migrants, or Bert Schloss’ 1957 report, or even the descriptions of JOIN’s first weeks in Uptown by Rennie Davis or Richard Rothstein.

The most profound significance of Medium Cool derives not from the Uptown storyline, but from the ingenious melding of the film’s characters with the protests and police riot during the 1968 Democratic Party Convention. The film builds to a conclusion that uses actual protests and police response as scenery. The fusion of fiction and reality was no accident. Wexler, with considerable ties to the New Left and civil rights activists

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9 Director’s Commentary, Medium Cool, Creterion Collection DVD.
and fully aware of Mayor Daley’s likely response, anticipated the drama that would unfold in Lincoln Park and Grant Park during the convention. When he filed his script with the Writer’s Guild in January of 1968, it included scenes with the main characters mingling with protestors, the National Guard, and the Chicago Police.10

Wexler built a story around the expected drama as a way to implicate the mass media and its audience in the injustices of the late-1960s. Wexler held an expansive definition of the ‘media,’ one that incorporated both production and consumption. When he damns the limitations of media narratives, he includes the audience that demands flat and digestible stories and characters. Yet this postmodern scrambling of narrative power obscures an otherwise resolutely modernist message. In implicating the audience, Wexler aspires to affect change. Medium Cool, in form, is indebted to New Wave cynicism, but, in message, it is a closer relative to the tradition of Popular Front social realism. Wexler, his cast, and crew intended Medium Cool to be a wake-up call to audiences about the inequality and suppression beamed to them on the nightly news. 11

The romantic relationship between Cassellis and Eileen pushes the plot to incorporate the protests and police riot. Harold reacts to seeing his mother and Cassellis kiss by running away. The next morning, a panicked Eileen takes the El downtown to search for Harold in places he is known to roam. The actual protests and police reactions unfold in the foreground and background as the actress plays the part. Wexler and his small crew had embedded themselves in Grant Park alongside direct cinema and news

10 Director’s Commentary, Medium Cool, Criterion Collection DVD.

cameras while Verna Bloom, as Eileen, moves seamlessly within the crowd. Wexler’s crew captures the melee near the Grant Park band shell, when the Chicago Police charged protestors amidst a tangle of overturned benches and a haze of teargas. Eileen/Bloom looks shocked as she cautiously bends down to gain a better look at a bloodied protestor. If the camera had panned a few yards it may have recorded the wounded Rennie Davis.

One of Wexler’s sound men, who had experienced combat zones, recalled that he had never been so terrified in his life.\(^\text{12}\)

Figures 22 and 23. Actress Verna Bloom in the Midst of Protesters. The real-life backdrop consumes the fictional narrative in *Medium Cool*.

Critics and audiences have struggled with the conclusion of *Medium Cool* since the film’s release, which coincidentally has a striking similarity to the shocking highway death scene that closed another classic released in the late-summer of 1969—*Easy Rider*. Reunited with Cassellis, who had been inside the Chicago Amphitheatre shooting the convention as a freelancer, Eileen continues her search for Harold as a passenger riding with Cassellis through what looks like a section of the Cook County Forest Preserve. Inside Cassellis’s car, the radio plays a news update. The disembodied voice informs us that former News Channel 8 cameraman John Cassellis is in critical condition after a car accident, and that his unidentified female passenger is dead. In the instance that this flash-forward registers, the car goes into a violent spin and crashes. The camera pans out as a family slowly drives by the wreckage. A boy leans out of the station wagon window and snaps a photograph of the carnage on the way past. The news radio continues the update, now moving on to a reporter’s breathless account of police violence in Grant Park. As the background chant of “The whole world is watching!” grows, the camera pivots to reveal Haskell Wexler behind an omniscient movie camera. The two cameras zoom into one another, and the film ends as Wexler’s lens consumes the screen. Like one of the final lines from Peter Fonda’s character in *Easy Rider*—“We blew it”—the parting shot from *Medium Cool* makes an oblique but reflective and profound comment about the tumultuous late-1960s.

Reception of *Medium Cool* by was mixed. Wexler remembers Paramount executives coming out of the first screening looking like they “had been hit over the head.” A protracted negotiation between the production team and the studio about the
final edit delayed the film’s release. Paramount decided to provide the least possible amount of promotion for the movie, either because the film’s political message, its unconventional mix of fact and fiction, or both. The Motion Picture Association of America assigned *Medium Cool* an ‘X’ rating, which prevented wide release. Although many assumed the rating came from the scene of a fully-nude Casselis and a girlfriend innocently frolicking about his apartment, Wexler maintains that the rating was a “political X.”

Many critics were little more charitable than Paramount executives. Stanley Kaufmann of *The New Republic* panned the film as self-indulgent and overly arty, and found the riot scenes to “smack of opportunism.” Kaufmann granted Wexler his technical grace, before concluding with feigned praise: “He [Wexler] is well worth watching to see whether his future work is free of patent contrivance and glib sensation (in honest causes, of course) or, what is worse, phony candor; whether he will take the trouble to become a thorough artist or will ride along as a flashy, superior Lumet-Frankenheimer clevernik.” The *Chicago Tribune’s* Gene Siskel found little more value. Siskel considered the black militant sequence to be a powerful social commentary, but otherwise dismissed the “manufactured story line” and described the riot footage as “flimsy documentary.” A *New York Times* critic described *Medium Cool* as an “angry, technically brilliant movie, [but] less complex than it looks.” The film, however, was not without its critical admirers upon release. The *Los Angeles Times*, like others, compared the movie to the year’s *Midnight Cowboy* and *Easy Rider*. While the critic described *Medium Cool* in less glowing terms than those classics, he qualified his remarks by stating that it, “asks larger

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13 Director’s Commentary, *Medium Cool*, Criterion Collection DVD.
and more disturbing questions than either.” In Film Quarterly, the leading American
high-brow outlet for criticism, Judith Shatnoff heaped eloquent praise on the film. She
described Medium Cool as potentially revolutionary for studio filmmaking, alongside
Arthur Penn’s irreverent Alice’s Restaurant of that same year. Yet, even for Shatnoff, the
documentary aspects of the film overshadowed the fictional plotlines. She concluded that
Medium Cool was, “a train of events, whose alternating units are streamlined coaches of
realism and rickety freight cars of artifice.”

The film had no greater champion than Roger Ebert of the Chicago Sun-Times,
who described his first review as, “a response and some speculation.” Ebert was
compelled to expand his thoughts on the movie after a fourth viewing, several weeks
after the initial release. The former University of Illinois SDS member and friend of
Rennie Davis interviewed Wexler later in 1969, and named Medium Cool as the second-
best movie to be released in that banner year. Despite this praise, Ebert nevertheless
dismissed the Uptown subplot as “certainly not original.”

The Medium Cool aged well, however. Subsequent events such as the Kent State Massacre and Watergate helped to
vindicate Wexler’s dark take on the media, repression, and the blurred lines between
reality and performance. As the virtues of European New Wave gained acceptance
among critics, many revisited Medium Cool to find the most relevant Americanized

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14 Stanley Kaufman, Review of Medium Cool [originally published September 20, 1969] in
Figures of Light: Film Criticism and Comment (New York City: Harper and Row Publishers, 1971);
Chicago Tribune, September 19, 1969; Vincent Canby, “Screen: Real Events of ’68 Seen in ’Medium
Cool,’ New York Times, August 28, 1969; Champlin,“’Medium’ With a Message: Wexler’s ’Cool’ a Worried
Message About the Medium’s ’Medium’ With a Message,” Los Angeles Times, September 21, 1969;

version of Jean-Luc Godard. The film is a cornerstone in film studies programs, and received the coveted Criterion Collection DVD treatment in 2013.

Wexler was unabashed about his veneration of Godard from the beginning, telling Ebert in 1969, “I steal a lot from Godard. He gives you courage. He tries everything. He's a fearless, gutsy son of a bitch. He tries to get into that area between ‘movie’ and ‘life’ by having his actors speak directly to the camera, things like that. Sometimes it works and sometimes it doesn't.”16 The prevalence of over-turned cars in *Medium Cool* invokes the epic tracking shot of a traffic jam and bottoms-up vehicles in Godard’s *Weekend* (1966)—itself often interpreted as a premonition of the urban unrest that erupted in Paris in 1968. Cassellis adorns his bachelor pad with a large poster of Jean-Paul Belmondo’s character Michel Poiccard, the anti-hero from Godard’s canonical New Wave debut *Breathless* (1960). At one point, Cassellis pauses beside the poster with dangling cigarette, in an exact mirror image. That Poiccard so studiously based his appearance and mannerisms on Humphrey Bogart’s Hollywood personality only adds to the intertextual hall of mirrors. Critics were also quick to notice the parallel between Eileen’s journey among the crowd during the Democratic National Convention spectacle and Godard’s *Breathless* juxtaposition of Patricia Franchini (Jean Seberg) with a crowd of Parisians watching the actual procession of Presidents Eisenhower and De Gaulle (Patricia wears a smart Dior dress, while Eileen is conspicuously clad in a fetching yellow sun dress).17


17 The parallels to *Breathless* are seemingly infinite. For example, the romance between Chicagoan playboy Cassellis and West Virginian independent Horton maps well to that of Parisian playboy Poiccard and the independent American Franchini.
The final scene in *Medium Cool*, where a cameraman turns a camera towards the camera, is a direct quote of the ending of Godard’s less-well-known short *Le Grand Escroq* (1964). That film features Franchini of *Breathless* five years-on as a traveling camera person for a San Francisco news station who, like Cassells, is a stylized version of direct cinema and cinéma vérité practitioners.

Most critics, writing in 1969 or today, dismiss the Uptown storyline as a convenient plot mechanism to somehow place a bystander in the protests and riots. Yet the casting, filming, and editing process—if not the final product—revealed an invaluable insight into the poverty, community dynamics, and cultural identity that defined Uptown in the late-1960s. Furthermore, *Medium Cool* would not have been made without Wexler’s desire to engage Uptown’s low-income population. This relationship was no accident. Although Wexler had few contacts within Uptown before 1968, he was familiar with the plight of white southerners and Appalachians. His first film was as commission for the anniversary of a textile mill in Opelika, Alabama, owned by a friend of his father. The mill proprietor despised the final product, as Wexler focused primarily on the social condition of mill workers instead of the economic and technical virtues of the facility. Wexler shot portions of other projects in the south and Appalachia, including a documentary about the Highlander Folk School, which he fervently supported. His involvement in the filming and production of *In the Heat of the Night* brought to his mind strong thoughts about the portrayal of social themes, in general, and low-income southern whites, in particular. When interviewed in early 1968 about his plans after the

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tremendous two-year run of *Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf* and *In the Heat of the Night*, Wexler dismissed the latter. He described the film as, “a fake sociological script, with little understanding of today’s south. I resent films that talk about subjects I’m interested in and pretend to be on the good side but are superficial.” Years later, he reflected on his attraction to the plight of low-income white southerners. “Poor American whites have never been presented in a film with respect. There is a great dignity…an aspect of our country that has not been appreciated enough.”

This pastoral perspective on white postwar poverty dominates Wexler’s depiction of the Hortons and their surroundings. Wexler infused the flashback scenes of Harold with his father back in West Virginia with warm light and innocent expressions of community and virtue. Harold’s father, acting as a church deacon on his day off from the coalmines, baptizes his wife in a pond in the midst of a lush pasture and a cluster of beaming church members. The scene dissolves into the congregation sitting in their small chapel, singing a hymn lead by Deacon Horton. The singing is raw, full-throated, and transcendent.

Wexler’s approach to poor southern and Appalachian whites paralleled that of other middle-class and elite liberals and progressives of the era, who sought to include that population into the ‘interracial movement of the poor.’ ERAP organizers had been attracted to Uptown almost exclusively by the prospect of building a poor white arm of the civil rights movement. Yet, the preconceived notions of people like Rennie Davis about poor whites created challenges for building a mass movement. As with JOIN,

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Wexler could only partially incorporate white southerners and Appalachians into his vision. This challenge had even deeper roots. Uptown’s liberal urbanists of the 1950s, such as Albert Votaw, likewise fell short of reconciling the social and cultural dynamics of white southerners and Appalachians with their diversity-based program of conservation, renewal, and social modernization.

Wexler’s immediate obstacle to incorporating Uptown’s low-income Appalachian white community was that he had very few contacts in the neighborhood. The ubiquitous Studs Terkel came to his rescue. Terkel had known Wexler as a teenager, and maintained ties to the members of the Wexler family who moved in and out of Terkel’s progressive cultural and political circles. Credited in the film as “Our Man in Chicago,” Terkel provided assistance that made some of the most memorable scenes ofMedium Cool possible. He connected Wexler to the black arts activists who set the screen afire in the first half of the film. Terkel—a welcome white man in many black areas ever since his on-air veneration of singer Mahalia Jackson—accompanyed the crew into the neighborhood. Wexler claimed he could not have gone without his presence.20

Wexler’s crew was a conspicuous and vulnerable presence in Uptown, even if the final cut of the film depicted a docile population. On one of the first days of shooting on Clifton Avenue, someone fired several rifle shots from one of the six-flats that lined the claustrophobic street. Fortuitously, a group of young southern white men appeared and offered to act as the film crew’s bodyguard—for a fee. The movie people agreed, and they relaxed at the prospect of safety ensured by their loyal toughs. Little to their

20 Director’s Commentary, Medium Cool, Criterion Collection DVD.
knowledge, however, they were playing parts in a drama enacted by Uptown locals. The men who offered to act as bodyguards were the same ones who fired the rifle. The entire thing was a set-up. Wexler himself could not have written a more involved scene of interlocking notions of fact and fiction or performance and reality.21

It was in Uptown that Terkel’s expansive knowledge of Chicago made the biggest impact on production. Terkel became increasingly familiar with Uptown throughout the decade, going back to his emcee gig at the 1960 Uptown Folk Fair. Like Wexler, Terkel chronicled a voyage to the 1963 March on Washington, riding a train with civil rights activists and recording several radio interviews along the way. One interviewee was CORE worker Peggy Terry. The two immediately became close friends, and remained so after Terry moved to Uptown the next year. When Wexler asked Terkel about filming, he immediately connected the director with Peggy Terry, by then a tested Uptown organizer.

Wexler’s casting and filming in Uptown needed Terry’s knowledge of the migrant community—a familiarity forged over years of tireless grassroots organizing. The director specifically sought an ‘authentic’ Appalachian migrant to play the key part of young Harold Horton. Child actors who auditioned for the part were too refined and “effete” for the filmmaker’s vision. The solution was for Wexler and his crew to station themselves on Clifton in the heart of Uptown with a lode of cold sodas. They closely watched as children swarmed the conspicuous movie people, clamoring for one soda after the other and demanding candy. They asked one boy nearby, who already had his own drink, if he wanted one of their ice-cold Pepsis. The kid shot back, “I don’t want your

21 Hy Thurman related this story during a walking tour of his Uptown days, on September 24, 2013.
damn soda!” The search for the Uptown local to play the part of Harold was over. Terry, of course, knew the family. The Blankenships were her neighbors; they had migrated from Uptown to West Virginia in the mid-1960s.22

Terkel and Terry also recommended community organizer and Kentuckian Charles Geary for the part of Harold’s father. Geary was straight from central casting, a true life veteran of the coalmines and a part-time storefront preacher. Indeed, Terry later described him as a “professional hillbilly.”23 Geary was born in 1929 in the tiny, isolated north central Kentucky hamlet of Jugville. A son of a Pentecostal preacher and migrant laborer, Geary split time between Jugville, Louisville, and Kentucky’s mining country as a child. He was engaged at 16 and joined the Army at age 17 in 1946. Geary was stationed in the Philippines at the close of World War II, and was eventually wounded in combat during the Korean War. Desperate for employment upon his discharge, he found work as a seasonal construction laborer in northern Indiana. Geary then set his sights on Chicago, after hearing about the abundance of jobs there. He described his arrival in the slim 1970 autobiography, *What I’m about Is People.*

I got a ride from a salesman who told he’d been poor once, but now had a lot of money. Hearing him talk about the beautiful apartment buildings along Lake Michigan made me start dreaming of the wealth and possessions I wanted to have someday. Suddenly the man’s voice shattered my dream: “I’ll let you off here.” The car slowed. “Just walk a few blocks from the lake. That’s where all the hillbillies go when they get to the city.” Just who did he think he was, calling my “hillbilly?” He wasn’t such hot stuff. Yet, in a way, I knew he was right…When I got out

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23 Handwritten caption of photograph of Geary in Peggy Terry Collection, Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison.
of the car it was about nine o’clock at night. I didn’t know where to go. I had nothing but my suitcase and two pennies. It was the same old story—no food, no money, no place to stay.²⁴

Geary bounced between day labor and other short term employment. Ordained as a Pentecostal minister, he preached in store front churches and aspired to open his own church in Uptown. A Democratic precinct worker offered him steadier work and a supply of food, and asked for Geary’s support of urban renewal in exchange. What Geary learned about the details of the plan—possibly the 1962 Meltzer Associates “Uptown: A Planning Report”—combined with his sour labor experience to push the Kentuckian towards oppositional politics.

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Figure 24 and Figure 25. Above: Harold Blankenship as Harold Horton in *Medium Cool*. Blankenship (left), Blankenship’s younger brother (center), and an unknown person in their Uptown apartment in 1968. Below: Charles Geary as Harold’s Father. Still frames from Haskell Wexler, Director, *Medium Cool*, Criterion Collection DVD.
In 1966, the OEO-funded Tri-Faith Employment Agency hired Geary as a field representative, seeking to take advantage of his widening contacts in Uptown. He became director of the agency in early 1967, and continued to push Tri-Faith to be more a social action entity than one for social aid. CBS filmed a short documentary about Geary and Tri-Faith in 1968. The program aired the same night as intense media coverage of Martin Luther King, Jr’s, funeral. The juxtaposition of the stories had a profound impact on Geary.

A strange thing happened as I watched it. It sort of inspired me, and I felt that it was partly up to me to pick up where Dr. King had left off, to rededicate myself to the ministry. I began thinking about Uptown. There were so many organizations—Indian, Spanish-speaking, block clubs, youth groups. I realized that if they could all fight together, everyone would have a better chance to succeed.  

Not long after, Studs Terkel introduced Geary to Haskell Wexler.

The final cut of *Medium Cool* left Geary with only two flashback scenes in West Virginia. The rest of the fictional Horton family, however, stole the show. Even the harshest critics of *Medium Cool* praised the acting of Verna Bloom and Harold Blankenship as the migrant Hortons. Bloom immersed herself in Uptown for weeks prior to filming, toting a tape recorder everywhere she went as a way to capture the challenging southern Appalachian accent. She was particularly attached to an Uptown woman named Jean, who humored her research only as long as Bloom provided a steady supply of Jim Beam. The actress shopped and ate as a low-income Appalachian migrant would. She

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25 Geary, *What I’m about Is People*, 57-58. The CBS national feature that included Geary was “The Great American Novel,” a 60-minute, 9 o’clock p.m. effort to connect literary classics to contemporary times. The first half of the broadcast sought to “bring to life” *Babbitt* by focusing on Duluth, Minnesota. The second half compared *Grapes of Wrath* to Uptown, specifically the migration story of Charles Geary’s family. “Day’s Highlight’s,” *Chicago Tribune*, April 9, 1968.
assembled her own wardrobe for the film from the local second-hand stores, and only
applied make-up or styled her hair for the scene where Eileen accompanies Cassellis to a
rock concert. Her performance was so convincing that many assumed her to be an
‘indigenous’ amateur like Harold; the Massachusetts native worried that she would be
type-cast as a southerner. Critics heaped even more praise on the 12-year old actual
West Virginian. The New York Times scribe described Harold Blankenship’s work as the
film’s most convincing performance, explaining that, “[he] has the stunted look of
generations of deprivation in his physique, in his eyes, and in his profile that is as hard as
hickory nut.” The reviewer for the Los Angeles Times simply summarized his thoughts
on Harold’s turn as, “something that has to be seen to be believed.”

Wexler envisioned an even greater role for Uptown in Medium Cool than what
materialized as the final cut. The script called for deeper character development for
Eileen Horton. She comes in contact with Peggy Terry, playing herself, and begins a
gradual politicization. Wexler filmed several scenes with Eileen, Terry, and welfare
rights activist “Big Dovie” Coleman. In one unused scene, Eileen sips coffee with Peggy
Terry at the organizer’s dining room table. Several of Terry’s radical posters are curled
up before them, removed from the walls in preparation for a fresh coat of paint. Eileen
quizzes Terry about the meanings of the slogans and images.

26 Champlin, “‘Medium’ With a Message: Wexler’s ‘Cool’ a Worried Message About the Mediums
‘Medium’ With a Message,” Los Angeles Times, September 21, 1969; Look Out Haskell, It’s Real! Part ?.
Bloom’s next role was as Clint Eastwood’s co-star in High Plains Drifter (1973). Bloom’s most prominent
later roles included that as the irreverent Mrs. Wormer in Animal House (1978) and as Jesus’s mother Mary
in Last Temptation of Christ (1988).


28 Champlin, “‘Medium’ With a Message: Wexler's ‘Cool’ a Worried Message about the Mediums
Eileen: Peggy, what’s that mean—that ‘black brother’ thing?
Peggy: Well that’s about a black guy who was shot down on the street, on the West Side. He is a brother, because the same thing happens to our young white guys here in this neighborhood. Southern guys.
Eileen: Don’t you feel kinda funny—I mean, because he’s black?
Peggy: No. I think when people start gettin shot down together I think it’s about time we start to forget about color.

Terry unrolls a JOIN Community Union poster, which she plans to take with her to Resurrection City in Washington, for the Poor People’s Campaign. Terry invites Eileen on the trip. Eileen demurs, answering that she would not be able to take time off from work. Later, Big Dovie joins the women. The organizer recounts her recent visit to Eileen’s home state of West Virginia. She describes how she organized unemployed miners around receiving full welfare and health benefits. Eileen is taken back when Terry interjects that that African American Dovie was in Appalachia organizing low-income whites.29

Medium Cool editor Paul Goldin later told an interviewer about the difficulty he had in cutting the scenes with Terry. He specifically told of a lost scene that followed Terry and Eileen to a press conference for Jesse Jackson’s Operation Breadbasket. Wexler captures Terry and Eileen in the audience, as Jackson lets loose a stem-winder, bracketed by a gospel-inflected electric blues ensemble and a stirring rendition of the Battle Hymn of the Republic by a young vocalist. Terry—in her real life role as a Jackson ally—eventually stands behind the podium, largely obscured by the forest of microphones. She exclaims, “We got to learn to stick together, we gotta stop fightin each other. And that’s what I tell people ever’ day. We gotta stop fightin em. Black people

https://vimeo.com/album/2967272/video/120656929
don’t care if you love em, just quit kickin’ em and quit cutting off your own nose to spite your face.” The crowd erupts as she steps from the podium.30

Figure 26. Peggy Terry and Eileen Horton. In this unused scene from Medium Cool, Terry (left, as herself) and Horton (Verna Bloom) listen intently in Terry’s apartment to Uptown activist “Big Dovie” Coleman (off screen), who is describing her time in West Virginia organizing poor whites around welfare reform.


In the end, Wexler and the editors did not deem the subplot of politicized Appalachian and southerners in Uptown to be good enough of a fit to justify the extra running time of an already lengthy film. The plot’s divergence to the black “militants,” however, remained. Black radicalism and Uptown radicalism appealed to Wexler in different manners. The two apartment scenes—the one that remained and the one that was cut—make this clear. The black radicals confront both the fictional and actual camera, as they stand toe-to-toe with Gus and Casselis and speak directly to the audience. The “militant” apartment scene has a sense authentic, simmering, and cohesive revolution. The Uptown radicalism, as depicted in Peggy Terry’s apartment, is far different and much less dramatic. The women sit at a table and sip coffee, as Terry calmly and even matter-of-factly explains to Eileen the tenets of interracial community organizing. The two southerners—Terry and Eileen—have little in common other than an accent and a low income. While the prospect of a black Big Dovie organizing a poor white mining community may have surprised many (including Eileen), the revelation was no revolution, at least in the way of the “militant” scene.

If Terry would have appeared in the final cut of Medium Cool, it would have come at time of unprecedented notoriety for the organizer. Terry was steadily emerging as a national figure in progressive politics since her time in Uptown. Terry, her son Youngblood, and Mike James attempted to nationalize the community union ideal left behind by JOIN, gaining considerable notice from the SDS at the height of that organization’s influence. She met with Martin Luther King, Jr. on several occasions going back to the late-1950s, whenever King sought council on taking his message to
low-income southern whites. King named her to the steering council for the Poor People’s Campaign, and charged her with rallying support for the 1968 return to Washington among low-income whites. With this new prominence, Terry appeared on the June 13, 1969 cover of *Jet*, and was the subject of a flattering six-page feature in the black-owned weekly magazine. In Chicago, her old CORE contacts provided entrée into community activism on the South and West Sides, as depicted in the cut scene from *Medium Cool* that followed her to the Operation Breadbasket event. When the new Peace and Freedom Party sought a vice presidential candidate to share the ticket with Eldridge Cleaver, it turned to Peggy Terry. Michael James managed Terry’s national campaign.³¹

*American Revolution 2: “We’re all niggers, it seems like”*

Across the street from where Verna Bloom and her canary dress weaved through history in Grant Park, an unassuming commercial film crew was in the process of filming an advertisement in the Conrad Hilton Hotel. They were relatively unaware of the brewing storm nearby. Led by a young native of small-town Indiana named Mike Gray, the collective known as “The Film Group” initially attempted to continue work on the advertisement for Kentucky Fried Chicken, even as megaphone shouts and teargas filled the air. Colonel Sanders—the Colonel Sanders—had enough, however. Sensing an important story unfolding in their midst, Gray and his soundmen grabbed their lightest,

³¹ Ruth B. Stein, “White Woman’s Drive to Aid Poor People: She Recruits for Poor Campaign,” *Jet* (June 13, 1968), 16-19.
most basic equipment and rushed out of the Hilton, across Michigan Avenue, and into the heart of the fracas.32

Gray’s camera captured what remains among the most harrowing sequences of the police riot. Immediately, the advertising recorders become direct cinema daredevils. The SCLC “mule train” passes by. Police officers farcically chase a pig let loose by the Yippies. Staying through the night, Gray captures a floodlit knot of protestors chanting, “Peace! Peace! Peace!” as a phalanx of Chicago Police Officers arrives just in front of a squadrol. When the wagon comes to a halt, the chants dissolve into chaotic shouting as the police wade into the crowd with clubs flying. Then comes a sequence of arrests and beatings shot in the style of combat footage—shaky, with the frequent dips and dives of the frame caused by a cameraman bolting for cover. An officer nonchalantly walks by while spraying a stream of mace towards protestors. Others point directly at Gray’s camera and menacingly slap their batons. Gray stays with the protest through the next day and records the attempt made by Dick Gregory to lead hundreds of marchers towards the convention site, an effort that ends in mass arrests at the rifle barrels of the National Guard.33

Gray knew that he had captured a historic moment, and initially sought to edit the footage and release it, somehow, as soon as possible. A chance meeting with a veteran social activist convinced him otherwise. Instead, Gray and his crew became fulltime

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33 Mike Gray, Director, American Revolution 2 (Chicago: The Film Group, 1969), 2007 Facets Video DVD.
direct cinema auteurs. They aspired to reveal the simmering social and political tension in Chicago left behind after the major media outlets lost interest. Over the course of the remainder of 1968, Gray’s crew chased the story into the same black communities that Cassellis and Wexler had ventured. The filmmakers had no script or definitive plan of action, but instead relied upon tips from the community and their own instincts. They titled the film, released almost simultaneously to Medium Cool in 1969, as American Revolution 2.\(^{34}\)

The documentary transitions from the opening riot sequence to a series of ‘man on the street’ interviews in black neighborhoods. Most of the people filmed are bemused at the Convention spectacle. One interviewee explains his theory about the reasoning behind the police violence: Mayor Daley had only called for such a massive police presence because he expected an African American mob; all dressed up and no ‘riot’ to confront, the police created their own. After a scene where a Black Panther interviews men in a pool hall who expound on political theories of varied coherence, Gray cuts to a close-up of a young woman directly addressing the camera:

> See, black people have been demonstrating and going on for I don’t know how long. And, um, you know we been gettin our heads beaten and whatnot—and we knew what was ‘bout to happen when those folks went down there [Grant Park] because we had seen the pigs on the scene. We know what he’s like, we know what he’s capable of…And, so everyone gets up tight when a few honkies get they heads beat. What did they do when we was gettin our heads beat?..I just wanna deal with blacks, and black liberation. My scene is pickin up my damn gun—and I’m a mother—have my baby in one hand and my gun in the other, and walkin up to some honky—to all honkies—to say I’m here, mothafucka, to get what’s mine.

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The camera pans out as the militant stands and places her rifle on her hip.

Some of the most profound moments of *American Revolution 2* came about from Gray’s purposeful flourishes made in the editing room. Just as we gain a full view of the young militant brandishing her rifle, Gray gives a jump cut to a medium shot of a gap-toothed, Bryll-Creamed Charles Geary. The “professional hillbilly” organizer raises his thick-framed glasses and rubs his nose, exasperated. “Each person is like, black power is doin its own thing, and Irish power or whatever you wanna call it. We all people, we’re all poor folks.” After a brief jump back to the black militants, we are returned to Uptown. An American Indian woman sitting next to Geary adds her perspective on how meetings with powerful whites have, for centuries, resulted in nothing but pain. Geary, sitting under a map of areas in Uptown slated for urban renewal, continues: “Here’s a picture up on the wall that says, ‘Uptown Up to Regain Its Glory.’ And you can’t do this with pig farmers and Indians off the reservation. You gotta get rid of em.” The young lady turns to the camera and says, “You should talk to the Young Patriots. They’re just young street guys who are doing things.”

Geary’s associate was referencing a reconstituted group of street corner revolutionaries that traced its ancestry all the way back to the Peacemakers, who sought legitimacy from Al Votaw in 1956. Although internal strife and police repression ended the Goodfellows after the Summerdale Police March of 1966, several core members redoubled efforts to bring a political consciousness to marginalized Uptown boys and young men. Renamed as the Young Patriots in recognition of the primarily southern
white heritage of its members, the group took cues from the Black Panther Party and the Young Lords—a Puerto Rican gang that likewise politicized in the mid-1960s.

In American Revolution 2, a Young Patriot named Johnny McGinnis introduces the group’s objectives. “We wanna stop getting hassled, we wanna have our own office—we wanna do our thing without getting hassled by the cops. We wanna get all together.” A heavy-lidded young man named Melvin “Hy” Thurman explains in a soft Tennessee accent, “You know you can say ‘non-violence,’ but up to certain extent, then you gotta use violence.” Hy continues, “See one of the things that’s good about the Young Patriots is that there’s different kinds of people in it other than southern. We got Spanish, Indian, Italian, blacks, and Roberto.” Someone off camera says, “Roberto’s a cool head. Where’s he come from?” Johnny answers, “Cuba. We even got ourselves a Cuban.”

The camera follows the Young Patriots to a meeting at the Church of Three Crosses in Lincoln Park. This church had gained a reputation as a center for liberal sympathy for radical causes, and welcomed opportunities to hear from grassroots activists. This particular meeting was organized around the issue of police brutality. A mellow young man named Jack “Junebug” Boykin takes the lead for the Patriots. He puts a foot up on a chair and sips a can of soda, as he explains the plight of low-income people in Uptown to a largely indifferent and, later, condescending audience. After Junebug, Hy, and another Patriot founder speaks, a woman quietly introduces the last of the visiting revolutionaries: “Mr. Bob Lee, of the Illinois Black Panther Party.” A slender young man with a medium afro, wearing a black turtleneck and black blazer makes his way to the front of the room, carrying his eyeglasses loosely in one hand and a clipboard in the
other. Lee looks more like a professor of English literature than a committed Maoist. On his way through the crowd, he matter-of-factly says, “Well I don’t have to tell my story. These brothers have already done it. We’re all niggers, it seems like.”

The Black Panther’s appearance is unexpected, given the strict separation of black and white experiences so far depicted in *American Revolution* 2. Once Gray followed the story of post-Convention community activism to Uptown, he learned of a surprising, embryonic coalition forming between elements of the Panthers, the Puerto Rican Young Lords in Lincoln Park, and the Young Patriots. This Panther-led alliance strategy emerged with the ascension of Fred Hampton to the state party leadership. Hampton sought truces with gangs on the South and West Side that had been in conflict with the Panthers. He also appealed to other gangs trying to make the transition to street-level political organizations. Unknown to Hampton, Lee had already connected with the founders of the Young Patriots—that moment was captured by Mike Gray in the hall of the Church of the Three Crosses in Lincoln Park. Many Panthers were suspicious of Hampton’s strategy, but Bob Lee threw himself into creating an unlikely alliance with angry young white people in Uptown.35

Bob Lee may have felt that he need not to give his personal story to the Lincoln Park liberals, but that rhetorical strategy did not make his background any less relevant and remarkable. Lee, whose full name is—fantastically—Robert E. Lee III, was born in Houston, Texas, and first moved to Chicago as a VISTA worker. Lee worked as an outreach officer to black, Puerto Rican, and white gangs on the near Northwest Side.

After the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., Lee joined the fledgling Illinois Black Panther Party and gained the trust of the new chairman, Fred Hampton. As a field marshal, he aimed to secure support from unlikely allies throughout the city, from liberal lakefront whites to presumably hostile area gangs. His meeting of the Young Patriots was the result of a scheduling error by the Church of Three Crosses. The organizers did not realize that the Young Patriots consisted of southern whites. If they had known, they would have certainly avoided the potential tension between them and the Panther representatives. Since the theme of the meeting was police brutality, however, Lee and the Patriots found immediate common ground. Lee later recalled being shocked at many of the middle-class liberals’ condescending tone towards Junebug, Hy, and Johnny. His spontaneous opening line—“We’re all niggers, it seems like”—was an authentic expression of discovery for the Texan. Over the next several weeks, he learned that he and the Patriot leaders shared more than an accent.36

Gray’s film crew captured Lee’s introduction to the Uptown community, at a meeting called by Geary and the Young Patriots. After an introduction from Geary, Lee carefully coaxes the apprehensive audience to share their stories of frustration with landlords and the police. He reassures them that, as an African American, he can identify with unfair treatment. Lee’s call for class-based unity connects with the recalcitrant audience. A middle-aged man named John Howard, a Virginia native and early JOIN member, responds with an impromptu monologue that solidifies the breakthrough. “The

36 Williams, From the Bullet to the Ballot, 126-129. Ebert was particularly moved by the scene at the Church of Three Crosses, concluding that the dismissive attitudes of some of the hosts were the “ultimate in liberalism…To be bored by someone rather than admit you feel superior to him.” Ebert, Roger Ebert’s Four-Star Reviews, 27.
building’s not fit for dogs to live in, but humans gotta pay $140 dollars a month for the thing. They sold the building to new ownership. What we need is an understanding of the people—.” Bob Lee interjects, “Right on.” Howard continues, “Coalition among the people—We need the people to stick together—And take them owners, and put ‘em over in the lake somewhere!” Lee punctuates the notion with an even more emphatic “Right on!” as the crowd applauds.

Then, the Panther turns to Charles Geary’s daughter Marcella, who holds her toddler on her lap. After considerable cajoling, the shy Marcella rises and recounts an instance of police brutality against her brother that she witnessed. Over the applause, a proud Chuck Geary beams in the background, and says, “You shoulda heard her cussin the police!” The discussion of police behavior riles a boyish teenager in the audience named Roger: “I’m tired of ‘em coming down the street and kickin’ my damn head for nothin’ I ain’t done.” After Lee evokes the effectiveness of Huey Newton’s rhetoric, Roger continues, “We gonna stop this shit one way or the other, even if we have to fight with guns.” Lee interrupts Roger, places his large hand on the teen’s head, and gives it a playful shake. Roger shifts in his chair and looks away awkwardly. “The first thing you gotta do,” Lee says, “is discipline—learn some discipline, before you ever confront the pig. Because he’ll off you, Roger. He’ll off you, man.”

Earlier in the film, Junebug Boykin also considers the dangers of confronting the Chicago Police Department. In giving the history of the Young Patriots, Boykin tells the Lincoln Park liberals about how the Goodfellows singled out the city’s most decorated cop and marched on the Summerdale station. He recounts the response: “A cop jumped
up and said, ‘Listen you sumbitch hillbilly, if I see you out on the street tonight, I’m gonna blow yo head off.’ We wasn’t smart enough, we didn’t know that we was gonna be attacked right away. But we were.” Boykin explained how the police arrested and beat Goodfellows in groups of three and four, how members turned against each other, how “cats got shot at and got run out of the neighborhood.” The Patriots with experience in Uptown knew that tackling police brutality would need to be a slow, steady, and broad effort.

Lee closes his first meeting in Uptown with a jeremiad calling for the interracial movement of the poor that activists had been toiling towards for almost five years in Uptown.

Once you realize, man, that your house is funky with rats and roaches—you know, same with a black dude’s house is—once you realize that your brothers are being brutalized by the cops—the same way the West Side and South Side is—you know, once you realize, man, that you’re getting inadequate education in these high schools and junior high schools over here—the same with the South Side and the West Side—once you realize you are paying taxes—taxes!—for the cops to whup your ass—you’re paying ‘em! You’re payin’ ‘em for to whup your ass. You’re payin’ ‘em for to come in and beat your children. You’re payin’ ‘em to run you off the corner, and you’re payin’ ‘em to kill ya! And build from there. The same thing’s happenin’ on the South Side and the West Side. If you can realize the concept of poverty—of poverty! A revolution can begin.

Someone then announces that the Patriots, the Black Panther envoy, and Geary plan to disrupt the upcoming Model Cities community council meeting to be held at the Hull House Uptown Center. As the meeting breaks and the crowd moves towards the exit, middle-aged John Howard reaches over to shake Bob Lee’s hand. Lee tells Howard, “Right on. I’ll see you Monday night.”
By 1968 much of the federally-funded urban renewal and War on Poverty programs in Uptown had been reorganized by the Demonstration Cities and Metropolitan Development Act of 1966. Known to all as “Model Cities,” this initiative sought to concentrate and streamline social programs and redevelopment plans that had mushroomed into unwieldy bureaucracies. Chicago boasted seven Model Cities areas, including Uptown. Like the War on Poverty’s Chicago Committee on Urban Opportunity before it, Model Cities was built around existing community social, political, and economic structures—with only a token degree of involvement from the low-income or marginalized communities the initiative sought to serve. For Uptown progressives like Charles Geary, surviving elements of JOIN, and the emergent Young Patriots, Model Cities was just another in a long line of hypocritical efforts to address inequality. Political and economic elites—many with ties to the UCC, like Urania Damofle—stacked the Uptown Area Model Cities Community Council. The council had the power to recommend and approve urban renewal initiatives, including proposals for clearance and redevelopment. In early 1969, the council began considering a proposal from the City Colleges of Chicago to clear one of the densest sections of low-income population, in a portion of Sheridan Park bordered by the intersection of Broadway and Wilson, in favor for a new two-year college. Forces aligned with Geary and the Young Patriots immediately recognized the proposal as a thinly-disguised effort to push the poor out of Uptown.37

37 For detailed depictions of the controversial clearance and construction of Truman College, see Bennett, Larry. Neighborhood Politics: Chicago and Sheffield (New York: Garland Publishing, 1997), 84-89; Siegel, Uptown Chicago; and Roger Guy, “Hank Williams Lives in Uptown: Appalachians and the
Mike Gray’s film crew followed Geary and the Patriots to the Model Cities Community Council meeting that the insurgents planned to disrupt. *American Revolution* 2 captured the crescendo of the protest. The Young Patriots and dozens of Geary’s supporters bring the meeting to a halt before a vote could be cast, with thunderous clapping and shouts of “Power to the people!” and “Don’t vote! Don’t vote!” Geary and Junebug move towards the lectern, as several committee members huddle during the din, debating amongst themselves the proper parliamentary answer to the chaos. The look on Urania Damofle’s face is a combination of anger and disbelief. Geary makes his move to take over the microphone. He jabs his finger at the presiding committee member and barks, “What do you got against poor people?! You used to be one too!”

Eventually, all but the Young Patriots and Geary’s forces leave the room, and the “professional hillbilly” begins to hold a strategic meeting. One of Bob Lee’s Panther comrades whispers in Geary’s ear, who then announces that a sergeant from the Summerdale Police Precinct is about to enter the room. Bob Lee takes command of the meeting, and respectfully asks the sergeant for a meeting between the community—as represented by the Model City insurgents—and the police department, about allegations of harsh treatment.

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The final act of *American Revolution 2* consists of a meeting between Geary, the Panther envoy, the Young Patriots, other concerned citizens of Uptown, and two officials from the Summerdale Police District at Hull House Uptown Center on February 17, 1969. The Patriots, with the backing of the Lee’s Black Panther mission and Charles Geary’s new grassroots organization Voice of the People, won this particularly skirmish with the police department. The commander was conciliatory, and expressed a willingness to investigate allegations of brutality. The sergeant even wore one of Geary’s multicolor pins throughout the meeting. The precinct leaders announced that an officer would be stationed at Hull House, charged with maintaining an open door to the
community. He urged the radicals to lodge their complaints through these new channels.38

The Young Patriots’ unique style of dress and their use of peculiar symbols come to the fore during the police meeting. The Patriots self-consciously cultivated a conspicuous style of dress and comportment meant to grab attention. Although the Patriots were proud of their non-white members and allies in Uptown, they enlisted symbols of working-class masculinity and southern white heritage. Most members dressed in leather jackets, denim, and boots. Some retained the combed-back hairstyles that gave the nickname of “greasers” to their like. Country music remained a key identity marker, even as the age of conservative marketability of the genre dawned. Guitars were ever-present at the Young Patriot storefront, as they were at rallies and protests. These symbols may have set the Patriots apart from other revolutionaries in Chicago, but they did little to mark them in Uptown. Members therefore adopted the beret as an accessory, in the manner of the Black Panthers, the Young Lords, and the Brown Berets.

The Young Patriots formed over shared grievances about perceptions of Uptown’s low-income southern and Appalachian white community. Due to class biases and ongoing specious connections between the ‘newcomers’ and Uptown ‘blight,’ this whiteness assumed more dimensions than in the South. “Hillbilly” was a term of derision, muttered by redevelopers behind closed doors or spat at young men during arrests. Given these dynamics, one symbol struck the Patriots as an established connotation of white southern pride: the Confederate Battle Flag. The Young Patriots—proud of both their

regional background and anti-racism—sought to destabilize and reclaim the symbol. In an impassioned speech to a group of supporters and representatives from the Summerdale Police Precinct, Young Patriot William “Preacherman” Fesperman attempted to explain the reasons for the Patriots’ use of the flag.

I’m not gonna run out a long line of particular harassments that have been thrown up against people, but just use one to clear up a point you [the precinct commander] made about, which is probably the strongest point we been talkin about tonight. That is that I’ve been in the house of, uh, southern white people and I’ve heard policemen—pardon me ladies—say, throw em up against the wall, and say, “You fuckin hillbillies what you got on you?,” and this kinda thing. And all I wanna say is when you talk about tolerance—we not tolerated this. We angry. A hundred years ago—This flag which I wear on my cap represents the Confederate States of America. We was beat down, and we beat down people, for a hundred years. We know what it’s like to beat down people. We beat people down hard. We all gettin ourselves together, we angry about it. Because we’ve all been beaten down.

Preacherman affixed two other symbols to his wardrobe: the black-red-white-brown-yellow-striped button of the multi-racial people’s movement in Uptown and a “Free Huey” button on his beret beside the Dixie patch. Years later, Hy Thurman carefully spoke about the use of the symbol with José “Cha-Cha” Jimenez, his comrade from the Young Lords. After a nervous laugh, he started, “That symbolized, of course people from the South. But we were trying to take that flag and give it a whole different definition…We were saying that it’s not white power, per se, but it’s a white power that respected all people.”

American Revolution 2 concludes with the Young Patriots discussing the police summit afterwards. Roger, the boyish militant earlier calmed by Lee, tells Junebug, “I think they’s just feedin us a bunch shit tonight, just to keep things from getting started.” Lee reassures Junebug, encouraging him to begin the next phase of organizing. Junebug instructs the group, “There’s one thing we gotta do—we gotta get out and reach a bunch of people, because if we don’t, we gonna get picked off easy, and we’re gonna get picked off quick. And we gotta get people backing us up, so we can show people backing us up, so they’ll [police] get off our backs.” Lee agrees to take 200 of Geary’s multicolored buttons to distribute to Black Panthers. Roger persists, “They ain’t gonna stop crackin’ our heads.” Here, Gray indulges in the only instance of off-screen sound. The film cuts to a close-up of a memorial statue in one of Uptown’s famous cemeteries. A cacophony of voices from an earlier scene take over, yelling over one another about the relative merits and futility for dying for a cause—be it in Vietnam or Uptown. “If I know I’m dying, at least I got the satisfaction that I fought.” “Ain’t no satisfaction in dying, man! Fuck it! Ain’t no use dying a hero, you’re fuckin dead! And that’s it!” The quarrel continues as Gray’s camera pans out and elevates in an ever-widening birds-eye view of the large cemetery. Then, over an aerial of downtown Chicago, the young man critical of a hero’s death has the final word in American Revolution 2: “Fuck that, I want it now, because it’s mine.”

Mike Gray’s film crew captured, perhaps, the high-water mark of radical activism in the Uptown’s post-JOIN era. In focusing exclusively on the organizing efforts of Geary, Lee, and the Young Patriots, American Revolution 2 reveals what Medium Cool
elides. Yet, Gray’s sophisticated direct cinema approach to his subjects is effective to the point of distorting the magnitude of the movement in Uptown. The earnest connection between the activists and the camera, and the splicing together of the most dramatic moments, can leave a viewer with the impression that Uptown was aflame with revolutionaries and on the brink of a radical social and political reorganization.

Furthermore, anyone sympathetic to the cause of social justice could easily romanticize the activists featured in the documentary. There is seduction in the way that Gray films Bobby Lee explaining post-colonial theory while weaving through a seated crowd of Lincoln Park liberals or low-income white southerners. Throughout, Charles Geary hones the performativity of being the camera’s favorite “professional hillbilly.” The brooding Young Patriots are cloaked in a masculine virility that teeters at times on the edge of menace. They wear their boots and denim for all occasions, and curse the police and other authorities between drags from dramatically cradled cigarettes. Yet Junebug, Preacherman, and their comrades also boast about their non-white friends, and grope towards a cultural identity capable of tapping into the explosiveness of post-colonialism. On screen, the Patriots were the closest thing to a synthesis of Marlon Brando, Woody Guthrie, and Stokely Carmichael that the world will ever see.

But *American Revolution* 2 was no unmediated expression of a mass movement, despite the magnanimous presence and eloquent fury of the main players. The camera magnified the size of the movement. The Young Patriot cadre probably never exceeded two-dozen dedicated members. Geary’s Voice of the People was only beginning, and waxed and waned depending on the particular issue at hand. The players in *American
Revolution 2 did their part to make the most of their turn on the stage of late-sixties radicalism. Figures like Preacherman and Geary clad themselves—often literally—in the symbols of revolution.

Gray sought to release the film in the spring of 1969, after several private screenings. After one showing, Fred Hampton announced a new initiative to continue the multiracial spirit on display in the Uptown scenes of American Revolution 2. The plan would establish a unified front among the Panthers and the prominent politicized street gangs, particularly the Young Lords and the Young Patriots. Hampton dubbed the
alliance, the “Rainbow Coalition.” Mayor Daley was, reportedly, much less impressed by what he heard about the film. No movie theaters would show the documentary, a boycott Gray was convinced had originated with Daley’s strong-arming of the Film Projector’s Union. The mayor could not, however, prevent Roger Ebert from seeing American Revolution 2. Ebert haled the film as essential viewing for all Chicagoans and gave the movie a rare four-star recommendation. Playboy editor Hugh Hefner—never one to miss an opportunity to bedevil Daley or capitalize on a controversy—broke the boycott and showed the film to the public in his theater.  

The Young Patriots were only able to partially build on their role in the Rainbow Coalition. As expected, the Red Squad increased surveillance of the Patriots, and almost certainly placed effective informants and agents-provocateurs within the group. Black Panthers suspected that either the Red Squad or FBI COINTELPRO agents initiated a whispering campaign in black communities that the Patriots were affiliated with the Ku Klux Klan, and that their anti-racist message was disingenuous. The everyday struggles of building a movement in Uptown persisted, as local police hounded every move of the Patriots. Just with JOIN a few years earlier, debates about tactics and long-term goals weakened the group from within. Those who preferred a more militant stance, particularly the North Carolina newcomer Preacherman, broke from those who called for an Uptown-based grassroots movement. Preacherman took the Young Patriot name

40 For detailed accounts of the formation and short life of the Rainbow Coalition, see Sonnie and Tracy, Hillbilly Nationalists, 66-93; and Jakobi Williams, From the Bullet to the Ballot: The Illinois Chapter of the Black Panther Party, 126-166.


The Uptown-bound Patriots adopted the community service model made famous by the Black Panther chapters. Junebug and Youngblood led efforts to establish free breakfast programs and health clinics. The Young Patriots even applied for Model Cities funding for the programs. The clinic emerged as the most impactful aspect of Patriot radicalism. Dozens of doctors, nurses, medical students, and other concerned citizens volunteered to staff the facility, which bounced between several spaces as authorities pressured landlords to evict the activists. Despite the broad support, the Patriots could not withstand the official resistance, which included several police raids. The last Young Patriot health clinic closed around 1973, and the Young Patriot name slowly faded.\footnote{Sonnie and Tracy, \textit{Hillbilly Nationalists}, 83-93.}

\textbf{A Sixties Conclusion}

On December 4, 1969, agents from the Cook County Attorney’s office, with the support of the Chicago Police and the FBI, raided the home of Illinois Black Panther Party chairman Fred Hampton. An informant had drugged the young leader, so he had little chance to react when authorities burst through the door. Witnesses claimed in subsequent Federal civil rights court hearings that the raiders shot Hampton several times as he slept next to his eight-and-one-half month pregnant fiancée, before dragging him from his bed and putting two bullets into his head at point-blank range. The raid was a result of the intensification of a police war on the Illinois Black Panther Party. A few
weeks earlier, a confrontation had resulted in two dead and nine wounded Chicago police officers, and one dead Panther. FBI and Chicago Police Red Squad surveillance had also intensified, as authorities became increasingly worried about Hampton’s slow-but-steady coalition building efforts among black gangs, the Panthers, and politicized street organizations like the Puerto Rican Young Lords and the Young Patriots. At the time of the killing, Mike Gray was filming a documentary about the Panther leader, titled simply, *Fred Hampton*. In classic direct cinema style, Gray continued the project and followed the aftermath of the raid. He released the film with the new title, *The Murder of Fred Hampton*. The events that Gray filmed between 1968 and 1970 convinced the young Indianan to devote the remainder of his life to a secular mission for social justice.  

John Howard, the weather-beaten JOIN veteran who connected so earnestly with Bob Lee after proposing to ‘throw the owners in the lake,’ remained an important local member of Uptown’s radical community. He traveled alongside the younger activists throughout the city and country, bolstering the group’s legitimacy with those who might be suspicious of an exclusively young contention. After attending an SCLC meeting in Atlanta in late 1969, locals reportedly identified Howard as, “the guy who works with niggers in Chicago.” Later that night he was found dead, his throat slit. The murder remains unsolved, yet many Patriots and their allies suspected a connection between Howard’s vocal anti-racism and the resistance he faced. The Young Patriots named one of their first health clinics in Howard’s honor.  

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45 The death of John Howard (referred to by the pseudonym John Dawson) is first mentioned in Giltin and Hollander, *Uptown*, 216; see also, Sonnie and Tracy, *Hillbilly Nationalists*, 82-83.
Fred Hampton’s murder sent the Illinois Black Panther Party and the sapling Rainbow Coalition into disarray. Bob Lee’s work in Uptown never enjoyed the complete backing of the Party, yet Hampton’s Rainbow vision had given the organizer a mandate. With Hampton’s support gone Lee’s work suffered and the formal connections between the Panthers and the Patriots withered. Renowned organizer Saul Alinsky contacted Lee after he saw *American Revolution 2*, and offered him a coveted spot in the Industrial Areas Foundation training program. Lee eventually moved back to Houston, where he built an invincible grassroots political dynasty in the city’s Fifth Ward. Lee’s labor came to full fruition upon the appointment of the first black commissioner for Harris County—Lee’s younger brother El Franco Lee. Gray, ever-enamored by the slender Black Panther, reunited with Bob Lee in Houston in 2007. He found Lee delivering second-hand clothing, doing yard work, and helping students with art projects in the Fifth Ward, all in the name of securing votes for his political machine. El Franco Lee remains perhaps the most powerful black elected official in Texas. Mike Gray passed away before completing the film, in which he planned to connect the little-known story of Robert E. Lee II and that of the nation’s most famous community organizer, newly elected President Barack Obama. Gray’s final work behind the camera came alongside Haskell Wexler, in documenting protests during the 2012 NATO convention in Chicago.

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“Professional hillbilly” Charles Geary remained resolute in his organizing efforts past the tumultuous years of 1968 and 1969. He struggled to build a viable base, as health problems limited Peggy Terry and some of the Young Patriots left Uptown. Urban renewal and dislocation emerged as Geary’s primary battleground. Despite a few concessions won by the likes of the action seen in *American Revolution 2*, Daley’s urban renewal apparatus remained entrenched. By 1970, a resurgent pro-renewal effort was poised to realize the long-sought dream of razing large tracts of low-income housing.

Geary ran for 46th ward alderman in 1971. In his campaign questionnaire, he described the Daley years as “living hell,” invoked Will Rogers, and called for the disarmament of the police. The candidate disclosed his assets to the press while picking up his unemployment check. Ever performing, Geary claimed a 1964 Pontiac recently purchased for $60, two hickory rocking chairs (value unknown), $3.75 in savings at the Bank of Chicago, and a “few steel F-strings for his Kingston guitar.” Although he fell well short of threatening the incumbent backed by the Democratic Party, his unabashed campaign on behalf of the ‘people’ foretold shifts in the Uptown electorate that would emerge later in the decade.48

Tragedy struck the Blankenship family just weeks after Studs Terkel interviewed the family’s short-of-breath patriarch, Buddy, for his radio show in 1971. A dispute over a lost-and-found diamond ring devolved into a home invasion, and a cousin accidentally shot and killed Buddy Blankenship. The death eroded the family’s already unstable toehold on social, economic, and emotional stability. Harold Blankenship’s mother

became a chronic alcoholic and attempted several suicides. Harold dropped out of school in the eighth grade, and bounced between family members in Chicago. Harold’s life after the camera crews left, therefore, eerily echoed that of his fictional life. Haskell Wexler would not have been capable of tying such a profound knot of reality and fiction.  

Not long after his mother succumbed to cirrhosis in the late-1970s, Blankenship and his siblings moved back to West Virginia for good. Filmmaker Mike Cronin, in the process of creating the six-hour documentary on the making of *Medium Cool*, tracked down the middle-aged Harold Blankenship living a hard-scrabble life in rural West Virginia in 2005. Cronin’s documentary *Sooner or Later* focuses on the travails of the extended Blankenship family, as they endure poverty and a younger generation that drops out of high school and wrestles with Oxycontin abuse and a lack of job opportunities. Although missing several teeth and wearing a weathered face framed by straggly, long gray hair, Harold’s piercing dark eyes persist—still as “hard as a hickory nut.”

Studs Terkel moved to Uptown’s Castlewood Terrace in 1977. Peggy Terry remained one of his closest friends, as he mined her story and the stories of her low-income neighbors time and again for his books and radio and television work. When Terry died in 2004, Terkel was too ill to attend her memorial. He recorded his eulogy on a CD, to be played at the service. In his 1985 retrospective *Studs Terkel’s Chicago*, he recalled the impact that the Blankenship family had on him. To Terkel, Buddy and

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50 Memorial Service, 2004, Peggy Terry Collection, WHS.
Harold Blankenship’s lives represented an ineffable character of his adopted and beloved neighborhood. He described the last time he talked to Harold. “About five or six years later, I heard his voice on the phone. It was the dead tone of a seventeen-year-old loser. He had lost his factory job, was deep in debt, saddled with a sick brother-in-law, a care-worn sister, and a baby or two. And hardly any schooling. Dame Care had him on the hip. Uptown—they say it can’t be beat.”

*Uptown—they say it can’t be beat.* Terkel’s double-entendre captures the hope and dramatic tragedy of the turbulent late-1960s. Entropy emerged as a key representation of those revolutionary times in Uptown, be it by way of a fictional car accident, a documentarian’s final wide aerial shot of Graceland Cemetery, or the real-life grinding poverty experienced by trans-regional migrants. Even the smallest victories seemed pyrrhic, in the short term—a protest march on the police station, a lead paint poisoning testing project, or a fleeting coalition between black militants and Confederate flag-wearing revolutionaries. These moments were significant for their symbolic meanings, more than their social and political impact. Yet that symbolism carried weight for those who continued the struggle for social and economic equality into the 1970s, outside of the range of the camera lens or media spotlight.
CONCLUSION

MIDNIGHT AT CAROL’S PUB

Carol’s Pub sits on the far southwestern edge of Uptown, on a stretch of Clark Street that divides Sheridan Park and Ravenswood. The façade of peeling paint, mismatched masonry, and small tinted windows does not exactly serve as a welcoming beacon. But signs nevertheless advertise “Live Country and Western Music ‘til 4 am” on the weekend and “Country Karaoke” on other nights. During the day, a smattering of locals pass their time at the bar, taking frequent smoking breaks outside. After 10 o’clock on Fridays and Saturdays, the house band Diamondback holds court, just as they have for almost two decades. The quartet consists of two middle-age men in jeans and boots wielding a Fender and a bass guitar, a younger drummer, and a middle-age woman in skirt and boots. Haggard and Cash best suit the vocal leads of Mike—a Kentucky native who once lived in Chicago but now drives to his Carol’s gig from Cincinnati. Reva strums her acoustic guitar over her strangely appropriate, warbling renditions of Dolly and Loretta. Diamondback tears through the classics for an audience of ardent fans of the genre, hard drinkers only interested in the beer specials, and after midnight a large number of young people up from Lakeview and Lincoln Park indulging in an ironic visit to a country ‘dive bar’ in an otherwise gentrified section of Chicago. Carol’s opened in 1973, at the tail end of an era when white southern and Appalachian working-class
culture defined Uptown. The bar’s history—as the last Chicago honky-tonk—comes as a surprise to most late-night patrons.

Another vernacular expression of Uptown identity, on the neighborhood’s opposite corner along Argyle Avenue, highlights Uptown’s present in the ways that Carol’s Pub evokes its past. Since the early 1980s, Argyle has been a central location for immigrants and refugees from Southeast Asia—yet another in a perpetual wave of Uptown newcomers. Several murals along the stretch infuse the neighborhood’s conspicuous diversity with Asian and Asian American imagery. One late example, painted on the side of a Vietnamese restaurant, consists of black, brown, yellow, and white hands collaborating on the message “Community Unity.” A stove’s exhaust vent is festooned with the words, “One Love.” For most Uptown residents—longstanding and recent—the ideal of cultural diversity remains a valuable neighborhood identity.1

Figure 30. Mural on Nha Hang Restaurant, Argyle Avenue (2015). Photograph by author.

The seeds for today’s valuable multiracial idealism in Uptown sprouted in the late-1960s, but were planted in the two decades after World War II. Cultural diversity was a key marker for revolutionary Uptown, even if activists there had more immediate symbolic than political impact. Leftists and radicals were not the first to formulate and enlist diversity as a way to articulate and achieve aspirations. Consensus liberals and pragmatic redevelopers did so over a decade prior, as—in the words of banker Ed Dobbeck—the UCC ‘cased about in a vacuum.’ The differences between these conceptions and uses of diversity came about due to political, economic, and cultural contexts in which the conceivers worked. The four great issues of the postwar urban North and Midwest—urban renewal, demographic change, the confrontation of poverty, and community activism—built the Uptown diversity crucible. The spatial neighborhood remained the primary commonality of these dynamics, where actors tested their ideas and visions. Yet Uptown was more than a mere container for action. The neighborhood’s shifting cultural landscape and population, and its spatial and infrastructural realities inspired, informed, and sometimes constrained conceptions of diversity across the sociopolitical spectrum.

The lines between establishment and radical views of diversity were often not as neatly drawn as they first seemed. Al Votaw, the key architect of late-1950s urban liberalism, emerged from the radical left intellectual tradition of the late-1940s. Market-driven redevelopers, like Ed Dobbeck and W. Clement Stone, approved of diversity-driven messages usually reserved for liberals and radicals, as they recognized the theme’s potential as a magnet for public and private support. It was Votaw’s “The Hillbillies
the research that resulted in *The Other Americans*, which in turn influenced both the New Left and the War on Poverty. Although liberals like Morris Hirsh and Frank McAllister became estranged from the redevelopment bloc in the early-1960s, they reappeared as key allies for several New Left-led community projects a few years later. When these New Leftists arrived in Uptown in 1965, many brought with them class-based biases shared by liberals and conservatives.

Tensions within liberal, economic growth, and radical groups only made the Uptown politics of cultural diversity an even more complicated picture. The Uptown redevelopment consensus became unstable in the early-1960s, mirroring the limitations of the lauded—if mythical—American national consensus. Differences within Uptown’s “vital center” preceded the significant attacks from sojourning New Leftists and rooted local community organizers. These radicals, likewise, faced their own internal challenges. JOIN virtually folded in 1967, partly due to tactical and philosophical differences between locals and outsiders. As with the denouement of the fabled national liberal consensus, the limitations of the New Left in Uptown reflected a broader history. By the late-1960s, the New Left had evolved into a force based on national discourses about anti-war protest and a burgeoning counter-culture. Local and grassroots movements bore the consequences.

By 1970, neither redevelopers nor community organizers had realized their visions for Uptown. While the latter had the vivid symbolism of multiracial radicalism on their side, the former built upon the political and economic capital of dominant
institutions like the City of Chicago bureaucracy and financial backers. In Uptown, the inertia of redevelopment bested the élan of radicalism—at least in the short-run. Redevelopers ensured the clearance of two vital sections of working-class and poor activism, in favor of a community college and market-rate apartments. Activists were left to build upon the virtues of a noble fight lost.

As small as they were in numbers, the efforts of Uptown’s radicals still achieved important local and national notice. Peggy Terry’s 1968 campaign for Vice President on the Peace and Freedom Party ticket raised the profile of the neighborhood and its activists. For example, Roxanne Dunbar, a young women’s liberationist in Boston, wrote an adulatory letter to Terry in 1968 after reading about her in a national magazine. On the stationary for Dunbar’s fledgling cooperative Women against Society, the upstart radical demonstrated the ways that Uptown activism reverberated beyond the neighborhood.

I just read the Guardian article on you, and I was thrilled to find one of my people involved as you are. Your background sounds like mine. I was born in San Antonio, and raised in a little farming community near El Reno, Oklahoma, called Piedmont. I have been to Haleyville [Terry’s hometown]. So few of us get out of that life, and the ones that do (like my own brothers) sell-out, buy cars, houses, boats, work in defense plants, etc. I wish my mother had known she could have had some effect on society. She was illiterate and brilliant, started drinking ten years ago, and died a few months ago. I have seen a lot of that, as I’m sure you have.²

At the time of her letter, Roxanne Dunbar had recently completed her PhD in history and had moved to Boston in hopes of sparking a feminist revolution. Over the next four

² Roxanne Dunbar to Peggy Terry, October 11, 1968. Peggy Terry Papers, WHS, Madison, Wisconsin.
decades, as Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, she emerged as a leading activist for women’s, indigenous, and working-class issues, as she published five books on the topics.³

Members of the remnants of the New Left continued to filter in Uptown in the 1970s. Walter “Slim” Coleman arrived in Uptown in 1969, from Texas by way of Harvard. He connected with Peggy Terry and elements of Chuck Geary’s multiracial Voice of the People. Two Coleman-led organizations, the Black Panther Party-inspired Intercommunal Survival Committee and the Heart of Uptown Coalition, worked to retain low-income housing in the face of persistent efforts to develop Uptown for middle-class and elite residents. With Geary decamped to Horse Branch, Kentucky, and Terry limited by health problems, Coleman emerged as the central figure for Uptown’s dogged community radicals.⁴ In 1975, Young Lords founder José “Cha Cha” Jimenez mounted a spirited campaign for the city council seat of the 46th ward, which by then encompassed southern and central Uptown. Although he fell short of unseating the Democrat-backed incumbent, Jimenez’s efforts energized community activists. When the victorious candidate left Chicago for a spot in Jimmy Carter’s administration, progressive organizer and former SDS member Helen Shiller ran for the open seat. Like Jimenez, Shiller’s insurgent campaign fell short—first by 1,000 votes in the 1978 special election, and then by 247 votes in 1979.⁵

³ For more on Dunbar-Ortiz, see her two memoirs: Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, Red Dirt: Growing Up Okie (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2006); and Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, Outlaw Woman: A Memoir of the War Years (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2002).

⁴ Bennett, Neighborhood Politics, 165-175.

Coleman, Shiller, and the revitalized progressive low-income movement formed in a context of shifting Uptown demographics. Central and eastern Uptown became poorer and less-white through the 1970s. The southern and Appalachian white community—already dealt blows by the clearances for Truman College and Pensacola Place Apartments—gradually decreased. Many migrants returned south, while others secured more stable housing in Chicago’s single-family home districts or the suburbs.  

African Americans continued to filter in from the South and West Sides, settling alongside existing Hispanic and American Indian Uptown residents. In the mid-1960s, activists in JOIN and the Young Patriots went to great lengths to publicize non-white allies. By the mid-1970s, however, community organizing and multiracial poverty were visibly and inextricably linked in Uptown. This neighborhood dynamic was conspicuous in persistently segregated Chicago.

Other sections of Uptown, particularly the middle-class and single-family home Lakewood-Balmoral district in the northwest, remained relatively unchanged during the otherwise tumultuous 1970s. The Uptown “city within a city” seemed to persist, with the neighborhood’s ‘downtown’ bearing the brunt of disinvestment and poverty rates while the middle-class perimeter maintained its status. Yet in 1980, voters in the northern third of Uptown passed an unprecedented measure that allowed them to officially secede from Uptown. Thus was born Edgewater, the last of Chicago’s official 77 community areas.

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While the northeastern section of Edgewater steadily diversified, Lakewood-Balmoral retained its status. The Uptown “city within a city” was now smaller, less influential, and poorer than ever.

Designation of Lakewood-Balmoral as a National Historic District in 1999 proved to be a major component of the area’s rosy real estate prospects. This use of the federal government’s National Historic Preservation Act as a community renewal or conservation gambit had actually been perfected in Uptown in the decade prior. In 1984, an architectural historian successfully nominated most of Buena Park as a National Historic District, allowing property owners to take advantage of tax incentives for renovations of contributing apartment buildings. The next year, a real estate developer hired researchers to nominate the majority of Sheridan Park as a historic district. The two designations incentivized property owners to convert or maintain apartments for middle-class prices, creating what one scholar deemed “gentrification zones.”

In many ways, the tax benefits in the National Historic Preservation program achieved the subsidized apartment de-conversion and renovation that Albert Votaw and the UCC sought in the late-1950s.

Chicago’s political scene underwent a sea change in the 1980s, one in which Uptown played an vital role. In 1983 Harold Washington became Chicago’s first African American mayor. In Uptown, his campaign leaned heavily upon community organizers like Slim Coleman and Helen Shiller, who had steadily built a low-income multiracial

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voting bloc in the 46th ward. Washington rewarded Coleman and his allies with access and influence in city hall. The local electoral shift finalized in 1987, when Shiller won the alderman’s seat.9 She proved to be a polarizing figure from her earliest days in office. Famous Tribune columnist Mike Royko attacked the new alderman in October 1987.

Apparently her vision is that Uptown should remain a seedy old neighborhood. She wants to make sure that no real estate developers come into Uptown and put up nice new buildings that will attract nice new people. This is known as gentrification. In some circles, such as Shiller’s, it is viewed as an evil thing. In other circles, it is viewed as a damned good thing because it turns neighborhoods that are verging on becoming slums, or are already there, into stable, livable communities.10

Thousands of affordable housing residents and advocates felt otherwise, as evidenced by Shiller’s five-term career in city council in which she won what one observer deemed a “quadrennial class war.”11 Shiller’s political arrival and the class-based acrimony it engendered were more than 30 years in the making.

A walk from Carol’s Pub to the Argyle Avenue diversity murals shows Uptown—on the surface—as the heterogeneous neighborhood that the most idealistic of diversity proponents envisioned in the 1950s and 1960s. Indeed, Uptown is today that rare Chicago neighborhood with demographic variety: 51 percent white, 20 percent black, 14 percent Hispanic, and 12 percent Asian, according to the 2010 United States Census. During the 2015 election for alderman for the 46th ward, which encompasses much of the Chicago neighborhood of Uptown, a challenger spoke with a reporter about the peculiar


challenges and possibilities of the community. Amy Crawford rhetorically asked the reporter, “How do we preserve the diversity and unique character of the neighborhood while making our streets safer and growing the local economy?” She continued, “I’ve always regretted that our politics here are so divided. There’s a lot of room for common ground in this neighborhood.” Crawford’s position was not controversial. Certainly her opponent—a former Franciscan monk and social worker, and only the second openly gay member of Chicago’s city council—would have shared the sentiment.12


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12 Mark Brown, “Preserving ‘Diversity and Unique Character’ while Getting ‘More Done’ in 46th Ward, Chicago Sun-Times, March 10, 2015. The incumbent, James Cappleman, defeated Crawford in a run-off by over 2,000 votes. Crawford had tepid support from Uptown’s low-income community activists.
Yet recent class-based growth policies show current celebrations of diversity to be problematic, as Crawford alluded to with her comment about neighborhood divisions. As the nation rebounds from the 2008 housing crisis, gentrification has returned apace to Uptown. Community activists—many tracing their lineage directly to the late-1960s—continue to defend Uptown’s uncommon density of lakefront low-income housing against what they view as a revanchist wave of gentrification and tax-subsidized development.13 Once again—in a pattern that began no later than 1955—boosters and the media have revived the motif of an Uptown on the precipice of becoming a destination neighborhood, sloughing-off its “troubled” reputation and history.14 In this discourse, “diversity” becomes a more sanitized rhetorical tool than ever before. The white, middle-income


population has increased in Uptown since 1990—dramatically so after 2000.\footnote{In 1990, 36\% of Uptown’s population was non-Hispanic white. The percentage increased to 42\% in 2000 and 52\% in 2010. Median household income increased from $32,000 to $40,000 from 2000 to 2010. City of Chicago Community Area Census Profiles for 1990, 2000, and 2010, Department of Planning and Development: www.cityofchicago.org/city/en/depts/dcd.html.} If this trend holds, then Uptown may return to a relatively non-diverse neighborhood that desperately clings to aspirations of urbane diversity, just as it did before 1965. Until then, Carol’s Pub opens early in the day, and the cheap drinks beckon.
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