

*Contentious Cosmopolitans: Black Public History and Civil Rights in Cold War Chicago,
1942-1972*

by

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**A Thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of
Philosophy**

Graduate Department of History,

at the University of Toronto

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This dissertation looks at how teachers, unionists, and cultural workers used black history to offer new ways of thinking about racial knowledge from a local level. Numerous efforts to promote and teach this history demonstrated how dissident cosmopolitan political currents from previous decades remained relevant to a vibrant and ideologically diffuse African American public sphere despite widespread Cold War dispersions, white supremacist reactions, and anticommunist repressions.

My argument proceeds by demonstrating how these public history projects coalesced around a series of connected pedagogical endeavors. These endeavors included the work of school teachers on Chicago's South side who tried to advance curriculum reforms through World War II and afterwards, the work of packinghouse workers and other union-focused educators who used anti-discrimination campaigns to teach about the history of African Americans and Mexican Americans in the labor movement and to advance innovative models for worker education, and the activities of important cultural workers like Margaret and Charles Burroughs who politicized urban space and fought for greater recognition of black history in the public sphere through the advancement of their vision for a museum.

Collectively, these projects expressed important ideas about race, citizenship, education and intellectual labors that engaged closely with the rapidly shifting terrains of mid-20th Century civil rights and international anti-colonialisms. Ultimately, this dissertation offers a social history about how cosmopolitan cultural work in public history and similar forms of knowledge production were at the intersections of political realities and lived experience in U.S. urban life.

For my parents Brian and Jennifer and my brother Mike.

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Abbreviations

AAAM – Association of African American Museums

AAHA – Afro-American Heritage Association

A/D – Anti-Discrimination Committee (UPWA)

AFL – American Federation of Labor

AFT – American Federation of Teachers

AMSAC – American Society of African Culture

ASNLH – Association for the Study of Negro Life and History

BAM – Black Arts Movement

BPP - Black Panther Party

CAA – Council of African Affairs

CCCO – Coordinating Council of Community Organizations

CEMV – Committee to End Mob Violence

CFM – Chicago Freedom Movement

CIO – Congress of Industrial Organizations

CORE – Congress of Racial Equality

CPUSA – Communist Party of the United States

CRC – Civil Rights Congress

CTU - Chicago Teachers Union

FEPC – Fair Employment Practices Commission

HUAC – House of Un-American Activities Commission

ILWU – International Longshoremen and Warehouse Union

IWO – International Workers Order

MWM – March on Washington Movement

NACW – National Association of Colored Women

NCNW – National Council of Negro Women

NAACP – National Association for the Advancement of Colored People

NEH – National Endowment of the Humanities

NNC – National Negro Congress

NNLC – National Negro Labor Council

NNMHF – National Negro Museum and Historical Foundation

NOI – Nation of Islam

OBAC – Organization of Black American Culture

PCH – Parkway Community House

PLC - Progressive Librarians Council

PP – Progressive Party

PTA –Parent Teachers Association (Chicago African American)

PWC – Packinghouse Workers Center

PWOC – Packinghouse Workers Organizing Committee

SCLC – Southern Christian Leadership Conference

SSCAC – Southside Community Arts Center

UAW – United Auto Workers

UE – United Electrical Workers of America

UMW – United Mine Workers

UPWA – United Packinghouse Workers Association

WPA – Works Progress Association

Introduction

How best can we understand African American-led public history efforts born during the age of civil rights? This is the central question posed by “Contentious Cosmopolitans” in light of a flourishing of recent scholarship about northern civil rights, “long” 20th Century social movements, Cold War politics, Black Power and Black Arts activisms, cultural and social histories of migration from the U.S. South, and important reappraisals of community and culture formation in Black Chicago and urban America generally.¹ In Chicago, these efforts were

¹ This literature is now quite extensive, though several recent titles show a trend towards comprehensive national frames. Thomas J. Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty: The Forgotten Struggle for Civil Rights in the North* (New York: Random House, 2008); Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, “The Long Civil Rights Movement and Political Uses of the Past.” *The Journal of American History* 91:4 (March 2005): 1233-1263; Glenda Gilmore, *Defying Dixie: The Radical Roots of Civil Rights, 1919-1950* (New York: Norton, 2008); Nancy MacLean, *Freedom is Not Enough: The Opening of the American Workplace* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2006). There are also a growing number of case studies that both substantiate and engage in different ways with J.D. Hall’s provocative 2005 *Journal of American History* essay and Organization of American Historians address that posited a “long movements” paradigm from the 1930s through the 1970s as a framework for future research. See Lauren R. Sklaroff, *Black Culture and the New Deal: The Quest for Civil Rights in the Roosevelt Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009); Clarence Lang, *Grassroots at the Gateway: Class Politics and Black Freedom Struggle in St. Louis, 1936-1975* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2009); Matthew Countryman, *Up South: Civil Rights and Black Power in Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006); Heather Ann Thompson, *Whose Detroit?: Politics, Labor, and Race in a Modern American City* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001); Patrick Jones, *The Selma of the North: Civil Rights Insurgency in Milwaukee* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009); Joe William Trotter, Jr. *Black Milwaukee: The Making of an Industrial Proletariat, 1915-1945* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985 [2007]); Kimberley L. Phillips, *Alabama North: African-American Migrants, Community, and Working-class Activism in Cleveland, 1915-45* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999); Martha Biondi, *To Stand and Fight: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Postwar New York City* (New York: Harvard University Press, 2003); Robert O. Self, *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for the Postwar Oakland* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003). For recent comprehensive accounts of both Black Power, Black Arts and black liberation struggle activisms that emphasize regional variations, see James Smethurst, *The Black Arts Movement: Literary Nationalism in the 1960s and 1970s* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005); Peniel Joseph, *Waiting ‘Til the Midnight Hour: A Narrative History of Black Power in America* (New York: Owl Books, 2006); Peniel Joseph, “The Black Power Movement: A State of the Field,” *The Journal of American History* 96:3 (December 2009): 751-776; Daya F. Gore, Jeanne Theoharis, and Komozi Woodard, *Want to Start a Revolution? Radical Women in the Black Freedom Struggle* (New York: New York University Press, 2009); Nikhil Pal Singh, *Black is a Country: Race and the Unfinished Struggle for Democracy* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 2004); Robbie Lieberman and Clarence Lang, eds., *Anticommunism and the African American Freedom Movement: ‘Another Side of the Story’* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009); Judith E. Smith, *Visions of Belonging: Family Stories, Popular Culture, and Postwar Democracy, 1940-1960* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004). Recent works on Black Chicago include most notably Adam Green, *Selling the Race: Culture, Community and Black Chicago, 1940-1955* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006); Davarian A. Baldwin, *Chicago’s New Negroes: Modernity, the Great Migration, and Black Urban Life* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007); Beryl Satter, *Family Properties: Race, Real Estate, and the Exploitation of Black Urban America* (New

sustained in the heart of the African American Southside community through moments of widespread Cold War repression and rapid urban change. This dissertation offers an extensive treatment of their conceptualization, representation, and enactment as innovative forms of racial knowledge production through the mid-20th Century.²

Curiously, the bulk of scholarship to date on Chicago museums or public history omits discussions of efforts to create a black history museum for the city. Scholars have examined ethnic heritage museums that represent the mosaic of European (Jewish, Italian, Polish, Ukranian, Swedish, etc.), Chinese, and Mexican communities that certainly underscore the “Second City’s” cosmopolitan history and its role as “promise land” for urban migration in the modern era.³ These were all communities that played significant roles in the making of Chicago’s political and cultural modernity. But to date, few scholars have addressed how African American public history efforts in the city related to civil rights and racial justice struggles

York: Henry Holt, 2009); Timothy Gilfoyle, “Making History: Interviews with Timuel Black and Margaret Burroughs,” *Chicago History* 36:3 (Winter 2010): 52-64; Wallace D. Best, *Passionately Human, No Less Divine: Religion and Culture in Black Chicago, 1915-1952* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009).

² My use of the term “racial knowledge” takes into account the evolving scholarship since at least the 1980s across disciplines that seeks to move beyond race relation models largely defanged by the conservative co-option of color-blind discourses over the same period. Instead, I seek to follow in the footsteps of scholars like Davarian Baldwin, Michael Omi, Howard Winant and David Theo Goldberg who have examined the formations, preoccupations, and anxieties of race in the establishment of modern social sciences and systems of thought based especially on notions of place, space and the history of racial projects. As Goldberg suggests: “ultimately the efficacy of a theory about race and racism is to be assessed in terms of the ways in which it renders possible resistance to racisms.” It is in this spirit that I examine and deploy the term racial knowledge in this dissertation about local public history in Black Chicago. See, Davarian Baldwin, “Black Belts and Ivory Towers: The Place of Race in U.S. Social Thought, 1892-1948,” *Critical Sociology* 30: 2 (2004): 397-447; Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s* (New York: Routledge, 1994); David Theo Goldberg, *Racist Culture: Philosophy and the Politics of Meaning* (Malden: Blackwell, 1993), 41.

³ Dominic A. Pacyga, “Chicago: City of the Big “Little” Museums,” *Journal of American Ethnic History* 28:3 (Spring 2009): 55-64; Dominic A. Pacyga, *Chicago: A Biography* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009); Nicholas Lemann, *The Promised Land: The Great Black Migration and How it Changed America* (New York: Random House, 1991); James Grossman, *Land of Hope: Chicago, Black Southerners and the Great Migration* (Chicago University of Chicago Press, 1989).

through the politically repressive years of the early Cold War.⁴ Moreover, by combining public history scholarship and the historiography of Black Chicago's community-formation we get yet another important reminder of how African American history in the Midwest Metropolis was central to the city's global representations.⁵

With both these local and broader historiographical concerns in mind, "Contentious Cosmopolitans" offers an extensive close reading of numerous texts that demonstrate a diversity of understudied public history repertoires in Black Chicago. While my treatment is not exhaustive, the repertoires covered in this dissertation are both diverse and highly significant to how local activism impacted racial knowledge production at mid-Century. This dissertation charts vital curriculum reform efforts in Southside public schools that set the stage for curriculum reforms nationally, worker education programs strategically located in local packing industry programs aimed at anti-discrimination ideals well ahead of their times, and pioneering museum-making efforts that sought to chart African American history in Chicago and the world. Among the many sources consulted for this project, I have looked at a comprehensive selection of oral history interviews conducted by myself and more expertly by others. Other major sources

⁴ A notable recent exception is the work of Mabel O. Wilson who treats aspects of museum-making history in Chicago, especially African American involvement in the exposition movement of the city from the 1890s through the mid-20th Century. Though Wilson examines the important collaborations between Detroit and Chicago museum-makers like Charles Wright and Margaret Burroughs, her focus through the mid-20th Century is more centered on Detroit and the role of Charles Wright's efforts to forge a museum in that city and lead the Afro-American museum movement nationally. "Contentious Cosmopolitans" offers a more focused treatment of the Burroughs' Cold War driven efforts to envision a museum project in Black Chicago alongside parallel local efforts at black public history and racial knowledge production in the Windy City. See especially, Mabel O. Wilson, *Negro Building: Black Americans in the World of Fairs and Museums* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012); Margaret T.G. Burroughs, interview with John E. Fleming, "Dr. Margaret T. Burroughs: Artist, Teacher, Administrator, Writer, Political Activist, and Museum Founder," *The Public Historian* 21:1 (Winter 1999): 31-55; Ian Rocksborough-Smith, "Margaret T.G. Burroughs and Black Public History in Cold War Chicago," *The Black Scholar* 41:3 (Fall 2011), 26-42.

⁵ Davarian Baldwin, *Chicago's New Negroes*; Adam Green, *Selling the Race*; Nikhil Pal Singh, *Black is a Country*; Dominic Pacyga, *Chicago*; Thomas Dyja, *The Third Coast: When Chicago Built the American Dream* (New York: Penguin, 2013); Robert Rydell, *All the World's a Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1876-1916* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1995).

include extensive treatments of biographical, autobiographical, personal papers and archival manuscripts, local newspapers and magazine articles, and even children's literature.

These texts and the histories they reveal further substantiate the archival richness of Chicago as America's "Second City" – a city that developed quite apart from the famous *New Yorker* misnomer that dismissively characterized the Windy City's role in U.S. urban life and history. In fact, Chicago has always been a citadel of U.S. capitalism's industrial and knowledge-producing experiments throughout the modern era as well as a vital center for cultural production, radical and mainstream, left wing and right wing thought and practice. As Chicago native and cultural historian Thomas Dyja notes, the Windy City's role in promoting the very problematic concept of an American Dream has been downplayed. As such, the city became, in Dyja's view, a "Third Coast" in this matter, "... overshadowed by the two glamorous cities on the other coasts but central in all ways to the mass-market America we know today." This dissertation accepts the commercialized trajectory of Chicago's history and its role, then, in fostering the best and the worst of the American Dream. But "Contentious Cosmopolitans" maintains that a certain number of critical repertoires persisted through the Cold War 1950s and 1960s – particularly in terms of innovative forms of knowledge production such as through public history. *Third Coast* even ends with a nod to the establishment of the DuSable Museum of African American History in 1960 (actually it was 1961) bookended by an acknowledgement that the Windy City's poet laureate, the Southside's Gwendolyn Brooks, ultimately sided with younger generations who advocated Black Power.⁶ These connections briefly traced in a recent popular history text validate much of what follows.

⁶ Dominic A. Pacyga, *Chicago*; Thomas Dyja, *The Third Coast*, xxiii, 409.

Organization

The African American cultural workers in Chicago who delved deeply into public history labors show how struggles for racial justice were intimately connected to important yet highly contested fields of racial knowledge production throughout the long 20th Century. As this dissertation will highlight, connections between public history and civil rights were salient for those who remained critical of U.S. capitalism through the mid-20th Century especially. In short, African Americans in Chicago thought more expansively about race than nearly anywhere else in the country given the city's role in the ascendance of the U.S. as a global hegemon through the post-World War II era. As Adam Green writes: “[w]hile dreams of asserting Black Chicago as the new Negro capital in 1940 proved premature, by 1955 Chicago would reveal itself as pivotal to the project of reimagining blacks as a national people in thought and deed, and therefore as a thoroughly modern community.” Still, for black Chicagoans this outcome was far from straight forward. Green cautions that black “nationalization” was not simply one of “empowerment” but also included the “dubious inheritances of modern identity” such as “bombastic self-reference, mediated conception of social will, equation of commodity with human feeling” and “suppression of human variety...” – all factors that became part of the forces which ultimately shaped African American “shared cultural, social, and political identifications for better and for worse.”⁷ This dissertation will show how Chicago's black public history workers were near the center of these contestations over modern identity through the mid-20th Century.

The first chapter of this dissertation looks at how the vision for a black history museum in Chicago connected to major flashpoints of local civil rights activity through the 1950s and

⁷ Adam Green, *Selling the Race*, 45.

persisted despite the stifling conditions of Cold War America. As such, chapter one deals explicitly with the vision for a black museum in Chicago. It treats how this vision evolved from the left-inspired National Negro Congress-backed National Negro Museum and Heritage Foundation (NNMHF) in the 1940s through the actual implementation and chartering of museum-space at 3806 South Michigan Avenue in Bronzeville through the early 1960s. It concludes by suggesting that African American leftists were encouraged to channel their activism into public history labors in light of the Cold War's widespread political repressions.

Despite the post-World War II repressions that effected Black Chicago and U.S. society in general, public teachers persisted in their Depression era and wartime efforts to redress racial discrimination in the public sphere. As such, chapter two examines the curriculum reform projects of teacher's like Madeline and Samuel Stratton on Chicago's Southside. In particular, it considers how curriculum reforms represented important local interventions into revisions about racial and historical knowledge taking place in U.S. society through the mid-20th Century, particularly with regards to histories of racial slavery and its lived legacies. These reforms highlighted widespread efforts across the political spectrum to redress public school curriculums so that they were more attentive to the civic virtues of growing African American urban communities and their many contributions to modernity. While seemingly trivial, these forms of knowledge still rarely circulated in mainstream channels during this period. As such, early curriculum reform efforts are important because they contributed to revisions about how African Americans were represented in the public sphere through the mid-20th Century and how, as strategic cultural workers, local public school teachers were at the forefront of these efforts nationally.

The work of Southside school teachers in areas of curriculum reform were paralleled by similar knowledge producing efforts in the labor movement. This was especially true of those who worked and led efforts for civil rights reform in the meatpacking industry - one of the city's key industries through the mid-20th Century. Chapter three looks at how Chicago was the site of union-based anti-discrimination campaigns that revolved around the United Packinghouse Workers of America's (UPWA) successful expansion of union membership among black workers in the city. In conjunction with the post-World War II era of increased black migration to Chicago from the U.S. South and the city's vibrant black cultural renaissance (from the 1930s through the 1950s), black cultural activism for a time also took a central role within the UPWA into the mid-1950s. This activism was highlighted by the controversial relocation of the UPWA's District 1 headquarters into the old Bacon's Casino dance hall building in the heart of Bronzeville on the Southside, the distribution of histories about blacks and Mexicans in the packing industry, and the promotion of a black-listed film: *Salt of the Earth* (1955). Through the activism of cultural workers like writer Richard Durham and musician Oscar Brown, Jr. (before his Broadway fame), the UPWA's District 1 in Chicago led the way by continuing the union's historic role promoting democratic and civil rights reforms across the country against the conformist grain of most post-World War II U.S. union cultures.

Brown, Durham and others also helped lead a controversial Black Caucus Movement within the UPWA – a movement that foreshadowed the resurgence of black nationalism in the city and the nation. It is a fact that the Nation of Islam (NOI) will always be a sign-post for discussions about post-World War II nationalism, especially in Chicago where it is headquartered. However, the curious relationship that leftist figures who each worked for a time within the NOI like Richard Durham and Christine Johnson and are discussed at length in this dissertation, suggests that nationalism's diverse forms and purviews through the mid-20th

Century are ripe for reevaluation and reconsideration. As Adam Green writes, nationalism among black Americans has “become so common to make it seem an obvious and natural feature of black worldview...” But as Green cautions, “nationalism is neither organic or primordial.” Along with race, Green notes that nationalism is the “rubric of group identity most salient to specifically modern conceptions of human society” and thus, above all, “historically symptomatic....”⁸ It is worthy therefore as subject of further discussion, study, and understanding.

Much of this dissertation seeks to address the question of nationalism and its historically contingent forms in urban America. As such, chapter four specifically looks at how black nationalism in Chicago became a multi-faceted and complex intra-racial class phenomenon that drew on older traditions and modalities of black politics through the idiosyncrasies of local organizations and activists. As a method of focus, the chapter examines the establishment of the Afro-American Heritage Foundation (AAHA) in 1958 and its significant public history efforts – notably the promotion of Negro History Week in the city. Under the leadership of local figures like local CP-leader Ishmael Flory and the Nation of Islam’s (NOI) - University of Islam’s principal Christine C. Johnson, the AAHA bridged local nationalist politics with leftist anti-colonialism from the 1950s into the Black Power 1960s. Moreover, the AAHA also played a significant role in promoting the late-career knowledge producing efforts of the embattled but still eminent scholar of Black America: W.E.B. DuBois.

The last underlying themes this dissertation treats are the intergenerational aspects of black activism in Chicago through the mid-20th Century. In particular, I consider how public

⁸ Ibid., 44.

history institutions were impacted by (and in turn impacted) resurgent notions of Black Power and the emergence of the Black Arts Movement (BAM). BAM leaders in Chicago like Haki Madhubuti and pioneering black studies historians in the academy like Sterling Stuckey as well as others who became foundational to the emergence of black studies nationwide were mentored in their early careers through their engagement in local public history labors like those conducted by Margaret and Charles Burroughs and the cohort who founded the DuSable Museum. As such, chapter five concludes this dissertation by looking at how the DuSable conducted its expansion and development in the context of Black Power in Chicago and the nation. Importantly, the chapter considers intergenerational dialogues between left wing activists involved in the city's black cultural renaissance during the 1930s and those who promoted newer forms of nationalism ascendant with the turbulent politics surrounding the crises of late 1960s and 1970s urban America. Part of these intergenerational dialogues spoke to the conflicted role that state and foundation power structures played in attempting to shape various forms of cultural activism and knowledge production.

On Cosmopolitanism and Black Public History

The political stakes for cultural activists involved in these widespread public history labors were very real, their efforts earnest, though the results (such as significant public recognition for Black History Week) may seem by present day standards to be both tokenistic and even trivial.⁹ The effort to imagine these labors in concrete projects and institutions provide examples for how significant figures active in Black Chicago's left-labor cultural front first

⁹ For a recent discussion of the trivialization and tokenism that surrounds public reception to Black History Month, see John Hope Franklin, Gerald Horne, Harold W. Cruse, Allen B. Ballard, Reavis L. Mitchell, "Black History Month: Serious Truth Telling or a Triumph in Tokenism?" *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education* 18 (Winter 1997-1998): 87-92.

withdrew, survived, and later came to establish a history museum (among other public history projects) from the early 1940s through the early 1960s. These labors materialized arguably *because* of the Cold War repressions faced by U.S. blacks universally and the worldly issues that energized and underscored many aspects of African American politics and culture throughout the era that Michael Denning has called the “age of three worlds.” Indeed, this dissertation certainly lends itself to the “Cultural Front” conversation most associated with Michael Denning’s scholarship because it also helps characterize the efforts of black cultural workers whose lifeworks bridge the radical political cultures of the 1930s and 1940s with the more acclaimed nationalisms and civil rights activities of the 1950s and 1960s. Indeed, Denning’s latest work offers a compelling re-characterization of the Cold War era to account for the three worlds that helped shape important coordinates for U.S. black political cultures during the era - “First World” Capitalism, “Second World” Communism, and “Third World” anti-colonialism.¹⁰ Politics and culture were surely inseparable phenomena during this era as well and have been well reflected in histories of diasporic African populations who have moved (whether by force, necessity, or free will) throughout the Americas since at least the first slave emancipations of the late 18th Century.¹¹

¹⁰ Michael Denning, *The Cultural Front: The Laboring of American Culture in the Twentieth Century*, (New York: Verso, 1996), xviii-xix; Martha Biondi, *To Stand and Fight*; John J. Munro, “The Anticolonial Front: Cold War Imperialism and the Struggle Against Global White Supremacy, 1945-1960,” (PhD Dissertation, University of California, Santa Barbara, 2009); Michael Denning, *Culture in the Age of Three Worlds* (New York: Verso, 2004), 2-3; Penny Von Eschen, *Satchmo Blows Up the World: Jazz Ambassadors Play the Cold War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004); Penny Von Eschen, *Race Against Empire: Black Americans and Anticolonialism, 1937-1957* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997).

¹¹ For a classic but still definitive study of Black culture and identity that also deals with political ideologies and consciousness, see Lawrence Levine, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro-American Folk Thought From Slavery to Freedom* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977). For the classic interpretation of the subtle yet impactful shift from indentured servitude to racial slavery during the colonial era, see Edmund Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom* (New York: Norton, 1977). Recent scholarly efforts centered on Latin and South America underscore the importance of cultural entry points to the study of black diaspora populations and their roles in post-colonial nation-making in the Southern hemisphere. For examples, see Peter Wade, *Race and Ethnicity in*

In light of the high stakes game of politics and culture through the Cold War's mid-20th Century, it would be helpful to better define cosmopolitanism in the context of this period's racial liberalism. To this end, a useful set of questions would be to ask how public history projects challenged and/or adhered to the ideological limits of mid-20th Century U.S politics set by the Cold War's prevalent racial liberalism? Mid-20th Century liberalism typically separated civil rights, black nationalist, and labor movement activities into analytically separate spheres – a knowledge paradigm that has generally resulted in the stale historiographical compartmentalization of mid-20th Century black movement categories.¹²

Such racial compartmentalization can be overcome through the application of a looser concept like cosmopolitanism. Cosmopolitanism allows for the complexity of social experiences to be revealed over time and place and helps underscore the interconnectedness of politics and culture as they were lived, learned, envisioned, and experienced. For example, philosopher K.A. Appiah argues that cosmopolitanism offers a practical framework that accounts for the benefits of finding differences and alternatives within the universal ideals of learning about oneself through experiencing the world. As Appiah writes, once “strangers” have “found enough” in common, “there is the further possibility that we will be able to enjoy discovering things we do not yet share. That is one of the payoffs of cosmopolitan curiosity. We can learn from one another; or we can simply be intrigued by alternative ways of thinking, feeling, and acting.”¹³

Latin American (London: Pluto Press, 1997); George Reid Andrews, *Afro-Latin America, 1800-2000* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

¹² Nikhil Pal Singh, *Black is a Country: Race and the Unfinished Struggle for Democracy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004); Nikhil Pal Singh, “Culture/Wars: Recoding Empire in the Age of Democracy,” *American Quarterly* 50:3 (September 1998): 514.

¹³ K.A. Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers* (New York: Norton, 2006).

Similarly scholar Ifeoma Kiddoe Nwankwo suggests, black cosmopolitanism through the modern era offered universal overtures that worked to define “oneself through the world beyond one’s own origins.”¹⁴

Cosmopolitanism as Appiah and Nwankwo define it and apply it leave open the possibility for further understanding the nuances and complexities of local/regional black political cultures. While surely not a new insight, looking through a regional lens once again offers a framework to examine the degree to which black cosmopolitans both conformed and/or challenged traditional polarities in African American politics such as militancy and accommodation, protest and uplift, cultural and political nationalism and integration. For example, as this dissertation will show, the political legacies that institutions like the Southside Community Arts Center and the DuSable Museum of African American History drew equally upon the social realism of Mexican artists and the laboring cultures of the 1930s as much as they represented longer histories of slave emancipations and African survivals in the artwork and public history exhibits and programs they displayed and promoted.

Cosmopolitanism also offers a useful way to further explore the practices of Afro-modernity - its imaginings and many meanings. Concepts of Afro-modernity have been well-developed by scholars such as Cedric Robinson, Robin Kelley, Nikhil Pal Singh, Michael Hanchard and others who helped provincialize European enlightenment models of modernity just as they worked to universalize the experiences of blacks in the diaspora especially. In general, these scholars all reject simple binaries of Western and non-Western thought. Instead they show

¹⁴ Anne Meis Knupfer, *The Chicago Black Renaissance and Women’s Activism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006); 4; Ifeoma Kiddoe Nwankwo, *Black Cosmopolitanism: Racial Consciousness and Transnational Identity in the 19th Century Americas* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), 9.

how black radical traditions and modalities circulated transnationally and in diverse ways throughout the modern (and Cold War) era.¹⁵ These authors in particular do not cast regional or national articulations of black identity and rhetoric about “community” as essentialist and absolutist in the way that other scholars of Afro-modernity have - notably Paul Gilroy who most famously argued for a loosely connected counter-cultural sphere across the Black Atlantic.¹⁶

The cosmopolitan worldliness expressed in the public history activities of figures like Margaret Burroughs and the founders of the Ebony/DuSable Museum did more than contribute to a counterculture broadly set across a diffuse diaspora. Indeed, their public history labors were ideologically *and* pedagogically-driven and occurred in the midst of fairly widespread efforts to convene local black history projects and other cultural endeavors mapped onto local Southside and Chicago political geographies, particularly imagined future sites for cultural repositories and institutions - symbolized most poignantly in the establishment of a museum.¹⁷ As such, they offer regional vantage points unique to the city’s symbolic role as the Midwestern commercial gateway and expositional metropolis for U.S. industrial labor and transnational commodity

¹⁵ Cedric Robinson, *Black Maxism: The Making of a Black Radical Tradition* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1983); Kelley, *Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2001); Singh, *Black is a Country*, Michael Hanchard, *Party/Politics: Horizons in Black Political Thought* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006); Michael Hanchard, “Afro-Modernity: Temporality, Politics, and the African Diaspora,” *Public Culture* 11:1 (1999): 245-268; Michael Denning, *Culture in the Age of Three Worlds*. For the clearest articulation of the notion of provincializing the epistemologies produced by European enlightenment, see Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000 [2008]).

¹⁶ Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993). For a wide ranging and provocative of the black political imagination see, Kelley, *Freedom Dreams*.

¹⁷ For a recent discussion of how cosmopolitanism is used in contemporary political geography, see David Harvey, *Cosmopolitanism and the Geographies of Freedom* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009).

flows, the making of working class political and cultural traditions, and a major site of multi-generational streams for human migration from the late-19th Century onwards.¹⁸

Still, a qualification is needed here, one that further underscores the interconnectedness of politics and culture in African American life and society. In contending a form of cosmopolitanism, the founders of the museum in Chicago were not just part of an independent “Black Radical Tradition” as authors like Kelley and Robinson have found for many 20th Century African American Marxists.¹⁹ Rather, the endeavors of those who founded the Ebony/DuSable museum along with other black public history efforts in the city might better be understood through Timothy Brennan’s reading of radical non-Western rhetoric. In particular, Brennan looks at the formation of alternative utopias that opposed the acquisitive corporate globalism that makes cosmopolitanism seem like a toothless term. In appraising such alternative positions, Brennan argues for further nuances to the deployment of terms such as “radical tradition.” Brennan suggests a more flexible rubric for comprehending political ideologies beyond the entrapment of the amorphous yet still rigid “radical” designation often deployed. Rather, Brennan looks to the activities of cultural studies pioneer and Trotskyist-thinker C.L.R. James during his time in New York during the early 1950s and notes how James’ prolific Cold

¹⁸ William Cronon, *Nature’s Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York: Norton, 1992); James Grossman, *Land of Hope: Chicago, Black Southerners and the Great Migration* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1989); Dominic A. Pacyga, *Polish Immigrants and Industrial Chicago: Workers on the South Side, 1880-1922* (Columbus: Ohio States University Press, 1991); Thomas A. Guglielmo, *White on Arrival: Italians, Race, Color, and Power in Chicago, 1890-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003); Allan Spear, *Black Chicago: The Making of a Negro Ghetto, 1890-1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969). For an example of historical fiction that treats Chicago during the World’s Fair and Columbian exhibition during the 1890s, see Erik Larson, *The Devil in the White City: Murder, Madness, and Magic at the Fair that Changed America* (New York: Random House, 2003).

¹⁹ Examples of African American figures involved as central and sometimes dissident thinkers for sectarian left politics throughout the 20th Century include among others: Claude McKay, W.E.B. DuBois, C.L.R. James, and Richard Wright. Their ideological distinctions are certainly downplayed by Kelley through his provocative yet still attractive contention that they were part of an “independent” black radical formation. See Robin D.G. Kelley, *Freedom Dreams*, 54.

War writings from the United States were elaborated in accord with the “sensibilities of bolshevism” (or more precisely Leninism) in an era of repressive political surveillance and internecine political conflicts that restricted the activities of many on the left. These activities led paradoxically for James to both his isolation in and eventual expulsion from the U.S. and a simultaneous “sense of place within the ranks of everyday people,” highlighted particularly by his open support for “popular art” forms for leisure and culture activity.²⁰

Brennan’s use of ‘bolshevik sensibilities’ for figures like James elicits a more flexible Raymond Williams-like “structures of feeling” approach that helps capture the more fluid and shifting political identities and life experiences of fellow travelling and/or competing black left ideologies over the same period. Over the course of the 1940s through the 1960s, these sensibilities can be traced in the diverse writings of Harlem-based Communist cultural critic Doxey Wilkerson and dissident former Communist and left-nationalist iconoclast Harold Cruse. Despite a vast ideological gulf between the two, each writer made clear in their respective examinations of black “culture” from the left (whether public heritage efforts or other modernist cultural forms such as theater, music, or literature for example) a primary concern that politics and political ideology were at the center of debates over black cultural representation, production, control, and their related commodity forms.²¹ As black studies scholar Michael Hanchard suggests: “politics, power dynamics, and political communities determine, in the first

²⁰ Timothy Brennan, *At Home in the World: Cosmopolitanism Now!* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 82, 230, 251. For examples of writings by James during his tenure in the United States, most of which was published later and posthumously, see C.L.R. James, *Beyond a Boundary* (Sangster's Book Stores in association with Hutchinson, 1963); C. L. R. James, *American Civilization* (New York: Blackwell, 1993). Davarian Baldwin offers a useful appraisal of James’ ideas in his study of Black Chicago’s new negro cultural productions through the great migration era of the 1st World War (1920s and the 1930s). See Davarian Baldwin, *Chicago’s New Negroes*, 41.

²¹ Doxey A. Wilkerson, “Negro Culture: Heritage and Weapon,” *Masses & Mainstream* 2:8 (August 1949): 3-24; Harold Cruse, *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual* (New York: William & Morrow, 1967).

instance, how ‘culture’ first becomes political.”²² In short, the role of politics and the expression of black political ideologies are still central for further understanding U.S. cultural histories of race from the 1940s through the 1960s.

In their formative stages, black public history efforts in Chicago and throughout the United States that set the stage for the establishment of a project such as the DuSable Museum at mid-century were not solely conducted from within the academy. Nor were they wholly government or liberal philanthropic commissioned race relation projects such as Gunnar Myrdal’s *American Dilemma*.²³ Neither were they restricted to the solitary efforts of itinerant community historians or radical orators such as those who preached from soapboxes in Chicago’s Washington Park since at least the Great Depression era.²⁴

The cosmopolitan outlook of the Ebony/DuSable museum project was in no way alone nor did it represent the first efforts to found and promote African American-led public history projects in Chicago, the Midwest, or throughout the United States for that matter. In a recent prologue to a reissue of his groundbreaking study of black proletarianization and migration to *Black Milwaukee*, Joe William Trotter, Jr. felt it significant to indicate that a shopkeeper from that nearby midwestern city returned from a trip to Africa in the late 1850s to try and start a museum of African history there. Moreover, folklorists have studied Emancipation celebrations throughout the U.S. for decades, notably Juneteenth Day and similar emancipation-related celebrations that treated slave and freedmen folk tales in song, oral vernacular, and written verse

²² Michael Hanchard, *Party/Politics*, 14.

²³ St. Clair Drake and Horace R. Cayton, *Black Metropolis: A Study of Negro Life in a Northern City* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1945 [1962, 1970, 1993]); Gunnar Myrdal, *An American Dilemma; the Negro Problem and Modern Democracy* (New York: Harper, 1944).

²⁴Clarice Durham, “Bronzeville’s Venerable Historian,” *Hyde Park Herald* (July 23, 2003) 1; James Smethurst, *The Black Arts Movement, 193-200*, 195.

that might all have served in different moments as forms of black public history commemoration throughout the modern era.²⁵

In mainstream channels of 20th Century African American thought, the acclaimed and pioneering historian Carter G. Woodson helped found the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History (ASNLH) in 1915 in Chicago.²⁶ He and his associates felt the promotion of “black history” could, in the words of a recent biographer, preserve the 19th Century credos for social uplift and “serve the dual function of instilling cultural pride and self-esteem in African Americans while combating racial prejudice by exposing white society to Africans’ and African Americans’ monumental contributions to American and world culture.”²⁷

From at least the 1910s, a variety of intellectual and public history projects led by middling black social workers, public school teachers, librarians, union activists, church clergy and laity, fraternity and sorority members and clubwomen such as Mary McLeod Bethune and the National Association of Colored Women (NACW) engaged with the uplift tradition promoted by Woodson and helped build various regional organizations in many American cities from Washington, D.C. to Chicago. They organized exhibits at World Fairs and helped promote Woodson’s idea for a Negro History Week (later renamed Black History Week), an event

²⁵ Joe William Trotter, Jr. *Black Milwaukee* [2007], xlv; Lawrence Levine, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness*, Ch 2; William H. Wiggins, Jr., *O Freedom!: Afro-American Emancipation Celebrations* (University of Tennessee Press, 1987).

²⁶ Today the ASAALH is arguably the most influential professional organization devoted exclusively to the study and promotion African American history both within and without the academy. While initially founded in Chicago, its headquarters have always been in Washington, D.C. See, Darlene Clark Hine, “Carter G. Woodson, White Philanthropy, and Negro Historiography,” *The History Teacher* 19:3 (May 1986): 406.

²⁷ Pero G. Dagbovie, *The Early Black History Movement, Carter G. Woodson, and Lorenzo Johnston Greene* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2007), 1.

designed initially to reach working-class African American audiences that evolved into a national Black History month by 1976.²⁸

By the late 1940s and 1950s, *The Chicago Defender* along with the *Norfolk Journal and Guide* were exceptional within the black public sphere for widely recognizing these efforts to promote public history up to and including when Woodson passed away in 1950. Under the management of John Sengstacke and Robert S. Abbott, *The Chicago Defender* published sympathetic op-ed columns and promotional materials about local events commemorating Black History Week, reprinted articles from the ASNLH's public history journal, *The Negro History Bulletin*, covered Woodson's local appearances in Chicago and elsewhere, and offered extensive coverage of Woodson's funeral.²⁹ In a similar vein, the paper also initiated a local annual black cultural celebration in 1929, called the Bud Billiken Day Parade. The parade continues to be celebrated on the Southside annually in August by school and community organizations near Washington Park (a historic public space for these types of commemoration and celebration in

²⁸ Spencer R. Crew, "African Americans, History and Museums: Preserving American History in the Public Arena" in *Making Histories in Museums*, Gaynor Kavanagh, ed. (New York: Leicester University Press, 1996), 81; Jacqueline Ann Goggins, *Carter C Woodson: A Life in Black History* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1993); Pero G. Dagbovie, *The Early Black History Movement*.

²⁹ Pero Dagbovie, *The Early Black History Movement*, 42-43; "Negro History Week The Fourteenth Year," *The Chicago Defender* (National Edition) (April 29, 1939), 22; "Chicagoans Hear Dr. Woodson," *The Chicago Defender* (National Edition) (February 17, 1940), 12; Earl Conrad, "Yesterday and Today," *The Chicago Defender* (National Edition) (February 09, 1946), 15; "Art Exhibit Features Portraits of 26 Negro Leaders," *The Chicago Defender* (February 2, 1946), 4; "Club Women Observe Negro History Week," *The Chicago Defender* (February 08, 1947), 5; "Bud Offers 'The Negro' in Books For Billikens," *The Chicago Defender* (February 8, 1947), 12; "To Observe History Week," *The Chicago Defender* (February 15, 1947), 4; Mary McLeod Bethune, "Sees Basis for Presentation of Negro History Gradually Broadening," *The Chicago Defender* (February 11, 1950), 6; Woodson, Drew and Houston, Three Great Negroes Who Gave Their Lives For Progress," *The Chicago Defender* (May 20, 1950), 6; Lucius Harper, "Quiz Yourself On These Questions: See How Dumb You Are About Your History," *The Chicago Defender* (February 04, 1950), 7; Mary McLeod Bethune, "Recalls Carter G. Woodson 'Who Made Our History Live'," *The Chicago Defender* (National Edition) (February 17, 1951), 6; Langston Hughes, "Negro History Week Has Many Pleasant and Profitable Uses," *The Chicago Defender* (National Edition) (January 31, 1953)

Chicago).³⁰ Mainline black christian churches, especially Baptist but also Methodist and Episcopalian denominations helped convene celebrations for Negro History Week throughout this period, as did prominent fraternal orders such as the Elks and various Southside Catholic parishes that sought to maintain African American adherents through the promotion of interracial cultural education.³¹

As discussed in chapter two of this dissertation especially, many black and some white public school teachers on Chicago's Southside regularly took part in these public history efforts. Notably music and drama teacher and jazz musician Captain Walter H. Dyett (who taught Nat King Cole among many others), white English teacher Mary L. Herrick, and history and English teachers Samuel and his wife Madeline (née Morgan) Stratton at DuSable (formerly Wendell Phillips) and Dunbar Public High Schools. All were among a significant cohort of influential public school teachers who became instrumental in promoting black public history on the Southside. Many of these teachers initiated curriculum reforms in Chicago public schools through the mid-20th Century. The Stratton's in particular were involved in initiatives that extended well beyond the classroom. Sam Stratton worked to organize and publicize Negro History Week celebrations from the 1930s through the 1960s, while his wife Madeline Morgan developed the city's first black history curriculum for grammar schools with a fellow teacher

³⁰ For a short analysis of the parade during the 1930s and 40s, see Bill Mullen, *Popular Fronts: Chicago and African American Cultural Politics, 1935-46* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999), 20, 205; For a focused history, see Solomon, Morrow, "The Bud Billiken Day Parade and picnic among Chicago's black community, 1929—2000," (MA Thesis, Morgan State University, 2008).

³¹ "Study Negro History Says Stratton to Group," *The Chicago Defender* (National Edition) (December 28, 1940), 19; "Chicagoans Hear Dr. Woodson"; "Negro History Club," *The Chicago Defender* (February 10, 1945), 12; "Elks Will Observe Emancipation Day," *The Chicago Defender* (National Edition) (January 8, 1944), 15; "Elk Lodges to Honor Lincoln, Frederick Douglass," *The Chicago Defender* (National Edition) (February 8, 1947), 8; "Madelene Stratton to Speak at St. Edmund Church Sunday," *The Chicago Defender* (National Edition) (February 2, 1963), 16; Timonthy B. Neary, "Crossing Parochial Boundaries: African Americans and Interracial Catholic Social Action in Chicago, 1914-1954" (PhD Dissertation, Loyola University Chicago, 2004).

(Bessie King) in 1942. Morgan's efforts eventually drew the praise of Carter G. Woodson himself and gained her numerous awards, including an "honor roll" mention at an annual convention of the National Council of Negro Women (NCNW) in Washington, D.C.³²

Many of these teachers also became closely involved with the DuSable Memorial Society, a local public history club founded in 1928. The founder of the DuSable Society was a migrant and teacher from Tennessee, Annie E. Oliver. Oliver was an active middle class Chicago clubwoman in the 1930s and 1940s as well as a successful local beautician and entrepreneur.³³ While the DuSable Society's full relationship with the ASNLH remains unclear, it certainly "aided" the national organization through the promotion of local Black History Week efforts in the spirit set out by Carter G. Woodson at local churches and in one of the Southside's historic public gathering points: Washington Park.³⁴ These connections were underscored by the early use of the name DuSable. Four decades before the Burroughs' museum group sought to rename their museum project this way, the DuSable Society became the first significant group to memorialize and celebrate the city's first settler, Jean Point Baptiste DuSable. DuSable was a

³²"Study Negro History Says Stratton to Group"; "City-Wide Forum to Observe Negro History Week," *The Chicago Defender* (National Edition) (February 10, 1940), 4; "Hold Symposium on Negro," *The Chicago Defender* (National Edition) (February 14, 1942), 5; "Honor School Chief for New History Course Plan," *The Chicago Defender* (National Edition) (June 20, 1942), 7; "Defender Washington Bureau Head 12 Others on NCNW Honor Roll," *The Chicago Defender* (National Edition) (February 8, 1947), 3; "History Teacher Pioneer to be Honored at Annual Blue Ribbon Tea," *The Chicago Daily Defender* (February 20, 1963), 15; Madeline R. Morgan, "Chicago School Curriculum Includes Negro Achievements," *The Journal of Negro Education* 13:1 (Winter, 1944): 120-123; Timuel D. Black, interview with Erik Gellman and Ian Rocksborough-Smith, November 17, 2009, Chicago, Illinois; Letter to Madeline R. Stratton from Carter G. Woodson. November 22, 1946, Folder Correspondence, 1940s, Madeline Stratton Morris Papers (hereafter Stratton Papers), Vivian Harsh Collection, Carter G. Woodson Branch, Chicago Public Library, Chicago, Illinois (hereafter HARSH).

³³ For a useful treatment of Black beautician work as a form of working class black modernity during a period of rapid urbanization, see Davarian Baldwin, *Chicago's New Negroes*, 53-90.

³⁴ Much like Bughouse Square on the near North side of Chicago was to white radicals during the Depression years and earlier, Washington Park became a fixture of soapbox lectures and forums as well as more official public events, like Black History Week celebrations for African Americans in Bronzeville. The Chicago Police Department's Red Squad surveillance units focused on a group of itinerant black labor radicals that often organized demonstrations in the park from the Great Depression era through the Cold War period. Interview with Timuel D. Black, November 17, 2009.

figure whose mixed “French-Negro” Haitian heritage and imagined involvement in the Revolutionary War with the British on the Ohio frontier over time came to symbolize Black Chicago’s stake at mid-Century in the founding of a modern city built on the southwestern mudflats of Lake Michigan.³⁵

In addition to and frequently in connection with Black History Week celebrations in Chicago, a cultural and literary renaissance flourished from the 1930s through the 1950s. As a movement centered on black clubwomen’s efforts, the Chicago renaissance was manifested through public lectures, plays, literary readings, discussions, and programs in libraries, schools, and community centers such as the George Cleveland Hall Branch Library, DuSable and Dunbar High Schools, the Parkway Community House (also known as the outreach ministry of the Congregational Church of the Good Shepherd), and the Southside Community Arts Center on Chicago’s South Side. These events featured important African American writers, artists, performers, and thinkers such as Richard Wright, Gwendolyn Brooks, Margaret Walker, Richard Durham, Margaret Burroughs, Katherine Dunham and even the early plays written by Shirley Graham DuBois for the New Deal Works Progress Administration-funded Skyloft Players theater group.³⁶ Chicago’s Renaissance is periodized after (1930s through the 1950s) its more acclaimed Harlem Renaissance counterpart from the 1920s made famous by the likes of Alain

³⁵“DeSaible Society Makes Plans for Fund Drive,” *The Chicago Defender* (December 29, 1928), 7; “Chicago Honors Jean DuSable, Frontiersman,” *The Chicago Defender* (December 9, 1944), 10; “Commemorate DuSable as Great War Leader,” *The Chicago Defender* (May 7, 1948), 7; “DuSable City Founder, Honored,” *The Chicago Defender* (Daily Edition) (December 4, 1957), 15; “National DuSable Group in Program,” *The Chicago Defender* (National Edition) (March 2, 1957), 10; “DuSable Society Holds Open House,” *The Chicago Defender* (National Edition) (December 30, 1958), 14; “Chicago Hails DuSable Society Founder-Spearhead,” *The Chicago Defender* (National Edition) (December 17, 1960), 14; “DuSable Society Founder, Mrs. Annie Oliver, Dies,” *The Chicago Defender* (National Edition) (November 14, 1962), 8. The Men’s Division of the Chicago Urban League also had a DeSaible Club that commemorated the first Chicago settler. See Christopher Reed, *The Rise of Chicago’s Black Metropolis, 1920-1929* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2011), 21.

³⁶ This was well before Graham’s marriage and prolific sojourns abroad with the elder scholar statesmen W.E.B. DuBois.

Locke, Zora Neale Hurston, Sterling Brown and others.³⁷ Unlike the earlier Harlem Renaissance, Chicago's occurred in a moment when the Roosevelt administration sought to address civil rights issues through the funding of New Deal, Works Progress Administration (WPA) cultural programs such as the Federal Theatre Programs and state-level writers projects. Moreover, the Renaissance emerged over a period of several decades when diverse laboring cultures became popular themes in American life and society generally.³⁸

Among the various New Deal era cultural institutions that made the cultural renaissance in the Windy City fairly unique, the Works Progress Association (WPA)-sponsored South Side Community Arts Center (SSCAC) has experienced the most longevity. Inaugurated in 1941 by Eleanor Roosevelt and a consortium of artists and Black Chicago's cultural elites, the SSCAC was also one of over one hundred WPA sponsored art-museum institutions around the country from this period, but only among a handful that continued for many decades after New Deal funding disappeared.³⁹ In addition to Margaret Burroughs, the mainly women who were first involved with the Art Center continued their involvement in various efforts to promote black culture and heritage through to the 1950s. Most notable among these women was prominent clubwomen Irene McCoy Gaines, Pauline Kigh Reed, Thelma Wheaton (née Kirkpatrick), and

³⁷ Anne Meis Knupfer, *The Chicago Black Renaissance and Women's Activism*, 4-10; Bill Mullen, *Popular Fronts*; Darlene Clark Hine & John McCluskey, Jr. eds., *The Black Chicago Renaissance* (Chicago: University of Illinois, 2012); Richard Courage and Robert Bone, *The Muse of Bronzeville: African American Creative Expression in Chicago, 1932-1950* (New Brunswick, Rutgers University Press, 2011); Wallace D. Best, *Passionately Human, No Less Divine*, 81; "Negro History Club."

³⁸ Michael Denning, *The Cultural Front*; Bill Mullen, *Popular Fronts*; Lizabeth Cohen, *Making a New Deal*; George Lipsetz, *Rainbow at Midnight*; Jacqueline Dowd Hall, "Disorderly Women: Gender and Labor Militancy in the Appalachian South," *The Journal of American History* 73:2 (September 1986): 354-382.

³⁹ Margaret Goss Burroughs, "Chicago's Community Art Center: A Personal Recollection," *Art in Action: American Art Centers and the New Deal*, ed. John Franklin White (New Jersey: Metuchen, 1987), 1, 131-144; Radio Documentary, Rita Coburn Whack, "Dreamers of the Black Metropolis" (British Broadcasting Corporation, March 2013) (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b01r113s>) (Accessed June 27, 2013).

social worker Fern Gayden to name only a handful of key figures who continued the city's cultural renaissance through the 1950s. The cultural renaissance in Chicago clearly underscores the city's prolific role in showcasing African American urban cultural production through the mid-20th Century arguably beyond the city's usual status as a "Second" to New York.⁴⁰

Chicago's importance as a site for the study of black cultural infrastructures in the urban North, especially through the early Cold War period, should not be undervalued. When St. Claire Drake and Horace Cayton published their seminal sociological study of Black Chicago, *Black Metropolis*, in 1945, Chicago boasted the second largest African American population (over 300,000) behind only New York on the cusp of even greater migrations of black southerners to the city in the post-World War II years.⁴¹ Given Chicago's preeminence as one of the mid-20th Century's largest black metropolis centers and its relatively undervalued cultural renaissance vis-à-vis Harlem/New York, it is still worth considering how black migrants developed diverse and vital forms of cultural infrastructure there during this period. For instance, in the well-known introduction to Drake and Cayton's original edition of *Black Metropolis* (1945) as well as a less well-known series of essays in *Ebony* magazine six years later, Richard Wright wrote with a consistently pessimistic tone about a city that inspired so much of his most acclaimed writing.

⁴⁰ Bill Mullen, *Popular Fronts*, Ch. 7; Anne M. Knupfer, *The Chicago Black Renaissance and Women's Activism*, 71. Though artistic community certainly persisted in New York through the Cold War era, Harlem's Community Art Center lasted only from 1937 to 1945. See, Jane De Hart Mathews, "Art for the People: The New Deal Quest for a Cultural Democracy," *Journal of American History* 62:2 (September 1975): 316-339; "Harlem Community Arts Center," <http://maap.columbia.edu/place/58> (accessed October 21, 2010); Rebecca E. Welch, "Black Art and Activism in Postwar New York, 1950-1965," (PhD Dissertation, New York University, 2002).

⁴¹ St. Clare Drake and Horace Cayton, *Black Metropolis*, 12. Two recent dissertations treat the second Great Migration and explicitly highlight both the spatial expansion of Chicago's predominantly black Southside with an emphasis on working class historical actors "striving" for better workplace and housing opportunities. See Lionel Kimble, "Combating the City of Neighborhoods: Housing, Employment and Civil Rights in Chicago, 1933-1955," (PhD Dissertation, University of Iowa, 2004); Jeffrey Helgeson, "Striving in Black Chicago: Migration, Work, and the Politics of Neighborhood Change, 1935-1965," (PhD Dissertation, University of Illinois – Chicago, 2008). For a now classic but still highly relevant study of Chicago's first wave black migration from the Southern U.S. see James Grossman, *Land of Hope*.

Whenever Wright returned to Chicago from his ongoing sojourns to France and elsewhere he highlighted the alarming expansion of Chicago's vast, mostly working class black ghetto on the South and West sides of the city. With its proximity to the infamous University of Chicago School of Sociology, he characterized the community as one of the most "intensely studied" in the country. In this 'laboratory,' he saw with few exceptions only shameful ugliness. Wright's tragic tone has been echoed in much of the scholarship subsequently written about Chicago. Much of this scholarship deals importantly with the political economy of race and urban policy but suggests there was an absence of vigor in the public and hence cultural life of Black Chicago through the mid-20th Century.⁴²

Nonetheless, Chicago became emblematic through the mid-20th Century for what Thomas Sugrue calls the emergence of "cultural infrastructure" in urban areas. Two major waves of black migration since at least World War I from the South in turn shaped the consciousness of the protest-oriented 1960s especially through jazz, blues, and gospel music forms and through the black press.⁴³ Scholars Davarian Baldwin, Adam Green, Tracey Poe, and Wallace D. Best among others have done recent crucially important studies of migrant music, food, and religion to easily fill in the assertions made by Sugrue for Chicago alone. All their studies demonstrate

⁴² Richard Wright's classic novel *Native Son*, his autobiographical novel *Black Boy* and *12 Million Black Voices* draw significantly on his experiences living in Chicago as well as research he was privy to because of his proximity to the University of Chicago's School of Sociology. See Richard Wright, "Introduction by Richard Wright" to Drake and Cayton, *Black Metropolis*, xvii-xxxiv; Richard Wright, "The Shame of Chicago," *Ebony* 7:1 (December 1951): 23-32. Scholarship that does not adequately recognize the vigor of Black Chicago's public life during the 1940s and 1950s includes Arnold Hirsch's groundbreaking *Making the Second Ghetto* in which he suggests that the "ball park" in which urban politics played out lacked black voices. See Arnold Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto: Race and Housing in Chicago, 1940-1960* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983), xii. Other recent works that do this largely follow Hirsch's race relations approach though they examine a more comprehensive array of sources than he. See for example, James Ralph, *Northern Protest: Martin Luther King, Jr., Chicago, and the Civil Rights Movement* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993); Beryl Satter, *Family Properties*.

⁴³ Thomas Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty*, 264.

the effect that black working class cultures have undoubtedly had on the making of new, modern urban cultural forms of the Windy City by mid-century.⁴⁴

A study of black public history efforts yet another cultural entry point to this discussion, one that underscores the connectedness of civil rights and cosmopolitan intellectual labors. Civil rights scholars have long perceived how the late 1950s movement in Chicago emerged as a series of school boycott campaigns comprised of local black parent organizations, many of them recent migrants alongside more established middle class school teachers. This coalition of teachers and parents spearheaded movements for curriculum reform through the 1960s aimed at “community-controlled schools.” For instance, Al Raby, a social studies teacher with a background organizing for the United Mine Workers (UMW) was one of the chief figureheads of the Coordinating Council of Community Organizations (CCCO) which led many of the school boycott campaigns during the 1960s. These movements drew on both the Carter G. Woodson-inspired early black history movements as well as the intercultural education techniques devised by progressive educators during the 1930s that expressed “respect” for different cultures. The founders of the museum project in Chicago were certainly part of this larger movement for education reform. For example, Margaret Burroughs has also suggested that a major impetus for her efforts was to address the absence of adequate curriculum in Chicago’s public schools.⁴⁵ As these broader

⁴⁴ Davarian Baldwin, *Chicago’s New Negroes*; Adam Green, *Selling the Race*, Ch 2; Tracey N. Poe, “The Origins of Soul Food in Black Urban Identity: Chicago, 1915-1947” in Carole Counihan ed. *Food in the USA: A Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2001); 91-108; Wallace Best, *Passionately Human, No Less Divine*, Ch 4.

⁴⁵ Thomas Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty*, 452, 472-273. See also Alan B. Anderson and George W. Pickering, *Confronting the Color Line: The Broken Promise of the Civil Rights Movement in Chicago* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1986); James Ralph, *Northern Protest: Martin Luther King, Jr., Chicago, and the Civil Rights Movement* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993). For more on the origins of intercultural education see, David Tyack, *Seeking Common Ground: Public Schools in a Diverse Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2003), 81; Nicholas V. Montalto, *A History of the Intercultural Education Movement, 1924-1941* (New York: Garland, 1983); Amistad Society Letterhead, in author’s possession; Margaret Burroughs, interview with Timothy Gilfoyle, July 11, 2007, transcript, Chicago, Illinois, in author’s possession.

points of entry into the study of “culture” in Black Chicago indicate, a focus on the efforts to establish public history projects as both cosmopolitan intellectual labors and as part of emergent cultural infrastructures further enhances and sharpens the historiographical frameworks for the longer view trajectories of post-WWII civil rights, nationalism, and Black Power activism.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Recent frameworks for longer chronologies usefully discuss “long” movements but do not underscore cultural entry points as equally serious political history. Such omissions restrict notions of politics to traditional forms of legal and extralegal protest and partisan activism. See especially Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, “The Long Civil Rights Movement and Political Uses of the Past,” *The Journal of American History* 91:4 (March 2005): 1230-1231; Nancy Maclean, *Freedom is Not Enough*; Keita Cha-Jua and Clarence Lang, “The ‘Long Movement’ as Vampire: Temporal and Spatial Fallacies in Recent Black Freedom Studies,” *The Journal of African American History* 92:2 (Spring 2007): 265-287.

Chapter 1

Imagining a Black Museum in Cold War Chicago

“In the 1950s we noticed, there was a group of us, teachers, and people who were interested in black history and so we would have meetings to pass the time, and do something about having programs for black and African American history.⁴⁷

– Margaret T.G. Burroughs, Chicago, Illinois.

This was how teacher, artist, poet, and activist Margaret Taylor Goss Burroughs recalled her role in the founding of the Ebony/DuSable Museum of African American history in 1961. She was also a founder of Chicago’s Southside Community Arts Center (SSCAC) established in 1940 located across the street from where the museum would be housed on South Michigan Avenue. Both institutions figured prominently in her retrospective of the mid-20th Century black cultural heritage projects she helped establish.⁴⁸ The beginnings of these two institutions bookend the “long civil rights” era now fully recognized by scholars of U.S. history.⁴⁹ Moreover, the imagining of an independent black history museum through this period demonstrate how significant figures active in earlier decades realized their political visions through specific forms of cultural activism through the mid-20th Century – notably public history labors.

⁴⁷ Margaret T.G. Burroughs, interview with Ian Rocksborough-Smith, Chicago, IL, October 19, 2009; Mabel O. Wilson, “Making History Visible: World’s Fairs, Expositions, and Museums in the Black Metropolis, 1895-1995” (PhD Dissertation, New York University, 2007), 308; Mabel O. Wilson, *Negro Building*. The museum was initially called the Ebony Museum of African Art and History and underwent a series of name changes throughout the 1960s before the eventual decision to name it after Chicago’s first settler, a Haitian migrant, Jean Baptiste Point De Sable.

⁴⁸ Margaret T.G. Burroughs, interview with John E. Fleming, “Dr. Margaret T. Burroughs: Artist, Teacher, Administrator, Writer, Political Activist, and Museum Founder,” 43; Margaret T.G. Burroughs, interview with Ian Rocksborough-Smith, October 19, 2009, Chicago, IL. For extensive scholarly treatments of the Southside Community Art Center see Anne M. Knupfer, *The Chicago Black Renaissance and Women’s Activism*; Bill Mullen, *Popular Fronts*; Adam Green, *Selling the Race*. Margaret T.G. Burroughs, “Chicago’s Community Art Center: A Personal Recollection,” 1, 131-144.

⁴⁹ Jacqueline Dowd Hall, “The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past.”

The Ebony Museum's first physical locations and the backgrounds of its main founders underscore how public history in Chicago enabled the survival and persistent activity of an interracial group of cultural and labor activists from the 1940s through the 1960s. Burroughs first exhibited materials on African American history in a mansion on South Parkway (formerly Grand Boulevard and now Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive) that she and her first husband (artist Bernard Goss) rented and used to display their artwork in the 1940s.⁵⁰ In 1959, she and her second husband, Charles Burroughs, bought a coach house mansion at 3806 South Michigan from the Quincy Club - a group of retired black railway workers and Pullman Porters who had lived in the house since 1937 (see figure 1).⁵¹ One of the Quincy Club members, a migrant from Missouri named Ralph Turner remained centrally involved as a founder and lecturer for the museum when it became a prominent South Side institution through the mid-1960s and 1970s. The founding group also included librarian Marian Hadley, retired postal worker Gerard N. Lew who was the museum's first president, Wilberforce Jones who was a United Auto Worker member and later became an Oxford University student fellow, and local teacher Eugene Feldman. Feldman was a Jewish American and had been originally raised in the Midwest though much of his extended family lived in Montgomery, Alabama. He had been a civil rights and

⁵⁰ Margaret T.G. Burroughs, *Life With Margaret: The Official Autobiography* (Chicago: In-Time Publishing, 2003), 85-86.

⁵¹ Terry Tatum, Susan Perry and Brian Goeken, "Landmark Designation Site: Griffith-Burroughs House," Commission on Chicago Landmarks, November 5, 2009. http://www.cityofchicago.org/content/dam/city/depts/zlup/Historic_Preservation/Publications/Griffiths_Burroughs_House.pdf, (accessed March 10, 2011); "Quincy Club Important for Railroad Men," *The Chicago Defender* (National Edition), January 6, 1962, 6; Ralph Turner, interviewed by Margaret T.G. Burroughs, Chicago, Illinois, 1969, CSC Oral History Research Program papers (hereafter CSCOHP), Chicago State University, Archives and Special Collections (hereafter CSUASC).

For a useful history of African American Pullman porters and their influence on African American political culture in the early-mid 20th Century in Chicago especially, see Beth Tomkins Bates, *Pullman Porters and the Rise of Protest Politics in Black America, 1925-1945* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001). For an excellent history of African Americans as workers in the railroad industry, see Eric Arnesen, *Brotherhoods of Color: Black Railroad Workers and the Struggle for Equality* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001).

labor organizer in North Carolina during the 1940s and learned black history auto-didactically. He sought to continue similar work when he moved to Chicago in the 1950s and became acquainted with Margaret Burroughs through the Lake Meadows and Chatham neighborhood Art Fairs that she often helped organize.⁵²

Originally called the Ebony Museum of Negro History and Art, the institution was eventually named after the city's first non-Native settler in 1968.⁵³ The vision for a black history museum in Chicago, however, was a long-standing one. This vision was sustained from the 1940s through the 1960s by a broad and intergenerational cross-section of cultural activists who associated closely with Margaret Burroughs. It was made up primarily of Southside-based teachers, social workers, writers, artists, and trade unionists. Their efforts were but one front among diverse ideologically-driven efforts led mainly by middle class African Americans to strategically promote black cultural heritage in ways that underscored the regional identities of the Midwest and the Windy City through the Cold War era. The initial attempt to establish a history museum in Chicago was formed in conjunction with a moment of significant wartime civil rights activity that drew on the left-labor cultural activism of the New Deal era through the establishment of National Negro Museum Foundation (NNMHF). There were also various cultural heritage events organized through mainline black public history organizations such as

⁵² Eugene Pieter Feldman, *The Birth and the Building of the DuSable Museum* (Chicago: DuSable Museum Press, 1981), 11, 15; "Top, 'Unknown' Artists Exhibit," *The Chicago Defender* (Daily Edition), June 20, 1957, 7; "Outdoor Art Fair is Huge Success," *The Chicago Defender* (National Edition), July 6, 1957, 3.

⁵³ Today, there are over 300 such museums operating throughout the United States and Canada. See Mabel O. Wilson, "Making History Visible: World's Fairs, Expositions, and Museums in the Black Metropolis, 1895-1995" (PhD Dissertation, New York University, 2007) 308; Mabel O. Wilson, *Negro Building*, 242-249; Spencer R. Crew, "African Americans, History and Museums," 98; Margaret T.G Burroughs, interview with Ian Rocksborough-Smith, October 19, 2009; *Profile of Black Museums: A Survey Commissioned by the African American Museums Association* (African American Museums Association, Washington, D.C. and American Association for State and Local History, Nashville, Tennessee, 1988); "Negro History Museum Officially Opens Sunday," *The Chicago Defender* (October 28, 1961), 16.

the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History (ASNLH), churches, community centers, union halls, libraries, and private homes.

By 1963, the home-based Ebony Museum had attracted over 6,400 visitors to see exhibits of African, African American and Mexican art. It also had a growing collection of cultural artifacts from poetry and folk song manuscripts, to recordings, writings on history, sculptures and crafts that the Burroughs' had been collecting from their well-travelled friends. The museum also frequently solicited materials through advertisements in *The Chicago Defender* from the early 1950s and in announcements for the museum's opening - which took place in October of 1961.⁸ In his history of the museum, co-founder Eugene Feldman recalled his first experience at one of the Burroughses' popular salon parties shortly after his return to Chicago and the Midwest in 1957:

[h]ere I found a most unusual cultural scene. There was a fellow there giving guitar lessons. Then Charles Burroughs, Margaret's husband, who had since boyhood gone to school in the USSR, began giving lessons in Russian. After the "hellos" they had all made me welcome. I waited in a butterfly chair... in an apartment that served as a gallery also. It had beautiful paintings, black and white sketches and sculpture. It had a large wooden picnic table around which we were, in many weeks, months and years, to drink coffee and give birth to projects including the building of a Museum. I was thrilled to be in such a wonderful atmosphere.⁹

Feldman's recollection of the cosmopolitan salon milieu from which the museum was born was not unlike descriptions of other Southside cultural events. One reflection by the acclaimed African American poet and writer Gwendolyn Brooks of a party hosted a decade earlier by one of Burroughs' closest fellow travelers (sculptor Marion Perkins) was strikingly similar in tone. Brooks noted how the salon she attended was not a "typical" Bronzeville affair, but a racially "mixed" event that included black and white writers, artists, and various professionals from social workers to physicists - all enjoying martinis amongst other friends.

While there was no “over-mastering din,” Brooks observed that Margaret Burroughs was there and sang the classic song “Hard Times Blues” from a cross-legged position on the floor after which a local photographer encouraged others to offer more song and dance.¹⁰

This chapter will examine how similar scenes, reflections, and their attendant public history-related labors became an important repertoire for cultural activists in Chicago from the 1940s through the early 1960s. As such, this chapter will explain how black-led public history work fit into Chicago history and broader fields of historical inquiry – notably the production of racial knowledge at local levels. Institutional histories, oral and written autobiographies, archival manuscripts, local newspaper and magazine coverage deal specifically with how a cohort of activists eventually founded what became known as the Ebony/DuSable Museum in Chicago in the early 1960s - the first major independent black museum of its kind to be established in the United States.⁴ This chapter will proceed with an analysis of the museum group’s engagement with parallel public history efforts in the Windy City and discuss how these engagements constituted an important intervention into discussions concerning the politics of representing African American history in the public sphere from the early Cold War through the 1960s.

Not a “Venture”

It would be difficult to fully reconcile Burroughs’ retrospective of the DuSable Museum’s origins and the experiences of the activists who founded it with cultural and social histories of Black Chicago. Work on the Windy City’s most important community throughout the post-World War II period by Adam Green demonstrates how John H. Johnson’s publishing empire - which included *Negro Digest* and the more prolific *Ebony* and *Jet* magazines – were at the center of African American discussions about racial identity at mid-century in the public sphere. Green’s work on Chicago demonstrates that a sense of racial simultaneity in modern

African American cultural and social life through the mid-1940s and afterwards recast age-old black community cleavages between elite protest and uplift strategies among the community's middling-classes. This sense of simultaneity accounted for the racialized social conditions experienced by African American migrants from the South. Indeed, most who moved north with their families in search of "promised lands," while removed from the dangers and traumas of southern racial violence, nearly universally faced racial proscriptions from both subtle and not-so-subtle *de facto* discriminations throughout the post-World War II era. This was especially true in areas of housing, education, and employment. Still, to Green, the sense of racial simultaneity symbolized by Johnson's publishing ventures also problematically advanced a "possessive individualism" that accorded with the prevailing liberalism of the Cold War period. He suggests this individualism also risked "flattening" notions of African-American identity.⁵⁴

The sense of racial simultaneity expressed in *Ebony* innovatively formulated in the magazine's content and through its editorial make-up underscored the enterprise's imprimatur as an innovative business venture. Green's work shows how rather than simply ignoring or dismissing the energies of beleaguered leftists during the Cold War, Johnson publications actually absorbed some of them and their cultural labors into the liberal business idiom of the magazine, most notably *Ebony*'s main editor, Ben Burns (a Jewish American and a former Communist). Moreover, the magazine continued to cover issues that interested African American working classes - though it focused most of its attention on "professional, commercial and entrepreneurial sectors." Indeed, the editorship at *Ebony* grew tremendously during the 1950s after John Johnson's famous raid of the black press (notably *The Chicago Defender*'s staff) adding names like Lerone Bennett and Era Bell Thompson. The *Ebony* staff also drew on a

⁵⁴ Adam Green, *Selling the Race*, 7-8.

multigenerational group of Southside black bibliophiles and cultural workers – those studied especially in Anne Meis Knupfer’s study of the Chicago black renaissance (of the 1930s through the 1950s). Many of these figures were also prominent Southside bibliophiles, such as former Cleveland Hall Branch reference librarian Doris Saunders who joined the staff of *Ebony* mid-career and worked to expand its company library.⁵⁵ Saunders that recalls how she received a “mere three-dollar” raise to work at *Ebony*, an amount that was not significantly larger than her city salary. But the new job was accompanied by a promise from Johnson that if he made money, she would “make money.”⁵⁶

Still, it is worth considering other cultural projects less acquisitive in nature from the same moment - projects equally concerned with racial representations in the public sphere. Certainly, African American community life could be and often was represented in ways that were less commercial in orientation. In recent retrospectives, Margaret Burroughs was unequivocal in her position that the work she and her colleagues engaged in to promote public history in Chicago were quite different from the entrepreneurial forms of *Ebony* magazine and other ventures by Johnson publishing. For instance, Burroughs related how *Ebony*’s business representatives had threatened a “cease” and “desist” order against her when they learned she was using the word “Ebony” in the title for her museum project. According to Burroughs, the letter from *Ebony* characterized the museum as a “venture” – a characterization she rejected. For

⁵⁵ Saunders quoted in Adam Green, *Selling the Race*, 145-146, 161-162, 167, 175-176. Green notes that the Cleveland Hall Branch Library (whose historic Africana collections today are mainly housed at the Vivian G. Harsh collection at the Carter G. Woodson library) was Chicago’s equivalent to the Schomburg collection on Black History and Culture in New York City. See Adam Green, *Selling the Race*, 167. For more on the history of the Schomburg Library see, Jean Blackwell Hutson, “African Materials in the Schomburg Collection of Negro Literature and History,” *African Studies Bulletin* 3:2 (May 1960): 1-4; John Henrik Clarke, “The Influence of Arthur A. Schomburg on My Concept of Africana Studies,” *Phylon* 49:1/2 (Spring-Summer 1992): 4-9.

⁵⁶ Saunders quoted in Adam Green, *Selling the Race*, 167.

her, the museum was not a capitalist enterprise since the museum depended on scarce funding for its start-up, expansion, and later upkeep (see chapter 5).⁵⁷

In various other recollections, Burroughs expressed a similar sense of differentiation from entrepreneurial forms for cultural production and activism though she gave credit to those who first and foremost supported artistic and creative expressions. This was especially true for her memories of the Southside Community Art Center's (SSCAC) inauguration of 1941. The inauguration brought out numerous local dignitaries as well as more wealthy middle class black and white patrons and members of the SSCAC's Board of Directors. Burroughs characterized the early directors and donors as "bourgeois." They nearly "shut out" her fellow artists as well as a "colorful" and controversial local union leader, J. Livert Kelly, who generously donated to the center's start-up costs. Burroughs credited community entrepreneurs who helped artist's start-up their efforts with hands-off approaches. For instance, insurance salesman and Southside Community Committee member Golden B. Darby sponsored community art contests that preceded the WPA center while older black artists some of whom did commercial painting for a living, such as William McGill, William Carter, and George E. Neal each set up home and church basement studios throughout Bronzeville and encouraged the younger cohort of artists (such as Margaret Burroughs, Geraldine Hamilton, Bernard Goss, Fred Jones, Charles Sebree, Eldzier Cortor and others) who came to establish the SSCAC during the New Deal years. Moreover, Burroughs recalled how some of the artists she worked with were involved in protests

⁵⁷ Margaret Burroughs interview with Ian Rocksborough-Smith, October 19, 2009, Chicago, IL.; Dan Weissman, "Civic Watcher," *Crain's Chicago Business* 29:37 (September 11, 2006); John H. Johnson, *Succeeding Against the Odds: The Inspiring Autobiographies of One of America's Wealthiest Entrepreneurs* (Chicago: Warner Books, 1989).

downtown in Grant Park - which had been the site of an annual citywide art fair that for many years excluded African American artists.⁵⁸

In this sense, Burroughs recollections of the origins for her museum project along with her past experiences with other cultural institutions on the South Side set these labors apart from more mainstream and entrepreneurial forms of African American cultural production. Moreover, Burroughs retrospective situates discussions of public history efforts firmly in the local context of the early Cold War's ideological political battlefields. Expression of these politics became central to the ways black public history labors were to be carried out in the city. As such, the vision for the Ebony/DuSable Museum emerged from growing interest in public history practices and black cultural representations generally. In a recent study of museums and the public sphere, Jennifer Barrett notes how the "contemporary museum often struggles to negotiate between the remnants of an earlier rhetoric of 'public'... and new practices and types of spaces designed to attract new audiences, engage new communities and respond to the locality or nation within which they are situated."⁵⁹ The efforts to imagine a black museum in Chicago demonstrated just such "new practices." As demonstrated below and elsewhere in this dissertation, the DuSable Museum's founders attracted and engaged the local community primarily through heritage projects that reflected regional geographies as well as larger national and international coordinates for black political culture during the Cold War, civil rights, and Third World anticolonial movement eras.

⁵⁸ Margaret G. Burroughs, "Chicago's Southside Community Art Center," 136, 141; Margaret T.G. Burroughs, interview with Anna M. Tyler, November 11 & December 5, 1988, transcript, Chicago, Illinois, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C, 22-24; "Chicago Active in Effort to Establish Community Art Center," *The Chicago Defender* (National Edition) (May 20, 1939), 24. J. Livert Kelly was the leader of Local 444 of the Waiter, Bartenders and Cooks Union (AFL). See Adam Green, *Selling the Race*, 36; Timothy Gilfoyle, "Making History," 55.

⁵⁹ Jennifer Barrett, *Museums and the Public Sphere* (New York: Blackwell, 2011), 3.

Fellow Travellers

Some figures involved in the cultural fronts of earlier decades who commemorated black history and heritage were certainly also initially Communists. At the very least, many were fellow travelers with left wing sensibilities – notwithstanding whether the historical record can indicate a clear and definite Party affiliation.⁶⁰ Margaret and Charles Burroughs were influenced by old black left figures such as Paul Robeson and W.E.B. Du Bois who each maintained sympathies with segments of the broader U.S. left for its sustained attention to black discrimination, the grievances of organized labor, and working class social movements, as well as anti-imperialist politics. This coalition of left wing and African American activists has been described as the “black popular front” of the 1930s and 1940s and the “anti-colonial front” of the post-World War II era.⁶¹ Collectively, their continued strivings through the 1950s certainly complicate declensions for left-influenced activism over this entire period.⁶²

⁶⁰ Writings by black Communists involved in the Communist Party of the United States’ (CPUSA) policy decisions in the late 1940s and 1950s certainly suggested the likelihood of these claims. The CPUSA had abandoned Popular Front style liberalism in the 1940s but maintained a sectarian Stalinist political program strategically focused on a notion of “culture” as a weapon in the freedom struggles of African Americans. See Doxey A. Wilkerson, “Negro Culture: Heritage and Weapon”; V.J. Jerome, “Let us Grasp the Weapon of Culture,” *Political Affairs* 30:2 (February 1951), 195-215; John J. Munro, “The Anticolonial Front,” 154, 160-161. The legacy of marxist historian Herbert Aptheker has received extensive treatment and represents an important point of entry into any discussion about the Communist Party’s engagement with black history. See, Herbert Aptheker, “An Autobiographical Note,” *The Journal of American History* 87:1 (June 2000), 147-150; Herbert Aptheker and Robin D.G. Kelley, “Interview of Herbert Aptheker,” *The Journal of American History* 87:1 (June 2000), 151-167; Robin D.G. Kelley, “Afterward,” *The Journal of American History* 87:1 (June 2000), 168-171; Herbert Shapiro, ed. *African American History and Radical Historiography: Essays in Honor of Herbert Aptheker*, Minneapolis: MEP Publications, 1998.

⁶¹ I am borrowing the term “Cultural Front” from Michael Denning to underscore the roles of African American cultural workers whose labors often focused on Black history projects and bridged the radical political cultures of the 1930s and 1940s and the resurgent nationalisms of the 1950s and 1960s. Michael Denning, *The Cultural Front*, xviii-xix; Michael Denning, *The Cultural Front & Culture in the Age of Three Worlds*; Martha Biondi, *To Stand and Fight*; John J. Munro, “The Anticolonial Front”; St. Clair Drake, interview with Robert Martin, July 28, 1969, transcript, Ralph J. Bunche Oral History Collection (Civil Rights Documentation Project), Moorland Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, D.C. 119-230; Margaret T.G. Burroughs, *Life With Margaret*, 14, 60-61.

⁶² Scholars such as Penny Von Eschen, Gerald Horne, and others whose writings on race and the Cold War are indispensable to the historical record, chart largely tragic narratives, especially for black left wing politics and

The Burroughses biographies fit these black leftist paradigms through the mid-20th Century. Born a descendant of slaves from Virginia Charles Burroughs was raised by socialist parents in Harlem and Moscow where he learned fluent Russian. His parents were products of northeastern U.S. public colleges and had been involved in depression era welfare rights and tenant organizing in Harlem. Along with his siblings, Charles Burroughs had gone to school in Moscow during the 1930s and, inspired by Chaplin's "City Lights," became a circus trapeze artist and drove a truck there as a self-described "patriotic activity" during World War II. He returned to New York and eventually moved to Chicago in 1950 over which time he married Margaret Burroughs (then Margaret Taylor Goss) to become her second husband.⁶³

Margaret Burroughs' self-representation as a leftist was more ambiguous. In autobiographical texts, Burroughs noted that she has been described as a "progressive," a "militant," or a "radical." But she was careful not to self-represent fully in these terms. She maintained she was never a member of the Communist Party. Rather, Burroughs underscored her

their related trajectories. For example, see Penny Von Eschen, *Race Against Empire*; Gerald Horne, *Communist Front? The Civil Rights Congress, 1946-1956* (London: Associated University Presses, 1988); Gerald Horne, *Black and Red: W.E.B. Du Bois and the Afro-American Response to the Cold War* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1986); Clarence Lang and Robbie Lieberman, eds., *Anticommunism and the African American Freedom Struggle: 'Another Side of the Story'* (New York: Palgrave, 2009). For a critical historiographical assessment of how civil rights and left wing politics remained in creative tension through international political discussions during the Cold War era, see John J. Munro and Ian Rocksborough-Smith, "Reframing Black Internationalism and Civil Rights During the Cold War," *Journal of American Studies of Turkey* 29 (Spring 2009): 63-79; John J. Munro, "The Anticolonial Front."

⁶³ Charles G. Burroughs, *Home* (Chicago: The Culture Fund, 1987). Erik McDuffie writes extensively about Williana Burroughs, her experiences with the CPUSA, and her conflicted residency in the Soviet Union through the 1930s. See Erik McDuffie, *Sojourning For Freedom: Black Women, American Communism and the Making of Black Left Feminism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 55-57. A number of recent scholarly works have treated African American engagements with the politics and culture of Soviet Russia during the middle decades of the 20th Century. For example, see Mark Solomon, *The Cry Was Unity: Communists and African Americans, 1917-1936* (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 1998); William J. Maxwell, *New Negro, Old Left: African-American Writing and Communism Between the Wars* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999); Kate A. Baldwin, *Beyond the Color Line and the Iron Curtain: Reading Encounters Between Black and Red, 1922-1963* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002); Glenda E. Gilmore, *Defying Dixie: The Radical Roots of Civil Rights, 1919-1950* (New York: Norton, 2008); Margaret T.G. Burroughs, *Life With Margaret*, 72.

Catholic upbringing (from her mother's side) and particularly the influence of an Irish Catholic primary school teacher in Chicago, Mary L. Ryan, who encouraged her early interest in visual art. Though Burroughs could not afford to supplement a scholarship she received to attend Howard University, Ryan mentored her through teaching degrees at Chicago Normal College (1939) and a master's at the Art Institute of Chicago (1948). Burroughs recalled Booker T. Washington's uplift "bucket" metaphor to explain her decision to situate her cultural work locally in Chicago - which complicates the black political traditions she lays claim to. She also represented her family's history as typical for migrants from the U.S. South following World War I and highlighted her father's mixed Native American and African ancestry, their proximity in St. Rose, Louisiana to the linguistic world of French/Spanish Caribbean cultures, their working class status (her mother worked as a domestic while her father a farmer and in Chicago secured temporary work in the stockyards). Moreover, she highlighted her family's subsequent struggles to establish themselves as part of the first major wave of black southerners from the trans-Mississippi/Louisiana region to the urban North. Burroughs' narrative collapses the political geography of migrant experience into her recollection of the cultural salons she convened on Chicago's Southside as part of the city's black cultural renaissance. To her, these informal and diverse Bronzeville-based gatherings in people's homes fostered both her intellectual and political commitment to public history from the 1930s through the 1960s and became her "family's St. Rose dinner table from memory, displaced-good times transferred across state, class, and cultural lines."⁶⁴ Though her experiences reflect the inevitable personal

⁶⁴ Margaret T.G. Burroughs, *Life With Margaret*, 29-30, 55-56, 85; Carline Evone Williams Strong, "Margaret Taylor Goss Burroughs: Educator, Artist, Author, Founder, and Civic Leader" (PhD Dissertation, Loyola University, Chicago, 1994), 26.

changes wrought by human migration, they also reflected a temporal sense of continuity across both time and space (see figure 2).

While they were often isolated during the Cold War because of their leftist affinities, the persistence of figures such as the Burroughses nonetheless set the stage for the vibrant black arts infrastructures that emerged in Chicago during the 1960s. Building on the work of Bill Mullen and others, James Smethurst suggests that for Chicago in particular, “left-influenced African American institutions of the 1940s largely disappeared during the Cold War,” and those that survived this moment such as the Southside Community Arts Center and *The Chicago Defender* (like in the labor movement of the same period) purged many known leftists from their ranks.⁶⁵ There were certainly many Cold War dispersions in the late 1940s and 1950s with Chicago writers and cultural workers such as Richard Wright, Lorraine Hansberry, and many others compelled to move far afield to practice their crafts. Still, Smethurst notes that the remainder of the black left in Chicago (chiefly Margaret Burroughs and her museum cohort) focused “on art and education even more intensely as a means of maintaining a presence in the African American community within the constraints of McCarthyism.”⁶⁶

Museum Origins

Specific designs for a museum devoted entirely to black public history actually existed in Chicago since at least the mid-1940s and accord with Smethurst’s projection. Margaret

⁶⁵ James Smethurst, *The Black Arts Movement*, 193.

⁶⁶ Spencer R. Crew, “African Americans, History and Museums,” 81; Jacqueline Anne Goggin, *Carter G. Woodson: A Life in Black History* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1997); James Smethurst, *The Black Arts Movement*, 196, 200. For the dispersion of the black literary left from Chicago see especially, Bill Mullen, *Popular Fronts*. For useful, in depth studies of Black Chicago’s cultural renaissance, see Anne Meis Knupfer, *The Chicago Black Renaissance and Women’s Activism* and Davarian Baldwin, *Chicago’s New Negroes*.

Burroughs became a key member of a group of ten black labor, civic leaders, and teachers based mostly in Chicago who initiated the city's first significant attempt to establish an African American history museum in 1945.⁶⁷

The group that first undertook this endeavor was called the National Negro Museum and Historical Foundation (NNMHF). While it existed, the Foundation was closely associated with militant civil rights formations in the city and around the country. NNMHF members included Margaret and Charles Burroughs, as well as community activists John Gray, local Communist Party member and union activist Ishmael Flory, and Associated Negro Press editor and writer Frank Marshall Davis. Members included older, well-respected community figures in its ranks such as public school teacher Sam Stratton and John Bray of the Colored Episcopal Church. Margaret Burroughs became the NNMHF's financial secretary. Most of these members were also leading local members of the National Negro Congress (NNC) -- a broad civil rights organization that became progressively Communist-influenced, but was mainly comprised of liberal black labor activists with chapters in cities across the U.S. who highlighted a wartime and immediate postwar era of significant activism and protest.⁶⁸ The organization had chapters in numerous American cities and led an immediate postwar era of significant activism and protest. Just prior to the NNC's decline in the late 1940s, the NNMHF effectively continued the former's

⁶⁷ On Margaret Burroughs' role with SSCAC see Bill Mullen, *Popular Fronts*, 75-105; Anne Meis Knupfer, *Black Women's Activism and the Chicago Renaissance*, 5, 8, 19, 67; Mara Scudder, "DuSable Museum's Proud Growth," *The Chicago Defender* (Daily Edition) May 7, 1974; Mabel O. Wilson, "Making History Visible," 299-300; Mabel O. Wilson, *Negro Building*, 245-247.

⁶⁸ The *PUSH Magazine* article is cited in Carline Evone Williams Strong, "Margaret Taylor Goss Burroughs: Educator, Artist, Author, Founder, and Civic Leader" (PhD Dissertation, Loyola University 1994), 184.

cultural activities in Chicago during World War II – which revolved especially around celebrations and public recognitions for black history.⁶⁹

The NNC’s Chicago Council’s last executive secretary John Gray also held the same position with the NNMHF – a connection that highlighted how civil rights activism and black public history labors were two sides of the same coin. In the late 1940s, Gray made some important reflections and political interventions on the significance of black-led public history efforts in the city. Gray appealed to Senator Glenn Taylor of Idaho who had spoken against the seating of segregationist white Mississippian Theodore Bilbo in Congress and in the same letter solicited Taylor’s participation in a “mass meeting” to celebrate “Negro History Week” in February of 1947. Though Black History Week was certainly celebrated in other American cities with growing populations of Southern migrants especially, Gray felt that Chicago’s celebrations had become one of the more “prominent traditions” of that city. A proclamation from Mayor Ed Kelly indicated that both the NNC and the NNMHF “extended activities during this week,” while a news release from the NNMHF promoted local history events and indicated how a joint meeting was held between the two organizations to coordinate celebrations.⁷⁰

The connection between public history labors and leftist politics was not lost on important observers of Black Chicago from the mid-20th Century. Local college professor and

⁶⁹ Erik Gellman, “‘Death Blow to Jim Crow’: The National Negro Congress, 1936-1947” (PhD Dissertation, Northwestern University, 2006), 4, 204-210; Erik Gellman, *Death Blow to Jim Crow: The National Negro Congress and the Rise of Militant Civil Rights* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011). For an account of immediate post-World War II labor insurgency with an emphasis on cultural forms and fronts, see George Lipsetz, *Rainbow at Midnight: Labor and Culture in the 1940s* (Chicago: University of Illinois, 1994), 99-156.

⁷⁰ John M. Gray to Glenn Taylor, January 4, 1947, Box 66, Folder 15, National Negro Congress Papers, 1933-1947 (hereafter NNC Papers), Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library (hereafter SCHM); “Proclamation,” City of Chicago, Mayor’s Office, January 22, 1947, Box 66, Folder 15, NNC Papers, SCHM.

co-author of *Black Metropolis* (the classic study of Chicago's African American community), St. Clair Drake, recalled the significance of the NNMHF in a revealing unpublished interview from 1969. In this interview Drake commented extensively on Chicago history and politics. In particular, he noted the uniqueness of Cold War conditions in the city for black Communists who channeled energies into public history-related commemorative cultural projects. Drake noted how "[t]he communists by this time [1950s]" were "a broken breed in Chicago..." that "[t]he McCarthy thing had put them down" and that they were "... infiltrated with the FBI so heavily that they" did not "know which way to turn." He suggested an entente had been reached between the NNMHF's more left-leaning members (notably Margaret Burroughs and Ishmael Flory) and Chicago's black Democratic congressman, William Dawson. Dawson's race-brokerage style of politics as the titular head of Chicago's black Democratic submachine kept him in an ongoing struggle to appease the city's notorious and corrupt Democratic civic leadership. Drake suggested that from that point, "[Chicago's black Communists] never raised an issue of an international nature. They stayed off of issues about war and peace and revolution and that sort of thing. They never got into a real local fight but they went in for the study of Negro history." In exchange, Dawson helped the NNMHF and cultural heritage groups with direct leftist affinities that emerged later coexist with the civic machine. For example, the Afro-American Heritage Association (AAHA),⁷¹ founded in 1958, encouraged Richard J. Daley and Illinois Governor Otto Koerner in the late 1950s and 1960s to proclaim Negro History Week, "as long as... [the Communists]... stayed on that strict cultural nationalist line"⁷²

⁷¹ The Afro-American Heritage Association was started and led by Ishmael Flory and Christine C. Johnson. For more on the AAHA, see chapter 4 of this dissertation.

⁷² St. Clair Drake, interview with Robert Martin, July 28, 1969, transcript, Ralph J. Bunche Oral History Collection (Civil Rights Documentation Project), Moorland Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, D.C. 119-230. The literature on Chicago's Democratic Machine and African American politics is

Writings by black Communists involved in the Communist Party of the United States' (CPUSA) leadership and policy decisions in the late 1940s and 1950s certainly suggested the potential for these claims. The CPUSA had abandoned popular front style liberalism in the late 1930s. While it continued to focus on organizing in the labor movement through the late 1930s and 1940s, the CPUSA also advanced a program that strategically focused on notions of “culture” as a weapon in the freedom struggles of African Americans.⁷³ Indeed, while the focus of many black Communists in Chicago was on trade union activism to the mid-1950s through the CIO-affiliated United Packinghouse Workers Association (UPWA) successful role in promoting anti-discrimination and civil rights on the shop floor, many extended this attention to wider community issues.⁷⁴ While there is much more to be understood about the complex role of Communist race relations and African American political culture in 1950s Chicago, it could be that another key focus and front for black Party members, fellow travelers, and their allies was

extensive and complex. For a focused political biography of William Dawson's career, see Christopher Manning, *William L. Dawson and the Limits of Black Electoral Leadership* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2009). Studies of black politics and their complex engagement with Chicago's Democratic civic machine over the course of twentieth century include: William J. Grimshaw, *Bitter Fruit*; William J. Grimshaw, *Negro Politics in Chicago: The Quest for Leadership, 1939-1979* (Chicago: Loyola University Center for Urban Policy, 1980); Christopher Reed, *The Chicago NAACP and the Rise of Black Professional Leadership, 1910-1966* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997); Adam Cohen and Elizabeth Taylor, *American Pharoah: Mayor Richard J. Daley and His Battle for Chicago and the Nation* (New York: Back Bay Books, 2000), 57-61; Lizabeth Cohen, *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 251-289; Dempsey J. Travis, *An Autobiography of Black Politics* (Chicago: Agate Publishing, 1981); “Kerner O.K.'s Negro History Week Feb. 11,” *The Chicago Defender* (Daily Edition) January 24, 1962, 6; “Kerner Backs History Week,” *The Chicago Defender* (Daily Edition) January 31, 1962, 9; James Smethurst, *The Black Arts Movement*, 194.

⁷³ Doxey A. Wilkerson, “Negro Culture: Heritage and Weapon”; V.J. Jerome, “Let us Grasp the Weapon of Culture,” 195-215; John J. Munro, “The Anticolonial Front,” 154, 160-161.

⁷⁴ When the Packinghouse Workers decided to move their headquarters to the old Bacon's Casino/DuSable Community Center building in 1949 in the black community, the location was most recently used by the International Workers Order where Louise Thompson Patterson (wife of renown Black Communist William Patterson) helped organize CP-sponsored cultural events in the late 1930s and 1940s. See, Sam Parks, interview with Rick Halpern and Roger Horowitz, 3 October, 1985, United Packinghouse Workers of American Oral History Project (hereafter UPWAOHP), Wisconsin Historical Society (hereafter WHS); “Louise Thompson Speaks on Spain,” *The Chicago Defender* (November 6, 1937), 24; Rick Halpern, *Down on the Killing Floor: Black and White Workers in Chicago's Packinghouses, 1904-54* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 243-244.

the fostering of diverse cultural sites for these prolific public history labors. These efforts were not explicitly about political protest on the shop floor or in the street but rather offered expressive sites for creative dissent within and from the black community.

Margaret Burroughs clearly regarded her efforts to promote black history as a different repertoire than civil rights protest. “[W]e had sympathy with [the civil rights movement],” she noted, “...I imagine a lot of Chicagoans participated in it. I spent my time working on black history work and didn’t have time to work with them because of what I was working on.”⁷⁵ Regardless of any backroom deals with the civic machine, FBI infiltrations, or strategic diversion on the part of African American CP sympathizers or members, this perceived shift to “cultural” activism could have come down to a question of tactics and strategy, given the political atmosphere of Cold War America. Such endeavors certainly attracted attention from government surveillance networks though risked less in this moment than more overt forms of public protest such as direct action sit-ins and demonstrations or rallies, especially if conducted under the auspices of Communist and/or other leftist peace banners that were sure to attract greater repression and negative attention.⁷⁶ Indeed, it was risky enough at the height of the McCarthy period with anticommunist equations of anything that smacked of civil rights and/or black strivings for self-determination to Communism, often regardless of affiliations on the political spectrum.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Margaret Burroughs, interview with Ian Rocksborough-Smith, October 19, 2009.

⁷⁶ For a treatment of African American intellectuals and their struggles to advocate for peace during the early Cold War, see Robbie Lieberman, “‘Another Side of the Story’: African American Intellectuals Speak Out for Peace and Freedom during the Early Cold War Years,” in Clarence Lang and Robbie Lieberman, eds., *Anticommunism and the African American Freedom Struggle*, 17-49; Gerald Horne, *Communist Front?*; Gerald Horne, *Black and Red*.

⁷⁷ Brenda Gayle Plummer, *Rising Wind*, 195.

Though an entente with Congressman Dawson and the civic Democratic machine may well have taken place, the activities of the historical foundation were not strictly cultural nationalist in orientation.⁷⁸ In fact, the NNMHF continued to make broad appeals in its promotional materials and activities to radically reform U.S. democracy in an international context. For example, a 1946 poster demonstrated that it was a black-led, broadly-based, multi-generational effort. The NNMHF's activities stretched over several decades and reflected cosmopolitan concerns to redress racial discriminations globally, assert universal citizenship rights, and publicly represent distinguished African American pasts in the making of an inclusive American "Present and Future" through the remembrance of abolitionist figures like Frederick Douglass and Sojourner Truth. The group also highlighted the world historical moment of the late-1940s. This period marked a shift away from the wartime observance of black history conducted by the parent organization, the National Negro Congress, an observance historian Erik Gellman notes was used to "understand the current war."⁷⁹ For many African Americans, this shift in perceptions within the black public sphere occurred against the backdrop of fascism in both Europe and Jim Crow proscriptions at home. With wars against fascist states ended in Europe, the group criticized American statesmen for ostensibly "democratizing" China while the poll tax was "protected" in the U.S. South preventing one tenth of the country's people "the right to participate in the selection" of government.⁸⁰

⁷⁸ For a more focused discussion of cultural nationalism and public history see Chapter 4 of this dissertation.

⁷⁹ Erik Gellman, "Death Blow to Jim Crow," 204.

⁸⁰ "Negro History Week: Win a People's Peace February 10-17, 1946," Timuel D. Black Papers (unprocessed) (hereafter Black Papers), HARSH.

The NNMHF's promotional materials also revealed more about the foundation's diverse activities, which like the NNC had still explicitly connected civil rights and protest activities with black history celebrations. A 1946 poster noted how the foundation had been "established to stimulate a wider interest in the Negro History Week movement" with the goals of establishing a museum of black "history and culture," to collect records of cultural achievements, and to host classes and seminars on black history.⁸¹ A "Negro History Folder" produced by the NNMHF the following year contained similarly captioned photographs to the 1946 promotional poster, but also recalled a downtown demonstration "against lynching" that had featured among others, Sam Parks, then a young leader of a Chicago local of the United Packinghouse Workers of America (UPWA) and prolific black actor and progressive spokesperson, Canada Lee, as keynote speakers.⁸² Indeed, the NNMHF held annual Negro History Week exhibits at the UPWA's District 1 union hall located at 49th and Wabash Ave in Bronzeville.⁸³ While figures such as writer and poet Frank Marshall Davis would leave Chicago during the McCarthy period, others less overtly left wing in their politics such as Sam Stratton stayed in the city and promoted black history and other related cultural events while keeping the vision for a black history museum alive. Promotional materials for the NNMHF also featured pictures of a proposed site for a museum in Chicago which made mention of an imagined future to rival the most widely acclaimed U.S. black history research archive, the Schomburg library in New York. It also ran an announcement for a mass meeting to discuss the passing of the Fair Employment Practices

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² "Negro History Folder," February 1947, Box 67, Folder 16, NNC Papers, SCHM; Erik Gellman, "Death Blow to Jim Crow," 205; "Burroughs, Margaret Goss" Investigators Report/ Chicago Police Department, File No. 1950, alphabetical file, Box 296, Chicago Police Department Red Squad and related records [manuscript], ca. 1930s-1986 (bulk 1963-1974) (hereafter Red Squad Records) Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois (hereafter CHM).

⁸³ Margaret T.G. Burroughs, *Life With Margaret*, 100.

Commission (FEPC). The announcement highlighted southern anti-Jim Crow protests, demands for minimum wages, and featured captioned photo montages of black priests, older cultural figures of the 1930s and 1940s such as Paul Robeson, Langston Hughes, as well as younger figures such as Lena Horne.⁸⁴

Coverage of this nascent museum foundation in *The Chicago Defender* suggests that its organizers, Sam Stratton and John Gray, were at the center of FEPC and anti-Jim Crow campaigns in Chicago's downtown Loop after Loop hotels banned attempts to organize Black History Week events on their properties. The boycott garnered support from a broad coalition of liberal and labor groups from the Chicago Civil Liberties Committee, to the Federated Hotel Waiters Union (Local 356), and local representatives of the United Packinghouse Workers of America (UPWA), notably Sam Parks from the Wilson packing plant, Local 20. Support from the left-leaning UPWA was especially significant. In the late 1940s and 1950s, the UPWA occupied a fairly unique position (even compared with other left-leaning CIO affiliates) as an institutional facilitator of black community activism from the 1940s through to the 1960s.⁸⁵

The observance of black history week had reached significant levels of public recognition to consistently involve prominent city labor activists and Southside civic leaders alike in these activities. As such, the event also linked to broader issues of fair employment and the open use of public facilities (issues that remained synonymous with civil rights in the city). Moreover, the attempt to promote spatial recognition within Chicago's historic hotel district as well as a future

⁸⁴ "Negro History Week: Win a People's Peace February 10-17, 1946" Folder 16, Box 67, NNC Papers, SCHM; "Make History! Negro History Week, February 10-17, 1946," Box 67, Folder 16, NNC Papers, SCHM; "Negro History Week" Eighty-Two Years of Freedom 1863-1945," Box 67, Folder 16, NNC Papers, SCHM.

⁸⁵ "Loop Hotels Ban Race History Fete," *The Chicago Defender* (National Edition) February 9, 1946; "Chicago Hotels Set Quota on Negroes at Banquets," *The Chicago Defender* (National Edition) March 2, 1946, 12. For more on the UPWA, black public history, and racial knowledge production see chapter 3 of this dissertation.

site for a history museum on the Southside mapped a significant juncture in the making of 20th Century Black Chicago's modern political geographies.

The National Negro Museum and Historical Foundation (NNMHF) is certainly recalled in oral and written texts produced by DuSable Museum founders. These texts demonstrate how the cultural activism embodied in black history projects from the 1940s, such as the NNMHF, connected to the 1950s and 1960s through the alternative use of memory. Such use of memory complicates traditional consensus narratives that limit civil rights chronologies to shorter periods. These memories entangle civil rights narratives with notions of resurgent black nationalism and identity formation through the late 1950s and demonstrate above all the richness and complexity of black political modalities in the public sphere through the mid-20th Century. An early written history of the DuSable museum was done by one of its main founders, Eugene Feldman. Feldman situates Burroughs' nationalism "back in the 1930s... [when she] was writing and thinking Black" and belonged to the youth chapter of the NAACP and wrote for the Associated Negro Press. Feldman writes how in the 1940s, Margaret Burroughs, John Gray and others formed the NNMHF. He also suggests that the foundation contained "the spirit and premier effort that finally gave birth to the DuSable Museum."⁸⁶ Thus, a vision for a black cultural heritage museum extended from mid-1940s when the NNMHF was first established through the 1960s.

In many of her autobiographical reflections, Burroughs primary identity as a cultural activist is exemplified by her retrospective on the politics of art, whether through her actual artwork or even her sense of aesthetic self-representation. Burroughs felt that "[a]rt should make

⁸⁶ Eugene Feldman, *The Birth and the Building of the DuSable Museum*, 13.

a statement... a positive statement.” On the question of both subject and audience in art Burroughs indicated a primary concern for “the little people, the street people...” She felt that “every artist or every writer, whatever they say should be a statement for the total, complete liberation of our people.” She also realized the danger that “...the capitalistic system – encourages artists to do all this stuff that says nothing” and so prudence as an artist was always needed.⁸⁷

Burroughs’ commitment to political art and activism born through her salon and museum-making activities and mapped through family memories of migration reverberates in similar ways throughout the narrative cadences of her auto-biographical thoughts. As such, Burroughs’ narrative weighs the importance of social experiences: from memories of migration, to her mixed ancestry, and Catholic influence in education, demonstrate the fluidity of black racial *and* political identities during the mid-20th Century. In his important study of black cultural politics and modernity, political scientist Michael Hanchard notes how many forms of ideology often “fuse secular, sacred, cosmological, and even futurist thinking” into efforts to construct “popular” rhetoric. “Their adherents may not declare themselves Marxist, liberal, conservative, or Afro-Centrist,” writes Hanchard, “but fuse elements from a broad range of ideational sources in their critical deliberations concerning political events or circumstances in daily life.” Still, for Burroughs, the combination of her Southside salon milieu and public history labors, formative New Deal era experiences, and her anti-capitalist viewpoints placed her activities within a

⁸⁷ Margaret T.G. Burroughs, interview with Anna M. Tyler, 33-34; Margaret Burroughs, interview with Timothy Gilfoyle; Margaret Burroughs, *Life With Margaret*, 55, 122-123.

marxist frame just as CLR James' writings in 1950s New York were reflective of "bolshevik sensibilities."⁸⁸

Margaret Burroughs was actually motivated by her troubles with McCarthyism to found a museum project. For example, she faced FBI surveillance and most notably local Chicago Police Department harassment at her doorstep. This harassment led to her appearance before the Chicago Public School's Board of Education in 1952 where civic authorities attempted unsuccessfully to attain information from her about local Communists and their activities.⁸⁹ As one scholar notes, left-leaning Chicago teachers "faced further scrutiny from the Chicago Police Departments Subversive Unit, or 'Red Squad,' which started to investigate the political activities of all those who applied to or worked for the city, state, and county, and especially the Chicago public schools in the 1940s and 1950s. Chicago Police Red Squads often shared this information liberally with federal level House of Un-American Activities Committees (HUAC) and the FBI."⁹⁰ As many scholars of Cold War America have indicated, the "red scare often turned into a black scare as the Red Squads put African Americans from across the political spectrum who supported civil rights under suspicion of communism." Indeed, the Chicago Red Squad investigated Burroughs because she had participated with Communists in a number of political activities and attended civil rights meetings and demonstrations in the 1940s and early 1950s.⁹¹ A brief perusal of Burroughs' Red Squad file further indicates the high level of surveillance she

⁸⁸ Timothy Brennan, *At Home in the World*, 230; Michael Hanchard, *Party/Politics*, 74.

⁸⁹ Margaret T.G. Burroughs, *Life With Margaret*, 193; Bill Mullen, *Popular Fronts*, 181-191; Carline Evone Williams Strong, "Margaret Taylor Goss Burroughs," 117-118; Margaret T.G. Burroughs, interview with Ian Rocksborough-Smith, October 19, 2009; Margaret T. Burroughs, interview with John E. Fleming, "Dr. Margaret T. Burroughs," 39.

⁹⁰ John Lyons, *Teachers and Reform: Chicago Public Education, 1929-1970* (Chicago: University of Illinois, 2009), 123-124.

⁹¹ Ibid.; "Convention Lays Basis for Advance in Negro Creative Arts," *Daily Worker*, January 30, 1952, 7.

and many others were subjected to in Chicago (and other cities) by local city police departments – notwithstanding federal FBI harassment and monitoring. Burroughs’ file includes entries on seventy-four public events she allegedly attended and/or publications she authored or was cited in between 1950 and 1968.⁹²

DuSable Museum co-founder Eugene P. Feldman was also tracked by Chicago Police through this period. Feldman’s Red Squad file charts his record of writing in the radical left-wing press, notably for the *Daily Worker* and *The National Guardian* based in New York, and the *Southern Newsletter* in Kentucky (the latter a newsletter that covered issues of civil rights and racial prejudice within organized labor in southern states). Feldman’s file also traces his activities through his relocation to Chicago and the Midwest in the late 1950s where he continued to be involved with local left-wing causes, labor and civil rights activism, and where he became closely acquainted to Margaret Burroughs through the art fairs and public black history works she promoted locally.⁹³

Still, such surveillance and harassment did not completely impede Burroughs and many other middle class progressive teachers both black and white subjected to similar treatments.

⁹² “Burroughs, Margaret Goss” Investigators Report.

Examining sources like police surveillance files are useful for they uncover potential leads to historians about the biographies of important individuals whose politics and/or cultural activities attracted significant attention from Cold War era government authorities at the local level. More revealing perhaps would be to historicize Cold War archives and consider how the frequent inaccuracies of these sources demonstrates what Ann Stoler suggests are the records of “uncertainty and doubt in how people imagined they could and might make the rubrics of rule correspond to a changing imperial world.” As such, local Red Squad files as much as federal level FBI files, if viewed as imperfect records produced by a less-than-sublime state apparatus, can reveal as much about the anxieties of state and central power as they do about the activities of activists and their subaltern selves (ie. whether they were or were not in the Communist Party). See, Ann Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 4.

⁹³ “Feldman (DR.), Eugene.” Investigators Report/ Chicago Police Department, File No. [Blank], alphabetical file, Box 299, Chicago Police Department Red Squad and related records [manuscript], ca. 1930s-1986 (bulk 1963-1974), Red Squad Records, CHM; Eugene Feldman, *The Birth and the Building of the DuSable Museum*, 11-15.

Despite “hard times” as a student of art education at Chicago’s Institute of Art in which she had to balance part time work with intensive study and when she was nearly kicked out for missing tuition payments and sometimes low marks, Burroughs managed to complete a BA and MA in 1946 and 1948 respectively.⁹⁴ In fact there was hope for aspiring public teachers during this period despite the hardships they faced if they were left wing or progressives. Public teacher’s salaries in Chicago steadily increased from 1940s levels to 1953 from monthly minimums of \$135 for elementary school teachers to \$250 and \$200 to \$288 for high school teachers. Certainly there were ongoing issues of racial discrimination in public schools regarding teaching appointments and social studies curriculums. For example, black teachers were still often only assigned to overcrowded Southside schools and classrooms. However, reforms towards pay equity occurred in a period of expanding U.S. unionized workers salaries over the post-World War II years. Also, despite the anti-communist leanings of leaders such as John Fewkes and Mary Herrick at the Chicago Teachers Union (CTU), the union generally supported teachers brought before government committees concerned with un-American activities. Teachers like Margaret Burroughs with leftist reputations would continue to teach despite the threat of reprimands that resulted from the Cold War climate.⁹⁵

As such, instead of relinquishing her teaching job with the city under such pressures, Burroughs stepped back and applied for an enviable one year sabbatical to Mexico. There, she sojourned with her family and joined other prominent African American writers and artists (namely Elizabeth Catlett and Charles White) to Mexico City’s Taller de Gráfica popular arts school in 1952. In Mexico, Burroughs studied with renown Mexican painters, muralists and

⁹⁴ Margaret T.G. Burroughs, interview with Anna M. Tyler, 49.

⁹⁵ John Lyons, *Teachers and Reform*, 108, 114, 117, 122, 130. For more on black teachers and curriculum reforms related to public history and racial knowledge see Chapter 2 of this dissertation.

sculptors – notably Leopold Mendez and Francisco Mora. She also met José David Alfaro Siqueiros. Through these experiences, Burroughs refined her skills in charcoal and stencil linocut forms – all of which became trademarks for her later visual art. For Burroughs, the year in Mexico “strengthened” her “in more ways than one – not only artistically, but morally and intellectually” so that when she “came back to Chicago” she “was in a fighting mood” determined to oppose any efforts to remove her from her teaching position in Chicago Public schools. After her return, Burroughs notes that “[n]obody ever called me in for questioning... again” and she was able to return to DuSable High School to resume teaching art and art history there until she was eventually promoted as a teacher to Community Colleges by the late 1960s.⁹⁶

Contested Public History

Despite Burroughs and other teachers’ successful negotiation of Cold War repressions, the role that public history efforts had in Chicago appeared marginal if gauged solely on local activities associated nominally with the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History (ASNLH) – the nation’s leading black history group. Indeed, no local chapter of the ASNLH had been fully active in the city since the 1930s. This situation was sustained until 1964 when a chapter was finally reestablished. Indeed, a perusal of the *Negro History Bulletin* (the ASNLH’s community and public history-oriented publication) from the 1940s through the 1960s rarely featured Chicago in its effort to cover Negro History Week celebrations. In fact, it regularly

⁹⁶ Burroughs would adapt many Mexican artistic aesthetics into her print-making and linocut drawing techniques. American studies scholar Rebecca Schreiber suggests that a cohort of African American artists sought both temporary and permanent refuge through the Mexican art scene and distinguishes their approaches to modern art with the “universalist” abstract expressionism that had become more commercially viable in the United States during the 1950s. See Bill Mullen, *Popular Fronts*, 192; Rebecca M. Schreiber, *Cold War Exiles in Mexico: U.S. Dissidents and the Culture of Critical Resistance* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 5-6, 27-57; Deborah Caplow, *Leopoldo Mendez: Revolutionary Art and the Mexican Print* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2007); Humberto Musacchio, *El Taller De Gráfica Popular* (Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Economica, 2007); Margaret T.G. Burroughs, interview with Anna M. Tyler, 62.

featured other mid-20th Century black metropolis' such as Detroit, Atlanta, and Washington, D.C., but Chicago activities were conspicuously absent.⁹⁷

This is not to suggest that people in Chicago did not subscribe to the ASNLH's journals, contribute to its publication, or generally support the association's efforts. For instance, prominent Chicago-based Roosevelt College English scholar and pioneer in the study of Gullah dialect and African cultural survivals in the Americas, Lorenzo D. Turner, corresponded frequently with executives at the ASNLH about contributions he made to the association's efforts. The *Chicago Defender* also regularly featured the association's activities in both its daily and national print editions.⁹⁸

An episode during the mid-1950s, however, reveals the significant levels of interest in the promotion of black public history in Chicago. It also reveals how public history became an aspect of civil rights advocacy that underscored the complexities of African American cultural politics and identity formation during the early Cold War era. In 1955, Margaret Burroughs along with a group of local teachers and community activists that included local Communist leader Ishmael Flory spearheaded efforts to re-establish the dormant ASNLH chapter - which had not been active in the city since the 1930s. Initial responses from the Association's staff in

⁹⁷ "Revamp Negro History Group," *The Chicago Defender* (Daily Edition) (October 13, 1964), 11; "Plans for Celebrating Negro History Week," *Negro History Bulletin* 9:4 (January 1946), 86; "How We Should Celebrate Negro History," *Negro History Bulletin* 10:5 (February 1947), 101-102; L.D. Reddick, "Twenty-Five Negro History Weeks," *Negro History Bulletin* 13:8 (May 1950), 178-179; "Negro History Celebrations," *Negro History Bulletin* 19:8 (May 1956), 182; "History Clubs and Branches," *Negro History Bulletin* 22:8 (May 1959), 186; Summary History of the Detroit Branch of the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History," *Negro History Bulletin* 26:1 (October 1962).

⁹⁸ W.M. Brewer to Lorenzo Turner, December 7, 1953, Box 6, Folder 1, Lorenzo Turner Papers (hereafter Turner Papers), Melville J. Herskovitz Library of African Studies, Northwestern University (hereafter AFNU); Charles H. Wesley to Lorenzo Turner, October 5, 1954, Box 6, Folder 2, Turner Papers, AFNU; W.M. Brewer to Lorenzo Turner, October 20, 1955, Box 6, Folder 3, Turner Papers, AFNU; Lawrence Levine, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness*, 146

Washington, D.C. were positive about Burroughs and her “group” (which remained unnamed in correspondence). However, in the same year, Irene McCoy Gaines, a prominent Chicago clubwoman who had recently been appointed an executive to the ASNLH’s national council, blocked the group from obtaining a charter for a chapter. Gaines had been active in the late 1940s with important curriculum reform efforts in Chicago’s public schools with the NAACP. More significantly, Gaines was president of the National Association of Colored Women (NACW) during the 1950s. She was a key organizational figure in Black Chicago’s cultural renaissance during the post-war years. Gaines was also a lifelong member of the Republican Party and represented a prominent and vocal political current in African American public life during the 1950s that firmly advocated for a form of Cold War racial liberalism that promoted civil rights for blacks regardless of Democratic or Republican party allegiances. In the spirit of the times, Gaines’ politics included a healthy suspicion of left wing, particularly Communist associations. In 1955, Gaines was appointed an executive with the ASNLH and blocked the Burroughses efforts to found a local chapter. As an executive, Gaines held the right to screen the background of applicants.⁹⁹

⁹⁹ Margaret Burroughs to Lorenzo Turner, September 1, 1955, Box 6, Folder 3, Turner Papers, ASNU; Nerissa Long Milton to Lorenzo D. Turner, November 8, 1955, Box 6, Folder 3, Turner Papers, ASNU; Letter to Albert N.D. Brooks to Irene McCoy Gaines, Oct 11, 1955, Box 5, Folder 1, Irene McCoy Gaines Papers (hereafter Gaines Papers), CHM; Albert ND Brooks to Margaret Burroughs, November 15, 1955, Box 5, Folder 1, Gaines Papers, CHM. For an extended treatment of Irene McCoy Gaines’ career and activism as a clubwomen, see Anne M. Knupfer, *The Chicago Black Renaissance and Women’s Activism*, 6. For more on African American bipartisan Cold War liberalism see Mary Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000); Helen Laville and Scott. Lucas, “The American Way: Edith Sampson, the NAACP, and African American Identity in the Cold War,” *Diplomatic History*, 20:4 (Fall 1996): 565-590. In Chicago, some of this current materialized in the bipartisan movement that opposed Chicago’s Black Congressman, William Dawson, who was a Democrat Party stalwart during the 1950s. See Anne Meis Knupfer, *The Chicago Black Renaissance and Women’s Activism*, 96; David T. Beito and Linda R. Beito, *Black Maverick: T.R.M. Howard’s Fight for Civil Rights and Economic Power* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009); William J. Grimshaw, *Bitter Fruit*; Dempsey J. Travis, *An Autobiography of Black Politics*.

Of course, the actual reason for the blocked local ASNLH chapter application had to do with the left wing associations of Margaret Burroughs and her cohort and the high stakes involved in representing black public history efforts during the Cold War. Correspondence between Gaines, ASNLH staff, and Burroughs reveal much about the tensions that surrounded both Cold War and racial politics during this period. It also demonstrates the earnestness with which cultural activists from across the political spectrum approached black public history as a viable front for their civil rights activism.

In a letter to Gaines that praised her for her nationally recognized work with the NACW, Albert Brooks (ASNLH Secretary-Treasurer in D.C.) initially thought Gaines would be “glad” to know about the formation of a local chapter by Margaret Burroughs; according to Brooks, Burroughs had retained Professor Lorenzo Turner as an “advisor” for her group. Indeed, an earlier letter from Burroughs to Turner indicated that her group had invited him to speak about the nature of ASNLH activities at the Washington Park YMCA. After initial enthusiasm in the Fall of 1955 from both Gaines and the ASNLH towards Burroughs’ application, ASNLH staff under the direction of its then president, Charles Wesley, cited a “rather unforeseen development” that had “come up regarding certain officers and members” involved in the Chicago chapter application. The ASNLH wanted Turner to confer specifically with Gaines about the appointment of anyone interested in establishing a local chapter, and felt they were to “be careful to avoid jeopardizing the future support of the Association... [that it] needs the help of all who believe in the fundamental rights and dignity of all mankind.” Furthermore, the letter implied that Burroughs would work with the more mainstream DuSable Memorial Club/Society

as a compromise and that “gradually” through the “club... these questionable people [Burroughs by implication] could be eliminated.”¹⁰⁰

In his reply to the ASNLH, Turner distanced himself from any direct association to Burroughs’ history group. Turner maintained he had met with them on only two occasions, one of which was to give an “illustrated lecture on African music and its influence on New World music.” Turner indicated he had “no knowledge” of the members’ political affiliations and that he was certainly not an “adviser to the group – whatever that term might mean.” Moreover, he suspected that because of his “long connection with the [ASNLH]... members of the group have felt free” to ask “questions” about its work. He added that he had “no knowledge” of the political affiliation of members in Burroughs group though he recalled that Ishmael Flory had previously been a student at Fisk University when Turner worked there “several years ago” prior to his appointment at Roosevelt.¹⁰¹ While he reaffirmed his support of Gaines and her charge to scrutinize the chapter application, Turner emphasized how Burroughs’ group “appeared intensely interested in Negro History...” were “eager to learn... more...” and that “[n]othing of a political nature was said at either of the meetings” he attended. The effect of this correspondence from both Turner and Gaines was enough to sway the ASNLH against the application. Indeed, the day after Turner clarified his position with the Association, Albert Brooks wrote back to Burroughs in a manner that praised her interest in the association, but underscored Gaines’ authority on the matter. “Under the conditions heretofore stated,” wrote Alberts, “we find that the branch

¹⁰⁰ Albert N.D. Brooks to Margaret Burroughs, November 15, 1955, Box 5, Folder 1, Gaines Papers, CHM; Nerissa Long Milton, to Lorenzo D. Turner, November 8, 1955, Box 6, Folder 2, Turner Papers, ASNU.

¹⁰¹ Ishmael Flory helped organize a Denmark Vesey black history club while he was a student at Fisk in Nashville which organized pickets against a lynching that occurred near campus in 1933. See Erik Gellman, “Death Blow to Jim Crow,” 17. For more on Flory’s work as a union and community activist during the 1930s especially where he worked with Black railroad and dining car workers in Chicago, see Eric Arnesen, *Brotherhoods of Color*, 99.

organization as set up in your area is not in effect a legally authorized branch... It is with regret, therefore, that I must inform you that prior authorization to use the name of the Association is herewith withdrawn until such time when the proper procedures have been taken to set up a branch organization.”¹⁰² Clearly the political stakes and specter of left wing political association involved for establishing a local public history branch were too high for the ASNLH to accept Burroughs’s collegial overtures.

The failure to establish an ASNLH chapter in Cold War Chicago should not be understood to overstate the political gulf between black cultural activists working on similar projects. For instance, librarian Marion Hadley, who worked closely with Burroughs to help establish the museum in the early 1960s appealed to Gaines for a letter of support on a Ford Foundation grant application for a history project on black soldiers in American wars.¹⁰³ In 1956, eventual museum co-founder Eugene Feldman, published an article about a Reconstruction era black congressmen in the ASNLH’s *Negro History Bulletin*.¹⁰⁴ Margaret Burroughs would appear on a Negro History Week panel with Lorenzo Turner at the Kenwood-Ellis Community center and also used him as a reference in an application for a Guggenheim fellowship for her efforts to write children’s literature.¹⁰⁵ Moreover, Burroughs would sit on a diverse committee of

¹⁰² Lorenzo D. Turner to Nerissa Long Milton, November 14, 1955, Box 6, Folder 2, Turner Papers, ASNU.

¹⁰³ Marion Hadley to Irene McCoy Gaines, May 11, 1956, Box 5, Folder 2, Gaines Papers, CHM; Irene McCoy Gaines to Mr. Max Rabb, Secretary to the President’s Cabinet, January 24, 1956, Box 5, Folder 2, Gaines Papers, CHM; Maxwell M. Rabb to Irene McCoy Gaines, January 25, 1956, Box 5, Folder 2, Gaines Papers, CHM.

¹⁰⁴ Eugene P. Feldman, “James T. Rapier,” *Negro History Bulletin* 20:3 (December 1956), 62.

¹⁰⁵ The most famous poem Burroughs wrote was “What Shall I Tell My Children Who Are Black.” Her children’s books included: *Jasper the Drummin’ Boy* (1947), *Did You Feed My Cow* (1955) and *Whip Me, Whop Me Pudding and other stories of Riley Rabbitt and His Fabulous Friend* (1966). This body of work made her part of a significant wave of left wing women in the United States who expressed political dissent through children’s literature through the Cold War years. See Eugene Pieter Feldman, *Figures in Black History* (Chicago: DuSable

Bronzeville's cultural activists who were part of an NAACP sponsored black history pageant in 1957. The committee was directed by Southside musicologist and organist Ruth Allen Fouche, and included conveners like Marion Hadley, NAACP branch chair and United Auto Workers organizer Willoughby Abner, local African studies scholars Lorenzo Turner and St. Clair Drake, school teacher Sam Stratton, and white CORE activist Faith Rich.¹⁰⁶ These broad connections and interactions underscored both the complexity *and* simultaneity of Cold War era African American cultural politics in Chicago.

Throughout this period, Burroughs also maintained contacts within Chicago's teaching and artistic communities. Friends of hers vouched for her status as a member in good standing with the Southside Community Art Center after the center's board revoked her membership in 1956 on suspicion that she and her husband Charles were members of the Communist Party. Margaret and Charles Burroughs actually returned to Chicago at different times throughout the 1950s and continued to meet with and discuss plans for a museum of black history amidst larger cosmopolitan discussions centered on politics, art, and culture with gatherings of writers, intellectuals, artists, and civic leaders at their Coach House on South Michigan Avenue. As noted

Museum of African American History, 1970), 94; Julia L. Mickenberg, *Learning from the Left: Children's Literature, the Cold War, and Radical Politics in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

¹⁰⁶ Flyer, "Brotherhood... that each may contribute to the common good; ... That all may be enriched. First Annual Dinner in Observance of Brotherhood and Negro History Weeks," February 25, 1956, Box 5, Folder 2, Gaines Papers, CHM; Margaret Burroughs to Lorenzo D. Turner, Sept 8, 1956, Box 6, Folder 5, Turner Papers, ASNU; Souvenir Program, "The Shadow of My Hand" Sponsored by NAACP Chicago Branch Pageant Committee, February 10, 1957, DuSable High School Auditorium, Box 1, Folder 8, Turner Papers, ASNU.

above, the home doubled as a salon and exhibition space for black cultural artifacts from around the diaspora¹⁰⁷

Through such socially diverse gatherings of artists and intellectuals in the late 1940s and 1950s, Margaret Burroughs also became more and more involved with projects that paid particular attention to the African diaspora and issues related to anti-colonialism.¹⁰⁸ By 1961 Burroughs helped found and launch *Freedomways* Magazine based in New York City with, among others, the acclaimed and left-leaning African American playwright and transplanted Chicagoan, Lorraine Hansberry.¹⁰⁹ *Freedomways* was an important New York-based, black-led and leftist-oriented journal that convened an “intergenerational dialogue” which bridged “gaps” in the mid-20th Century black freedom struggle and simultaneously addressed issues of national reform, citizenship, and international struggles for anti-colonialism.¹¹⁰ Burroughs was also the

¹⁰⁷ “Interview with Margaret Burroughs and Charles Wright 12/26/84,” 1, Box 6, Folder 13, Charles H. Wright Papers (hereafter Wright Papers), Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History, Detroit, Michigan (hereafter WMAAH); Margaret T.G Burroughs, interview with Ian Rocksborough-Smith, October 19, 2009; Eugene Feldman, *The Birth and the Building of the DuSable Museum*, 11-13; Sterling Stuckey, “Foreword,” 13; Lee Blackwell, “Off the Record,” *The Chicago Defender* (Daily Edition) Dec. 19, 1957, 10; “Top, ‘Unknown’ Artists Exhibit,” *The Chicago Defender* (Daily Edition) June 20, 1957; Ted Stone, “Heard and Scene,” *The Chicago Defender* (Daily Edition) June 12, 1958.

¹⁰⁸ Middle-class African American engagements with African anti-colonial movements during the late 1950s and 1960s have now been treated extensively. See James Meriwether, *Proudly We Can be Africans: Black Americans and Africa, 1935-1961* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002); Brenda Gayle Plummer, *Rising Wind: Black Americans and Foreign Affairs, 1935-1960* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996); Kevin Gaines, *American Africans in Ghana: Black Expatriates and the Civil Rights Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006); Jason C. Parker, “Made-in-America Revolutions”? The “Black University” and the American Role in the Decolonization of the Black Atlantic,” *The Journal of American History* 96:3 (December 2009): 727-750.

¹⁰⁹ An excellent analysis of the Cold War context in which Hansberry produced “A Raisin in the Sun” is found in Judith E. Smith, *Visions of Belonging*, Ch. 9. Hansberry of course wrote “A Raisin in the Sun,” a play that offered yet another important post-war black left cultural expression that while not produced in was set in Chicago and attuned to the profound changes then taking place elsewhere in the African diaspora at midcentury. See Judith Smith, *Visions of Belonging*.

¹¹⁰ Jack O’Dell, *Climbin’ Jacob’s Ladder: The Black Freedom Movement Writings of Jack O’Dell*, ed. Nikhil Pal Singh (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009) 30-31; Ian Rocksborough-Smith, “Filling the Gap” ; James Smethurst, “SNYC, *Freedomways*, and the Influence of the Popular Front in the South on the Black Arts Movement,” *Reconstruction: Studies in Contemporary Culture* 8:1 (2008)

Chairman of the National Conference of Negro Artists that had been initiated by a group of Chicago artists, most notably Marion Perkins, and who first convened in Atlanta in 1959. The group aimed to influence the upcoming celebrations for the 100th anniversary of the emancipation proclamation and contribute to more mainstream efforts at promoting public remembrance of the official end to U.S. slavery made most famously through the now universally (though often flattened) celebrations of the August March on Washington demonstration in 1963. Indeed, Burroughs described the museum project as part of both the anticipation of the 1963 Emancipation Centennial Celebration and the work of the NNMHF “which extended into the early 1950s” and celebrated black history weeks in February.¹¹¹

The 1963 emancipation centennial exposition was held at Chicago’s new McCormick Place convention center and certainly demonstrated the conflicted nature of black public history labors through the mid-20th Century. This centennial celebration attracted nearly 20,000 people over the Summer and included a visit from Martin Luther King, Jr. It was primarily organized by ASNLH co-founder James E. Stamps and local businessman Alton A. Davis and backed by a committee of local businessmen and politicians, notably state congressmen Corneal Davis. While exposition organizers had hoped for over 800,000 visitors, *The Chicago Defender*’s daily edition still reported “capacity” audiences to many exhibits at the exposition through late August of 1963. Architectural studies scholar Mabel O. Wilson suggests that the exposition’s sponsorship

([http://reconstruction.eserver.org/081/smethurst.shtml /](http://reconstruction.eserver.org/081/smethurst.shtml/)) (accessed April 4, 2010); James Smethurst, *The Black Arts Movement*, 124-127, 196. Burroughs would eventually relinquish her founding role as Arts editor of *Freedomways* in 1965 to focus her efforts on museum work in Chicago.

¹¹¹ Wilbur C Rich and Roberta Hughes Wright, *The Wright Man: A Biography of Charles H Wright, MD* (Charro Books: Southfield, MI, 1999), 289-290; *Profile of Black Museums*, 3-5; “Interview with Margaret Burroughs and Charles Wright 12/26/84,” 1.

by big U.S. corporations such as AT&T and Pepsi “demonstrated how the Cultural Front’s techniques of cultural production and representation through mass culture had been absorbed into corporate structures” and that the McCormick Place exposition marked the end of the “great” African American-led exposition movements which dated from late 19th Century and paralleled mainstream industrial expositions.¹¹²

While she had been involved in the 1940 American Negro Exposition in Chicago, Burroughs played an even more central role at the 1963 exposition. She was approached to arrange the exposition’s main exhibits on black art and history. These exhibits featured original paintings by her that “traced the Negro in Illinois” from “DuSable to Dawson.” During this same period, Burroughs also worked closely with fellow African American elementary school teachers Leo Sparks and Christine C. Johnson from the Afro-American Heritage Association (AAHA) to exhibit African artwork. Johnson (a teacher at the Nation of Islam’s University of Islam) had collected on a trip to West Africa in 1957 where she had met both Nnamdi Azikiwe of Nigeria and Kwame Nkrumah of newly independent Ghana. As part of the Negro Hall of Fame exhibit at the African Heritage Exposition in New York city in 1959, Burroughs, Sparks, and Johnson represented Chicago and displayed African Art alongside the artwork of New York area black artists.¹¹³

¹¹² “Ask Artists to Meeting in Georgia,” *The Chicago Defender* (National edition) February 28, 1959; Margaret T. Burroughs, “The People Speak: Community at Center,” *The Chicago Defender* (Daily Edition) Oct 21, 1959; Memo to Otto Kerner from Corneal A. Davis, February 4, 1963, Box 3, Folder 1, Corneal Davis Papers (hereafter Davis Papers), CHM; Mabel O. Wilson, *Negro Building*, 243-244; “Large Crowds View Exposition,” *The Chicago Defender* (Daily Edition) (August 20, 1963), A2. For more on the 1940 exposition, see Adam Green, *Selling the Race*, Ch 1.

¹¹³ “Chicago Teacher Tours Africa Guests with Nkrumah, Azikiwe,” *The Chicago Defender* (National Edition) October 12, 1957, 14; “Admire African Art,” *The Chicago Defender* (Daily Edition) August 18, 1959, 14; Bob Hunter, “Negro Progress Exposition Open,” *The Chicago Defender* (National Edition) (August 17, 1963), 1.

Quite apart from the mixed results of the mainstream 1963 centennial exposition, alternative racial projects from the left like the DuSable museum were part of a fairly significant growth of black-led educational and cultural formations through the late 1950s and early 1960s. The museum project certainly connected with other black left organizations such as the AAHA in Chicago (see chapter 4), the Atlanta artist's conference, and *Freedomways* in New York. Collectively, these projects continued the black cultural fronts of previous decades and certainly complicate conventional chronologies for the Black Power and Black Arts Movements. Furthermore, the work of figures such as Margaret and Charles Burroughs convened important intergenerational mentorships that materialized in the cultural resurgences of the late 1960s through the works of figures such as Haki Madhubuti who helped found Third World Press (a major Black Arts Movement institution) and the writings of historian Sterling Stuckey. Stuckey helped pioneer black studies in the academy and was the first president of the Amistad Society, a local public history group formed in Chicago during the early 1960s by Southside and West Side public school teachers. The Society hosted significant history lectures by prominent scholars like John Hope Franklin and prolific activist icons like Malcolm X.¹¹⁴

Something more can also be made of the significance of intergenerational and multiracial cultural activism with regards to civil rights efforts in 1950s and early 1960s Chicago. This period has been downplayed by historians who view the takeover of a militant protest-oriented leadership of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in

¹¹⁴ James Smethurst, *The Black Arts Movement*, 223-224; Sterling Stuckey, "Foreword" in Dr. Margaret T.G. Burroughs, *Life With Margaret: The Official Autobiography*, 14; Strong, "Margaret Burroughs"; "The History of Americans of African Descent" for Teachers and Social Workers of the Chicago Area" Feb 8, 1968 Orientation Program, Box 3, Folder 7, Elma Stuckey Papers (hereafter E. Stuckey Papers) CHM; Haki Madhubuti, "Liberation Narratives Collected and New Poems, 1966-2009," (lecture, Carter G. Woodson Regional Library, Chicago, IL, February 13, 2010), transcript in author's possession; Sterling Stuckey, interview with Ian Rocksborough-Smith, April 16, 2010, Chicago, Illinois.

1957/58 by Chicago's Democratic machine as a moment of declension for black activism and community vitality. There is little written between then and the more widely recounted open housing and school desegregation movements of the mid-1960s in much of the urban North. Historiographically, far greater attention has been accorded these latter events as they occurred in Chicago, with special emphasis on when Martin Luther King and his associates brought the Southern Christian Leadership Conference operations North in the mid-1960s.¹¹⁵ Indeed, the city's main civil rights moments of the mid-1950s which included demonstrations against white violence in veterans housing projects like Trumbull Park on the far South Side and against the infamous murder of Chicago teenager, Emmett Till, in Mississippi. Yet the local NAACP under union activist Willoughby Abner was also involved in cultural heritage projects as a tangent to its more prominent civil rights activism. As noted above, the Chicago NAACP Chapter formed a committee in 1957 that organized a black heritage pageant in conjunction with black history week, which in Abner's view underscored a worldliness through the "Negro's cultural heritage" that contributed to "civilization in America and elsewhere in the world," despite the "barriers of segregation, discrimination and prejudice."¹¹⁶ The NAACP's Pageant committee remained one example of how traditional civil rights organizations remained significantly concerned with public history and cultural matters through the Cold War period.

¹¹⁵ James Ralph, *Northern Protest*; Alan B. Anderson George W. Pickering, *Confronting the Color Line*; David J. Garrow, *Chicago 1966: Open Housing Marches, Summit Negotiations, and Operation Breadbasket* (Carlson Pub, 1989).

¹¹⁶ Dempsey J. Travis, *An Autobiography of Black Politics*; Beryl Satter, *Family Properties*, 56-59. The best assessment of Abner's tenure as head of the NAACP which does not make this case, is Christopher Reed, *The Chicago NAACP*, Ch 9. For good assessments of the far Southside housing battles and of black public responses to Till's murder, see Arnold Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto*; Adam Green, *Selling the Race*, especially Ch. 5. A useful fictional interpretation of the post-World War II far Southside housing riots, based on first-person experience can be found in Frank London Brown's excellent first novel, *Trumbull Park* (Chicago: Regnery, 1959). A recent scholarly account of the Westside housing struggles which took place in conjunction with the second major wave of African American migration (1940s to 1960s) from the US South can be found in Beryl Satter's, *Family Properties*; Souvenir Program, "The Shadow of My Hand."

Margaret Burroughs did not participate in sit-ins in the downtown Loop as she had participated in anti-lynching protest and early civil rights activism with groups like the NNC and NNMHF in the 1930s and 40s. Still, Burroughs remained engaged with local discrimination issues in Chicago throughout the late 1950s and 60s. For example, she became the Vice-President of Black History and Culture of the Chicago League of Negro Voters – an understudied black-led response to the independent Illinois Voters League which positioned against Chicago’s Democratic machine-dominated local politics. Led by younger school teachers such as Bennett Johnson, the independent but parallel League of Negro Voters would become a fixture of black civil rights activism in the city leading into the 1960s. Burroughs also reflected on the city’s heated school desegregation battles of the early-mid-1960s in an important article published in the influential Chicago-based literary journal, *Negro Digest*. Through this period, she was a member of the powerful “independence Caucus” slate of the Chicago Teachers Union (CTU) which ran a multiracial slate comprised mainly of blacks and Jewish Americans in an effort to attain collective bargaining and dislodge an entrenched anticommunist, largely white anglo-saxon and male-dominated leadership which had historically avoided civil rights advocacy and the redress of equality issues for black and minority teachers in terms of pay and appointment.¹¹⁷ The work of one historian of educational reform in Chicago demonstrates that Burroughs brought her activism into the classroom when she “discussed black history with her students at DuSable High School.” When “the principal walked past the door she would change to discuss more acceptable subjects, and when the principal had gone she would then return to

¹¹⁷ “Voter’s League Elects Officers,” *The Chicago Defender* (Daily Edition) Dec. 1, 1958, 2; “Credits League With Spurning Vote,” *The Chicago Defender* (Daily Edition) Dec. 16, 1959, A2; Margaret Burroughs, “Identity for the Negro Child: Integration of Learning Materials... Now!,” *Negro Digest* (March 1966), 30-34. For information on Burroughs’s protest activities in the 1930s and 1940s see Bill Mullen, *Popular Fronts*, 87; Bennett Johnson (VP, Third World Press), interview with Ian Rocksborough-Smith, December 6, 2009, Chicago, IL.

her original subject.”¹¹⁸ If not still intimately involved in conventional civil rights activities such as sit-ins and direct actions, Burroughs clearly saw her efforts to promote the missing pages of America’s history during the same period as vitally important for substantiating efforts to redress racial discrimination.

To negotiate the Cold War in Chicago, Margaret Burroughs and the other founders of the Ebony/DuSable Museum worked throughout the 1940s and 1950s to establish and maintain their presence in initiatives that promoted black cultural heritage and public history. Such engagements culminated in a sustained vision for a museum on Chicago’s South Side and highlighted significant interventions into Black Chicago’s shifting political cultures and geographies at mid-century. The founders of the museum maintained a tactical worldliness that engaged them with fellow travelling cultural workers (particularly in New York and Mexico) that enabled their survival from Cold War repressions. As such, they felt like a substantive part of the global movements against European colonialism from this period. As shall be explored further in Chapter 2, their activities were rooted in broad, local pedagogical efforts that worked for the teaching of black public history in local schools. As a significant form of cultural activism, museum-making consistently paralleled and at times actively engaged in the activities of more mainstream political activism in Black Chicago’s. Most significantly, the leftist affinities that underscored the activities and experiences of the cohort who came to found what would become the DuSable Museum also demonstrates the importance of interrogating traditional chronologies, definitions, and categories for civil rights, black nationalist, and left-labor cultural front activity moving into the 1960s and the period most associated with Black Power and Black Arts activism.

¹¹⁸John F Lyons, *Teachers and Reform*, 67, 130



Figure 1: 3806 South Michigan Avenue, the original home of the Ebony/DuSable Museum located in historic Bronzeville (circa late 1960s).

Source: Eugene P. Feldman, *The Birth and the Building of the DuSable Museum* (Chicago: DuSable Museum Press, 1981), 48.



Figure 2: Charles and Margaret Burroughs (circa 1960s) at the original location for the Ebony/DuSable Museum of African American History. The 3806 South Michigan Avenue Coach house doubled as their home and is located in a cultural hub of Bronzeville that featured the Southside Community Art Center across the Street.

Source: Eugene P. Feldman, *The Birth and the Building of the DuSable Museum* (Chicago: DuSable Museum Press, 1981), 47.

Chapter 2

“We Had the Models”: Southside School Teachers, Curriculum Reforms, and Black Public History in the Midwest Metropolis

The main body of your thesis begins here. In a letter to a public school teacher in Chicago in 1946, Carter G. Woodson warned of “ill-designing persons seeking every opportunity to use occasions” like the History Week celebration for unethical “political” or financial “exploitation.”¹¹⁹ The founder of Negro History Week and head of the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History (ASNLH) trusted the teacher, Madeline R. Stratton (née Morgan), as an unofficial representative of his association in Chicago. At this time, the city lacked an officially active branch of the ASNLH – a situation that continued through the 1950s and into the early 1960s. Morgan was trusted because, as a teacher, she had developed a curriculum unit on African American history for primary schools in Chicago during the early 1940s that received national and international attention and because she promoted the ASNLH’s work through her activities as a local clubwomen.

In anticipation of the school boycott and *de facto* segregation issues that highlighted much of the 1950s and 1960s in the nation, Woodson urged Morgan to enlist the support of local churches, schools, and clubs in Chicago. This support was intended to assist appeals to the city’s Board of Education to purchase history books about African Americans for its school libraries and to raise funds for the ASNLH by selling these public institutions the black history resources it produced. Woodson outlined the ASNLH’s program as one that promoted what “we have learned about the history of the Negro and to extend the effort into places where it has not yet

¹¹⁹ Carter G. Woodson to Madeline R. Stratton, November 22, 1946, Folder Correspondence 1940s, Stratton Papers, HARSH; Pero Dagbovie, *The Early Black History Movement, Carter G. Woodson, and Lorenzo Johnston Greene*, Ch 1; Earl Conrad, “Dr. Woodson Hails N.Y. School Anti-Bias Act,” *The Chicago Defender* (National Edition) (April 7, 1945), 3.

become widely known” throughout the U.S. and the world. One of Woodson’s chief concerns, however, was sustaining the programmatic integrity of the association. The prospect of having others impersonate (or emulate) what he saw as the rightful domain of the ASLNH, whether for political or acquisitive purposes, clearly worried Woodson who sought to oversee the nation’s Negro history observances as closely as he could.¹²⁰

It is possible that concern over who controlled these celebrations was prompted by the fact that there was especially widespread interest in the promotion of black public history¹²¹ throughout the 1940s. The city’s Negro History Week celebrations were shepherded by a coalition of community activists and included local organizers from the Packinghouse Workers

¹²⁰ Carter G. Woodson to Madeline R. Stratton, November 22, 1946.

¹²¹ To the extent that my examination of black public history imputes essential notions of blackness, I also seek to balance such a definition with a fluid approach to group-defined social experiences and identity formation. As such it is useful to take cues from recent scholars who emphasize how “racial identity” is historically “contingent.” These scholars have responded to the famous debates over “culture” and its formation over time between E.P. Thompson (“total way of struggle”) and Raymond Williams (“total way of life”). They seek to strike a balance between the two in their own considerations of 20th Century African American intellectual, social, and cultural history. Expanding on Ralph Ellison’s notion of black identity as an “identity of passions,” Nikhil Pal Singh suggests that many African American activists and intellectuals involved in the 20th Century black freedom movement expressed a “shared sense of fate” rather than essentialist nationalism. Similarly, Adam Green looks at how such shared life-world’s developed historically - a question that commits to “the idea that racial identity... constitutes an entity itself in perpetual formation.” See Nikhil Pal Singh, *Black is a Country*, 118-119; Adam Green, *Selling the Race*, 11-12, 142-143.

Also, my use of the term “public history” attempts to reflect ongoing discussions about the uses of history in the public sphere and the degree to which it was used by a variety of social actors with some degree of professional and occupational training beyond academic orthodoxies. It will emphasize settings outside of Ivory Towers but inevitably connects to discussions about knowledge production and disciplinary boundaries that invariably also occurred from within. For a synopsis of how public history evolved into a subfield of professional history with its own associations and conferences, see Barbara J. Howe, “Reflections on an Idea: NCPH’s First Decade,” *Public Historian* 11:3 (Summer 1989): 68-85; Michael Scaraville, “Looking Backward Toward the Future: An Assessment of the Public History Movement,” *Public Historian* 9:4 (Autumn 1987): 8. Most recently the National Council of Public Historians has defined “public history” as “a movement, methodology, and approach that promotes the collaborative study and practice of history; its practitioners embrace a mission to make their special insights accessible and useful to the public.” National Council of Public Historians, <http://ncph.org/cms/what-is-public-history/> (accessed May 24, 2011). For useful discussions of Carter G. Woodson’s role as a practitioner of public history and the establishment of African American history as a an academic field in its own right, see Pero Dagbovie, “Making Black History Practical and Popular: Carter G. Woodson, the Proto-Black Studies Movement, and the Struggle for Black Liberation,” *The Western Journal of Black Studies* 28:2 (2004): 372-383.

and the left-leaning National Negro Congress' National Negro Museum and Historical Foundation (NNMHF). The NNMHF's Negro History Week activities were coordinated by local National Negro Congress leader John Gray, who noted that celebrations were backed from "leaders of both races," including mayor Ed Kelly and Illinois Governor Dwight Green. These endorsements took place at DuSable High School on the Southside and recognized the important efforts of African Americans towards winning the Second World War. Promoted in 1945 as a "mass rally," the high school program featured E. Franklin Frazier, the University of Chicago School of Sociology-trained Chair of social science at Howard University as its main speaker. Frazier had recently been named to *The Chicago Defender's* honor roll (in 1944) and was recognized for his work on "race relations" by the Schomburg Library of Negro Literature in New York City. The program committee chair was Margaret Burroughs (née Goss). She arranged for three skits to be performed by school children: one on "Emancipation and Reconstruction," one on "African dances," and the other on "folk dances" - each of which had been performed a week earlier at a Phi Delta Kappa African American sorority program. Other speakers included John J. Johnson, businessman and publisher of the already successful *Negro Digest* and the soon to be prolific *Ebony* magazine; Ernest DiMaio, head of the Illinois CIO and left-leaning United Electrical Workers Union; Anton Johansson of the Chicago Federation of Labor; Rabbi Jacob Weinstein of Temple K.A.M; and Madeline Morgan – who was described as a "teacher and Negro history specialist."¹²²

This interracial group of religious, labor, academic, business, and community leaders came together to celebrate Negro History Week activities and reflected a post-World War II and

¹²² "Kelly Praises Negroes for Aid in Winning War," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Feb. 11, 1946, 11; "E. Franklin Frazier on Negro History Week," *The Chicago Defender* (February 17, 1945), 13; "Selected on *Chicago Defender* Honor Roll," *The Chicago Defender* (December 30, 1944), 3.

immediate postwar moment of “hope” for the nation.¹²³ Celebrations in this moment, at least in part, reflected the left wing and liberal reform movements that had been active across a variety of fields: (from ecumenical religions, to labor interracialism, to government-sponsored cultural programs, to aspects of African American community activism). Each sought in different ways to radically transform U.S. society through projects that promoted racial pluralism that had been devised not long before, during, and after World War II.¹²⁴ The fact that the event’s programs were organized by Southside artist and public school teacher, Margaret T.G. Burroughs, and featured Madeline Morgan as its “Negro History specialist” further affirmed the leading role that African American teachers (specifically women) played in shaping these interracial public history events as part of broader movements that aspired for democratic and social change.¹²⁵

Opening up these celebrations as forums for the discussion of black history helped address pressing issues related to racial equity such as access to decent jobs, housing, and public education. Furthermore, they brought increased attention to white supremacist violence (whether state-sanctioned, vigilante, or both). The diverse interests involved in these events underscored

¹²³ Despite the racial limitations of New Deal reforms, African Americans certainly figured into visions for multi-racial democracy expressed during this era. See Patricia Sullivan, *Days of Hope: Race and Democracy in the New Deal Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996).

¹²⁴ Michael Denning, *The Cultural Front*; Lauren Sklaroff, *Black Culture and the New Deal*; Robin D.G. Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe: Alabama Communists During the Great Depression* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990); Rick Halpern, *Down on the Killing Floor*; Roger Horowitz, “Negro and White Unite and Fight”: *A Social History of Industrial Unionism in Meatpacking, 1930-90* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997); Robert Zieger, *The CIO: 1935-1955* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995); Robert Korstad and Nelson Lichtenstein, “Opportunities Found & Lost: Labor, Radicals, and the Early Civil Rights Movement,” *The Journal of American History* 75 (December 1988): 789-815; Adam Fairclough, *Race and Democracy: The Civil Rights Struggle in Louisiana, 1915-1972* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1995), Ch 3. Timothy B. Neary, “Crossing Parochial Boundaries: African Americans and Interracial Social Action in Chicago, 1914-1954,” (PhD Dissertation, Loyola University, April 2004).

¹²⁵ For discussions about the leading role of African Americans in promoting public history through the ASNLH, see Pero Dagbovie, “Black Women, Carter G. Woodson, and the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, 1915-1950,” *The Journal of African American History* 88:1 (Winter 2003): 21-41. For a reference to this movement in Chicago, see Anne Meis Knupper, *The Chicago Black Renaissance and Women’s Activism*, 4, 15.

issues of community control and the politics that surrounded representations of black culture and history – concerns that have mainly been associated with the civil rights and Black Power activism of later decades.¹²⁶ Indeed, issues like housing shortages, education, and employment (which disproportionately effected racialized groups), were especially prevalent in the years right after World War II and so highly applicable to the goals of organizing black history events.¹²⁷

The variety of forms public history efforts took and their association with protest activity related to civil rights during the 1940s fueled the concerns of earnest black history pioneers like Carter G. Woodson. This was certainly reflected in the protective tone he took with Chicago schoolteacher: Madeline Morgan (later Stratton). As this chapter will demonstrate, the ways educators (especially African American educators with left wing and liberal sensibilities – recall Raymond Williams) approached the promotion of local popular educational projects arose out of a series of rich intellectual, political, and pedagogical engagements. These engagements included civil rights activism, but especially the application of University of Chicago “race relations” methods to knowledge production. These coordinates for black public history occurred against the paradoxical backdrop of America’s ascendant affluent society as well as fears of totalitarian specters at home and abroad.¹²⁸ All these concerns were discussed at black public history

¹²⁶ William L. Van DeBurg, *New Day in Babylon: The Black Power Movement and American Culture, 1965-1975* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

¹²⁷ Arnold Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto*, 20; Beryl Satter, *Family Properties*; Thomas Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty*, xviii.

¹²⁸ As such, it is important to state that such engagements were paralleled by important changes in Black print capitalism (as was the case for print capitalism generally during the 1940s) wherein historic community and regional newspapers competed for the spoils of American post-war consumption with newer pictorial magazines and journals. These newer forms of print media often gained greater national and international circulation (like *Time* and *Ebony*) in step with the golden age of radio broadcasting, early television, and expanded consumer advertising. For a study of African American consumer culture that focuses especially on the mid-20th century, see Robert Weems, Jr., *Desegregating the Dollar: African American Consumerism in the Twentieth Century* (New York: New York University Press, 1999). For more focused studies that treat specific engagements by African Americans with consumer culture industries and white collar business ventures, such as consumer advertising, insurance, and

celebrations in churches and community centers and closely accompanied campaigns to reform Chicago public school curriculums. In particular, these campaigns featured the publication of materials for use in classrooms (from lesson plans, proposed textbook and curriculum reforms, to children's literature) by African American and progressive white teachers, librarians and some clubwomen during World War II and throughout the 1940s. Collectively, these efforts became models of curriculum reform emulated nationally.

African American teachers and clubwomen through the late 1930s and 1940s were inspired by Woodson's vision for the creation of publically accessible history by celebrating the civic virtues of figures such as Jean Point Baptiste DuSable (Chicago's first settler and one of Haïtian descent). Some of these celebrations were conducted through "diasporic" frames that reflected a cognizance of hemispheric movements against trans-Atlantic slavery, colonialism, and the connected histories of black migration throughout the Americas.¹²⁹

magazine print media, see Robert Weems, Jr., *Black Business in the Black Metropolis: The Chicago Metropolitan Assurance Company, 1925-1985* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996); Jason Chambers, *Madison Avenue and the Color Line: African Americans in the Advertising Industry* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008); Adam Green, *Selling the Race*, Ch 4. For a history of how cultural workers in film, television, and theater challenged the United States' efforts to project a unified image of American nationalism abroad during the 1940s and 1950s in the context of changing cultural technologies and industries, see, Andrew J. Falk, *Upstaging the Cold War: American Dissent and Cultural Diplomacy, 1940-1960* (Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2010). Useful studies of how American efforts to direct its cultural images abroad were subverted and challenged during the Cold War especially by jazz musicians, see Penny Von Eschen, *Satchmo Blows Up the World*. Recent studies of the black press in the United States can be found in Todd Vogel, ed. *The Black Press: New Literary and Historical Essays* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2001). For the now seminal historical text on the history of American consumer culture through the mid-Twentieth Century see, Lizabeth Cohen, *Consumers Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Vintage, 2003).

¹²⁹ While it represents a comprehensive unearthing of primary sources and a thorough narrative history that shows the role African American women had in promoting innovations in intercultural education, Anne Meis Knupfer's recent study of Black Chicago's Renaissance does not fully explain the connections between early civil rights efforts and their rhetorical entanglements with and challenges to new forms of racialism that were expressed through liberal public education and "race relations" projects influenced by the University of Chicago's school of sociology from the 1930s. Also, her use of the word "transnational" interchangeably with "diaspora" to describe the influence of Carter G. Woodson on African American club women in their efforts to both exhibit African art and/or stage lectures and pageants about local Black Chicago history through community institutions like the Southside

This chapter will also examine the complexities of community discussions that considered these revisionist histories. Underlying all of these discussions was an understanding of the challenges posed by the chronic and historic underfunding and neglect of public education, especially in poor black neighborhoods nationwide. Various public history projects in Chicago during the late-1930s and 1940s underscored broader tensions between a left-leaning cosmopolitan worldliness in the public sphere and local/regional racially liberal attempts to reform U.S. notions of national citizenship and civic belonging.¹³⁰ An examination of these educational forms provides an important vantage point for how Chicago's African American cultural politics constituted a widespread ideological battleground throughout the 1940s. As this chapter will show, these political tensions were part of the larger push for economic citizenship studied by scholars of both race and gender in public and legal affairs through the same period.¹³¹ As such, public history was deployed as a mobilizing tool for social change before the

Community Art Center and the Parkway Community House could be pushed further. Future studies might further unpack the political imaginary expressed in the actual materials produced for curriculum reform and the extent to which such materials demonstrated more complex and worldly considerations for how racial justice might proceed in relation to new more diverse publics. See Anne Meis Knupfer, *The Chicago Black Renaissance and Women's Activism*, 4, 5, 15 and especially Chapter 4.

¹³⁰ This notion of an African American "worldliness" was developed by Nikhil Pal Singh to forward a more complex understanding for how the long civil rights era (1930s-1970s) ushered in new forms of black political consciousness, not simply as part of a redemptive national teleology, but as refreshing new rubrics for understanding expressions of African American modernity in the context of rapid urban migrations, regional variations in political cultures, and global cultural awakenings. I use the terms "cosmopolitan" interchangeably with "worldliness" here to also underscore the further need to treat the close and often ambivalent relationship between African American engagements with U.S. nationalism and autonomous expressions of community-consciousness. Cosmopolitan's use here is also intended to sharpen characterizations of black intellectual radicalisms and dissents (whether nationalist, diasporic, or transnational) which underscore more engagements (and/or entanglements) with a global consciousness through the expanded public spheres of the mid-20th Century. See Nikhil Pal Singh, "Culture/Wars: Recoding Empire in the Age of Democracy," 514; Nikhil Pal Singh, *Black is a Country*, 51-52, 119-128; Timothy Brennan, *At Home in the World*.

¹³¹ The clearest scholarly synthesis of legal and social policy history through the mid-20th Century with regards to the overlapping concerns of race and gender issues can be found in Alice Kessler-Harris about the notion of "economic citizenship." In this ground-breaking study, Kessler-Harris suggests...." See Alice Kessler-Harris, *In*

more acclaimed activisms of these fields in subsequent decades – especially those most attributed to the 1960s.

“A Living Force in Chicago”

Prior to the school boycotts and desegregation campaigns of the mid-1950s and 1960s, racial inequities in public education and curriculum reform were significant issues in Chicago.¹³² It is certainly true that through the 1960s, the Chicago Freedom Movement (CFM) drew wide attention to curriculum inadequacies and widespread patterns of *de facto* segregation and underfunding in Southside and Westside schools. The CFM organized important citywide marches and boycotts – tactics used only sporadically in prior decades.¹³³ Still, in earlier decades, many teachers (mainly women), writers, and cultural workers in Chicago were at the forefront of related efforts to radically reform public education from both inside and outside of the classroom.

Pursuit of Equity: Women, Men and the Quest for Economic Citizenship (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

¹³² Two studies focused specifically on the history of African American activism in public education in Chicago look at the periods from the 1920s through 1941 and the 1960s through the 1970s. Little has been written on the period from World War II through the 1960s. See, Michael W. Homel, *Down from Equality: Black Chicagoans and the Public School 1920-1941* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1984); Dionne Danns, *Something Better for Our Children: Black Organizing in Chicago Public Schools, 1963-1971* (New York: Routledge, 2003). A short article and introductory chapter based on secondary research by Danns judiciously treats such activism from the 1920s through 1950s and focuses on the biography of Chicago’s first African American school principal, Maudelle Bousfield. See, Dionne Danns, “Maudelle Bousfield and Chicago’s Segregated School System, 1922-1950,” *Midwest History of Education Journal* 25:1 (1998), 127-131.

¹³³ One of the key figures who led the Chicago Freedom Movement of the 1960s was high school teacher Al Raby. See James Ralph, *Northern Protest*; Alan B. Anderson and George W. Pickering, *Confronting the Color Line*; John Lyons, *Teachers and Reform*, Ch 5; Dionne Danns, *Something Better for Our Children*, 15, 20-22; Arvah E. Strickland, “The Schools Controversy and the Beginning of the Civil Rights Movement in Chicago: 1995 Presidential Address,” *The Historian* 58:4 (June 1996), 717-729.

More specifically, a significant number of Southside teachers sought to redress racial inequities in educational resources for Southside schools. As such, they devised alternative civics curriculums that focused on promoting black public history events and resources through community centers, libraries, and especially public schools. The Association for the Study of Negro Life and History's (ASNLH) activities throughout Chicago were supported in the 1940s by committed African American teachers and their allies in the community.¹³⁴ These activities reflected important contributions to an interracial and nationwide movement of educators committed to pushing the political boundaries of U.S. cultural pluralism to the left during the late 1930s, early 1940s, and World War II years.¹³⁵ Historian Daryl Michael Scott has shown that as early as the 1920s, numerous movements for curriculum reform initiated specifically by African American cultural pluralists (notably Carter G. Woodson and the ASNLH) sought to directly input black history into public school curriculums and, by World War II, "called for schools to teach multiracial democracy."¹³⁶ Similarly, Julia Mickenberg writes that the "intercultural education" efforts of this period were a moment when left wing and Marxist "educators took the nation's struggle against fascist dictatorships as an opportunity to teach students about

¹³⁴ This was despite the ASNLH's subsequent troubles with supporting a local chapter that fit into Cold War liberal orientation of its national leadership (see Chapter 1).

¹³⁵ Nicholas V. Montalto, *A History of the Intercultural Education Movement, 1924-1941* (New York: Garland, 1983).

¹³⁶ Julia L. Mickenberg and Daryl Michael Scott have written on how short-lived intercultural education programs implemented during World War II were in many American cities. Still, these programs served as important antecedents to the multicultural educational projects of later decades that paralleled and served to counter a vociferous conservative "impulse" in American educational and political thought during the Cold War. See Julia L. Mickenberg, *Learning from the Left*, 94-95; Daryl Michael Scott, "Postwar Pluralism, Brown v. Board of Education, and the Origins of Multicultural Education," *The Journal of American History* 91:1 (June 2004), 69-82. Also see parallel arguments made by Nicholas Lemann in his study of the origins of standardized testing in American education. See Nicholas Lemann, *The Big Test: The Secret History of the American Meritocracy* (New York: Strauss and Giroux, 2000); Anne Meis Knupfer writes expressly on the social activism of African American clubwomen, social workers, librarians and teachers who worked through community centers and library's, in particular, to address these issues. See Anne Meis Knupfer, *Women's The Chicago Black Renaissance and Women's Activism*.

democracy and the right to embrace minority views and culture.”¹³⁷ These curriculum reforms were certainly a part of the multicultural and pluralist attempts to progressively change U.S. democracy through this period. As such, these reform measures foregrounded the notion that equal citizenship represented in educational resources was an ideal that needed to be at the forefront of African American struggles for equality.

In the wake of 1942 Negro History Week celebrations, a revealing article called the “Development of Negro History in Chicago” appeared in *The Chicago Defender*. It underscored how Woodsonian-inspired educational activism appealed to and was mainly carried out by African American teachers (most of whom were women) working on the Southside. In fact, these teachers became the chief practitioners of black public history during the 1940s due to their roles in curriculum reform efforts as well as extra-curricular events and clubs they helped organize in schools and in the community. The author of the article, Mavis Mixon, was a teacher at Douglas Elementary. She emphasized the importance of Negro History Week in Chicago and underscored the influence that Carter G. Woodson and the ASNLH had in influencing the shape of such events. Mixon also noted how Negro History Week was a community-wide event for many African Americans and “a week of intensive activity for nearly every church, club, civic organization and school.” To Mixon, it was “fitting” that the entire city responded “wholeheartedly” to this celebration.¹³⁸

Mixon’s assessment of black history development in Chicago focused mainly on the efforts of African American teachers and their white allies in the profession. Their work in public

¹³⁷ Julia Mickenberg, *Learning from the Left*, 94.

¹³⁸ Mavis Mixon, “The Development of the Study of Negro History in Chicago,” *The Chicago Defender* (February 7, 1942), 15.

schools represented the most significant effort to promote black history through curriculum reform and was modeled on methods devised by the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History. Mixon explained that a number of Southside schools had many teachers (many of them white) and a few supportive principals who helped establish extra-curricular Negro History Clubs during the 1930s and 1940s. As Black Chicago historian Timuel D. Black recalls, progressive white teachers were among the first to actually begin teaching supplemental African American history to their civics students.¹³⁹ Schools with Negro History club programs included Copernicus, McCosh, Coleman, Douglas, and Doolittle grammar schools, as well as Dunbar, Wendell Phillips, and DuSable high schools. Mixon singled out Henry Mendellsohn for his work in promoting clubs at Doolittle. She explained how Mendellsohn, a Jewish American principal, was a “pioneer of Negro history in the public schools.” Mendellsohn joined Samuel Stratton to sponsor a program on black history at Doolittle in 1937 before Stratton became a prominent civics teacher at DuSable High School and later at Dunbar Vocational High School.¹⁴⁰

Other Chicago teachers who pioneered and promoted black curriculum supplements and extracurricular public history included Florida Sanford. Sanford organized a “Negro History Club” for “teaching boys and girls their own history” at Mixon’s own school, Douglas grammar. After she transferred to Burke school, Sanford established a similar club while Mavis Mixon and her colleague, Julma B. Crawford, continued the one at Douglas. The Douglas club grew quickly and attracted other teachers, namely Mary Williamson, Charlotte Stratton, and a “Mrs McFarland.” Mixon recognized them each as “outstanding authorities on Negro history.” The

¹³⁹ “Timuel D. Black, interview with Erik Gellman and Ian Rocksborough-Smith, November 17, 2009, Chicago, Illinois.

¹⁴⁰ Mavis Mixon, “The Development of the Study of Negro History in Chicago,” 15. Stratton was also a key figure in the establishment of the National Negro and Museum and Heritage Foundation later in the 1940s. For more on the NNMHF, see Chapter 1 of this dissertation.

school's vice-principals Grace Mason and Howard B. Smith also contributed materials and guidance to the club. Though Mixon likely emphasized Douglas' teachers because she worked there, she also felt the school was unique because "the entire faculty furthered the study of Negro history throughout the school year." Also, the school had "an annual Negro History exhibit during Negro History week" to which it invited the entire Southside community and other schools. Nearly fifty per cent of faculty at Douglas had a subscription to the *Negro History Bulletin* – the ASNLH's chief organ for promoting public history.

Other schools in the district achieved similar levels of engagement with extracurricular forms of black public history that connected with civil rights work in the community. Even better than Douglas, Keith Elementary School held subscriptions in 1942 that reached one-hundred per cent of its faculty. A teacher at Forestville grammar (Ethel Hilliard) organized a club that achieved a seventy-five per cent subscription rate among teachers at her school.¹⁴¹ Some of these teachers became involved with local civil rights groups during the early 1940s and were deeply engaged with the city's African American cultural fronts – namely art and literary groups.¹⁴² For instance, Hilliard became president of the NAACP's women's auxiliary in 1941 while Madeline Morgan joined the Association's local education committee. Mavis Mixon was also a poet who worked with Margaret Burroughs and Gwendolyn Brooks in writing groups that met at the Southside Community Arts Center – an important locale for Chicago's black cultural renaissance from the late 1930s through the 1950s.¹⁴³

¹⁴¹ Mavis Mixon, "The Development of the Study of Negro History in Chicago," 15.

¹⁴² For an extended treatment of Chicago's African American cultural front in the 1930s, see Bill Mullen, *Popular Fronts*.

¹⁴³ Mavis Mixon, "The Development of the Study Negro History in Chicago"; John Lyons, *Teachers and Reform*, 162; S.I. Hayakawa, "Second Thoughts," *The Chicago Defender* (National Edition) (October 9, 1943), 15; Mavis Mixon, "Galleon's Goal," *The Chicago Defender* (December 16, 1942), 14; Bill Mullen, *Popular Fronts*,

The most important Southside high school for promoting black public history in the community was Du Sable. Located at 4934 South Wabash, the school opened in 1935 to accommodate a growing population at Wendell Phillips High School. First called the New Wendell Phillips, the school was eventually renamed DuSable after the city's first settler.¹⁴⁴ One of the school's history teachers during this period was Samuel Stratton, whose involvement in organizing black public history-related events on the Southside also made him a highly respected community figure. "More than any single individual," wrote Mixon, "[Stratton] has made Negro history a living force in Chicago." Born in Ashboro, North Carolina in 1897, Stratton first came to the city like many African American migrants seeking opportunity through education during the Great Migrations. He eventually received teachers training at the Chicago Normal Teacher's College and pursued graduate studies in education at the University of Chicago. After teaching for several years in Baton Rouge and St. Louis, Stratton came back to the city and taught in Southside public schools for the next thirty-two years, mostly at DuSable High School and Dunbar Vocational, where he retired in 1962 as head of the Social Studies Department. Stratton became closely involved with Southside social and civic life as a chief organizer of numerous public history-related clubs. He also became involved in furthering the agendas of community institutions and organizations such as the Parkway Community House and the local chapter of the NAACP.¹⁴⁵ The influence that prolific teachers from Du Sable High School like Mary

especially Ch. 3; Alan M. Wald, *Exiles from a Future Time: The Forging of the Mid-Twentieth-Century Literary Left* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 270; Darlene Clark Hine, John McCluskey, Jr. eds., *The Black Chicago Renaissance*

¹⁴⁴ Michael W. Homel, *Down From Equality*, 171.

¹⁴⁵ "Biography: Candidate for School Board for Samuel B. Stratton," [undated], Box 1, Folder 6, CORE-Chicago Chapter, CHM; Mavis Mixon, "The Development of the Study Negro History in Chicago."

Herrick, Captain Walter Dyett and others had on several generations of African American southsiders is recalled in Timuel Black's seminal *Bridges of Memory* oral history collection. Former Chicago mayor (1983-1987) Harold Washington recalled history teachers at DuSable with fondness from the late 1930s and 1940s, notably Anna Sublette, who "made history come alive" through her infectious personality.¹⁴⁶

These positive reflections of former students in Southside schools about teachers who promoted public history were paralleled by the civic level observances of school officials. For instance, Mavis Mixon noted that the city's school board superintendent from the period, William Johnson, was relatively liberal on racial issues for his time. This holds especially true if Johnson is compared to subsequent superintendents who oversaw the famous school boycotts in the city during the late 1950s and 1960s - notably Benjamin Willis. Willis became a nation-wide symbol for Northern white reactions and slow responses to desegregation and school funding issues. He was especially notorious for backing stop-gap measures to create temporary school buildings in Chicago that became notoriously over-crowded and frequently dysfunctional. They were nick-named in derisive terms as "Willis Wagons."¹⁴⁷ Superintendant Johnson was more liberal on racial issues than Willis later was. Johnson supported a formal curriculum reform initiative led in 1942 by Sam Stratton's wife, Madeline Morgan [Stratton], through Emerson Elementary School where she then worked as a teacher. He also sent bulletins to schools that

¹⁴⁶ Tim Black himself was an alumnus of the DuSable high school and went on to a successful teaching career in public schools and city colleges. See, Timuel D. Black, *Bridges of Memory: Chicago's First Wave of Black Migration, Volume 1* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2003), 129, 134-141, 140, 167, 171, 178, 179, 180, 181-182, 190, 248, 409-10. Quoted in Dempsey Travis, *An Autobiography of Black Politics*, 472; Michael W. Homel, *Down From Equality*, 101-102, 142.

¹⁴⁷ For some good appraisals of how racial inequities were exacerbated by the actions of Benjamin Willis in the late 1950s and 1960s, see James Ralphe, *Northern Protest*; Anderson and Pickering, *Confronting the Color Line*; John Lyons, *Teachers and Reform*.

compelled recognition and observance of Negro History Week and made some effort to cancel high school transfers of white students to suburbs – a process vociferously opposed and largely ignored by white parents.¹⁴⁸

Notwithstanding Johnson's racial liberalism, historians of Chicago's public schools and the teaching profession felt his record was less than stellar. They note that he was also squarely in the camp of the city's corrupt democratic political machine through the 1940s and that he did little to advance public education overall. Johnson ignored teachers' interests as unionists and, by extension, those of students. He also made patronage appointments for school board members, fixed tests for principalships, offered school infrastructure contracts as political favors, and assigned only textbooks written by him at a profit (which a National Education Association report noted were in fields for which he was not a "recognized" authority).¹⁴⁹ Johnson was a nemesis of the Chicago Teachers' Union (CTU) and opposed efforts by the union to influence school policy. Still, the union itself remained relatively uninterested in pushing for racial reform so when it came to supporting black history in curriculums, the teachers union had little to say.¹⁵⁰

An exception among white teaching union members was Mary J. Herrick. Herrick was an influential and liberal white teacher who willingly worked on Chicago's Southside at DuSable High School most of her career and is subsequently remembered by many black southsiders

¹⁴⁸ Mavis Mixon, "The Development of the Study of Negro History in Chicago," 15; Nahum D. Brascher, "Honor School Chief for New History Course Plan," *The Chicago Defender* (National Edition) (June 20, 1942), 7; Anne Meis Knupfer, *Chicago's Black Renaissance and Women's Activism*, 79; Madeline R. Morgan, "Chicago School Curriculum Includes Negro Achievements," *The Journal of Negro Education* 13:1 (Winter 1944), 120.

¹⁴⁹ John Lyons, *Teachers and Reform*, 50-53; Mary J. Herrick, *The Chicago Public Schools: A Social and Political History* (Beverly Hills: Sage Publishers, 1971), 271-273.

¹⁵⁰ "History Teacher Pioneer to be Honored at Annual Blue Ribbon Tea"; John Lyons, *Teachers and Reform*, 52, 65, 67, 160, 162.

fondly. Herrick was an active CTU member despite the union's apprehensions for racial reform through the mid-20th Century. She later wrote a definitive history of Chicago public schools in 1971. In this work, Herrick offered considerable praise for superintendant William J. Bogan who preceded William Johnson and roundly criticized Johnson's tenure. A proponent of John Dewey progressivism and popular among public teachers, Bogan's efforts to push for increased public funding for education to address overcrowding in schools were, in Herrick's view, consistently thwarted by civic officials during the Depression era when he held his post.¹⁵¹

“You Had to Have Some Political Pull”

School officials throughout the New Deal and World War II eras certainly had styles that contrasted. However, overall they did very little to prevent the increasing *defacto* racial segregation of the city's public schools. Until the 1920s, there had actually been substantial integration of black students and teachers. Chicago schools had been, in historian Michael Homel's words: “basically equal to the ones whites attended.” As African Americans came to the city in larger numbers from the First World War era through the Second World War years and afterwards, they faced increasingly virulent types of urban racial discrimination in the forms of predatory real estate practices (from restricted covenants and redlining through contract buying schemes), changes in urban and neighborhood zoning, as well as scattered violence from a significant number of white residents (mainly of Eastern European descent) in many areas of the city. Such widespread discrimination exacerbated racial inequities and tied issues of segregation in public schools to the rapid changes taking place in residential areas throughout the city

¹⁵¹ Mary J. Herrick, *The Chicago Public Schools*, 225-226, 227-228, 270-274; Anne Meis Knupfer, *The Chicago Black Renaissance and Women's Activism*, 79. Many white teachers wanted to work outside of the Black Belt after the 1920s when more and more African American migrants moved to the city but were increasingly segregated into this area. See Dionne Danna, *Something Better for Our Children*, 16.

(especially on the Southside).¹⁵² The number of segregated schools increased in the 1930s from six to twenty-six, and the proportion of segregated black students “doubled to 82.4 percent.” Homel notes how no figures exist for the 1940s, but suggests that segregation increased “still further.” The low point during the Depression decade paralleled a precipitous school budget shortfall, renewed rounds of teacher layoffs, and the double-shifting of thirty-five elementary schools with class sizes over fifty - most of which were located on the black South Side. Through 1945 school boundaries were determined solely by school administrators. This arbitrariness exacerbated the likelihood of discriminatory student transfer practices.¹⁵³ In short, there was a complexity of issues that created hugely difficult conditions for African Americans who wanted to attend the city’s public schools from the 1930s through the 1940s and afterwards.

During this period racial inequities in education were certainly addressed by black civic leaders. However, these efforts had mixed results. The most common form of activism was through public petition against double-shifting students and the related issue of inadequate instructional time and quality education. Objections were registered at Annual Board of Education budget meetings, through City Council probes, and State Commission investigations. Direct action sit-ins and boycotts (as forms of activism on issues of education) were not widely used as tactics by education activists until the late 1950s. There were some actions organized by concerned parents at elementary schools during the 1930s surrounding the overcrowding and degradation of redistricted Southside schools, notably on the far Southside neighborhood of

¹⁵² Arnold Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto*; Anderson and Pickering, *Confronting the Color Line*; Beryl Satter, *Family Properties*; Anne Meis Knupfer, *The Chicago Black Renaissance and Women’s Activism*, 79; Michael W. Homel, *Down From Equality*, x, 27.

¹⁵³ Mary J. Herrick, *The Chicago Public Schools*, 223; Anne Meis Knupfer, *The Chicago Black Renaissance and Women’s Activism*, 79; Michael W. Homel, “The Politics of Public Education in Black Chicago, 1910-1941,” *The Journal of Negro Education* 45:2 (Spring 1976): 180-181.

Lilydale. Local branches of civil rights and civic organizations such as the National Negro Congress, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the Chicago Council for Negro Organizations, the Chicago Urban League, and the National Association of Colored Women gave some attention to conditions in public schools during this period. One school board hearing in 1942 was attended by hundreds of Southsiders, including many African American Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) leaders. PTA's and alumni groups voiced the deepest concerns over widespread double shifting and even triple shifting that occurred in their children's schools - conditions that continued through the 1960s despite protests. They also underscored the lack of available educational resources and proper access to vocational training in defense and construction fields. However, during this period, civil rights and civic organizations generally lacked the funds necessary to mount protracted legal challenges and lobbies against discriminatory patterns in public schools. Indeed, these patterns in the urban North were *de facto* and not *de jure* as they were in the U.S. South (and so harder to combat legally). Also, these organizations generally focused more on other sectors such as residential segregation and employment discrimination.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵⁴ "Voice Frank Plaints of City Schools," *The Chicago Defender* (January 24, 1942), 6; Michael W. Homel, "The Politics of Public Education in Black Chicago," 188-190. For more on the organizational difficulties of both the NAACP and the Urban League during the 1930s, see Christopher Reed, *The Chicago NAACP*; Arvarh. E. Strickland, *The Chicago Urban League* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966). Dionne Danna, *Something Better for Our Children*, 20-21; Michael Homel, "The Politics of Public Education in Black Chicago," 187-188; Michael W. Homel, *Down From Equality*, Ch. 5. Homel also notes that the white-led citywide parents association and Chicago Schools Committee were late to recognize the conditions of Southside schools. These organizations eventually came to advocate on their behalf in the early 1940s as part of a campaign to highlight the overall neglect of public schools by civic levels of government. See, Homel, *Down From Equality*, 174-175.

The NAACP's legal campaigns against school segregation were famously led by Thurgood Marshall and his team of lawyers during the mid-1940s and 1950s. Most of their legal work was conducted in southern states where school segregation was legally sanctioned in many places until the historic *Brown* decision of 1954 that finally overturned the prevailing doctrine of "separate but equal." See Peter Irons, *Jim Crow's Children: The Broken Promise of the Brown Decision* (New York: Penguin, 2002).

The ongoing though lower key protests by African American leaders on education issues produced some modest infrastructural improvements – namely renovations to a few elementary schools with active parent associations and the building and maintenance of one high school [DuSable]. After these rather limited gains, however, the Chicago School Board was later able to boast about infrastructure that ostensibly aided a growing student population. In a brochure from 1944, the Board claimed that six million dollars (most of it from Washington) had opened 12,534 new seats and helped finish what would become DuSable High School (which had been built in 1935 to deal with overcrowding at Wendell Phillips High). The School Board utilized the optic of relatively better public education in northern urban areas for southern migrants whose experiences with dirt poor Southern rural schools obviously could not compare with the architectural and infrastructural marvels constructed and encountered in richer northern metropolis.’ As Herrick notes, the Chicago school board’s propaganda “listed the number of migrant children from each southern state.” Mississippi headed this list at thirty-four per cent. The board published pictures of “ramshackle one-room Negro schools in Mississippi... placed opposite pictures of Chicago schools.” This literature neglected to mention that the new Chicago buildings depicted “were jammed with children on double shifts, while in white areas only a very few schools in outlying areas were so crowded.” Indeed, the year this school board report was published, Du Sable and Wendell Phillips High Schools together had 3,000 more students than they had seats available. As another historian of Chicago schools observed, once migrants settled into the city, issues like racial inequality in public education and the fair use of urban space became important to them.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁵ Mary J. Herrick, *The Chicago Public Schools*, 270; Michael W. Homel, “The Politics of Public Education in Black Chicago,” 179. DuSable High school had been overcrowded and neglected for maintenance from its inauguration. See, Michael W. Homel, *Down From Equality*, 172.

Like their students, in the decades leading up to and including the 1940s, black teachers faced increased forms of racial discrimination. For example, teachers encountered tenuous employment and recruitment processes. Despite being fully qualified for their professions, many teachers and school board members (the latter one of the most coveted black political appointments through the mid-20th century) had to rely in different ways on various forms of patronage -- whether white sponsors or political favors from civic officials -- to secure stable employment. Though African American teachers were part of a long tradition of public school teaching dating back to post-Civil War Reconstruction, in Chicago they were increasingly restricted to teaching in the ghettoized Southside “Black belt” through the 1930s. They also contended with an informal system of quotas (along with Jews) at the city’s public Normal College where teachers were trained. Through the Great Depression years, African American enrollment at the college fell from 72 of 1,090 students in 1930 to 24 of 625 in 1934. By 1940, Chicago Normal only admitted 11 Blacks among a total of 400 students. Such declines raised alarm in the pages of *The Chicago Defender*. President of the Chicago Council of Negro Organizations, Irene McCoy Gaines, claimed that blacks were “told that the proportion of Negro students had to be kept down because after graduation there would be no place for them, as they would not be accepted by principals in white districts.”¹⁵⁶

Liberal Southside teacher Mary J. Herrick wrote a 1931 master’s thesis that outlined the issues facing African American teachers in securing employment and the forms of racial patronage that effected their hiring. She found that apart from being frequently barred from local teacher training colleges like Chicago Normal through the 1930s, many qualified candidates

¹⁵⁶ John Lyons, *Teachers and Reform*, 160; Mary J. Herrick, *The Chicago Public Schools*, 246; Margaret T.G. Burroughs, interview with Anna M. Tyler, 13. Irene McCoy Gaines quoted in Michael W. Homel, *Down From Equality*, 34.

languished on substitute lists for longer periods than whites “because” the substitute bureau purposely placed black teachers on limited payrolls at overcrowded and inner city schools. A 1945 Report from the Mayor’s Committee on Race Relations approximated that ninety per cent of “nonwhite” teachers were in schools with “95 percent or more Negro pupils.” Once hired, black teachers had to contend with white administrators and principals who saw “inferiority” in teachers as well as pupils. These teachers also had to combat against the bad reputations of their schools located invariably in poor racialized communities. Working conditions and salaries for teachers throughout the city declined relative to inflation through the Second World War period. For example, Chicago elementary teachers made a maximum of \$2,313 in 1941 and by 1946 made \$2,850 a year. However, these figures represented a decline of nearly \$200 in purchasing power relative to inflation. Even worse, high school teachers made as much as \$3,515 in 1941 and in 1946 made \$3,950 but their purchasing power decreased by nearly \$570 per year.¹⁵⁷

The American Federation of Teachers’ (AFT) affiliated Chicago Teachers Union (CTU)¹⁵⁸ did allow African American teachers into some leadership positions. For example, Wendell Phillips teacher, Clarence Lee was on the CTU’s board of representatives (1939-1948) and its executive board from 1942 to 1948. He was also part of a CTU delegation that attended an AFT convention in Minneapolis that adopted a resolution in support of the Fair Employment Practices Commission (FEPC) in order to combat discrimination against blacks and American Indians after the Second World War. Throughout the 1940s, the CTU mirrored some efforts by

¹⁵⁷ Michael W. Homel, “The Politics of Public Education in Black Chicago, 1910-1941,” 182, 185; Michael W. Homel, *Down From Equality*, 28; Dionne Danna, “Maudelle Bousfield and Chicago’s Segregated School System, 1922-1950,” *Midwest History of Education Journal* 25:1 (1998), 128-129; Mary J. Herrick, “Negro Employees of the Chicago Board of Education,” (MA Thesis, University of Chicago, 1931), 34-35; Mary J. Herrick, *The Chicago Public Schools*, 246; John Lyons, *Teachers and Reform*, 66-67, 102; Harold Gosnell, *Negro Politicians*, 32-33.

¹⁵⁸ The CTU was formed in 1937.

progressive labor unions (mostly in the CIO) who produced educational materials for adult education classes, radio broadcasts, and other media output that featured the civil rights unionism of figures like A. Phillip Randolph and highlighted issues of race and gender discrimination in housing, jobs, and education. Overall, however, the CTU's leadership structure remained dominated by an anglo-saxon, anti-communist, and largely male cohort throughout this period. John Fewkes, the white and anti-communist head of the CTU clashed frequently with more liberal factions in the union – a tension that came to a head in the late 1950s when a younger generation of Chicago teachers like Meyer Weinberg and Margaret Burroughs organized against his conservatism through the CTU's independent caucus. Still, as CTU historian John Lyons notes, over this period the union generally “did little in practical terms to challenge racial discrimination in the hiring of black teachers, the assignment of black teachers away from white schools, or the unequal segregated system of education.”¹⁵⁹

The effects of discrimination on African American teachers across social strata during the 1940s also demonstrated the complex ways race patronage impacted professional appointments. Teacher-librarian Irma Clark was the daughter of a successful Kansas City, Missouri businessman and worked for several years in schools there after getting a library science degree from the University of Illinois. But when she moved to Chicago with her husband in the late 1920s she had trouble finding work. As she recounted in an oral history of African American migrants to Chicago: “you had to have some political pull in order to get a job like that, and we didn't know the right people.” It was not until she had taken several civil service exams for

¹⁵⁹ “Negro on Slate of Teachers for Union V.P. Post, *The Sunday Worker* (May 20, 1962), 12; John Lyons, *Teachers and Reform*, 65-67; “Teachers Union Aids Minorities,” *The Chicago Defender* (September 7, 1946), 2. For more on the history of unionism and teachers throughout the United States, see Marjorie Murphy, *Blackboard Unions: The AFT and the NEA, 1900-1980* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990).

library science that she was finally granted a job. She then worked for over forty years in Chicago public schools, mostly as a teacher-librarian at DuSable High School.¹⁶⁰

The experiences of the first African American school principal in the city Maudelle Bousfield also demonstrated how racial patronage worked in this period. The middle class daughter of public educators from St. Louis, Bousfield was the first African American woman to graduate from the University of Illinois-Urbana/Champaign. Bousfield (née Brown) married a doctor, Midien O. Bousfield, who held “an esteemed” position within Chicago’s black community through the 1930s because of his leading role in various social and health fields and as director of Liberty Life Insurance (which later merged with the more prolific Supreme Liberty and Life - a staple Bronzeville business and community institution). Dr. Bousfield was eventually named to the school board in 1939 by Mayor Ed Kelly’s administration – the same year Maudelle Bousfield was named principal of Wendell Phillips High School. While certainly merited, Bousfield’s prior appointment to a principalship at Keith Elementary in 1927 was equated in the *Pittsburgh Courier* with her association to prominent local congressman, Oscar DePriest, who had been instrumental in leveraging civic employment for African Americans in many fields. While Midien Bousfield’s appointment to the school board ultimately produced little positive outcomes for black Southsiders, his appointment nevertheless represented a hard fought political victory for the community. Southside historian Timuel Black recalled with fondness how the Bousfield’s lived in the black middle class neighborhoods of South 46th and

¹⁶⁰ “Irma Clark,” in Timuel Black ed., *Bridges of Memory*, 138, 140.

Forestville. During the 1930s and 1940s, these areas of the Southside housed the “high muckety-mucks” of the black community.¹⁶¹

These characterizations revealed Bousfield and her husband’s social position in local black society and her proximity, as a significant local educator, to prominent circles of civic race leadership. Nonetheless, Bousfield still faced many challenges in becoming the city’s first black principal in an era of white supremacist reaction and power.

Despite the successful completion of a newly created administrators exam in the late 1920s where Bousfield scored in the top twenty of 600 applicants, she still faced ridicule from school board officials who doubted her ability to perform well on the exam. Also, once promoted to the administrative level, Bousfield’s professional challenges were manifold since the various principalships she held at Keith (1927-1931) and Douglas Elementary (1931-1938) and Du Sable High (1939-1950) were all schools that faced funding shortages and overcrowding as well as decrepit facilities as compared to most of the public schools in white areas. Also, more often than not, they served neighborhoods that were overwhelmingly poverty-stricken. For over twenty-five years, *The Chicago Defender* and other community leaders had been campaigning through protracted negotiations at the civic level for black representation on the school board (a position her husband did finally attain). Bousfield’s appointment to Wendell Phillips was similarly and sympathetically covered in the black press as triumphant “firsts” for Chicago.¹⁶²

¹⁶¹ “Dr Bousfield on School Board,” *The Chicago Defender* (October 28, 1939), 1; Dionne Danks, “Maudelle Bousfield and Chicago’s Segregated School System, 1922-1950,” 127-129; Timuel D. Black, *Bridges of Memory*, 22; Michael W. Homel, *Down From Equality*, 158-164.

¹⁶² “Dr Bousfield on School Board”; Dionne Danks, “Maudelle Bousfield and Chicago’s Segregated School System, 1922-1950,” 128-129; Dionne Danks, *Something Better for Our Children*, 17-19. A similar school board appointment was repeated during the school boycotts in Chicago during the late 1950s, when the assistant principal of DuSable High School, Annabel Prescott, the daughter of AME bishop, Archibald Carey Sr. and sister of judge, Archibald Carey, Jr. (each noted pillars in the black community) was appointed by the vilified superintendent

African American teachers with working class backgrounds experienced different forms of racial patronage as well. The early career of Margaret Burroughs is illustrative of this. Through the 1940s, Burroughs (then Taylor-Goss) used teaching to support her artistic pursuits. But her experiences getting into the teaching profession illustrate how some African Americans experienced important alternative forms of patronage in their strivings for professionalization. While she had been a youth member of the secular popular front movements of the 1930s, Burroughs drew on contacts and mentors she had among the city's prominent Catholic and parochial school networks. As noted in chapter 1, Burroughs had been born into a Catholic sharecropping family in a rural Louisiana town. When her parents moved to Chicago in the 1920s, she attended several grade schools including St. Elizabeth's – a Catholic school on the Southside. In various autobiographical texts, Burroughs recalled the role of Mary Ryan, an Irish Catholic teacher she had in grade school. Ryan coached Burroughs through two difficult attempts to pass racially prohibitive entrance exams at Chicago Normal Teachers College from which she eventually gained certificates in 1937 as an elementary teacher and in 1939 as a high school art teacher.¹⁶³ As one historian suggests, “[l]eftist Catholics like Burroughs, did not necessarily see contradictions between radical politics and their religious faith.”¹⁶⁴

Benjamin Willis as a school board representative. Though Willis may well have viewed the latter appointment as a token gesture, Prescott utilized the role to promote a “human relations” approach to teacher training and worked to halt the transfer of white teachers out of Black schools to encourage their meaningful interaction with the community. See, Anne Meis Knupfer, *The Chicago Black Renaissance and Women's Activism*, 90-91.

¹⁶³ Carline Evone Williams Strong, “Margaret Taylor Goss Burroughs,” 68-69.

¹⁶⁴ Timothy B. Neary, “Crossing Parochial Crossings,” 242-243.

Recent scholarship does reflect the significance of a vibrant liberal Catholic interracialism that persisted in the city throughout this period.¹⁶⁵ Local bishop Bernard J. Sheil joined African American Communist William L. Patterson on an interracial Chicago-based committee that sought to integrate major league baseball. And as late as 1945, African American leftist and famed classical and folk singer Paul Robeson made speeches at the Southside's main Catholic parish, Corpus Christi.¹⁶⁶

Notwithstanding the complex role that Catholic political and cultural modalities had in framing the restrictive Cold War politics of America from the 1940s and into the 1950s, such engagements between liberal Catholics and the political left are revealing for at least two reasons. These engagements suggest important convergences on the grounds of both civil rights and the production of revisionist racial knowledge for the advancement of the citizenship rights of African Americans in ways that crossed-over traditional political and cultural cleavages.

“Our American Family”?

Beyond its complex relationship to civic-level corruption and patronage in public education, there is much more to be understood about the significance of African American-led curriculum reform efforts in Chicago during the early 1940s. Michael Homel contends that within the African American community there were concerns “relating to vocational training,

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.; Timothy Neary, “Crossing Parochial Boundaries: African Americans and Chicago’s Catholic Youth Organization, 1930-1954,” *American Catholic Studies* 114 (Fall 2003), 23-37.

¹⁶⁶ “Bishop Sheil Joins Fight Against Major League Color Barrier,” *The Chicago Defender* (June 13, 1942), 19. For assessments of Catholicism’s complex role in working class politics associated with the American labor movement, see Steve Russwurm, ed. *The CIO’s Left-Led Unions* (Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1992). For more on the Chicago committee to desegregate major league baseball, see William L. Patterson, *The Man Who Cried Genocide: An Autobiography* (New York: International Publishers, 1971), 141-147; “Wrigley Sees ‘Negroes in Big Leagues Soon,’” *The Chicago Defender* (December 26, 1942), 19; “Cub Prexy Wrigley to Hire Scout for Race Ball Clubs,” *The Chicago Defender* (National Edition) (December 25, 1943), 1.

Negro history” and the numbers of black teachers employed by the city. But such issues “held relatively minor priority throughout these years.”¹⁶⁷ Still, positive appraisals of teacher Madeline Morgan’s proposed reforms in the early 1940s, which consisted of supplementary social studies units geared towards elementary education (Kindergarten to Eighth Grade), indicate that some African American teachers definitely influenced public discussions of these matters – especially proposed curriculum reform measures. This dynamic is best illustrated by understanding how Morgan’s curriculum reforms were part of a broad field of black cultural activism ascendant through this period that also engaged closely with forms of popular education and public history. Indeed, superintendant William Johnson’s support for Morgan’s program paralleled the activities of locally-situated New Deal Works Progress Administration (WPA) managers who oversaw government-sponsored cultural projects initiated by African Americans during the late 1930s and 1940s. For a short time, these mid-level New Deal officials supported black history curriculum initiatives, writings, and other educational and creative projects sponsored through federal cultural programs.¹⁶⁸

A 1942 banquet that honored Superintendent Johnson for his attention to Morgan’s proposed reforms demonstrated this process. Johnson actually met with Morgan and considered her curriculum reform proposals. He was also present at a well-attended Woman’s City Club banquet of over 300 hundred people. The banquet heralded Morgan’s efforts and those of other African American educators to reform curriculum. “[C]ordial” telegrams were sent from Eleanor and Franklin Roosevelt, which in the *Chicago Defender’s* optimistic estimation, helped validate a “revolutionary trend” in public education. Notwithstanding such optimism, the event

¹⁶⁷ Michael W. Homel, “The Politics of Public Education in Black Chicago, 1910-1941,” 180.

¹⁶⁸ Lauren Sklaroff, *Black Culture and the New Deal*, 2-4.

demonstrated that Superintendent Johnson at least made overtures to proposed curriculum changes. Morgan's honors were shared with her school's principal, who approved of the curriculum and served as Morgan's intermediary to the school district. Wendell Phillips High School principal Maudelle Bousfield was also present and had been involved with Morgan and her team of researchers in developing the curriculum units. Bousfield emphasized how plans for their implementation had "begun long before Pearl Harbor" – an indication that these proposals were not simply to assuage national wartime observances of racial tolerance, but that local African Americans had developed them independently on their own accord. *The Defender* paraphrased Superintendent Johnson's widely applauded banquet address for noting how Chicago's curriculum reform issues were "part of a national and world trend for co-operative justice." One local attorney at the banquet overstated Johnson's support for curriculum reform as a redemptive moment similar to both biblical crucifixion and Abraham Lincoln's martyrdom. Clearly flattered, Johnson responded that he had no fear of "crucifixion" and that he wanted it "known that the Negro" had given "his toil... talents, and even his life, to create and perpetuate our democratic way of life."¹⁶⁹ Such racial performances certainly smacked of a tokenism and a patronizing power imbalance between white public officials and the African American community. But the event also echoed how civic powers were beginning to seriously recognize the observation of black history celebrations as opportunities to cement their public commitments to racial reform in areas of education and housing (however, disingenuous these forms of recognition were revealed to be over time).¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁹ "Honor School Chief for New History Course Plan."

¹⁷⁰ Chicago mayor Ed Kelly had long made overtures towards Black public history in Chicago. In 1934, Kelly insured a float commemorating Jean Baptiste Point DuSable was conspicuously present during a 1934 Soldier Field pageant called "Drama of Chicago on Parade." See Dempsey Travis, *An Autobiography of Black Politics*, 124.

In characterizing the development of such curriculum as a trend in “co-operative justice,” these exchanges reflected the currency of observing black cultural contributions to U.S life as projections of the country’s apparent “democracy” on a global stage.¹⁷¹ As such, the views expressed at this banquet demonstrated how discussions of curriculum reform exemplified African American subjectivities. They could both subvert and affirm notions of national belonging while simultaneously representing creative tensions between pluralist visions for U.S. citizenship and national belonging, more worldly notions of democracy and internationalism, and regional expressions of independent black politics and activism.

There was a great deal of public attention accorded these curriculum reforms. Morgan indicated that Superintendent Johnson had “readily accepted” proposals for the black history units that she and her school principal Elinor McCollum had first brought to the School District’s attention. In 1940, Morgan was released from her teaching duties to work for a year and a half with an assistant of her choosing to develop these units. She chose fellow elementary school teacher and Southsider Bessie King to work with her. A committee was also struck to supervise the work. Chaired by McCollum, this committee included the city’s only other African American school principal, Ruth Jackson (principal of Colman elementary). Morgan and King then were assigned to the city’s Bureau of Curriculum and “given all of the freedom” they deemed

William Grimshaw notes how over the course of the 1940s, Chicago’s civic Democratic machine moved in the opposite direction as the national party which eventually came to advocate an “end to racial discrimination.” In Chicago, the local machine was moved “in the opposite direction” and pulled back from Ed Kelly’s “modest anti-discrimination measures in public housing and in the public schools.” See William Grimshaw, *Bitter Fruit*, 57.

¹⁷¹ Such imperatives were often expressed by politicians with the approach of the Cold War to positively spin America’s racial “problem” to global observers. See Mary Dudziak’s, *Cold War Civil Rights*; Thomas Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line: American Race Relations in the Global Arena* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001).

necessary to complete their project. In a reflection of her work, Morgan felt that the educational methods adopted by Johnson and the Chicago schools would “bring about a change in the kind and quality of attitude in our American family and gradually bring about a change in interracial as well as racial behavior” among young people. A questionnaire completed by South Side school teachers reported that students were generally “surprised to learn that Negroes had made so many contributions to American life.” Another teacher who tried the units reported that her student’s interest in independent research was so great that she was prompted to organize a “Negro history club.” The teacher added that she hoped the monthly “tolerance” pamphlets sent to local schools might encourage “white children” to change for the better upon learning about black achievements. Morgan’s work also became relevant to state-level officials during this period and reflected the increasing popularity of racial liberalism in the public sphere. Indeed she appeared at the behest of Illinois (and Southside) State Representative Corneal Davis in 1945 before the state’s Education Committee at the 64th General Assembly to enact a bill that stated that the “[h]istory of the Negro race may be taught in all public schools and in all other educational institutions in this state supported or maintained, in whole or in part, by public funds.”¹⁷²

The process through which Morgan devised the social studies units also revealed a strong pedagogical current in Chicago’s black cultural fronts at the outset of the 1940s. These units

¹⁷² “Informal CV Morris 1964?,” Box 1, Folder 1 Biographical, Stratton Papers, HARSH; Madeline R. Morgan, “Chicago School Curriculum Includes Negro Achievements,” 120-123. For an excellent critical discussion of how racial liberalism has dominated the U.S. public sphere from the mid-20th Century through to the present and included the near merger of liberal and conservative impulses in American political thought in ostensibly “color-blind” critiques of multiculturalism, see Nikhil Pal Singh, *Black is a Country*, 15-57. Conversely, the clearest sympathetic interpretation of Cold War civil rights history and racial liberalism can be found in Mary Dudziak’s, *Cold War Civil Rights*. For an articulation of consensus liberalism at mid-century aimed at the perceived excesses of mostly Republican-led conservatism, paranoid populisms, and other corruptions of ostensibly redeemable American political traditions, see Richard Hofstadter, *The Paranoid Style in American Politics and Other Essays* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1952 [1954, 1963, 1964, 1965]).

were not simply a wartime reform measure devised by elites to paper over widespread racial discrimination in America. When the units were celebrated at the 1942 banquet with the superintendent in attendance, high school principal Maudelle Bousfield's contention that Morgan's units had been devised well before Pearl Harbor stands as an important intervention in the public script about the importance of racial reform in U.S. society generally.

Morgan had been inspired to devise black history curriculum when she attended the American Negro Exposition of 1940. This event was held in Chicago and took place one year before the famous attack on the South Pacific island base that launched U.S. involvement in the Second World War.¹⁷³ As historian Adam Green notes, the exposition's organization was impeded by financial mismanagement thanks largely to missteps taken by the local businessmen who sponsored it. The exposition also avoided any difficult discussion of racial slavery's legacies by not showcasing the innovative scholarship done since the 1930s (namely by the likes of W.E.B. DuBois and L.D. Reddick) to rebut the still dominant Plantation School of Southern history associated with U.B. Phillips and his cohort.¹⁷⁴ These omissions resulted in an overall sense of "confusion" among the event's exhibitors and artists about "notions of 'racial nationalism' and the obligations of 'American nationality.'" Green suggests this feeling "endured" for many in their future efforts to engage with the meanings of black community moving forward. Despite such ambiguities, the event featured the exhibition of a variety of work by mostly local African American artists and writers – notably by artist/teacher Margaret Burroughs and dancer/choreographer Katherine Dunham. It also featured contributions from Harlem Renaissance luminaries with Chicago ties like Arna Bontemps and Langston Hughes.

¹⁷³ Madeline Morgan, "Chicago School Curriculum Includes Negro Achievement," 120.

¹⁷⁴ The Plantation School generally accounted account for the experiences of former slaves rather than their masters as had been the convention.

Indeed, the Exposition was, as Green writes, a “rehearsal for more sustained imaginative enterprises within Black Chicago in years to come.”¹⁷⁵ The 1940 Negro Exposition made a great impression on Madeline Morgan. She was “greatly interested and impressed by the contributions that had been made by Negroes in science, health, art, and literature to American life.” She visited the exposition “several times” and dreamt for a “time when Negro boys and girls would be given an opportunity to read about the achievements” of black leaders “and their deeds.”¹⁷⁶ Morgan took the inspirations for pedagogy she gleaned at the exposition and applied them to her curriculum reform efforts. As such, Morgan’s work represented just one of the many “enterprises” that followed from this local watershed event.

Another such “enterprise” was *The Chicago Defender’s* coverage of Negro History Week in Chicago through the late 1930s and 1940s. This coverage demonstrated how staff on the paper engaged closely with the politics of public school curriculums. For instance, an editorial from 1939, promoted the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History’s (ASLNH) “Negro History Week” celebrations and underscored the role of “blacks in the evolution of world culture” as a “fact, and “not a fiction.” This editorial as well as numerous others emphasized a civilizational and modernist rhetoric, worldly in scope, with emphasis on the timeless race heroes of the modern era such as abolitionist Frederick Douglass, Tuskegee College founder-Booker T. Washington, journalist and anti-lynching crusader Ida B. Wells, and the Midwestern cosmetics magnate Madame C.J. Walker. These editorials emphasized an imperative to change national

¹⁷⁵ Adam Green, *Selling the Race*, 41, 45-47; Jeffrey Helgeson, “Who Are You America but Me? The American Negro Exposition, 1940” in Darlene Clark Hine and John McCluskey, Jr. eds., *The Black Chicago Renaissance*. For an extensive treatment of the Chicago Negro Progress exposition in 1940 as one the main expositions conducted by Black Americans through the mid-20th Century, see Mabel O. Wilson, *Negro Building*, Ch. 4, 191-241.

¹⁷⁶ Madeline Morgan, “Chicago School Curriculum Includes Negro Achievement,” 120.

civics curriculums with the goal of changing perceptions in the public sphere about the positive virtues and achievements of black Americans. One column stated the need to work “persistently toward the goal of offering the American children of both races the same opportunity to study the Negro that they have to study all other peoples of the earth.”¹⁷⁷

Leading these efforts at the paper was Morris Lewis, *The Defender*'s circulation manager in the late 1930s and a former secretary for congressman republican Oscar DePriest, who represented Illinois' first district (Chicago's black Southside) during the Great Depression (1929-1935). Lewis had been instrumental in promoting ASNLH national convention meetings in Chicago. These conventions attracted thousands in 1935 and again in 1940 – the latter event alone drew a crowd of nearly 2,000 to Ebenezer Baptist Church to hear Carter G. Woodson speak. As the ASNLH's Illinois State chairman and secretary, Lewis helped organize an annual ad-hoc city-level committee to organize Negro History Week events in churches, schools, YMCA's, and other community centers throughout the late 1930s through the mid-1940s; he also helped promote the association's membership drives there. While there was interest in sustaining local ASNLH branch activities during this period, an official local chapter was not fully active in the city from the late 1930s through the 1950s because of attempts “by some to use it as a partisan tool.”¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁷ Dempsey Travis, *Autobiography of Black Politics*, 124; “Negro History Week,” *The Chicago Defender* (National Edition) (February 4, 1939), 16; “Drippings from Other Pens,” *The Chicago Defender* (National Edition) (April 29, 1939), 22; “A Page from Our History,” *The Chicago Defender* (National Edition) (February 10, 1940), 12; “Negro History Week,” *The Chicago Defender* (National Edition) (February 17, 1940), 14; “Attend Negro History Week Tea,” *The Chicago Defender* (National Edition) (February 24, 1940), 6; “Chicagoans Hear Dr. Woodson,” *The Chicago Defender* (National Edition) (February 17, 1940), 12; “City-Wide Forum to Observe Negro History Week,” *The Chicago Defender* (National Edition) (February 10, 1940), 4; “Women to Observe Negro History Week,” *The Chicago Defender* (National Edition) (February 17, 1940), 16; “Democracy Parade Hits Defense Jim Crow,” *The Chicago Defender* (February 15, 1941), 7.

¹⁷⁸ “4-day Program Announced for History Meet,” *The Chicago Defender* (September 7, 1935), 5; “Committee Ready for Historians,” *The Chicago Defender* (National Edition) August 3, 1935, 4; “Morris Lewis

Fears over partisanship in these endeavors were founded given the diversity of groups involved in representations of African American cultural politics. Through the late 1930s, Chicago featured a number of left wing and cultural nationalist groups engaged in radical and anti-colonial politics related especially to African liberation. These groups generally received little coverage in the *Chicago Defender* but nonetheless sought involvement in citywide Negro History Week observances. Though never large in numbers, groups ranging from nationalist Garveyites to Marxist labor organizers gathered regularly in Washington Park. One of the black Southside's most important public spaces through the mid-20th Century, the park featured popular soapbox speakers, lectures, and outdoor meetings led by such groups. Shortly after Communist leader William L. Patterson and his wife Louise Thompson moved to Chicago in 1939 to work with the local Party chapter, they moved close to Washington Park and became witnesses to important "weekly" events there. Patterson recalled how "[s]outsiders crowded into the park and formed a circle around the speakers. There were often well over a thousand listeners in the audience."¹⁷⁹ In his classic study of black nationalism, E.U. Essien-Udom listed a range of organizations active in Chicago during the 1930s and 1940s from the Garveyite-inspired Peace Movement of Ethiopia, the Ethiopian World Federation Council, an Islamic sect called the Moorish Science Temple, the Joint Council of Repatriation, to the Washington Park Forum led

Gives Address to Ministers," *The Chicago Defender* (August 25, 1934), 23; "Race Life History Groups in Drive," *The Chicago Defender*, (January 11, 1936), 2; "Race Study Unit Plans Anniversary Fete," *The Chicago Defender* (July 13, 1940), 8; "Revamp Negro History Group," *The Chicago Defender* (Daily Edition) (October 13, 1964), 11. Also see Chapter 1 of this dissertation.

¹⁷⁹ William L. Patterson, *The Man Who Cried* Genocide, 148-149. For a less sympathetic interpretation of these same Washington Park speaker scenes – a critique Patterson duly referenced alongside his own perspective previously cited, see Richard Wright, *American Hunger* (New York: Harper, 1944 [1977]), 37.

by figures like Otis Hyde. As Essien-Udom noted, “membership in some of these organizations” was “too small to justify extensive comment.”¹⁸⁰

Still, it was clear that in addition to the popularity of Washington Park speaking forums, some of these groups operated within the mainstream of African American social life. For example, the World Wide Friends of Africa was headed by “world-traveler” F.H. Hammurabi Robb and was invited in 1940 to lecture on the history of black women to the Chicago and Northern District Association of Colored Women; Robb was also a history column writer for *The Chicago Defender*.¹⁸¹ In 1944, the ASNLH hosted a mass meeting at the Metropolitan Community Church for Negro History Week in collaboration with the DuSable Memorial Society and a “joint committee” hosted a city-wide banquet in Carter G. Woodson’s honor in the same week. Other events included African art displayed by the Southside Community Arts Center; a banquet hosted by the Frederick Douglas Afro-American Association; a panel discussion organized by Hall Branch head librarian Vivian Harsh; and numerous programs held in elementary and high schools.¹⁸² Despite the best efforts of the ASNLH to have its imprimatur on these related activities, the proliferation of different groups carrying out Negro History Week celebrations demonstrated the difficult prospect of addressing such a task.

¹⁸⁰ E.U. Essien-Udom, *Black Nationalism: A Search for an Identity in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962), 50.

¹⁸¹ F.H. Hammurabi Robb, “Hammurabi Robb Starts New Feature Series for Defender,” *The Chicago Defender* (National Edition) (August 1, 1936), 24.; “Women to Observe Negro History Week,” *The Chicago Defender* (National Edition) (February 17, 1940), 16; Susan Nance, “Respectability and Representation: The Moorish Science Temple, Morocco, and Black Public Culture in 1920s Chicago,” *American Quarterly* 54: 4 (December 2002): 623-659.

¹⁸² “Map Plans for Annual Negro History Week,” *The Chicago Defender* (National Edition) (February 12, 1944), 15.

To be sure, by the early 1940s, wartime civil rights issues overshadowed many local-level observances for black history. This was exemplified by a demonstration in 1941 attended by over 1,000 people who marched down South Parkway Avenue. Held at the outset of Negro History Week in February, the “Demonstration for Democracy” echoed national civil rights and union leader A. Phillip Randolph’s demands for a March on Washington Movement (MWM). The MWM protested discrimination in defense industries and related vocational training. The event promised to bring out a significant cross-section of Black Chicago and included representatives from over 125 organizations, including the Chicago Baptist Institute, the Chicago Urban League, the NAACP, the Chicago Council of Negro Organizations, the Chicago and Northern District Federation of Colored Women, the National Negro Congress and numerous labor and church leaders. The co-chairmen of this demonstration was Enoc P. Waters (an editor at the *Chicago Defender*) and St. Clair Drake who has written about his experiences as a *Defender* writer. Prior to his prolific work as a professor of African studies at Roosevelt College, Drake was also secretary of the Conscientious Objectors to Jim Crow and a secretary of the demonstration’s organizing committee (as well as a graduate student at the University of Chicago). The overwhelming focus of slogans and messages at this demonstration focused on job discrimination and underscored themes of Christian “brotherhood” and “race relations” in wartime America. For example, slogans at the march included: “[s]eparate Units Aren’t Right If You Want Negroes to Fight” and “Christianity Means Justice to Humanity.”¹⁸³

¹⁸³ “Democracy Parade Hits Defense Jim Crow,” *The Chicago Defender* (February 15, 1941), 7. For more on the March on Washington Movement, see Herbert Garfinkel, *When Negroes March: The March on Washington Movement in the Organizational Politics for FEPC* (Glencoe: The Free Press, 1959). Numerous studies and memoirs written with attention to both social and literary history methods have treated the diverse activities of *The Chicago Defender*’s talented editors, especially figures like Enoc P. Waters, Ben Burns, Era Bell Thompson, Metz Lochar and others. These studies examine their subsequent dispersal to other regions and the employment of many (considered by some as a “raid”) with Johnson publications (*Ebony* and *Negro Digest*) and other similar “cultural”

In the same timeframe, *The Defender* also gave space to fairly left wing antiwar perspectives. Margaret Taylor Goss [Burroughs] published one of her first pieces of writing in the paper as a “Negro mother” in which she asked provocatively: “why... war?” Goss’ strategically gendered article outlined a basic chronology for U.S. history that charted African American roles in the country’s wars: from King William’s War during the 17th Century through the revolutionary period when colonists took up arms against the British, through to the Mexican annexation of the 19th Century. The Civil War period was cast heroically through well-known episodes and figures who sought both the union’s preservation and slavery’s abolition. After this, a “new form of slavery began” with the onset of Jim Crow segregation despite the best efforts of black soldiers, John Brown, and Lincoln’s warnings about preserving the union in his inaugural address. Despite the brevity of these historical treatments, Goss’ editorial underscored a vital opposition to World War II on the basis of American “DEMOCRACY which promised for the Negro masses economic and social equality.” Goss characterized both allied and German war efforts as imperial in nature and drew parallels with more recent histories of militarization in Europe and its persistent reaches in racial colonies worldwide.¹⁸⁴

enterprises through the late-1940s and 1950s. James Grossman’s study of Black migration to Chicago through World War I and the interwar years remains foundational for understanding the role of print media in shaping or facilitating cultures of migration from the American South as Blacks sought greater opportunities in more northern regions through information they partly received by reading and hearing about content discussed in *Chicago Defender* articles. See James Grossman, *Land of Hope*; Bill Mullen, *Popular Fronts*, Ch 2; Adam Green, *Selling the Race*, Ch. 4; Enoch P. Waters, *American Diary: A Personal History of the Black Press* (Chicago: Path Press, 1989); Ben Burns, *Nitty Gritty: A White Editor in Black Journalism* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1996); Era Bell Thompson, *American Daughter* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1946).

¹⁸⁴ Margaret Taylor Goss, “A Negro Mother Looks at War,” *The Chicago Defender* (National Edition) (August 31, 1940), 13. African American intellectual engagements at both the popular and academic levels with World War II anti-interventionism was more widespread and should be viewed beyond the vacillations of the Communist Left which pivoted around the Nazi-Soviet pact of 1939 - to which they are sometimes erroneously attributed. See Daniel Aldridge III, “A War for the Colored Races: Anti-Interventionism and the African American Intelligentsia, 1939-1941,” *Diplomatic History* 28:3 (June 2004): 321-352. Though it requires further examination

Beyond the nation's preoccupation with the Second World War, *The Defender's* coverage of the ASNLH and Negro History Week events focused on Carter G. Woodson's efforts to promote school textbook reform and influence public school education. A 1936 article of Woodson's suggested that specific units with accompanying textbooks devoted to black history were needed in public school curriculums. Woodson pointed to experiments in Georgia, Texas, and Delaware where full credit courses were first developed for high schools and that such approaches were needed elsewhere in the country. As such, he singled out influential post-secondary institutions for criticism like Columbia, Yale, Harvard and the University of Chicago for not "teaching the Negro except as a problem." The ASNLH clearly viewed competing practitioners of black public history in a suspicious light. Without giving names, a *Defender* editorial in 1940 promoted this view and warned of "bogus literature" being distributed to a "deluded public." These warnings were much like the tone and message of the letters Woodson wrote to Madeline Morgan in 1946 that warned of competing interests who sought to profit (both politically and financially) from Negro History Week celebrations.¹⁸⁵

The ASNLH promoted Woodson's ideas for history week celebrations through Morris Lewis' influence at the *Defender*. In particular over this period, it appraised a new textbook, *The Negro, Too, In American History* by Merl P. Eppse. Published in 1938 through the National Education Publishing Company, *The Negro, Too* placed African American history in the

and substantiation, *The Chicago Defender* did exhibit a militancy during the 1930s and early 1940s especially that made it among the most receptive to left wing perspectives among African American newspapers. See Bill V. Mullen, *Popular Fronts*, 44-74.

¹⁸⁵ "More Teachers, Texts Needed For Growth Of Race History," *The Chicago Defender* (December 28, 1935), 10; "History Groups Warns of Bogus Literature," *The Chicago Defender* (National Edition) (January 27, 1940), 12.

mainstream of conventional U.S. history. It conformed entirely to biracial notions of race relations and emphasized the complementary if unrecognized role that blacks (which it stated came “from a primitive culture in the strange land called Africa”) played in the discovery of the New World through America’s “pioneering” westward expansion. The book also provided appendices on important historical statistics. These statistics included year-by-year lynching cases from the late 19th Century, population numbers that charted urban and rural demographic changes around the country through World War I, and occupational changes within African American communities since Emancipation. *The Defender* promoted the book through advertisements and even offered a coupon that encouraged teacher purchases and stated how hundreds ordered it for use in their classrooms.¹⁸⁶ Through the promotion of Eppse’s book, the *Defender* affirmed the foundational role played by blacks in the making of modern U.S. history just as it allowed for modernist teleologies about racial progress. In an era when the very humanity of African Americans was still fundamentally questioned and rarely recognized in the public sphere, the importance of circulating such assimilationist titles (while surely at least in part promotional and acquisitive in nature) seemed paramount.

The curriculum reforms that Morgan helped promote were never directly implemented and reflect the very precariousness of these forms of knowledge production. For instance, Morgan’s black history curriculum ideas were used only “experimentally” in schools and never fully instituted. These results accorded with Northern public school policies during this period which only nominally opposed segregation, yet allowed widespread white student transfers to outlying suburban schools. Such policies largely limited the movement of black students to better

¹⁸⁶ “Teachers To Use Eppse’s New Book in Observing Negro History Week,” *The Chicago Defender* (National Edition) (January 13, 1940), 7; Merle P. Eppse, *The Negro, Too, In American History* (Chicago: National Education Publishing Company, 1938), ix-xii.

schools in white districts, and chronically underfunded schools in poor areas generally. In 1945, Chicago public school curriculum director Mary Lusson suggested that the social studies units designed by Morgan had been “sandwiched” into general social studies curriculums but only in “appropriate places... naturally, and without undue emphasis.”¹⁸⁷

In this sense, curriculum reform efforts fit squarely with the brevity of government-supported intercultural education movements nationally. For the most part, these intercultural education movements were only momentary in duration. Loosely supported by top officials, they lasted roughly from the mid-late years of World War II.¹⁸⁸ These movements paralleled the positions of various liberal-aligned Chicago Mayor’s Conferences on Race Relations during the 1940s which “verbally committed to the ideal of equality of opportunity for Negroes” and were held in the spirit of “brotherhood.”¹⁸⁹

It is true then, that the reforms proposed by Chicago teachers in the 1940s did not redress the overwhelming deficiencies in social studies curriculums nor did they redress the overall crisis in public school education related to racial discrimination. But the prospect of such reforms demonstrated the degree to which public officials and the teachers who pushed them could use symbolic recognition of cultural and historical achievement by black Americans as indicators of progress towards racial equity. This fact itself marked a significant moment in the circulation and production of important forms of local racial knowledge and helped usher in more expansive repertoires for social change in later decades.

¹⁸⁷ “History Teacher Pioneer to be Honored at Annual Blue Ribbon Tea”; Raymond Nathan, “Classrooms Against Hate,” *Common Sense* 14:9 (October 1945), 7; Madeline R. Morgan, “Chicago School Curriculum Includes Negro Achievements,” 123; “Education: Brown Studies,” *Time Magazine* (Monday, June 21, 1943).

¹⁸⁸ Nicholas V. Montalto, *A History of the Intercultural Education Movement*; Anne Meis Knupfer, *The Chicago Black Renaissance and Women’s Activism*, 79; Julia Mickenberg, *Learning from the Left*, 90-94.

¹⁸⁹ St. Clair Drake and Horace Cayton, *Black Metropolis*, 263-264.

“Many and Varied Contributions”

As noted above, Morgan’s proposals had a much further reach than the staged approval they received from public officials during World War II. Her curriculum units actually became blueprints for the development of educational resources and projects elsewhere. They ultimately received fairly widespread consideration among progressive educators and intellectuals throughout the country and around the world. Within the United States alone, Morgan’s curriculum ideas were appraised sympathetically in *Time Magazine*, *American Unity* magazine, *PM New York* newspaper, *Common Sense*, as well as in the black press and journals such as *The Chicago Defender*, *Negro Digest*, and *The Journal of Negro Education*.¹⁹⁰

A 1943, a *Time Magazine* article characterized Morgan’s units as “unusual,” and fixated on her “handsome” appearance (she was 36 at the time). Despite this fascination with her youthful exoticism, the article offered considerable praise for her intellectual and pedagogical pursuits. It mentioned the first grade unit that focused on a story about the civic virtues of a distinguished “colored” policeman named Billy Glide and also provided tales of African American Pullman porters who were depicted as dignified railroad workers who held positions of respect in black communities nationwide. Second graders looked at the accomplishments of scientist George Washington Carver while a third grade unit looked at Dahomey and the West African ancestry of most U.S. blacks. Fourth graders examined the careers of world-travelling entertainers Marion Anderson and Paul Robeson; fifth graders looked at the life of Chicago’s first settlers Jean Point Baptiste DuSable; while sixth to eighth graders recalled a “Negro captain” named Alonzo Pietro on Columbus’ Niña alongside a brief overview of American

¹⁹⁰ “Informal CV Morris 1964?,” Box 1, Folder 1 Biographical, Stratton Papers, HARSH.

slavery and its abolition. The units ended with a discussion of black military “heroes” from the war of 1812 through the Second World War. *Time* highlighted Morgan’s optimism for the curriculum and the fact that New York school officials demonstrated “interest” in her work as well as U.S. Catholic “pedagogues.”¹⁹¹

From a more internationalist view, the anti-fascist liberal magazine *Common Sense* noted how requests for copies of Morgan’s study units had come from Italy, Africa, and South America as well as throughout the United States. Morgan’s work was praised for being part of a broader movement of pluralist educators during the 1940s who had taken off their “gloves” against racial “intolerance.” Hilda Taba, Director of the National Council for Social Studies Department in New York, approached Morgan about her work and the “problem of inter-racial cooperation.”¹⁹² Morgan’s research was seen by many as a valuable resource, by popular front anti-fascists and mainstream liberals alike through 1945.

Influential Marxist historian Herbert Aptheker heard about Morgan’s curriculum units during World War II after reading the article that mentioned her work in a *Common Sense* article. Aptheker consequently requested information from her for use in his scholarly work. Such correspondence demonstrated intellectual collaborations between African American teachers involved in Chicago’s black cultural front and yet another influential Jewish-American pioneer in the field of African American history. Indeed, Aptheker’s engagement with Black

¹⁹¹ “Education: Brown Studies,” *Time* (Monday 21, 1943)
<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,766766,00.html> (accessed July 15, 2011)

¹⁹² Raymond Nathan presents the Springfield, Massachusetts public school plan as one that offered a pluralist and anti-racist curriculum and one that demonstrated a measure of success in that region during the 1940s when anti-semitic and anti-black race riots were occurring in nearby cities such as Bridgeport and Hartford. See, Raymond Nathan, “Classrooms Against Hate,” 7-8. For more historical assessment of the Springfield plan see, Michael Daryl Scott, “Postwar Pluralism, *Brown v. Board of Education*, and the Origins of Multicultural Education”; Hilda Taba to Madeline R. Morgan, February 7, 1945, Box 2, Folder 1, Stratton Papers, HARSH.

Chicago's cultural milieu during the 1940s was enhanced by the fact he occasionally came from his New York base to lecture directly to Southside audiences. Morgan's correspondence with a figure of stature on the U.S. Left such as Aptheker also reflected the attention given at mid-century by many leftists to children's literature and education. Julia Mickenberg suggests this shift may have been partly because many on the Left were becoming disillusioned with the politics of conventional revolutionary organizations like the CP after the Second World War. Notwithstanding how Cold War repressions and revelations of Soviet atrocity rendered CP appeals unpalatable, as a distinct cultural form, children's literature offered left wing activists a more hopeful, less ideologically-driven medium through which to express pedagogical concerns and ideas.¹⁹³

Indeed, Margaret Burroughs, published her first book of children's literature, *Jasper The Drummin' Boy* in 1947. The book focused on the exploits of its young protagonist, Jasper Anderson, whose infatuation with drumming becomes a trope for engaging youth in a discussion about the contingencies of black identity. His mother first admonishes him for acting out on his "drums" at a piano recital at church after which he is grounded from attending a jazz show at Bronzeville's famous Regal Theater. "You're not an African warrior," she says. "You're an African American." Through a negotiation with his elders, Jasper proves his passion for

¹⁹³ Herbert Aptheker to Madeline Morris [undated], Folder Professional Correspondence, 1940s and 1950s, Stratton Papers, HARSH; Frank Marshall Davis, *Living the Blues: Memoirs of a Black Journalist and Poet* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1993), 290. Much has been written on the influence of Herbert Aptheker on the development of African American historical studies as a discipline and his influence especially on increased interest in Black public history. Aptheker's legacy as a Marxist historian has also received extensive treatment and represents an important point of entry into any discussion about the Communist Party's engagement with Black history as well as Jewish American engagements with civil rights, Black nationalism and the African American liberation struggle. See, Herbert Aptheker, "An Autobiographical Note," 147-150; Herbert Aptheker and Robin D.G. Kelley, "Interview of Herbert Aptheker," 151-167; Robin D.G. Kelley, "Afterward," 168-171; Herbert Shapiro, ed. *African American History and Radical Historiography*; Alan Wald, "Narrating Nationalisms: Black Marxism and Jewish Communists Through the Eyes of Harold Cruse," James Smethurst and Bill V. Mullen, eds., *Left of the Color Line: Race, Radicalism, and Twentieth-Century Literature of the United States* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 141-162; Julia L. Mickenberg, *Learning from the Left*, 6.

drumming and connects to a worldly, if essential, notion of wishing he “was an African drummer... and [that he could] send messages all over Africa.” He aspires to be like Barzillai Lew, a drummer and soldier who fought for the American revolutionary cause and to be like his grandfather Anderson, who played in the fictional “Duke Oliver” Windy City Band. Jasper also strives to be a “great drummer” like the fictional Chicago jazz-man “Stomp King” and to be heard in the annual Southside community festival: the Bud Billiken parade.¹⁹⁴ As a teacher, Burroughs’s mapping of local, national, and worldly imaginaries through the story of *Jasper* stands as an important pedagogical statement from the Cold War era. The book portrayed complex African American cultural and political themes in a positive frame at a time when few similarly designed forms of children’s literature circulated this way.

Experiments in pedagogy and race relations on the Left went well beyond children’s literature during this period. In the spirit of progressive educational techniques, alternative forms of popular education were implemented during the 1930s and 1940s. These ranged across many political and religious modalities. Most of these experiments, however, were nominally left wing or liberal in orientation.

Chicago had its equivalent of the Communist Party-founded New York-based Jefferson School of Social Sciences in the Abraham Lincoln School. It was called the Abraham Lincoln School and was founded in 1943 by William Patterson. The School was a collaboration between Patterson and various Chicago-based liberal educators and philanthropists like Maudelle Bousfield and prominent businessmen who supported New Deal liberalism, such as department store magnate Marshall Field, stock broker Si Wexler, and interior decorator Clara Taylor. These

¹⁹⁴ Margaret Taylor Burroughs, *Jasper the Drummin’ Boy* (Chicago: Follett, 1947 [1970]), 22-24.

high-heeled figures helped secure the school's location at the top of an office building in the downtown Loop. An afterthought of the popular front coalition from earlier years and very short-lived given the strictures of Cold War America, it was actually only fully active for three years - from 1943-1946. The school nonetheless brought together a significant cohort of Chicago cultural workers with broad social justice visions for its program – styled after the whiggish legacies of its namesake. Patterson noted how he had been inspired to form the school after “listening” to the discussions of itinerant preachers, workers, and political radicals in Washington Park. As such, he wanted to establish “a broad, nonpartisan school for workers, writers and their sympathizers.” In the style of many contemporary left-wing labor and political organizers from his generation, Patterson felt that African American migrants fleeing oppressions in the rural south and Europeans who fled religious and economic persecution could find common interracial ground in schools geared towards “worker education.”¹⁹⁵ At the same time, Patterson emphasized that “[a]bove all... the many and varied contributions of black Americans to the economic, political, artistic and social life” of the U.S. “had to be uncovered.”¹⁹⁶

The school stands as a significant legacy of Chicago's popular front with its open collaboration of leftists, liberals, and business leaders.¹⁹⁷ Located at 30 West Washington Street,

¹⁹⁵ All these groups made up Chicago's historic ethnic enclaves and much of the rank and file in the city's basic industries through the 1940s.

¹⁹⁶The school stands as a significant legacy of Chicago's popular front with its open collaboration of leftists, liberals, and business leaders. See William L. Patterson, *The Man Who Cried Genocide*, 149-155.

¹⁹⁷ This educational effort in particular illustrates how a significant current of Black Chicago's cultural politics during the 1940s represented an uneasy merger between a popular front-style leftism rooted in Chicago's radical and working class political traditions with new, highly differentiated entrepreneurial and professional classes who emerged from changing African American religious, business and community networks. The notion of a merger between popular front and a black entrepreneurialism builds on the scholarship of Bill V. Mullen and Christopher Reed. Bill V. Mullen, *Popular Fronts*, 9; Christopher Reed, *The Chicago NAACP*. Such tensions among professional classes echoed an earlier division among Black Chicago's business elites during the First Great

the Abraham Lincoln School offered “low-tuition night courses, extension courses in factories and lectures.” Associated Negro Press editor, poet and left nationalist, Frank Marshall Davis, taught histories of jazz for the school. Other teachers included midwestern white novelist Jack Conroy, who taught courses on creative writing and numerous guest lectures given by acclaimed Chicago writers and bohemian literati such as Willard Motley, Nelson Algren, Arna Bontemps, and Richard Wright. The school’s first director was British-born A.D. Winspear, an Oxford-educated scholar of Greek history. The board of directors came from the “ranks of labor, the middle class, the black nationalists, and somehow they found in one or another... a common interest.” Patterson described classes he taught on “Hitler racism,” European imperialism, white supremacy and anti-Semitism in the United States, and emphasized “the fact that these were twin evils.” In 1943, writer Langston Hughes opined that if he “had a kid” he would send them “neither to Howard nor Harvard” but rather to a “workers’ school like the School for Democracy in New York [also known as the Jefferson School for Social Science] or the Abraham Lincoln School in Chicago.” With the onset of the early Cold War in the late 1940s, many of the schools erstwhile liberal supporters backed away from its upkeep, and it ceased operating regularly after 1948. Nonetheless, Patterson noted in his autobiography that he “never enjoyed any experience more than the building of the Abraham Lincoln School.”¹⁹⁸

Migration era (1910s to 1920s) who did not necessarily ascribe to an integrationism or an accommodationism to traditional uplift strategies. These elites ultimately favored the growth of institutional “black self-sufficiency.” See Allan Spear, *Black Chicago*, 226.

¹⁹⁸ William L Patterson, *The Man Who Cried Genocide*, 149-155; Douglas Wixson, *Worker-Writer in America*, 454; Frank Marshall Davis, *Living the Blues*, 283, xxii; “Abe Lincoln School Plans to Continue,” *Chicago Daily Tribune* (December 6, 1947), 13; “Him They Can Have,” *Chicago Daily Tribune* (April 21, 1948), 20; “Paul Robeson at Chicago War Plant,” *The Chicago Defender* (August 7, 1943), 20; Langston Hughes, “Here to Yonder,” *The Chicago Defender* (National Edition) (October 30, 1943), 14. For a treatment of the Jefferson school in New York, see Marvin E. Gettleman, “‘No Varsity Teams’: New York’s Jefferson School of Social Science, 1943-1956,” *Science & Society* 66:3 (Fall 2002): 336-359. Chapter 3 of this dissertation focuses more fully on the legacy and

Even more significant for the history of Chicago's South side and left cultural politics, William Patterson's wife, Louise Thompson undertook the organization of "DuSable" Lodge 751 of the International Workers Order (IWO). Later known as the DuSable Community Center through the late 1940s, in Chicago, the IWO became a significant cultural front organization during the World War II years. Like the Southside Community Art Center, the IWO/DuSable center was a site where numerous left wing figures (notably black artists like Elizabeth Catlett and Margaret Burroughs) came to organize art and writing workshops for Southside youth and where important progressive white artists with national reputations like Rockwell Kent came and spoke. The community center occupied the old Bacon's Casino building at 49th and South Wabash - just a block north from DuSable High School. Previously it had been a dance hall and thus already a prolific cultural site. Historian Erik McDuffie notes how the "DuSable" Lodge thrived under Thompson's directorship "as a bustling black political and cultural community center." The lodge reached over 1000 members by the end of the war years and also ran membership drives through other local community center's like Ida B. Wells.¹⁹⁹

Not unlike the Communists, U.S. Catholics were interested in worker education but from a differing ideological perspective that was more in line with the country's Cold War prerogatives. A school was opened in Chicago called the Sheil School of Social Studies, named after one of the city's few liberal bishops: Bernard Sheil (mentioned above). During World War II, Sheil House (named after Bernard) had an enrollment of nearly seventy-five per cent women.

history of worker education in Chicago as it pertained to race and class issues (with a special focus on the centrality of the United Packinghouse Workers' efforts in these areas.

¹⁹⁹ Erik McDuffie also notes how the IWO nationwide had nearly 85,000 members through 1947 "at its height." See Erik McDuffie, *Sojourning for Freedom*, 138-140; "Rockwell Kent, Noted Artist, IWO Speaker," *The Chicago Defender* (National Edition) (December 30, 1944), 17A.

It also focused on recognizing U.S. citizenship for the wartime services of African Americans. Teachers at Sheil House included black catholic labor organizer John Yancey, and one course in 1944 featured the services of Harlem Renaissance luminary Claude McKay. Public school teacher Madeline Morgan [Stratton] also taught African American history courses there which carried titles such as “The Negro in America,” “History of the Negro People,” “American Negro Literature,” and “The History of Race Prejudice in America.” As historian Timothy Neary notes, the school continued into the early 1950s. However, Sheil’s brand of Catholic New Deal liberalism increasingly “isolated” the bishop and his educational efforts from the mainstream of the mainly conservative Catholic Church throughout the Cold War era.²⁰⁰

Beyond Catholics, a small group of University of Chicago students (white and black) became pacifists during this period through a Methodist religious grouping established in the early 1940s called the Fellowship of Reconciliation. This group of course evolved more famously into the Congress on Racial Equality (CORE). CORE’s activities consisted of small non-violent civil disobedience against Hyde Park gentrification and the segregation of local roller rinks and recreation areas. While its nucleus would grow into the nationally significant organization of the late 1950s and 1960s, its initial small membership and the fact that some members were ambivalent about independent black political and cultural initiatives limited its early impact. For instance, one of its founding members, Bernice Fisher, was a white divinity student at the University of Chicago. She opposed African American “bloc voting” and felt that Negro History Week was “mere chauvinism.” On the other hand, Fisher defended A. Phillip Randolph’s March on Washington Movement. As such, these perspectives were certainly

²⁰⁰ Timothy Neary, “Crossing Parochial Boundaries,” 246-248.

nuanced and reflected ambiguous (if limited) understandings of black politics by well-meaning white liberals.²⁰¹

Other pedagogical institutions developed independently of public schools during this period as well. Led by African American teachers, these institutions focused mostly on school-aged children. For example, the Howalton Summer School was established in 1946 at the Michigan Boulevard Garden Apartments by a group of African American teachers who had complained but received no response from Mayor Kelly about the conditions of many Southside grammar schools. The school served “graduates” of a nursery school on the Boulevard and went from kindergarten to eighth grade.²⁰² The Abraham Lincoln Center in Kenwood (which continues to function) was founded in 1905 and run by Unitarian ministers and teachers.²⁰³ It became a significant Southside hub for extra-curricular activities such as dance classes, drama, and art education – especially after the neighborhood became predominantly African American through the 1910s and 1920s. In the early 1940s, the center hosted numerous receptions for figures like Langston Hughes (1940) and W.E.B. DuBois (1941). Then a professor of sociology at Atlanta University, DuBois gave a lecture there that focused on the history of slavery’s abolition in the United States that had failed to usher in an “era of economic opportunity” for blacks. DuBois prophetically emphasized that any wartime peace arrangements had to “take into

²⁰¹ August Meier and Elliott Rudwick, *CORE: A Study in the Civil Rights Movement, 1942-1968* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1975), 3-5; “CORE Maps Out Summer Campaign Against Bias,” *The Chicago Defender* (National Edition) (April 27, 1946), 3.

²⁰² Anne Meis Knupfer, *The Chicago Black Renaissance and Women’s Activism*, 83.

²⁰³ Today it is called the Carruthers Center for Inner City Studies and is a campus of Northeastern Illinois University.

consideration the economic as well as political rights of the darker races” or else risk future wars.²⁰⁴

A key institution that became a site for the proliferation black public history and a strategic resource especially for local researchers throughout the Chicago Renaissance period (1930s to 1950s) was the George Cleveland Hall Branch Library. The library was located only a few blocks from the famous intersection of 47th and South Parkway, the symbolic cultural epicenter of Black Chicago through mid-Century. Horace Cayton and St. Clair Drake noted how if you were “trying to find a certain Negro in Chicago” during this period, you stood “on the corner of 47th and Park long enough” and you were “bound to see him.”²⁰⁵ Madeline Morgan would spend many nights and weekends at the Hall Branch Library over the year and a half she devoted to her early curriculum reform projects. Several scholars have demonstrated how the Hall Branch library became a major mid-western repository for African American history and culture - much like the Schomburg library was for New York City.²⁰⁶

Morgan was far from alone as she did this kind of work in the library. The head librarian, Vivian G. Harsh, and its children’s librarian, Charlamae Rollins, spent many years from the early 1930s building branch holdings through travels mostly in the U.S. South. Together, Rollins and Harsh helped organize local study, storytelling, and drama groups and programs for a range of ages. Harsh was also on the ASNLH’s local Negro History Week committees while Rollins

²⁰⁴ “DuBois Says Peace Terms Must Include Dark Races,” *The Chicago Defender* (April 26, 1941), 6; “Will Honor Play-Wright at Reception,” *The Chicago Defender* (October 5, 1940), 5; “It Grew Up With Defender: Lincoln Center,” *The Chicago Defender* (August 13, 1955), 4A.

²⁰⁵ Horace Cayton and St. Clair Drake, *Black Metropolis*, 379-380. Originally called Grand Boulevard, South Parkway is now called Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive.

²⁰⁶ Anne Meis Knupfer, *The Chicago Black Renaissance and Women’s Activism*; Bill Mullen, *Popular Fronts*; Julia Mickenberg, *Learning from the Left*, 102.

became a member of the Progressive Librarians Council (PLC). Under the auspices of the PLC, Rollins began a letter writing campaign in 1941 to book publishers to raise awareness about the lack of available literatures that spoke to “the experiences of African American children” – a campaign that resulted in an annotated book project called *We Build Together*. Historian Julia Mickenberg notes how *We Build Together* was “one of the earliest guides to books about African American children.”²⁰⁷ Together, Rollins and Harsh fostered a supportive and flourishing research environment for a teacher like Morgan to carry out her curriculum project.

Numerous Chicagoans utilized the Hall Branch library as an important site for developing innovative knowledge projects. *Chicago Defender* writer Richard Durham researched and wrote much of the content for his historical radio dramas at the library, namely: “Democracy U.S.A.” and “Destination Freedom.” These plays featured vignettes of African American figures in history and underscored histories of racial discrimination. They aired on a local NBC affiliate as well as at the University of Chicago radio station during the late 1940s. One successful local African American book-seller interviewed by Richard Durham in the mid-1940s noted how he and his wife had donated a collection of books on African Americans to the Hall Branch library. They envisioned the Hall library’s holdings as a rival of the “famous” Schomburg Library in New York.²⁰⁸ In his autobiographical history of a career in black journalism, *Chicago Defender*

²⁰⁷ The Progressive Librarians Council had been formed in 1939 by Librarians on the Left and fought segregation in public libraries throughout the U.S. It cooperated with organized labor, and promoted the acquisition of materials about labor issues and civil rights. See Julia Mickenberg, *Learning from the Left*, 101-102; Charlaemae Rollins ed., *We Build Together: A Reader’s Guide to Negro Life and Literature for Elementary and High School Use* (Champaign: National Council of Teachers of English, 1941 [1967]); “Committee Ready for Historians.”

²⁰⁸ Barbara Savage, *Broadcasting Freedom: Radio, War, and the Politics of Race* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 260-270; Richard Durham, “Biggest Text Book Buyer Never Got To College,” *The Chicago Defender* (National Edition) (July 22, 1944), 2; Allyson Hobbs, “Biographical Note,” Guide to the Richard Durham Papers, 1939 – 1999, <http://mts.lib.uchicago.edu/collections/findingaids/index.php?eadid=MTS.durham> (accessed July 2, 2011); J. Fred MacDonald, “Radio’s Black Heritage: Destination Freedom, 1948-1950,” *Phylon* 39:1 (First Quarter, 1978): 66-73.

beat writer Enoch Waters related how the library was an “invaluable resource” for his research while he worked for the paper during the 1930s and 1940s.²⁰⁹ Overall, the Cleveland-Hall Branch library played a crucial role as knowledge repository for African Americans involved in Chicago’s cultural renaissance for the entire mid-Century period.

As a nexus for creative projects, Black Chicago’s knowledge repositories became important sites for public discussions about histories of racial slavery and discrimination. As such, it is important to underscore how this period also marked the beginnings of revision to histories of America’s “peculiar institutions” in formal scholarly settings.

Morgan’s curriculum units envisioned a comprehensive treatment of the African American past distilled to an elementary level and, as such, certainly reflected these new revisions. For example, Morgan’s grade seven unit reflected new studies and approaches to histories of American slavery (now classic ones) pioneered by the likes of Herbert Aptheker and W.E.B. DuBois. These scholars’ collective works on slavery and Reconstruction emphasized the agency of African American slaves in the making of their own freedoms during both the Revolutionary and Civil War eras (18th and 19th Centuries especially).²¹⁰ While presented in heroic and teleological terms, Morgan’s units offered biographical treatments of freedmen who

²⁰⁹ Enoch P. Waters, *American Diary: A Personal History of the Black Press* (Chicago: Path Press, 1987), 267.

²¹⁰ The work of W.E.B. DuBois on Reconstruction as well as Herbert Aptheker’s document-rich though embellished account of American slave rebellions were far from the mainstream of American academe in their time. Historian Robin Kelley writes that he himself had trouble getting his academic supervisors to consider figures like Aptheker and DuBois in graduate studies he took during the 1980s when African American studies had supposedly already “made it” as a major subfield of American history. See, Robin D.G. Kelley, “Afterward,” 168-169. Among the many classic works by DuBois and Aptheker (who themselves collaborated on numerous occasions, including Aptheker’s own role as one of the chief executors of DuBois’ papers) two of the most notable are: W.E.B. DuBois, *Black Reconstruction: An essay toward a history of the part which black folk played in the attempt to reconstruct democracy in America, 1860-1880* (New York: International Publishers, 1935); Herbert Aptheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1943). For an appraisal of the Dunning school in American historiography, see Philip R. Muller, “Look Back Without Anger: A Reappraisal of William A. Dunning,” *The Journal of American History* 61, No. 2 (Sep., 1974), 325-338.

became republican soldiers during the revolutionary wars. Figures like Boston's Crispus Attucks or leaders of slave insurrections and plots like Gabriel Prosser, Denmark Vesey and Nat Turner in South Carolina and Virginia or familiar abolitionists like Douglass and Truth. These biographies were presented in narrative forms as "thrilling and stirring stories" as methods to engage younger audiences. Thus, the imperative of presenting usable pasts through civics curriculums surely informed Morgan's treatment of Reconstruction and its aftermath. Her units also focused on late 19th and 20th race leadership under Jim Crow exemplified by figures like Booker T. Washington. She followed this with appraisals of civic and intellectual leaders from mid-20th Century African American public life, namely Mary Mcleod Bethune of the National Association of Colored Women, Mordecai Johnson and Alain Locke at Howard University, and other pioneer scholars and cultural luminaries such as W.E.B DuBois, Carter G. Woodson, and Henry Osawa Tanner. While certainly not the most erudite of scholarly approaches to the construction of historical narrative, it bears recalling how it was completed in an era when the Plantation School of U.S. and Southern history still dominated conventional understandings of racial slavery and Reconstruction. Approaches to U.S. history, even in the 1940s, generally treated black Americans as subhuman, static subjects. The effort to simply circulate positive portrayals of freedmen, slaves, and abolitionists through this period – especially through public school curriculums - was still an extremely tenuous and thus important task.²¹¹

Chicago Schools

The proximity of Black Chicago's cultural renaissance to scholarly communities on the cutting edge of approaches to the study of social science and race in the United States needs to be

²¹¹ Madeline R. Morgan, "Chicago School Curriculum Includes Negro Achievement," 123.

emphasized in light of any assessment of racial knowledge production at mid-century. Nathan Glazer has characterized this intellectual era nostalgically as the “golden age” of American sociology.²¹² Many cultural pluralist models devised in this “age” focused on North American cities and constituted a mostly liberal response to the movement of over two million Southern migrants during the 1940s. This process was especially evident in Chicago during the 1940s when the city’s black population expanded and when Southern migrants fleeing southern hardships sought jobs and opportunities, often in Northern urban centers. A city like Chicago had also long been the “symbolic” industrial laboratory for government and business leaders to test and workout theories that would champion visions for a supposedly “democratic civilization.”²¹³

A significant number of black Chicagoans became keen observers of the rapid demographic changes taking place in the city and the related perceptions that Southern migrants sought to achieve “modernity” through the supposedly civilizing industrial metropolis. They subsequently became involved with “race relations” projects that sought to remedy the social dislocations and changes they observed. Much like the bohemians, cultural workers, and artists who created the New Negro cultural movements of the 1920s in New York and elsewhere, many black scholars from this period (to invoke the incisive terms of Davarian H. Baldwin): “took advantage of [their often] precarious” positions “as white objects, to create a multitude of...

²¹² Nathan Glazer, “Foreword” in E. Franklin Frazier, *The Negro Family in the United States, Revised and Abridged Edition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966 [1939, 1948]), vii.

²¹³ Jeffrey Helgeson, *Striving in Black Chicago: Migration, Work, and the Politics of Neighborhood Change, 1935-1965*,” (PhD Dissertation, University of Illinois – Chicago 2008); James Grossman, *Land of Hope*; Arnold Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto*; Horace Cayton and St. Clair Drake, *Black Metropolis*, 12; Paul Street, *Racial Oppression in the Global Metropolis: A Living Black Chicago History* (Plymouth: Rowman, 2007), 98. World War II era migrants to Chicago by 1960 (including its growing West Side neighborhoods) had grown the African American sections to the equivalent of the nineteenth century’s largest U.S. city and the second “largest Negro city in the world.” See *Black Metropolis*, 12; Davarian Baldwin, “Black Belts and Ivory Towers,” 401.

[s]ubjectivities rife with both primitive stereotypes and modern innovations.”²¹⁴ In this way, as the ultimate participant observers for a watershed moment of social change in U.S. history approaching mid-Century, black scholars and intellectuals placed themselves at the strategic forefront of knowledge production about racial identity in the social sciences.

Chicago-based African American educators and researchers (all cultural workers of a sort) engaged closely with scholarly trends despite their work on the margins of mainstream academe. Much of their work, such as E. Franklin Frazier’s now highly scrutinized research on the urban black family nonetheless proved foundational to the parameters of racial liberalism and the languages deployed in debates over urban pathologies and assessments of “progress” for racial “underclasses” in the United States over the next half century.²¹⁵ Frazier’s efforts were also part of a new wave of liberal “race relations” projects focused on America’s ethno/racial “problems” funded by consortiums of white state, philanthropic foundation, and academic officialdom - the most famous of which was the massive Carnegie foundation-commissioned study authored by Swedish social scientist, Gunnar Myrdal, and aptly entitled: *An American Dilemma*.²¹⁶ Scholars of U.S. race relations now agree that black intellectuals from this era

²¹⁴ Davarian Baldwin, “Black Belts and Ivory Towers,” 422.

²¹⁵ E. Franklin Frazier, *The Negro Family in the United States*. After his studies at the University of Chicago, Frazier would join an esteemed and foundational group at the historically black Howard University, which included Ralph Bunche in political science, Doxey Wilkerson in education; Eric Williams in history; and Alain Locke in philosophy. See St. Clair Drake, “Studies of the African Diaspora: The Work and Reflections of St. Clair Drake” in Benjamin P. Bowser and Louis Kushnick with Paul Grant, eds., *Against the Odds: Scholars Who Challenged Racism in the Twentieth Century* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2002), 90.

²¹⁶ For a useful case study of how African American activists operated with government administrators to promote Black public history projects as forms of civil rights under the auspices of the Works Progress Administration, see Lauren R. Sklaroff, *Black Culture and the New Deal*. Excellent critical and historical studies of the racial liberal “cultural” paradigm that emerged from the 1930s and 1940s and rooted mainly in the social scientific models of urban research fostered through by institutions like the University of Chicago’s School of Sociology can be found in Stephen Steinberg, *Turning Back: The Retreat from Racial Justice in American Thought and Policy* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2001); Stephen Steinberg, *Race Relations: A Critique* (Stanford University Press, 2007); David Roediger, “The Retreat from Race and Class,” *Monthly Review* 58:3 (July/August 2006): 40-51; Nikhil Pal Singh, *Black is a Country*, Ch 1.

consciously engaged with white mentors/supervisors and collaborators on these projects to in fact bring “new eyes to the study of race.”²¹⁷

Recent scholarship has begun to rethink the critical intellectual contributions of black sociologists like Charles Johnson, E. Franklin Frazier, Ralph Bunche, Oliver Cromwell Cox and of course, W.E.B. DuBois (among others) to the intellectual histories of cultural pluralism in the United States. Each of these figures had varying degrees of engagement with Chicago school sociology; Johnson, Frazier, and Bunche were willing pupils, while DuBois’ work arguably predated and was conspicuously absent from association with University of Chicago projects. Each of these figures undertook diverse activist commitments to cultural pluralism and Marxist thought respectively. Oliver Cromwell Cox’s work on caste and class stands as the most critical of the Gunnar Myrdalian framework for racial liberalism and, by extension, the long intellectual shadow of Chicago School Sociology founder and figurehead: Robert Park.²¹⁸

A Windy City-based extension of this intellectual genealogy through the 1930s and 1940s featured younger sociologists doing graduate work at the University of Chicago like St. Clair Drake and Horace Cayton (who co-authored the famous community study: *Black Metropolis*). Their milieu also included anthropologists working closely with the diasporic and African

²¹⁷ Indeed, the numerous studies that comprised the entirety of Myrdal’s research included many authored and carried out by African American social scientists who would lead diverse professional paths. For example, Ralph Bunche would work for the State Department while James Jackson would lead sections of the American Community Party. See Davarian Baldwin, “Black Belts and Ivory Towers,” 418. See also, Stephen Steinberg, *Race Relations: A Critique* (Stanford: University of California Press, 2007), 61-72; St. Clair Drake, “Studies of the African Diaspora: The Work and Reflections of St. Clair Drake” in Benjamin P. Bowser and Louis Kushnick with Paul Grant, eds., *Against the Odds: Scholars Who Challenged Racism in the Twentieth Century* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2002), 87.

²¹⁸ See Anthony Q. Cheeseboro, “Conflict and Continuity: E. Franklin Frazier, Oliver C. Cox, and the Chicago School of Sociology,” *The Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* 92:2 (Summer 1999): 150-172; Nikhil Pal Singh, “Culture/Wars,” 477-478; Nikhil Pal Singh, *Black is a Country*, 41-42; Stephen Steinberg, *Turning Back*, 44-45; Davarian Baldwin, “Black Belts and Ivory Towers,” 397-450.

survival models espoused by Melville Herskovitz at nearby Northwestern University. One of Herskovitz' protégés included the acclaimed dance choreographer, Katherine Dunham, whose studies under the Northwestern scholar were diverse but largely unrecognized. Dunham researched Haïtian and Jamaican folk culture which she later incorporated into her dance choreography but also (at the behest of Herskovitz) conducted one of the earliest field studies of the Temple of Islam in Chicago before the Temple became popularly known as the Nation of Islam and a fixture of black nationalism on the Southside through the 1950s. Other extensions of this genealogy included writers like Arna Bontemps and white midwestern radical writer Jack Conroy. All were employed in Works Progress Administration (WPA) writing projects during the New Deal and often worked with interracial groups of writers under the auspices of the regional WPA-affiliated Illinois Writers Project. Published in the same year as *Black Metropolis* in 1945, Bontemps and Conroy's *They Seek a City* was based on their WPA writings and represented an early attempt to trace the experiences of Chicago's newest African American migrants from the South. The book utilized the findings of Dunham's study of black Muslim "cults" in the city and highlighted the pioneering exploits of mixed race figures in Chicago like Jean Point Baptiste DuSable and frontier episodes with American Indians and Mexicans in the opening of mid-western "mudtowns" like Chicago.²¹⁹

Each of these texts engaged in discussions that sought to redress widespread public perceptions that African and Latin American peoples were static and "backward" by nature. Indeed, *The Defender* advertised the books alongside other popular and similarly-themed titles

²¹⁹ Anne Meis Knupfer, *Chicago's Black Renaissance and Women's Activism*, 17, 57; Arna Bontemps and Jack Conroy, *They Seek a City* (New York: Doubleday, 1945), 177-184; Douglas Wixson, *Worker-Writer in America: Jack Conroy and the Tradition of Midwestern Literary Radicalism, 1898-1990* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 445-449.

that aligned with New Deal liberalism, anti-colonialism, and (to borrow from the hopeful title of a book authored by Roi Ottley) the New-World-a-Coming anticipated by many striving African Americans in this period.²²⁰ As such, ambitious texts like *Black Metropolis* and the more literary *They Seek a City* were part of a catalogue of presentist scholarly and popular writings produced over the same period that promoted “venerable” black pasts alongside “living” cultures and that advanced appeals to racial equality even as they risked essentializing black identities. As historian Daryl Michael Scott notes: “the dominant strand of thought within the social science community [from the 1930s and 1940s] held that blacks lacked a distinctive culture, black intellectuals and the rapidly expanding black middle class were moving in the opposite direction.”²²¹

To be sure, black intellectuals like Drake, Cayton, Frazier and many others were also part of a generation of American scholars imbued with what Nathan Glazer called a “radical” desire to positively change the social position of the majority of African Americans.²²² As St. Clair Drake noted, by the 1930s, he did not “know any black social scientist who privately or publicly” did not “claim to be some kind of Marxist.”²²³ Also, many academic mentorships and relationships were complicated by racial patronage. The most significant ones in Chicago included the one between Herskovitz and Dunham (Dunham eventually dropped her graduate

²²⁰ “World’s History Book Outlet on 600,000,000 colored people,” *The Chicago Defender* (August 11, 1945), 5; “These Books are Available at The Studio Bookshop,” *The Chicago Defender* (February 2, 1946), 8.

²²¹ Daryl Michael Scott suggests that an important current of post-war pluralism extended from these kinds of projects and were accepted by African American leaders, especially during the civil rights upsurges of the 1950s. as a “therapeutic approach to race relations.” As such, organizations like the Southern Christian Leadership Conference employed intercultural educators like Rachel DuBois. See, Daryl Michael Scott, “Postwar Pluralism,” 76-77.

²²² Nathan Glazer, “Foreword” in E. Franklin Frazier, *The Negro Family in the United States*, xi

²²³ Quoted in Nikhil Pal Singh, *Black is a Country*, 89-90.

study and pursued a career in dance in New York). Others included the projects supervised by the likes of Ernest Burgess, W. Lloyd Warner, Louis Wirth, and Everett Hughes at the University of Chicago, namely the early work of St. Clair Drake and Horace Cayton. Still, others were spirited and open academic quarrels, especially between contemporaries. The most famous of these was the debate between Melville Herskovitz and E. Franklin Frazier about African survivals (Herskovitz) versus the degradation and violent break caused by racial slavery (Frazier).²²⁴

Black Metropolis remains the signal ethnography of Chicago's African American community in the 1930s and 1940s and is arguably the most ambitious and important urban community study ever completed in the United States. Based on research conducted in the late 1930s, it evolved from a University of Chicago, WPA, and foundation-funded research project designed to investigate urban youth delinquency. To be sure, with its comprehensive statistical analyses of Southside community life (for instance, it utilized social club and church membership lists to analyze intraracial class relations) and its over 25,000 interview subjects, *Black Metropolis* rearticulated and constituted a passionate affirmation of African American

²²⁴ The latter debate was essentially between a cultural relativism and a greater attention to objective social conditions caused by racial slavery and its hemispheric legacies. Many of these scholars shifted their views over time based on where and what they studied and increased their overall attention to comparative methods. For example, Frazier and Drake completed anthropological work in West Africa during the 1950s that muted their earlier contention that rural southern "folkways" had fully replaced Africanisms. Conversely, by the time Herskovitz published the *Myth of the Negro Past* in 1958, the founder of Northwestern's Africana research collection had moved beyond seeking concrete "loci" for culture and offered more subtle observations of Africanisms, such as "body movement" and diffuse "family traditions." See, "Part III: The African Diaspora and Cultural Survivals: The Frazier-Herskovitz Debate," Pierre van den Berghe, ed. *Intergroup Relations: Sociological Perspectives*, (New York: Basic Books, 1972), 103-136; Melville J. Herskovitz, *The Myth of the Negro Past* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1958 [1941]); St. Clair Drake, "Studies of the African Diaspora," 100. For a useful film documentary on the life and work of Melville Herskovitz which roots his politics in strong traditions of Jewish progressivism in New York, see *Herskovits at the Heart of Darkness* (San Francisco: California Newsreel, 2009). For more on St. Clair Drake's intellectual trajectory from his college years which included close engagements with Quaker passivism, Neibuhrian utopianism, Marxism, the prophetic traditions of southern African American folkways, and the understudied influences of black anthropologist Allison Davis (an underappreciated colleague of W. Lloyd Warner's), see St. Clair Drake, "Studies of the African Diaspora," 88-91.

rights. It certainly utilized many of the same liberal social scientific techniques that went into the completion of Myrdal's *American Dilemma*.²²⁵ By Drake's own admission, the study was also "biased toward the [black] middle class" since it did little to probe (for example) the "disrespectable" behaviors of male clubs and fraternities while it scrutinized the intimate details of domestic life among its working class subjects.²²⁶

Nonetheless, the *Black Metropolis* study was conducted through black idioms for political and social inquiry. It was widely circulated and discussed after its publication through local and regional networks of community action in churches and recreation centers. In an address to the Parkway Community House Forum reported in *The Chicago Defender*, Cayton underscored the need for African Americans to be made aware of the "psychological" scars created by ghetto conditions and job ceilings before actions on those issues could be taken. He also emphasized how *Black Metropolis*' readability could best illustrate to local audiences how collective "subordination" was imprinted on both their "personality" and their "environment." Such psycho-social and environmentalist approaches to urban study certainly conformed with academic trends during the 1940s. Still, Cayton confided in his audience that their sponsors (the New Deal-funded Institute of Juvenile Delinquency) had not been "sure of what" he, Drake and their white University of Chicago sponsor (W. Lloyd Warner) "were trying to do." Indeed, in his autobiography, Cayton noted that he and Warner had originally envisioned a project far more "complex" and "sophisticated" than they revealed in proposals to prospective funding agencies. They eventually settled on "juvenile delinquency" as a strategic characterization for their proposed research. From this "authorization" they proceeded "to study the entire social structure

²²⁵ St. Clair Drake contributed a study to *American Dilemma* on African American voluntary associations and churches in the urban North. See St. Clair Drake, "Studies of the African Diaspora," 96.

²²⁶ *Ibid.*, 95.

of the Negro community and its relationship to the rest of Chicago.”²²⁷ The book’s very structure spoke to the subtle methods used by scholars like Cayton and Drake to dissimulate from their white collaborators at the University of Chicago, notably the placement of Warner’s forward at the back of a nearly 800-page volume.²²⁸

While Cayton and Drake collaborated with Warner to fund the project through the WPA, *Black Metropolis* still suffered for lack of resources. So Cayton (who managed fundraising for the project) sought support from local policy businessmen (described as “shaddies” in *Black Metropolis*) to finance some of the rental space for the project’s research.²²⁹ Overall, it was a project that bridged the worlds of the Ivory Tower with fullness of life in the black belt.

Horace Cayton and St. Claire Drake also worked to frame *Black Metropolis* as part of a more cosmopolitan structure of feeling that comprehensively treated the social and cultural history of Black Chicago from the 19th Century through World War II. Such cosmopolitanism emphasized both local community solidarity and how U.S. Blacks were more “international-minded.” In this view, blacks were more cognizant of colonial and global conflicts that had taken place (and were still taking place) in Africa in light of their own experiences with failed U.S. promises for universal rights and the realities of domestic racial apartheid and its varying regional manifestations.²³⁰ Horace Cayton spoke of these themes at a Negro History Week

²²⁷ Horace Cayton, *Long Old Road*, 237.

²²⁸ W. Lloyd Warner, “A Methodological Note” in St. Clair Drake and Horace Cayton, *Black Metropolis*, 769-782; John Bracey, “How and Why the Famous Book *Black Metropolis* Was Written: The Behind the Scenes Story,” (unpublished lecture, NEIU Carruthers Center for Inner-City Studies, Chicago, Illinois, March 13, 2910); St. Clair Drake, “Studies of the African Diaspora,” 94.

²²⁹ St. Clair Drake, “Studies of the African Diaspora,” 94.

²³⁰ “[I]nternational-minded” is quoted from Nikhil Pal Singh, *Black is a Country*, 109-118, 133; Horace Cayton, *Long Old Road* (New York: Trident, 1965), 237.

symposium that stressed the “hemispheric importance of negro solidarity” organized by DuSable High school history teacher Samuel Stratton in 1942. In that same year, teachers at Douglas Elementary on the Southside sent their Negro History Week exhibits to Belize and Honduras.²³¹

After its publication, Cayton used *Black Metropolis* in community lectures given under the auspices of his directorship at the Parkway Community House (PCH) - formerly the Church of the Good Shepherd. The PCH was a vital Southside institution of the New Deal period founded through a combination of New Deal patronage, white religious, and foundation philanthropy. The House hosted regular educational events for a wide segment of Southsiders from school children to steel workers. Unlike Cayton, who moved to New York in the 1960s and retired from public life due to mental illness, Drake continued on in academics and landed a job as an instructor at Roosevelt College in 1946.²³² Drake also later worked to oppose the University of Chicago’s urban renewal schemes in Hyde Park during parts of 1950s while he was a professor.²³³ Along with his colleagues at Roosevelt, notably English professor Lorenzo Turner, Drake regularly gave lectures on African, West Indian, and South American history topics at South Side community centers like PCH, libraries, women’s guilds, fraternal orders, and local churches. Turner and Drake also each gave their time to speaker bureaus such as the progressive era-inspired, Jane Addams-initiated Adult Education Council of Chicago and the CP-

²³¹ “Hold Symposium on Negro,” *The Chicago Defender* (National Edition) (February 14, 1942),

²³² The only post-secondary institution in Chicago that refused to install quotas for Jews, Blacks, women and social groups from its inception in 1945.

²³³ Anne Meis Knupfer, *The Chicago Black Renaissance and Women’s Activism*, 17, 37-49 ; “The Parkway Community Center,” *The Chicago Defender* (July 6, 1946), 14; St. Clair Drake, “Studies of the African Diaspora,” 99; Dempsey Travis, *An Autobiography of Black Politics*, 190-193; “Hold Symposium on Negro,” *The Chicago Defender* (National Edition) (February 14, 1942), 5; Mavis Mixon, “”The Development of the Study of Negro History in Chicago.”

influenced National Negro Museum and Heritage Foundation (NNMHF) through the mid-late 1940s.²³⁴

In fact, many black Chicagoans worked on educational projects that reflected the centrality of the Windy City to the cosmopolitan aspects of racial knowledge production in this strategic center of U.S. culture. Historian Nikhil Singh remarks how “[o]ne of the most significant and least remarked upon features of the early 1940s was that [the decade] gave rise to a profound re-conceptualization of the terms of racialized citizenship within the United States.” Singh further suggests that Chicago’s South side, as exemplified through Cayton and Drake’s *Black Metropolis*, was “less intellectually isolated than the larger society” and became a “site for a generation of cosmopolitan discourses” that “surpassed conventional American views of the world.”²³⁵ As such, scholars like Drake and Cayton and many of the community educators they worked with pushed caste as class arguments discussed through the Chicago School further to engage agonistically with the “ethnic paradigm” of cyclical migrant assimilation. This cosmopolitanism reflected the complexities and fluidity of African American political and cultural modalities and experiences, diverse claims to U.S. citizenship, and articulations of what Paul Gilroy terms a trans-Atlantic counter-cultural modernity.²³⁶

²³⁴Ralph McCallister to Lorenzo Turner, March 13, 1947, Box 4, Folder 5, Turner Papers, AFNU; “The People’s Forum: Spring 1947, Negro Progress in African and the West Indies,” Parkway Community House and the American Council on African and West Indian Affairs,” Box 1, Folder 6, Turner Papers, AFNU; “The Chicago Tougaloo College Club presents Dr. Lorenzo D. Turner, “The Negro in Brazil,” at the Church of the Good Shepherd, March 23, 1947,” Box 1, Folder 6, Turner Papers, AFNU; Lorenzo Turner, “Life in British and French West Africa,” Woodlawn Regional Branch, The Chicago Public Library, November 19, 1947,” Box 1, Folder 6, Turner Papers, AFNU; “The Carey Temple Women’s Guild Invites you and your friends to its Third Forum Series: Lorenzo Turner, The Negro in Brazil,” December 15, 1946,” Box 1, Folder 6, Turner Papers, AFNU; Grace Maxwell to St. Clair Drake, February 17, 1947, Box 10, Folder 8, St. Clair Drake Papers 1935-1990 (hereafter Drake papers), SCHM.

²³⁵ Nikhil Pal Singh, “Culture/Wars,” 476; Nikhil Pal Singh, *Black is a Country*, 153.

²³⁶ As Nikhil Pal Singh writes: “[u]nder the regime of modern racial liberalism, it has been difficult to uncouple the idea of successful black assimilation from violent imaginaries of black erasure long central to

As a public school teacher in Midwest Metropolis, Madeline Morgan's curriculum project deserves consideration alongside such academic-level projects. All were concerns of Black Chicago's rich intellectual cosmopolitanism during the 1940s. For example, Morgan's efforts to design curriculum units were designed and conducted in consultation with both academic and local community knowledge spheres. Much of the research for her units was carried out late into evenings and over weekends at the Hall Branch library, but was also conducted in the stacks of the University of Chicago, the Field Museum, and the Art Institute of Chicago. Morgan submitted drafts of her units for correction and approval to a distinguished and interracial list of academics. These scholars included Carter G. Woodson, head of the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History (ASNLH); Charles Wesley, then president of Wilberforce University and Woodson's successor at ASNLH; Melville Herskovitz, founder of African studies at Northwestern University; Avery O. Craven, a professor of Southern U.S. history at the University of Chicago who wrote sympathetically of civil rights during the 1940s and worked to complicate mythologies about the "solid South" in his own scholarship; Fay Cooper Cole, an English professor at the University of Chicago known for his role with the

American exceptionalism. Specifically, normative attempts to write blacks into a national narrative of immigrant incorporation and ethnic succession have invariably left behind the traces of prior histories of racialization. This has been manifested in an intellectual division of labor in which discussion of intranational differences often proceed under the separate headings of "race" and "ethnicity." Race and ethnicity have become ways to handle different kinds of difference." See, Nikhil Pal Singh, *Black is a Country*, 41. The slippage between 'race' and 'ethnicity' and their deployment in historic understandings of different hierarchies for colonial labor groups is also usefully treated in Peter Wade's excellent and concise comparative overview of black and native groups in the Americas. See Peter Wade, *Race and Ethnicity in Latin American*. Moreover, numerous attempts to define notions of a diasporic Black Radical Traditions have also been made. The most significant and enduring reflection remains Cedric Robinson, *Black Marxism* (1983). Other important figures in this debate include Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*; Robin D.G. Kelley and Tiffany Patterson, "Unfinished Migrations: Reflections on the African Diaspora and the Making of the Modern World," *African Studies Review* 43:1 (April 2000): 11-45. Most recently, Paul Gilroy has provocatively argued for the need to recapture the moral itinerancy of earlier Black Atlantic circulations of politics and culture, see Paul Gilroy, *Darker Than Blue: On the Moral Economies of Black Atlantic Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard Belknap, 2010).

defense team headed by Clarence Darrow at the famous Scopes trial in Tennessee during the mid-1920s; and Walter Johnson, an English professor from the University of Illinois. In addition to this illustrious list of scholar advisors, other experts consulted included numerous South side public school teachers and administrators. These included African American school principals Maudelle Bousfield and Ruth Jackson, and in particular, three “outstanding” teachers of history: Ciara Anderson (Du Sable High), Samuel Stratton (Du Sable High), and Thelma Powell (Wendell Phillips High).²³⁷

The cumulative advice of these educators and “race” experts helped Morgan produce curriculum units that reflected important models of cultural pluralist education. In terms of content, these units privileged the role of blacks in the making of the modern U.S. and its role in the world. As noted above, her third grade unit was on the West African nation of Dahomey (which became Benin in 1960). In this unit, Morgan noted how African farmers were viewed as backward – surely also a reference to how Southern U.S. sharecroppers were sometimes perceived. An excerpt from the unit mentioned that “[t]he African Negroes have to work very hard for a living” and that “[f]arming” was “not easy.” This validation of agrarian life was likely intended for the many working class sons and daughters of black farmers Morgan anticipated in Chicago classrooms through the 1940s. Fifth and sixth grade units featured various black explorers and pioneers. They learned that Chicago’s “first pioneer” [DuSable] was a “Negro” and that he “lived and traded with the Indians,” that he sold his cabin in the area to Le Mai, “a Frenchman,” who in turn sold it to an Englishman: “John Kinzie.” While setting out the central historical actors in the struggle for the Ohio frontier and the founding of Chicago, Morgan did not emphasize how Jean Point Baptiste DuSable (given his Haïtian background) likely

²³⁷ Madeline Morgan, “Chicago School Curriculum Includes Negro Achievement,” 120-121.

sympathized with the French side in these conflicts. However, the purpose of establishing the notion of a black “first” in Chicago as well as the basic constellation of populations involved in the ongoing process of colonization was surely useful. Sixth graders learned of “Estevanico,” credited with “discovering both Arizona and New Mexico” and of Matthew Henson, the only “American” chosen by Admiral Peary to go on his North Pole expedition in the early 20th Century.²³⁸ Morgan expressed a desire to imbue prospective pupils of her civic units with a global sensibility for black subjectivities that also promoted youth self-esteem. These sensibilities surely expressed an American exceptionalism that also mapped alternative coordinates in Africa and the Americas that challenged the prevalent centrality of white anglo-settler myths which prevailed through this same moment.

Morgan’s social and personal life from this period reflected these same worldly sensibilities. Her curriculum work was recognized at a luncheon of the Chicago Metropolitan Council of the National Council of Negro Women (NCNW) in 1943 – a group that honored her nationally four years later. Morgan was awarded a “plaque” at a meeting that directly recognized her curriculum units. The meeting also featured Farima P. Sinha as guest speaker - a former secretary of the London Bureau of the Indian National Congress Party. Sinha spoke about the Gandhian techniques of India’s independence movement and the challenges posed by “quisling” elites as well as British “overlords” in the subcontinent. At the time, Sinha was also an economics professor at the Central YMCA College in Chicago and would later join the dissident liberal and left wing faculty members who chartered the liberal Roosevelt College downtown. Sinha’s contribution to this NCNW meeting of middle-class African American women was meant to inspire their own commitments to social action in the United States. *A Defender*

²³⁸ Ibid., 121-122.

columnist reported that Sinha felt U.S. blacks should “secure their full measure of democracy,” and that this might advance the worldwide prospect of enabling “subjected countries to choose their own governments and leaders.”²³⁹

At the same time, middlebrow educational and cultural functions demonstrated the work of an early Cold War orientalism similar to that examined by Christina Klein. This orientalism forged transnational and intercultural relationships as it reinforced exotic notions of Asian mysticism and clairvoyance. For example, a *Defender* columnist described the audiences reaction to Sinha’s speech as “deeply moved” because of his “soft-spoken, fluent and convincing though somewhat plaintive voice.” Sinha used no manuscript but spoke from “a heart which seemed at times to overflow with emotional (sic) because of the abject misery and futile efforts of his people...” On another occasion, Madeline Morgan was reported in a *Defender* article entitled “East Meets West” where she was pictured with an old grade school classmate, Tsuchen Kuan, at a tea that Morgan and her husband Samuel Stratton hosted in Kuan’s honor. Like Morgan, Kuan was also involved with “youth education” but had returned to her native China for work.²⁴⁰

Such middlebrow concerns over “youth education” displayed in East meets West scenes of collegiality could easily be mistaken as traditional African American uplift rhetoric for their embrace of respectability. Yet a closer look at what teachers like Madeline Morgan were trying to accomplish in this moment through such collaborations demonstrates a more complex vision

²³⁹ “East Meets West,” *The Chicago Defender* (National Edition) (May 12, 1945), 15.

²⁴⁰ Rebecca Stiles Taylor, “Activities of Women’s National Organizations,” *The Chicago Defender* (National Edition) (February 20, 1943), 17; “Defender Washington Bureau Head 12 Others on NCNW Honor Roll,” *The Chicago Defender* (National Edition) (February 8, 1947), 3; Christina Klein, *Cold War Orientalism: Asia in the Middlebrow Imagination, 1945-1961* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 7-8; “East Meets West,” 15.

for social change and educational method that took a close accounting of changes in global race relations.

Such visions connected universal notions of global racial equality and changing educational models of race relations that increasingly focused on psycho-social remedies through the mid-20th Century.²⁴¹ Morgan underscored such views in her reflections on the need for curriculum reforms through the 1940s and 1950s. In her view, “wholesome attitudes” could be directed from early childhood. She hoped the country’s “post-war history” would “reflect the change in attitude by new thinkers who will accord the Negro his rightful place in American history.”²⁴²

To be sure, many public school teachers emphasized concerns over student behavior that betrayed their middle class prejudices. For instance, Maudelle Bousfield consistently enforced appropriate dress and behavior codes for students attending extra-curricular programs at the Parkway Community House she taught. A former student at DuSable High School and future mayor of Chicago, Harold Washington, recalled being scolded by his English teacher there for a favorable presentation he gave on Chicago’s policy businesses – then a part of the underground economy but also one of the city’s most important employers of white collar African Americans.²⁴³

²⁴¹ The best example of this approach in relation to African Americans were the “doll” tests devised and utilized by NAACP legal activists in school desegregation cases during the early 1950s. See Peter Irons, *Jim Crow’s Children*, 62-79.

²⁴² Madeline R. Morgan, “Chicago School Curriculum Includes Negro Achievement,” 123.

²⁴³ Dempsey Travis, *Autobiography of Black Politics*, 470; “Jimmy Ellis” in *Bridges of Memory*, 172. For a comprehensive analysis Chicago’s policy business during the 1930s and 1940s, see Horace Cayton and St. Clair Drake, *Black Metropolis*, 470-494.

Nonetheless, the influence that school teachers like Samuel Stratton, Madeline Morgan, Mary Herrick and many others had on their students and on future efforts to reform curriculums should not be understated. When asked about the influence such pioneering Southside school teachers had on education struggles, Chicago historian Timuel Black (a former school teacher himself) replied: “you see, we had the models.” Black’s statement underscores the commitment that many Southside teachers and public educators had for working towards quality education – a point that surely reflects the ongoing frustrations expressed by many public educators today about ongoing structural racial inequalities in the education system.²⁴⁴ Blacks’ use of the term “models” reflects the important role that teachers had (and continue to have) as conduits for state power and as conveyors of behavioral mores. Yet in his telling, Black’s terms are clearly used to underline the teacher’s strategic role as a cultural activist, an interlocutor capable of transmitting visions for a more democratic society to an informed citizenry and to young people especially. Despite the consistent funding shortfalls that plagued public educators, particularly in African American neighborhoods, the diverse models and resources for understanding social relations that were accessed by a significant number of public school teachers in Chicago during the 1930s and 1940s further reveals the complexities of African American cultural politics from that era.

It is true that black history units were never fully implemented during this period. However, the models for alternative curriculum reform devised by Chicago public school teachers and their allies endured, bridged academic and community divides, and were sustained through later decades outside of official channels.

²⁴⁴ “Emmanuel’s First Job: Fix Chicago Schools,” *Chicago Sun-Times* (May 16, 2011), <http://www.suntimes.com/opinions/5361966-474/editorial-emanuels-first-job-fix-chicago-schools.html?print=true> (accessed May 30, 2011).

Indeed, through to the 1950s, some African American teachers independently provided alternative and supplemental curriculums to their classes at great personal risk. This became especially significant in the post-world War II and early Cold War eras when advocacy for civil rights became increasingly equated with Communist subversion. Numerous Chicago teachers of a later generation, such as Margaret Burroughs and Timuel D. Black, have related experiences about how some white colleagues and administrators monitored their classroom conduct. Indeed, they sometimes expressed concern to administrators over how Burroughs and Black approached their curriculum and lesson planning – especially if they had seen evidence that students were being taught judicious forms of African American history.²⁴⁵ Margaret Burroughs has related one such scene in her autobiography:

“I, of course, was a strong advocate of black history, which was considered subversive in itself at that time. God forbid that you would teach Harriet Tubman or Sojourner Truth in class, and if you had anything to say about Nat Turner or Denmark Vesey, well you had better just keep it to yourself. While my students were painting, I would be in the middle of a discussion about the Scottsboro boys and I’d look over and see the white principal appear at the classroom door. Turning back to the class I’d say, ‘And that’s how Betsy Ross came to sew the flag. Now boys and girls, let’s talk about Patrick Henry...’ My students knew enough to hold in their chuckles until the principal has passed the door. As soon as he was gone, we’d go back to Clarence Darrow’s Scottsboro defense or Ida B. Wells’ upbringing or Mary McLeod Bethune’s activism.”²⁴⁶

Tim Black described a similar experience from when he started teaching in the early 1950s and instructed the sons and daughters of white steelworkers in the increasingly African American-populated city of Gary, Indiana - just beyond the borders of Chicago’s Southside:

²⁴⁵ John Lyons, *Teachers and Reform*, 130; Timuel D. Black, interview with Erik Gellman and Ian Rocksborough-Smith.

²⁴⁶ Margaret Burroughs, *Life With Margaret*, 73.

My challenge was to prove to them that they weren't dumb. I won that. My attitude was there was a whole school there... almost all white. Their mission was to prove to this "dumb nigger," that he shouldn't be there... my mission was to say it don't make any difference. And I had an inner feeling in myself to say, to myself, you don't know who you're fucking with. White and black students were trying to get into my class. And the principal came and said white teachers [were complaining] about me. I have all this demand for my class... 'cause I give them good grades. And so the principal came and he sat in, and said, "what is that you're teaching..." I said, "American history." But he said, "that's not in the curriculum." I said, "corrected American history. Go check it out... I was just inserting it where it belongs."²⁴⁷

Such recollections certainly emphasized the contested terrain of school curriculum and racial knowledge production that public educators (African Americans in particular) encountered in the increasingly conservative climate of Cold War America. The concerns that Carter G. Woodson, Madeline Morgan and many others expressed about curriculum reform and representations of black public history in concert and/or conflict with other activists and public education officials would find renewed expression in the post-war restructuring of American life. This was especially true as African American struggles for civil rights, jobs, and freedom accelerated through the 1950s. In a city like Chicago with significant traditions of working class radicalism that often conflicted with changing techniques of industrial management, a useful terrain to further explore these important questions about racial knowledge and pedagogy was at the often tense intersections of civil rights politics and Cold War union cultures.

²⁴⁷ Timuel D. Black, interview with Erik Gellman and Ian Rocksborough-Smith.

Chapter 3

Black Chicago Cultural Workers, Racial Knowledge, and the United Packinghouse Workers Association

Jazz musician, entertainer and radical political activist, Oscar Brown, Jr., fondly recalled his experiences in the mid-1950s when he worked on anti-discrimination campaigns for the United Packinghouse Workers Association (UPWA). “I had been very excited about these activities,” said Brown in a 1975 interview. “I had gone in there thinking I was going to be a cultural worker, I was going to go in there and write plays and put on shows, and take the labor movement into my path and, of course, I just got absorbed into the labor movement’s path and learned a lot”.²⁴⁸ From the beginning of 1953 through early 1954, and only seven years before he starred in “Kicks & Co” on Broadway, Brown worked as a program coordinator for the union’s Chicago-based District One.²⁴⁹ Though very short-lived, Brown’s tenure in packing symbolically marked the apex of a significantly longer period of educational, cultural, and community growth among UPWA locals in the city of Chicago and its surrounding metropolitan areas.²⁵⁰ The UPWA’s District 1 has long been recognized as a leader within a wider union that was considered among the most activist-oriented in the country on issues of civil rights and anti-

²⁴⁸ Oscar Brown Jr Interviewed by J. Fred MacDonald Feb 1975, Box 13, Richard Durham Papers, HARSH; Rick Halpern, Ch. 7, *Down on the Killing Floor*; Shelton Stromquist & Marvin Bergman, “Introduction: Unionizing the Jungles, Past and Present,” Shelton Stromquist and Marvin Bergman, eds., *Unionizing the Jungles: Labor and Community in the Twentieth Century Meatpacking Industry* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1997), 7.

²⁴⁹ “Kicks and Co. Closes in Chicago, To re-open in NY,” *Jet Magazine* (October 26, 1961): 58; “Summary – Program Department Work; May through September 1953,” Box 349.7; Folder 3; State Historical Society of Wisconsin (hereafter cited as UPWA Papers); Memo to Richard Durham, December 28, 1953, Box 349.7, Folder 41, UPWA Papers.

²⁵⁰ Other Midwestern UPWA districts with significant African American communities included those in Kansas City, Missouri/Kansas, Omaha, Nebraska, and Waterloo, Iowa. For more on these milieus, see especially Rick Halpern and Roger Horowitz, *Meatpackers: An Oral History of Black Packinghouse Workers and Their Struggle for Racial Economic Equality* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1996).

discrimination. But as Brown's narrative indicates, there were limits to the reach, breadth, and form of these policies as the Cold War era proceeded.

In another more recent recollection that appears in an autobiographical film about his life Brown reflected positively on his brief UPWA experiences.²⁵¹ This was despite the fact that the UPWA had just fired him along with former *Chicago Defender* writer and "transplanted Mississippian" Richard Durham who he worked closely with in his brief tenure with the union.²⁵² Together they were two of the many casualties from the internecine Cold War conflicts that occurred within American labor unions during the late 1940s and 1950s. Originally recruited by Durham, he and Brown became pivotal figures in the union's program department and anti-discrimination campaigns operated out of Chicago through the mid-1950s. Brown recalled how through his UPWA work (though it was short-lived), he "learned the politics of organization. And... learned interpersonal relationships on a complex level." Indeed, his experience with the UPWA "helped" him "to grow" and "formed the basis" for what he "later wrote about and a lot of the attitudes" that he had "later in life."²⁵³

Brown's focus on culture, organizational, and educational knowledge as the basis for his later work with the African American liberation struggles of the 1960s is revealing. It reveals how expansive the experiential parameters of African American engagements within the industrial union movement could have been through the repressive moments of mid-20th century.

²⁵¹ *Music is My Life, Politics My Mistress: The Story of Oscar Brown, Jr.*, No Credits Productions Inc., [2007].

²⁵² Keith Gilyard, *John Oliver Killens: A Life of Black Literary Activism* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2010), 113; Roger Horowitz, *Negro and White, Unite and Fight!*, 235-236.

²⁵³ *Music is My Life, Politics My Mistress* (DVD 2007); Clarice Durham, interview with Ian Rocksborough-Smith, Chicago, IL, March 18, 2010; Leslie O'Rear, interview with Ian Rocksborough-Smith, March 10, 2010, Chicago, IL; Roger Horowitz, *Negro and White, Unite and Fight!*, 235-236; Barbara Savage, *Broadcasting Freedom: Radio, War, and the Politics of Race* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 269.

Cosmopolitan cultural workers like Brown, the son of a Southside lawyer and civic leader (Oscar S. Brown, Sr.) for a brief period through the late 1940s and early to mid-1950s, co-existed with a multiracial cohort of rank-and-file unionists in the UPWA's District 1 who were committed to localized forms of activism. Collectively, these currents aspired for progressive social changes in the broader community and nation. Cosmopolitan figures like Brown and Richard Durham sought openings and opportunities to advance their cultural activism through the union in ways that did not always sit well with lifelong staffers in the union or its rank and file. Such work increasingly ran against the grain of a broader U.S. labor movement that was becoming more confined within the strictures of the U.S.'s Cold War racial order.²⁵⁴

Still, it was through union-based anti-discrimination work and worker education activities that African American activists made their mark on the union and in the community through the late 1940s and 1950s.²⁵⁵ When Durham joined the international's staff as a program director in 1953, he was embroiled in a lawsuit against NBC over the fate of his remarkable public history-oriented *Destination Freedom* radio program - cancelled by the network in 1950 due to its radical knowledge content. The union also employed novelist Frank London Brown on its program staff when he lived in Kansas City in the early 1950s and before he moved back to Chicago and penned his famous 1958 novel *Trumbull Park* (based on the real life experiences of

²⁵⁴ See for example, Kevin Boyle, *The UAW and the Heyday of American Liberalism*; Robert Zeiger, *The CIO*, 246-250, 263; George Lipsitz, *Rainbow at Midnight*, 335-346.

²⁵⁵ This statement is intended as a focused elaboration of Roger Horowitz's and Rick Halpern's synthesis of their monumental and pioneering oral history work that underscores how black packinghouse workers influenced the amelioration of living and community conditions for all workers in packinghouse work. They show how African American workers in packinghouse work "transformed the working conditions and living standards of all workers in the industry." See Roger Horowitz and Rick Halpern, "Work, Race, and Identity: Self-Representation in the Narratives of Black Packinghouse Workers," *Oral History Review* (Winter/Spring 1999), 23

moving into a hostile veterans housing development on Chicago's far South Side).²⁵⁶ These figures along with Sam Parks, Charles Hayes, Russell Lasley, Leon Beverly, Marion Simmons, and Addie Wyatt helped develop a Black Caucus Movement within the UPWA and headquartered in Chicago during this period.²⁵⁷

Many of these figures contributed in important ways to the major flash points of civil rights protest in Chicago and the U.S. South during the 1950s. As noted in chapter one, the UPWA's District 1 was closely involved in the takeover of the NAACP during the mid-1950s by a slate of militant unionists.²⁵⁸ In 1956, a "mass meeting" of 3,000 people was sponsored by the UPWA at Greater Bethesda Baptist Church and featured a teenage witness, Willie Reed, from the infamous Emmett Till lynching case (the Chicago teenager murdered in Mississippi in 1955). The event featured Mississippian T.R.M. Howard, by then a fixture of Chicago's civil rights scene who relayed a message of solidarity from Martin Luther King, Jr. The UPWA's president Ralph Helstein addressed the gathering and suggested that the Montgomery bus boycott in Alabama was a "demonstration of passive resistance in the best tradition of Mahatma Ghandi." M. Gretta Greene, executive secretary of the Packinghouse Civic Community Committee introduced a resolution at the meeting that adopted a call for "intensified union and committee support for the fight against segregation." The UPWA also hosted many southern civil rights activists to Chicago, like the two expelled students from Alabama State University who were

²⁵⁶ Frank London Brown, *Trumbull Park* (Chicago: Regnery, 1959 [2005 by Mary Helen Washington]).

²⁵⁷ African American women played a major role in the Black Caucus Movement throughout the midwest, especially figures such as Addie Wyatt in Chicago, who worked in one of the smaller packing plants (Illinois Meats), Marion Simmons in Kansas, Rowena Moore in Nebraska, and Rosalie Wideman in Iowa. For more on the women's movement in the UPWA and Black workers, see Bruce Fehn, "African American Women and the Struggle for Equality in the Meatpacking Industry, 1940-1960," *Journal of Women's History* 10:1 (Spring 1998): 45p.

²⁵⁸ Rick Halpern, *Down on the Killing Floor*, 216-217, 240-241; Christopher Reed, *The Chicago NAACP*, 140-146.

among 35 students “arrested for participation in a prayer demonstration” near the state courthouse in the coastal city of Mobile. Indeed, many participated in, and even led, activism against the housing riots that prevented prospective black homeowners from moving into Far Southside neighborhoods like Trumbull Park and efforts to desegregate local businesses. Conferences on racism and women’s rights were also hosted by the UPWA throughout the 1950s and centered especially on the activism of the union’s Chicago locals.²⁵⁹

Along with their involvement in Chicago civil rights activism, District 1 and UPWA Black Caucus Movement leaders were also very connected to the promotion of radical cultural work in the public sphere. For example, in his efforts as program director for the international union, Richard Durham helped coordinate the union’s anti-discrimination policies but also attempted to utilize his position within the UPWA to promote the work of acclaimed African American authors like John Oliver Killens who wrote the novel *Youngblood* (1954) - a novel about southern racial violence and interracial working class solidarities. Durham was also closely involved in packinghouse worker produced print and radio media and the union’s attempt to promote the famously blacklisted film *Salt of the Earth* (1954) - about a multiracial zinc miners strike in New Mexico led by the left-leaning Mine, Mill, and Smelter workers.²⁶⁰

Such diverse activities highlight the breadth of repertoires undertaken by African American UPWA activists in Chicago through the repressive political atmospheres of the 1950s.

²⁵⁹ Rick Halpern, *Down on the Killing Floor*; Roger Horowitz, *Negro and White, Unite and Fight!*; “Audience Donates to Till Witness,” *The Chicago Defender* (National Edition), 10; “UPW Fete Honors Two Students,” *The Chicago Defender* (Daily Edition) (April 5, 1960), A20. For an excellent appraisal of Black Chicago’s response and activities surrounding the murder of Emmett Till see Adam Green, *Selling the Race*, 179-210.

²⁶⁰ Herbert Biberman to Richard Durham, September 14, 1954, Box 357, Folder 20, United Packinghouse Workers Papers (hereafter cited as UPWA Papers), State Historical Society of Wisconsin (hereafter cited as WISC); Keith Gilyard, *John Oliver Killens*, 113-114.

Collectively, these episodes represent significant, understudied, aspects of Black Chicago's cultural renaissance through the early Cold War period that sought (as Horace Cayton and St. Clair Drake might have opined in the same moment) to "advance the race."

Significant conflicts within the UPWA reflected tensions surrounding Cold War era racial politics in both the city and labor movement nationwide. Most CIO unions accepted the prerogative of "bread and butter" unionism after the Second World War that favored a widespread buy-in to the promises of a postwar-consumer driven U.S. society. This shift came largely at the expense of efforts towards "social" unionism or unionism that took on larger purposes towards social change. As Roger Horowitz notes, the UPWA was exceptional as the only union outside of the black-led Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters to "back" the efforts of Martin Luther King, Jr. through the 1950s. Its anti-discrimination activities, especially in Chicago, became the most exemplary of experiments in racial knowledge production for urban locales where this form of unionism was practiced by the UPWA. Still, over time, the UPWA's anti-discrimination activities were hindered by the stifling politics of Cold War America. As such, the union's innovative anti-discrimination programs were difficult to sustain through a period when labor and civil rights movements appeared to move in opposite directions because of an ostensibly intransigent white majority rank and file in the labor movement. Also, the UPWA's A/D program became the object of significant factional struggles within the union, especially at its executive level, which resulted in destructive staffing decisions that revealed the limits of the union's social unionism.²⁶¹

²⁶¹ Roger Horowitz, *Negro and White, Unite and Fight!*, 207-208; George Lipsitz, *Rainbow at Midnight*; Robert Korstad and Nelson Lichtenstein, "Opportunities Found and Lost"; Mary Dudziak, *Cold War and the Color Line*; Alice Kessler-Harris, *In Pursuit of Equity*. To be sure, the United Auto Workers certainly supported King's civil rights efforts by 1963. See, Kevin Boyle, *The UAW and the Heyday of American Liberalism, 1945-1968*, 121-122, 160.

Still, the UPWA's District 1 remained an integral part of Black Chicago's diverse cultural institutions through the 1960s. Indeed, few recent histories have adequately reflected on just how crucial the meatpacking industry and the diverse working class cultures it produced were to the development of Black Chicago's (and indeed the entire Midwestern Metropolis') vibrant civic life through the mid-Twentieth Century. Moreover, no history of the cultural renaissance through the post-World War II era considers how the city's role (both symbolic and historical) as "hog butcher for the world" may have influenced this trajectory as well. Horace Cayton and St. Clair Drake made this explicit connection in their classic 1945 study of the African American Southside - but few scholars to date have taken up these overtures.²⁶² When the UPWA moved its District 1 headquarters to the black Southside in 1949 in a controversial move that upset some of the union's local base in Chicago, it also helped sustain a "free" community space for African American expressions of antiracist resistance, hosting people as diverse as Martin Luther King, Jr. and renegade NAACP leader Robert F. Williams. All these activities foreshadowed the nationwide civil rights *and* black nationalist cultural insurgencies of the 1950s and 1960s. Even more importantly perhaps, they represented crucial forms of racial knowledge production at local levels that persisted through the Cold War period. When analyzed as forms of knowledge production about race, the UPWA's post-war anti-discrimination and worker education activities further underscore how the union took the "path not taken" by most U.S. labor unions during this same period.²⁶³

"They were always into something of significance to Negroes"

Oscar Brown, Jr.'s depiction of Black Chicago's civic life in the late 1940s puts the

²⁶² Horace Cayton and St. Clair Drake, *Black Metropolis*, 302-311.

²⁶³ Rick Halpern, *Down on the Killing Floor*, Ch 7.

activist milieu of the Packinghouse Workers at its center. In 1948, Brown joined journalist, Vernon Jarrett (who would go on to write for the *Chicago Tribune* and host his own local television show) to start a small radio news outlet called Negro News Front. Negro News Front broadcasted daily at seven in the morning on the local WJJP/WVON network. Poet Langston Hughes highlighted the program in his regular *Chicago Defender* column in a piece about what he “liked” in Black Chicago and called it the “best of its kind.” According to Brown, while he worked on Negro News Front, he relied heavily on packinghouse workers to furnish information about activism and newsworthy civil rights-related stories from the Southside. “I got a lot of news from them,” recalled Brown. “They were always into something of significance to Negroes.” Brown eventually worked on the UPWA’s own weekly internal radio program which aired on local Chicago radio stations as well when he became a District 1 program coordinator in the mid-1950s. According to *The Packinghouse Worker* newspaper, an internal union organ, the radio program was “handled by local professionals under the direction of the district, with a view to bringing local members into many of the broadcasts through recorded plant-gate interviews, guest speakers, etc.” For Brown, the packinghouse workers were a major center for gaining, spreading, and circulating community knowledge about issues of significance to African Americans.²⁶⁴

Brown surely had unique insights about the knowledge nexus that packinghouse workers represented on race issues at mid-century given his own family’s prominence in the community. Oscar Brown, Jr.’s father, Oscar C. Brown, Sr., was himself a major civic figure on the city’s

²⁶⁴ *Music is My Life, Politics My Mistress* (DVD 2007); Oscar Brown Jr. Interviewed by J. Fred MacDonald; “Vernon Jarrett,” *The History Makers* (<http://www.thehistorymakers.com/biography/vernon-jarrett-39>) (Accessed September 30, 2012); Langston Hughes, “Things I Like, And What I Don’t, I Don’t,” *The Chicago Defender* (June 25, 1949), 6. Brown also sought information from the CP-fronted Civil Rights Congress, which was especially consistent and focused on local issues in Chicago, see Gerald Horne, *Communist Front?*, 277; “District A’ Buzzin’ At Chicago Center,” *The Packinghouse Worker* 10:2 (July 13, 1951): 9.

Southside and presided over the local branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) during World War II. Brown, Sr., who was a Howard-educated real estate agent and lawyer, epitomized the “race man” leadership-style in Depression era Chicago.²⁶⁵ He helped lead a short-lived 49th State movement (at the time there were only 48 states in the union) that appealed to the same popular sentiment that the Communist Party sought to promote through its black belt thesis for self-determination in the U.S. South during the 1930s.²⁶⁶ Brown, Sr. also chaired a Southside committee made up of “civic, church, business and fraternal organizations” that supported the UPWA’s first major post-war strike in 1946 and was part of a community coalition that pushed for the implementation of post-war Fair Employment Practices Commission policies. The Southside Committee that supported the packinghouse workers included African American Communists such as William P. Harrison, chairman of the Negro Peoples Assembly, and William Patterson’s wife, Louise Thompson, who ran the International Workers Order (IWO) in the same Bacon’s Casino building on South Wabash that eventually became, the UPWA’s District 1 headquarters by 1949.²⁶⁷

Like in many other American industries, African Americans were first brought into

²⁶⁵ St. Clair Drake and Horace Cayton, *Black Metropolis*, 394-395

²⁶⁶ As a dissident Black Communist through the late 1940s and 1950s who sought to sustain the CP’s Black Belt thesis through the post-war period notes, such nationalism was also paralleled by the Garveyites and various early Afro-American Islamic sects, like the Sufis in Chicago. See Harry Haywood, *Black Bolshevik: Autobiography of an Afro-American Communist* (Chicago: Liberator Press, 1986), 553.

²⁶⁷ “New Group to Support Packinghouse Workers,” *The Chicago Defender* (National Edition) (January 12, 1946), 8. Oscar C. Brown was also a proponent of the 49th State movement, which advocated a call for self-determination among African Americans for the formation of 49th state during the mid-1930s (at the time there were only 48 states). Brown Sr. was aligned with a youth movement in the National Negro Congress in the late 1930s and early 1940s that helped elect him president of the local NAACP in 1942. See E. Essien-Udom, *Black Nationalism*, 50; Erik Gellman, “Carthage Must Be Destroyed”: Race, City Politics, and the Campaign to Integrate Transportation Work, 1929-1943,” *Labor Studies in Working Class History of the Americas* 2:2 (2005), 107, n96; Christopher Reed, *The Chicago NAACP*, 130. For a cogent account of the National Negro Congress and its involvement in Chicago area labor and civil rights struggles during the 1930s and early 1940s, see Erik Gellman, *Death Blow to Jim Crow*.

meatpacking in significant numbers across picket lines to work as temporary laborers by packing companies through the late 19th and early 20th Century. Packers sought to undermine the organizing efforts of “foreign-born” workers in the slaughterhouses and meatpacking centers of that era by dividing workers along racial lines. Over the course of the first four decades of the 20th Century, African American migrants escaping difficult (often destitute) racial conditions in southern agricultural work increasingly sought “modest” employment in meatpacking and steel in one of the nation’s key urban industrial hubs, especially during wartime labor shortages (World War I and II). The influx of southern migrants into these industries, especially meatpacking (whether as replacement laborers or otherwise) was usually to work in the hardest, messiest departments of the stockyards or slaughterhouses. Still, for most, they garnered far better wages and living standards in packing than they had as agricultural laborers. Also, over time, prospective union organizers realized how key these workers were to leveraging concessions from employers because of the strategic positions they came to occupy at points of production in the meatpacking process, especially on the industry’s notorious killing floors. Blacks who worked in the packinghouses of Chicago valued their jobs first for good reasons and were predisposed to oppose the earliest attempts at union organizing in their industry as a result.²⁶⁸

Most African Americans also felt racially and spatially excluded from the traditional packingtown neighborhoods “Back of the Yards” on the city’s southwest side. District 1’s original headquarters was established at Ashland and 4758 S. Marshfield in 1936, shortly before the Packinghouse Workers Organizing Committee achieved certification with the CIO. Just as

²⁶⁸ Rick Halpern, *Down on the Killing Floor*, 23, 34, 47, 158; Jim Grossman, *Land of Hope*, 3; St. Clair Drake & Horace Cayton, *Black Metropolis*, 302-311; Les Orear, interview with Ian Rocksborough-Smith, Chicago, March 10, 2010.

for decades few African Americans went East beyond Cottage Grove Avenue or West into Bridgeport (the traditional boundaries of historic Bronzeville), there was for many years an invisible line west of Ashland Avenue near the Back of the Yards which blacks rarely “crossed after dark” - a racial demarcation line that dated back to the race riots of 1919.²⁶⁹

The radical political milieu Brown described that helped shape Chicago’s growing African American majority packinghouse locals through the 1940s took form before, during, but mainly after World War II when the union consciously rebuilt itself around black membership drives.²⁷⁰ As Randi Storch points out, the city’s union stockyards formed “one of the largest industrial concentrations in the nation,” housing the “big three” packing companies: Armour, Swift, and Wilson who employed thousands each as well as the smaller houses of P.D. Brennan, Roberts & Oake, Miller & Hart, Agar, Reliable, and Illinois Meat. In total, 30,000 worked in these stockyards through the late 1940s.²⁷¹ The war also provided significant employment opportunities in skilled, industrial jobs for many minorities (especially women, blacks, and Mexican Americans) who came to make up a huge portion of the workforce in Chicago through this period. Bolstered by a new wave of southern migrants through World War II, a younger generation of militant African American unionists came of age politically, especially through their experiences in industries such as meatpacking, steel, transport, and railway work which had

²⁶⁹ Ibid.

²⁷⁰ For two nuanced and detailed accounts of how the meatpacking industry was organized in Chicago and around the country over the course of the late 1930s and early 1940s, see especially Rick Halpern, *Down on the Killing Floor*, 96-218; Roger Horowitz, *Negro and White, Unite and Fight!*, 58-83.

²⁷¹ Randi Storch, “The United Packinghouse Workers of America, Civil Rights, and the Communist Party in Chicago,” in Robert W. Cherny, William Issen, Keiran Walsh Taylor, eds., *American Labor and the Cold War: Grassroots Politics and Postwar Political Culture* (Rutgers University Press, 2004), 74.

all been at least partially organized in the industrial union drives of the 1930s and 1940s.²⁷² As noted in earlier chapters, the African American population of Chicago also grew exponentially during the 1940s and highlighted newer, increasingly complex forms of racial discrimination in both housing and labor markets (like contract buying schemes and veterans benefits that went mainly to whites) given the scarcity of opportunities in these areas.²⁷³ By the end of the war, African American employment in meatpacking had soared to forty percent of its total workforce (the largest regional center for packing in the nation during this period). Nationally, women consisted of 20 percent of the packinghouse work force through the early 1950s and Mexican Americans made up seven percent of UPWA members by 1949.²⁷⁴

The “orbits” for union organization among new black workers emerged primarily at the Chicago Armour, Wilson, and eventually Swift plants. These were led in the late 1930s and early 1940s by militant union organizers such as Hank Johnson and Herb March. Together, their commitment to racial equality (over strict adherence to Communist Party dictates) in their shop floor activism attracted the support and positive response of packinghouse workers to their leadership - which became the basis for the formation of the PWOC in 1937 and the UPWA-CIO in 1944. Two other key figures emerged through Chicago’s Wilson plant and Local 25 of the

²⁷² Erik Gellman, *Death Blow to Jim Crow*, Ch. 1; Rick Halpern, *Down on the Killing Floor*, 177-178; Roger Horowitz, *Negro and White, Unite and Fight!*, 166-167; Lionel Kimble, “I Too Serve America: African American Women War Workers in Chicago, 1940-1945,” *The Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* 93: 4 (Winter 2000/2001), 415-236; Eric Arnesen, *Brotherhoods of Color*, 84-180; Lilia Fernandez, “From the near West Side to 18th Street: Mexican Community Formation and Activism in Twentieth Century Chicago,” *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* 98:3 (Autumn 2005): 162-183;

²⁷³ Beryl Satter, *Family Properties*; Joe Allen, *People Wasn’t Made to Burn: A True Story of Race, Murder and Justice in Chicago* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2011); Ira Katznelson, *When Affirmative Action Was White: An Untold History Of Racial Inequality In Twentieth-century America* (New York: Norton, 2006), 114-115.

²⁷⁴ *Minorities in the UPWA: History of Negroes and Mexicans: A History of Negroes and Mexican Americans in the Packing Industry*, 31, Box 347, Folder 13, UPWA, WISC; Papers; Roger Horowitz, *Negro and White, Unite and Fight!*, 227.

union, namely Sam Parks and Charles Hayes. Each had a major impact on the overall growth of the UPWA, its reputation in the black community, and ultimately the emergence of a Black Caucus Movement within the union. Together Parks and Hayes were a good representation of the “militant” generation of African Americans who joined the UPWA during WWII. Less radical than Parks and Hayes but no less important for the union’s organization in Chicago during this period was Phillip Weightman who rose through the ranks at the notoriously difficult to organize Swift Plant. Swift packers had established an effective company union that rewarded loyal workers through patronage positions and advancement. Weightman emerged from this milieu as a key vice president in the union but did so as a more pragmatic and centrist figure than his cohort of World War II veterans. Indeed, Weightman (who like Hayes and Parks was also African American) helped lead a right wing faction within the UPWA that later supported the union’s adherence to the nation’s Cold War liberalism through the late 1940s and 1950s but also stood firm on issues related to civil rights throughout this period.²⁷⁵

By the post-war era, the packinghouse workers successfully developed a reputation in the black community as one of the most progressive CIO unions in the country on racial issues. This reputation was based on the fact that a significant number of southern migrants to Chicago and other urban locales had attained gainful employment in the stockyards of many cities since the Great Depression years when the interracial CIO union drives first began. Because of these successful strivings, many packinghouse workers became important symbols of respectability in Black Chicago especially through the mid-20th Century. According to former packinghouse

²⁷⁵ Rick Halpern, *Down on the Killing Floor*, 75-76, 168, 96-218; Roger Horowitz, *Negro and White, Unite and Fight!*, 149-174, 182, 227. For a good assessment of Swift’s corporate unionism and efforts to oppose it among workers, see Paul Street, “The Swift Difference: Workers, Managers, Militants, and Welfare Capitalism in Chicago’s Stockyards, 1917-1942” in Shelton Stromquist and Marvin Bergman, eds., *Unionizing the Jungles*.

worker Lowell Washington, Jr., other progressive CIO unions like Farm Equipment and Steel which were active throughout greater Chicago but never really became part of the black community in the way that the packinghouse workers were. In this sense, packinghouse workers on the Southside exuded a cultural respectability similar in form to that of Pullman Porters and even clergy from the Black Church.²⁷⁶ Indeed, a *Defender* column remarked after the 1946 packing strike, that significant increases in wage contracts with the packers had demonstrated that “Negroes not only make good union members but also labor statesmen.”²⁷⁷ Historians Rick Halpern and Roger Horowitz note how the opportunities provided to African Americans in meatpacking did more than allow them to “simply play a central role in their neighborhoods.” It also allowed them a significant form of upward mobility that made them “part of America’s blue-collar middle class” by the 1950s.²⁷⁸

Support for post-war meatpacking and stockyard strikes from Bronzeville institutions and organizations were common during this period. *The Chicago Defender’s* coverage of the 1946 strike acknowledged how the “bulk” of Packinghouse workers were “Negroes” and suggested that a standard “annual wage” in packing could “benefit” black workers who toiled in other industries as well. Moreover, a *Defender* article headlined “Negroes Play Big Role in Meat Strike” and covered the union’s epic but ultimately ill-fated 1948 strike. The article noted optimistically how in Chicago, the “heart of the packing industry, ...12,000 Negroes, half of the total strike force were pacing back and forth as 2,200 policemen, a third of the city’s force,

²⁷⁶ Lowell Washington, Jr. was among the hundreds of rank and file workers interviewed by Rick Halpern and Roger Horowitz during the 1980s as part of an immense industry-wide oral history project. See Rick Halpern, *Down on the Killing Floor*, 158.

²⁷⁷ “The United Packinghouse Workers,” *The Chicago Defender* (National Edition), 14; “35,000 May Strike With Packing Union,” *The Chicago Defender* (National Edition) (March 7, 1948), 5.

²⁷⁸ Rick Halpern and Roger Horowitz, *Meatpackers*, 3.

looked warily on.” Another article estimated that “35,000 of the 100,000” UPWA workers expected to strike were “Negroes” – a highly significant minority.²⁷⁹ Other civic organizations such as the local NAACP branch, the Urban League, *The Chicago Bee*, the Southside YMCA, and other black-led organizations offered use of their facilities and support for the strike. Before the Southside Committee to Support Packinghouse Strikers was formed during a luncheon meeting at Morris’ Eat Shop, District 1 director and organizer, Herbert March, “told the meeting” how the “average worker’s wage was 50 cents an hour below the scale the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics says is necessary for a family of four with one wage earner.” March added that the profits of packing companies in 1947 combined were \$144 million. If the role of African American packinghouse unionists in the community had been questioned in the past, the fact that such critical perspectives of the packing companies circulated in the late 1940s clearly marked the significance of Black Chicago’s support for keeping this industry organized. As Rick Halpern notes, such support signified a “profound change” on the part of these civic organizations from their stances in the early 1920s when African Americans were largely excluded from the labor movement and so blacks had good reason to oppose union membership.²⁸⁰

The UPWA’s District 1 also worked closely with Southside groups who promoted Negro History Week through the late 1940s. These collaborations demonstrated that the union played a part in promoting African American public history and related cultural efforts especially. In 1946, the UPWA co-sponsored a mass meeting called by the National Negro Congress’ National Negro Museum and Historical Foundation (NNMHF) at DuSable High School as part of a campaign by the UPWA to redress racial discrimination in unions. *The Chicago Defender* also

²⁷⁹ “Negroes Play Big Role in Meat Strike,” *The Chicago Defender* (National Edition) (March 27, 1948), 2.

²⁸⁰ Rick Halpern, *Down on the Killing Floor*, 220; “Negroes Play Big Role in Meat Strike.”

covered Herbert March's statement condemning a ban of Negro History Week celebrations in the Downtown Loop. March connected the incident to a filibuster in the federal Senate "against the fair employment practices bill" and suggested that upon hearing about the History Week ban, the union would "join with community force, Negro and white in a huge mass meeting." John Gray, executive Director of the NNMHF, optimistically proclaimed that in light of the packinghouse workers led mass meeting, "Negro History Week" had reached the "broadest" sponsorship it has ever had.²⁸¹ The fact that the UPWA's District 1 helped organize and sponsor such events placed it in clear alliance with those activists on the Southside who were closely involved with black public history as a dimension of civil rights activity.

A Left 'Feeling Base'

For Oscar Brown, Jr. the period immediately following World War II was one that signified a new moment of militancy for African Americans nationwide - one that corresponded for him to a renewed momentum for left wing politics. "When I was 19-20 years old, I got turned on to left wing politics following World War II" said Brown. Oscar Brown became very active at a young age during this period when he joined the Communist Party in Chicago and also ran for the state legislature in 1948 on the left-leaning and pro-civil rights Progressive Party ticket in Illinois' first district. Brown had been expected to follow in his father's (Oscar S. Brown, Sr.) footsteps to become a lawyer for the family firm. But in the end, Brown, Jr. dropped out of law

²⁸¹ "Loop Hotels Ban Race History Fete," *The Chicago Defender* (National Edition) February 9, 1946; "Chicago Hotels Set Quota on Negroes at Banquets," *The Chicago Defender* (National Edition) March 2, 1946, 12. The UPWA supported many cultural projects to do with black history during the 1940s and 1950s and frequently hosted or sponsored events of this nature at its union hall on the Southside located at S. 49th and Wabash. See James Smethurst, *The Black Arts Movement*, 199. For more on the UPWA's significant interracial community activities during the 1950s, see Rick Halpern and Roger Horowitz, *Meatpackers*, 1-26.

school at the University of Wisconsin to pursue his creative interests.²⁸² As a 1963 article from *Rhythm and Blues* described him, Brown was “a lawyer’s son.” Still, while as a middle class scion, the article also noted how even as a “little boy” Brown “loved adventuring in the relatively nearby Southside slums.” He used to wander “the streets, stood on the corners, flipped rides down alleys on peddlers’ wagons and whatever his five senses recorded, he absorbed.” By the time he was a teenager, Brown captured “vignettes of the Southside in tune and verse. He had never taken any musical training. He would hum tunes to a pianist friend who transcribed the musical scores.”²⁸³ Brown’s formative experiences growing up on the Southside and in the years immediately following World War II clearly had an impact on the political and creative projects he later undertook.

Black Chicago historian Timuel D. Black recalls a similar spirit of militancy following World War II. For Black, this spirit extended to a significant number of both white and African American war veterans who shared working class interests across racial lines through their collective wartime experiences. Such common ground revealed the obvious bankruptcy of segregating military units – a practice the U.S. military did right through the Vietnam War. Black felt his compatriots in the military “weren’t big numerically” but that they “had a mission” after they got out of the service. For Black, these wartime experiences for at least some veterans led to shared attitudes “about war and peace” in ways that were dissimilar to some of his more conservative black friends who were Tuskegee airman (the segregated flying squadron that grew to become the quintessential symbol of African American heroism and achievement during

²⁸² “Oscar Brown,” Leadership Visionary Project, <http://www.visionaryproject.org/brownoscar/> (accessed October 12, 2012); *Music is My Life, Politics My Mistress* DVD.

²⁸³ “Meet Oscar Brown,” *Rhythm and Blues* (January 1963), 16-17; *Music is My Life, Politics My Mistress* DVD.

World War II). His Tuskegee airman friends were “avid good Americans,” many of whom went in for “money-making” after the war. In Black’s view, the airmen did not “ask any questions” on hard political issues. Such perspectives about political and class tensions within the black community get lost sometimes with the unity emphasized by the Double V campaigns of the World War II period when many African Americans emphasized their service abroad as a way of redressing Jim Crow at home and in military occupations. One of Black’s more poignant memories after returning from military service was when he lived with his parents and used to see future UPWA research director Richard Durham and his wife Clarice “standing on the corner passing out leaflets” for the Progressive Party.²⁸⁴

Prior to his stint in packing, Richard Durham worked as a writer and editor with *The Chicago Defender* and near the end of his tenure with the paper worked to write and produce a landmark radio drama series called *Destination Freedom*. Sponsored initially by *The Chicago Defender* as a program called *Democracy U.S.A.* (for which Durham also wrote) the series was retitled *Destination Freedom* in 1948 and ran from 1948-1950 on the local NBC affiliate WMAQ. It was eventually renamed *Democracy U.S.A.* once again and defanged by network executives – a result that led to the end of Durham’s stint with NBC. Over its short two-year existence, the *Destination Freedom* program itself consisted of historically-themed radio dramas that Durham had written and researched at the Cleveland Hall Branch library on the Southside. The plays ranged in topic from the local to the universal. The shows first airing was entitled the

²⁸⁴ Timuel D. Black, interview with Erik Gellman and Ian Rocksborough-Smith. The most significant demonstration of this unity was the March on Washington Movement initiated by Pullman porter leader, A. Phillip Randolph who worked to pressure the federal government to pass Executive Ordinance 8802 - a law that ultimately led to the desegregation of munitions and military industries. See Herbert Garfinkel, *When Negroes March: The March on Washington Movement in the Organizational Politics for FEPC* (Glencoe: The Free Press, 1959); Sherie Mershon, Steven L. Schlossman, *Foxholes & Color Lines: Desegregating the U.S. Armed Forces* (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1998).

“Knock Kneed Man” and was about Crispus Attucks, the freedman who participated against the British in the events of the Boston Massacre in 1770. The show also featured various programs on Black Chicago personalities like Bronzeville’s first congressman, Oscar DePriest, as well as thematic pieces like “Segregation Incorporated” that focused on the racial inequities of urban housing.²⁸⁵ Durham consciously depicted heroic tropes from black history but also complex characters in *Destination Freedom* as compared to his earlier work *Democracy U.S.A* which he “criticized... for its patronizing attitude about black historical personalities.” Durham’s cast for the show was a who’s who of progressive Bronzeville and Chicago-based artists, actors, and personalities. This cast included Oscar Brown, Jr., singer Janice Kingslow, journalist Vernon Jarrett, and local white progressive radio personality Studs Terkel. Many of them had been involved in the short-lived W.E.B. DuBois Theater Guild, a small theater group on the Southside named after the esteemed scholar. As one scholar of African American radio history suggests, *Destination Freedom* offered “the single most effective use of radio to teach black history and to make political arguments on behalf of the black quest for freedom.”²⁸⁶

Destination Freedom was far from being the first black-themed radio programming in Chicago or the country for that matter. New York’s Roi Ottley first produced a similarly-themed radio drama four years before *Destination Freedom* and was based on Ottley’s book: *New World a Coming* in 1944. Since the late 1920s African American-focused radio programming in Chicago occurred through *The All Negro Hour*. Produced by Jack L. Cooper, the show depicted the “variety of talents and religious convictions” within the community to “undermine negative mainstream radio” depictions of black life. As black music became a profitable industry, West

²⁸⁵ “Analysis of *Destination Freedom* by Hugh Cordier, a thesis for the seminar: Problems in Radio, Northwestern University, Summer Quarter 1949,” 5, Box 6, Folder 4, Richard Durham Papers, HARSH.

²⁸⁶ Barbara Savage, *Broadcasting Freedom*, 261-263.

Indian Chicagoan Al Benson emerged as an immensely popular local disc jockey whose work typified the music's popularity through all of Chicago. And of course the famous *Amos 'n Andy Show* was produced in Chicago during the 1930s (which featured two white performers in black face) much to the dismay of groups like the NAACP.²⁸⁷ Nonetheless, *Destination Freedom* “marked a radical departure from *The Amos 'n Andy Show*” format with its emphasis on demystifying racial stereotypes. Historian Darlene Clark Hine writes how Chicago was literally “a destination” [for migrants] and that Durham’s program “provided the historical facts and context that black Chicagoans needed to continue forging a more empowering and assertive modern identity.” Moreover, Hine argues that, “Durham helped in the fashioning of oppositional consciousness by reminding black Chicagoans of the exploits of black freedom fighters across the long decades of slavery, emancipation, and reconstruction.”²⁸⁸

Destination Freedom received a good deal of support from within the Southside community and was certainly part of the many discussions that continued the city’s black cultural renaissance into the 1950s. The cast regularly appeared at local social events like “Coffee Cooler” hosted at the Parkway Community House and at the Chicago Radio Listeners Guild. The show received endorsements from local branches of the NAACP and the Urban League. One event at the Ida B. Wells Community Center on East 39th featured cast members alongside Margaret Taylor Goss [Burroughs], “author of children’s books,” as a guest speaker. Sometimes the “coffee coolers” served as the site of actual *Destination Freedom* broadcasts, which occurred weekly on Sunday mornings. For example, in December of 1949, the show broadcasted from the Woodlawn AME Church and the church’s pastor, Rev. Archibald Carey,

²⁸⁷ Darlene Clark Hine, Introduction to *The Black Chicago Renaissance*, xxvi. For more on Black radio programming in post-war Chicago, see Adam Green, *Selling the Race*, 80-89.

²⁸⁸ Darlene Clark Hine, Introduction to *The Black Chicago Renaissance*, xxvi.

was the featured speaker on the program.²⁸⁹

In many ways, *Destination Freedom* was too good to last given the level of editorial direction Durham exercised and the sort of content he was able to write about. It was difficult to sustain this sort of radio programming with little financial support in a setting like Cold War America. *The Chicago Defender* withdrew its funding for the program within the first year of airing. Upon reflection, Richard Durham felt this development had to do with the fact that one of the programs cast members, Oscar Brown, Jr., was running for the left-supported Progressive Party that year (as noted above) while he worked for the show. The local NBC station continued to run the show at a cost of \$300-\$350 a week but was unsuccessful at getting any other backers from Black Chicago's business community, let alone the larger white mainstream business community.²⁹⁰ Durham's relationship with NBC also ended badly as Cold War tensions continued to mount throughout Chicago (and the nation) and all things associated with civil rights were deemed to be Communist in nature. In the end, after only two years on the air, WMAQ discontinued the series in 1950. In its place another "show continued under the same title but was hosted by 'Paul Revere,' who extolled white patriots like Nathan Hale and Dwight Eisenhower."²⁹¹ Durham took issue with this shift in programming and sued NBC unsuccessfully for copyright infringement on the shows name and content - a suit that dragged

²⁸⁹ Lorenze Norton to Faith Jefferson Jones, May 21, 1949, Box 4, Folder "Destination Freedom Memorabilia," Richard Durham Papers, HARSH; Memo, Chicago Radio Listeners Appreciation Guild, Sunday June 26, 1949, Box 4, Folder "Destination Freedom Memorabilia," Richard Durham Papers, HARSH; "Children's Author on Coffee Hour," *The Chicago Defender* (Daily Edition) (April 16, 1949), Richard Durham Papers, HARSH; "Coffee Cooler Adds Sociality to Air Shows" *The Chicago Defender* (Daily Edition) (April 16, 1949), Richard Durham Papers, HARSH.

²⁹⁰ "Analysis of Destination Freedom by Hugh Cordier," 15-17.

²⁹¹ Barbara Savage, *Broadcasting Freedom*, 269.

well into the 1970s.²⁹²

Nonetheless, the brief yet successful run by *Destination Freedom* demonstrated how the late 1940s were still very much a moment when Black Chicago's political terrain was in the balance between a radical old left and an ascendant racial liberalism that ultimately squeezed the old left out. It was during this very interregnum that the UPWA played a vital role in sustaining older left wing sensibilities in the hostile climate of Cold War America as a younger generation of black activists took on the work of civil rights and what became Black Power activism. This was particularly evident if one examines the popularity of the Progressive Party in relation to other short lived left-wing political organizations of the same period, like the work of the National Negro Labor Council or the Civil Rights Congress on the Southside and elsewhere in the nation during this period.

A speech by singer/activist Paul Robeson in 1950 to 900 delegates at the National Negro Labor convention held in Chicago under the auspices of the National Negro Labor Council (NNLC) exemplified the spirit of this post-WWII African American left wing militancy.²⁹³ Robeson was also a national leader of the Progressive Party as well as chairman of the Council of African Affairs (CAA) and a close associate of the Civil Rights Congress (CRC) - a legal arm of the Communist Party (another significant left-leaning African American-led organization that addressed issues of colonial independence in the post-war era). Collectively, these organizations and coalitions made up the central formations of the African American radical left through the

²⁹² Richard Durham to Mr. Friedman, February 25, 1951, Box 9, Folder 1, Richard Durham Papers, HARSH.

²⁹³ For more on the National Negro Labor Council, see Clarence Lang, "Freedom Train Derailed: The National Negro Labor Council and the Nadir of Black Radicalism 1950-1956" in Clarence Lang and Robbie Lieberman, eds., *Anticommunism and the African American Freedom Movement: "Another Side of the Story."*

late 1940s and early 1950s.²⁹⁴ Robeson felt that “Negro trade unionists must increasingly exert their influence in every aspect of the life of the Negro community.” He added that the “knowledge and experience which... [black workers had] gained through... [their] struggles in the great American labor movement” could benefit “church... fraternal, civic or social organization.” In Robeson’s view, they could not be “permitted to continue” without the input of such laboring knowledge. Robeson also mapped out the regional sectors that could champion this process, from Packinghouse workers “here” in Chicago, to “auto workers” in Detroit; “seamen and longshoremen of the West Coast; the tobacco workers of North Carolina; the miners of Pittsburgh and West Virginia; and the steel workers of Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Michigan and Minnesota; the furriers, clerks and office workers of New York, Philadelphia” and others “throughout the land.” Robeson ended his speech with a barb against African American labor leaders whose civil rights activism was conforming rapidly to the liberalism of the post-World War II and early Cold War era. To this end he singled out figures like the “[A. Phillip] Randolphs,” “[Willard] Townsends” and “[Robert] Weavers.”²⁹⁵

The Progressive Party (PP) in particular emerged to represent this labor and civil rights militancy following World War II. Under former vice-president Henry Wallace’s leadership, the PP pushed the federal Democrats led by Harry Truman to adopt more stringent anti-discrimination measures such as the establishment of a Fair Employment Practices Commission (FEPC), the removal of southern poll taxes, and a hastening of military desegregation. Black

²⁹⁴ For more on the Council on African Affairs, see Penny Von Eschen, *Race Against Empire*. For more on the Civil Rights Congress, see Gerald Horne’s *Communist Front?*

²⁹⁵ Paul Robeson, “*Forge Negro-Labor Unity for Peace and Jobs*,” *Speech delivered at Chicago meeting of more than 900 delegates to the National Labor Conference for Negro Rights, June 1950* (New York: Political Affairs Reprint, 1976), 10, 14.

Chicago congressmen William Dawson's tight control of the Democratic Party's African American submachine certainly helped bring out the federal vote for Truman. Nearly seventy percent of African Americans who voted supported Truman in the election of 1948, due largely to Truman's "bold" civil rights stances.²⁹⁶ The PP achieved significant currency on the Southside in this moment but it did not achieve electoral success. While it was backed by progressives around the country the Progressive Party (PP) ultimately failed to garner much of the popular vote. Indeed, Oscar Brown, Jr. nor any of his local running mates who included the lawyer Earl B. Dickerson and the UPWA's District 1 secretary treasurer Sam Parks and local UAW, CIO Council, and maverick NAACP organizer Willoughby Abner, were ever elected to office.²⁹⁷

Still, as most African Americans overwhelmingly supported Democratic frontrunner Truman (in Chicago especially) they maintained an air of neutrality (or independence) locally in the lead up to the '48 election. These stances underscored a black Southside consciousness about the community's strategic position within the national electorate. Newspapers like *The Chicago Defender* ultimately supported Truman's campaign, but did so in terms that framed the African American voting public as one that was "non-aligned." *The Defender* did offer some favorable coverage to local Progressive Party activities during its 1948 campaign and duly noted the

²⁹⁶ Christopher Manning, *William L. Dawson*, 106-108; William Grimshaw, *Bitter Fruit*, 57-58, 65.

²⁹⁷ Oscar Brown Jr Interviewed by J. Fred MacDonald; "Vernon Jarrett," *The History Makers* (<http://www.thehistorymakers.com/biography/vernon-jarrett-39>) (Accessed September 30, 2012); *Music is My Life, Politics My Mistress*. The Progressive Party and Henry Wallace's failed campaign still remain significant for the way in which it pushed the Democratic Party under Harry Truman to adopt civil rights measures in order to ensure election. See, Robert J. Blakely, *Earl B. Dickerson: A Voice for Freedom and Equality* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2006), 142-143, 147-148; Keith Gilyard, *John Oliver Killens: A Life of Black Literary Activism* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2010), 114; "Progressive Party Election Bulletin [n.d.]," Box 20, Folder 5, Max R. Naiman Papers, CHM; "Second State Convention of the Progressive Party of Illinois, April 15," [1950], Box 20, Folder 3-4, Max R. Naiman Papers, CHM. For more on Henry Wallace and the Progressive Party's Third Party challenge and civil rights activity through 1948, see Adam Fairclough, *Race and Democracy*; Patricia Sullivan, *Days of Hope*.

election of eight blacks to the party's board of directors earlier that year. Even local independent African American republicans, like judge Archibald Carey (normally a Republican) who was a city alderman in the 3rd ward continued to be popular among black Southsiders through the late 1940s and early 1950s precisely because he took firm stances on issues of civil rights. After his unsuccessful bid for the state legislature in 1948 with the Progressives and as a Communist, Oscar Brown, Jr. even attempted two more forays into electoral politics in 1950 and 1952 with the local Republican and Democratic parties respectively. African Americans had good reason to distrust mayor Martin Kennelly since he did little to continue the modest racial reforms in public housing adopted by mayor Ed Kelly. In fact despite objections from William Dawson, Mayor Kennelly outlawed jitney cabs and passed "blighted areas" legislation that led to the displacement of many Bronzeville residents to make way for what would eventually become the Illinois Institute of Technology. African Americans in Chicago always had good reason to distrust the local Democratic machine, despite the power that Congressman William Dawson had over Southside politics through the 1940s and 1950s and the federal party on the national scene after World War II especially.²⁹⁸

Any history of the UPWA, unionism, and race through the middle of the twentieth century cannot avoid discussion of the complex relationship between American Communism and African Americans. As Rick Halpern notes, the CP appealed to and recruited many younger African Americans who gained employment in the stockyards during World War II, especially

²⁹⁸ Christopher Manning, *William L. Dawson*, 106-108; "The Wallace Bust," *The Chicago Defender*, (November 13, 1948), 6; "Illinois Progressives Elect Eight to Board," *The Chicago Defender* (March 7, 1948), 3; "Third Party or Third War III. Slogan for Wallace," *The Chicago Defender* (April 17, 1948), 5; *Music is My Life, Politics My Mistress* DVD. Jitney cabs were informal taxi cabs organized by black Southsiders in lieu of a dearth in transportation services extending throughout their community, from infrequent street car and elevated services to the refusal of downtown taxi drivers to enter the black community.

because of the party's reputation as a "militant civil rights organization."²⁹⁹ Some important packinghouse organizers like Hank Johnson surely drifted away from the CP orbit that predominated in the UPWA through the 1940s just as many African American cultural workers who were former Communists (like author Richard Wright) did. But by the end of the decade, the "CP boasted between four and five hundred members in the stockyards, with probably an equal number of sympathizers."³⁰⁰

An important role was undeniably played by black and white Communists within the union against racism in hiring policies, but especially on issues related to the black community like housing, employment, and public education. The early 1930s featured the CP-defended Scottsboro Boys case in Alabama as the Party's highest profile civil defense - a case about nine black teenagers falsely accused of sexually assaulting a white woman and that became a cause célèbre internationally. The CP also achieved notoriety in the Southern states for its work among southern sharecroppers, farm workers, and mine, mill, and smelter workers.³⁰¹ In Chicago, local CP-leaders headed unemployed councils during the 1930s and supported tenant rights alongside interracial union struggles in meatpacking and steel industries especially, but also public transit

²⁹⁹ Rick Halpern, *Down on the Killing Floor*, 168-169.

³⁰⁰ Johnson opportunistically left the UPWA and joined the upstart District 50 of the United Mine Workers who in 1940 were then breaking from the CIO. Sadly over the course of this heated episode Johnson was shot dead in 1944 by Artel Shelton, another former packinghouse worker turned coal miner. See Rick Halpern, *Down on the Killing Floor*, 168-169; Erik Gellman, *Death Blow to Jim Crow*, 61. The CP-issue also became a significant point of contention among the many scholars who contributed to a lively discussion in the pages of *Labor History* in 1999, shortly after the seminal works on UPWA history were published by Rick Halpern and Roger Horowitz - their work of course based on rich oral and archival research. See "Symposium on Halpern and Horowitz: Packinghouse Unionism," *Labor History* 40:2 (1999): 207-235.

³⁰¹ James A. Miller, Susan D. Pennybacker, Eve Rosenhaft, "Mother Ada Wright and the International Campaign to Free the Scottsboro Boys, 1931-1934," *American Historical Review* 106:2 (April 2001): 389-390; Robin D.G. Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe*.

and domestic work, areas significantly highlighted by the pioneering labors of many black women especially.³⁰²

By the late 1940s, the CPUSA still occupied a significant but fairly decreased profile in the black community since its heyday in the Depression era. In Chicago, connections between local CP leaders and labor movement-focused civil rights organizations like the National Negro Congress diminished after 1939 when the Party signed the Nazi-Soviet non-aggression pact and alienated many African Americans from the party (not to mention Poles and members of Chicago's Progressive Jewish Community). As Randi Storch suggests: “[w]ithin the context of Chicago's changing demography, the Cold War's deleterious effects on American trade unionism, and the UPWA's post-1948 union agenda... the American Communist Party developed a new line on race” which supported civil rights initiatives in industrial cities like Chicago but no longer saw itself as the “vanguard” of black-led movements around the country. This “vanguard” role was now firmly occupied by broadly-based community and civil rights organizations like the NAACP and the Urban League. It was a “combination of these forces” writes Storch, that “saved the UPWA from moving to a bureaucratic and unresponsive union” and allowed it to continue struggling for “social justice and racial equality on the shop floor and throughout the city.”³⁰³

Despite the decline of the old left, a distinct current of left wing militancy remained as

³⁰² For a useful treatment of the relationship between the CP and African Americans in Chicago through the 1930s, see Randi Storch, *Red Chicago*, 72, 103-114. See also Norman Solomon, *The Cry Was Unity*, 155-156; Erik Gellman, *Death Blow to Jim Crow*, 57-58, 160; Erik Gellman, “Carthage Must Be Destroyed,” 81-114, especially 108; St. Clair Drake & Horace Cayton, *Black Metropolis*, 219n, 734-736. Though often conflicted and controversial, such work with unemployed and working class movements was paralleled in other northern urban settings with large African American communities during the same period. See for example, Mark Naison, *Communists in Harlem During the Depression* (Grove Press, 1984); Cheryl Greenberg, *Or Does it Explode: Black Harlem in the Great Depression* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 97-100, 130-137.

³⁰³ Randi Storch, “The United Packinghouse Workers of America,” 77, 82.

part of Chicago's local black political culture through the post-WWII and early Cold War era and much of it centered on the UPWA in Chicago. As Timuel Black indicates, this current predated the civil rights movement of the late 1950s and 1960s and was symbolized in Chicago by the cultural and political milieu that surrounded District 1. In Black's view, this militancy was imbedded and expressed through important local structures of racial feeling, knowledge, and commitments to social change across generations. Black suggests that the "movement didn't start with" Dr. King. King, in Black's view, "glamorized" the movement and was surely "fantastic." But Black felt that there "were ordinary people, extraordinary in terms of their commitments who decided ... as Black had decided that the "movement" for civil rights in the 20th Century "began" with World War II experiences. "[I]n addition to this past experience [there was also] organizing unions." Tim Black felt that in Chicago especially, "Packinghouse workers began to get into a real strong organizing spirit with those that had stayed here and those that had gone... That was a base, a thought base. Feeling base. Already established. Didn't have to teach much. People like Oscar Brown, Jr.'s father, Oscar Brown, Sr., didn't have to tell Oscar Brown too much. So [Jr.] could join up in the movement very early in his life."³⁰⁴

This notion of a "feeling base" represented by the Brown's and the Packinghouse workers in Black's narrative stands in tension with the broader "structures" of "racial feeling" Adam Green suggests characterized Black Chicago's cultural and community life through mid-century. As Green's work deftly shows, the community expressed a more contingent form of entrepreneurialism that expressed a tenuous racial liberalism in the public sphere - exemplified in its clearest form by the emergence of Johnson publishing enterprises through the 1950s and

³⁰⁴ Timuel D. Black, interview with Erik Gellman and Ian Rocksborough-Smith.

which would dominate African American-led print media forms for decades to come.³⁰⁵ The Brown's of course did not represent even close to a majority of black Southsiders. Nor did the UPWA ultimately officially endorse the Progressive Party in the 1948 election or in future elections despite a significant cohort within the union who did - including its president Ralph Helstein.³⁰⁶ But as Brown and Black's reflections demonstrate, there was undeniably a left political current that persisted into the postwar period throughout the African American Southside. As Tim Black notes, "[t]he packinghouse workers were more radical than liberal. They were more to the Left."³⁰⁷

Anti-Discrimination and Workers Education

In the immediate post-WWII years, the UPWA's fortunes were very connected to the results of their strikes in 1946 and 1948. These actions were part of a hugely significant nationwide strike wave that consumed U.S. industry after the war. At the end of 1946, government statisticians "counted more than six thousand strikes involving well over seven million workers."³⁰⁸ In meatpacking, the 1946 strike nearly doubled hourly wages and moved towards regional wage harmony. However, the companies came back in the 1948 strike and held out against the UPWA. They were aided by a secret agreement signed with the rival (and more conservative Amalgamated Meat-Cutters-AFL) – a protracted conflict that resulted in the near

³⁰⁵ Adam Green, *Selling the Race*, 132,175.

³⁰⁶ Rick Halpern, *Down on the Killing Floor*, 234-236;

³⁰⁷ Timuel D. Black, interview with Erik Gellman and Ian Rocksborough-Smith.

³⁰⁸ Rick Halpern, *Down on the Killing Floor*, 218; Roger Horowitz, *Negro and White, Unite and Fight!*, 169. George Lipsitz has written expressly about how wartime wildcat strikes were led by many Black workers and white rank-and-filers who engaged in "hate strikes" and operated outside the parameters set by CIO leaders and progressive white radicals within the union movement who sought to uphold no-strike pledges during the war. See, George Lipsitz, *Rainbow at Midnight*, 69-98.

complete cessation of UPWA functions, whose resources over the course of the strike were bled dry. The defeat also came with tremendous internal turmoil within the labor movement due to the pressures felt nationwide by CIO unions to sign the recently passed Taft-Hartley agreement and which signaled the onset of anticommunist hysteria throughout the nation with far-reaching proscriptions on radical union activities and requirements that all signatory members of the National Labor Relations Board (a government agency that helped leverage union contracts) sign non-communist affidavits. The passing of the Taft-Hartley Act and its aftermath did have a profound effect on most CIO unions and certainly “threatened” the “militant” forms of union activism the UPWA had become known for.³⁰⁹

Nonetheless, the UPWA managed to weather the Taft-Hartley storm despite severe internal tensions between left and right factions as well as outside pressures from rising Cold War hysteria. This was in no small part because of the shrewd and balanced leadership of its president Ralph Helstein, a civil libertarian and social democrat elected at the union’s 1946 convention who opposed anticommunism’s worst forms. Helstein managed to achieve the support of centrist forces within the union to strategically signify compliance with the government-mandated anticommunist legislation. But he also utilized the democratic structures of his union which reflected his union’s majority rank and file sentiment (much of it from the left-dominated District 1 locals) which supported non-compliance.³¹⁰ As a result of Helstein’s balancing posture, the UPWA avoided outright expulsion from the CIO; a fate that befell eleven

³⁰⁹ Rick Halpern, *Down on the Killing Floor*, 225, 231; Roger Horowitz, *Negro and White, Unite and Fight!*; George Lipsitz, *Rainbow at Midnight*; Mary Dudziak, *Cold War and the Color Line*; Alice Kessler-Harris, *In Pursuit of Equity*, 151. For a good assessment of the effect of Taft-Hartley union cultures nationwide through the late 1940s, see George Lipsitz, *Rainbow at Midnight*, 157-181.

³¹⁰ Rick Halpern, *Down on the Killing Floor*, 224-227; Roger Horowitz, *Negro and White, Unite and Fight!*, 183-184.

other left-led unions who refused to adhere to Taft-Hartley.³¹¹ The UPWA did not escape this moment unfazed. Most significantly for Chicago and District 1, the fall-out from the '48 strike and the internal disputes over Taft-Hartley compliance led to the forced resignation of one of its key organizers, Herbert March (who continued to be an activist with the left-leaning Armour, Local 347 through the early 1950s).³¹²

But the post-1948 period also provided the union with a unique opportunity to continue its democratic tradition of responding to the interests of its rank and file and to seek social justice on racial issues with the ascendance of civil rights to the national agenda. As Les Orear, one of the UPWA International's key staffers and newspaper editors through this period recalls, the union was still "in the foreground" of left-wing unionism in the country. The union was "getting sniped at by the CIO for getting ahead of ourselves" on civil rights and anti-discrimination issues especially.³¹³ Roger Horowitz also notes in part as a response to the thesis which many historians advance about the disconnect between civil rights and labor through the Cold War era, that the UPWA's "aggressive policies" represented an "opportunity found and kept by its black members in a manner paralleled, to a far lesser extent, by [the eleven] industrial unions expelled from the CIO."³¹⁴

Ralph Helstein helped set up an anti-discrimination program with one of the union's vice-

³¹¹ These included the Farm Equipment, United Electrical, Food and Tobacco, and Fur and Leather workers who represented over 1.5 million members over the course of the postwar era, alienating them from the mainstream of the American labor movement. Steve Russwurm, ed. *The CIO's Left-Led Unions*; Roger Horowitz, *Negro and White, Unite and Fight!*, 195.

³¹² Randi Storch, "The United Packinghouse Workers of America," 75-76; Rick Halpern, *Down on the Killing Floor*, 225-227, 231.

³¹³ Les Orear, interview with Ian Rocksborough-Smith.

³¹⁴ Roger Horowitz, *Negro and White, Unite and Fight!*, 227.

presidents, Russell Lasley, an African American union executive and native of Iowa who relocated to Chicago for work in the international's head office in the late 1940s. They commissioned a study in 1949 conducted by Fisk University social scientist, John Hope III, entitled *Equality of Opportunity: A Union Approach to Fair Employment*. The study surveyed locals across the country to gauge views on race relations in packing plants and its findings became the basis for the establishment of the union's anti-discrimination department in 1950, headed by Russell Lasley. Framed as a way to oppose the "reactionary forces" of "business and banking" interests, the union's report on the formation of the AD department underscored how "minorities... [meaning primarily African and Mexican Americans and women] lacked participation in the activities of the union." The "cause" of this reality needed to be discovered and corrected. If left to continue, it was agreed that the situation would be a "danger to the future health" of the union.³¹⁵

During the late 1940s, the UPWA also further developed worker education programs organized to support its unique shop steward structures. The UPWA's steward structure facilitated the input and exchange of ideas about union policies directly from shop floor workers in many of its districts throughout the country and had been key to the union's successful organizing victories since the 1930s because of how it promoted workplace democracy. Both Rick Halpern and Roger Horowitz demonstrate how these organizational structures enabled rank and file workers to exert their power at points of production to influence labor negotiations and successful wage increases. This was especially true for the increasingly black majority locals in Chicago through mid-Century who served a strategic role in negotiating important regional wage

³¹⁵ "Civil Rights Report of the Anti-Discrimination Committee of the UPWA-CIO," March 15, 1950, Box 297, Folder 5, UPWA Papers, WISC; Rick Halpern, *Down on the Killing Floor*, 238.

differentials throughout the country by the 1950s. The job actions of workers who worked in strategic departments such as the beef and hog kills (or the “killing floors” made famous in the songs of Chicago blues greats like “Big” Bill Broonzy)³¹⁶ in coordination with the steward system enabled many of the union’s crucial victories over the course of the mid-20th Century - notably the achievement of regional North/South wage differentials by the early 1950s.³¹⁷

This democratic outlook was duly noted by University of Chicago social scientist and union expert Kermit Eby in 1953. Eby remarked how the packinghouse workers to that point during the post-World War II era were one of the “freer” American unions in terms of input from its rank and file and in terms of leading the way for workers education.³¹⁸ Moreover, Roger Horowitz notes how the forms of steward training encouraged by the UPWA worked to promote alternate histories of the labor movement in meatpacking, to inform workers about how the industry was structured, how contract and grievance procedures worked, and most unique of all, how the union’s anti-discrimination programs were disseminated to workers at the shop-floor level.³¹⁹

It is generally agreed that as a dissident social movement, worker education declined through this period as labor, capital and the state merged. For example, the independent labor colleges of the 1920s and 1930s, like Brookwood Labor College, declined. These colleges offered more “ideologically-based education” and almost functioned as liberal arts colleges - open to a range of opinions from socialist to libertarian. Worker education programs affiliated

³¹⁶ Who himself at one point worked in packing before he became a major blues musician.

³¹⁷ Rick Halpern, *Down on the Killing Floor*, 142-143, 204-205; Roger Horowitz, *Negro and White, Unite and Fight!*, 216-218, 226-227;

³¹⁸ Kermit Eby, “The ‘Drip’ Theory in Labor Unions,” 97, 99.

³¹⁹ Roger Horowitz, *Negro and White, Unite and Fight!*, 213.

with the Communist Left, like the Jefferson School of Social Science in New York and the Abraham Lincoln School in Chicago (analyzed in chapter 2), had fewer resources to sustain themselves as viable centers from which labor unions could administer entire programs through the Cold War 1950s. In part as a result of this void, most unions started to farm out their programs to universities and colleges that generally focused on more “utilitarian” forms of education that “incorporated education as a means to promote policies and administrative skills.” Workers in effect became alienated from their “modes of education” just as the labor movement itself shifted to a more narrow focus through the 1950s.³²⁰

The first official attempts by the UPWA to start worker education were headed by Svend Godfredsen, from the union’s District 6 (Minnesota). Godfredsen organized a training institute at the University of Chicago in 1946 that (in the words of one scholar of the UPWA’s education program history) forwarded a “utilitarian agenda” focused squarely on “grievance procedures, wage structure, and legislative and community action.” Though a handbook called “History of the Packinghouse Workers” was used in Godfredson’s early program, “history” and knowledge of past “oppressive practices” on the part of the packing companies was generally omitted from curriculum. The program was certainly geared to “promote” rank and file participation and to work seamlessly with the democratic steward structure of the UPWA. But under Godfredsen it did not emphasize issues of racial discrimination or any specific ideological agenda that made it any more advanced in outlook than the statist and New Deal-oriented CIO. It follows then that Godfredsen along with Phillip Weightman (a conservative African American executive of the

³²⁰ Clyde W. Barrow, “Counter-Movement Within the Labor Movement: Workers’ Education and the American Federation of Labor, 1900-1937,” *Social Science Journal* 27:4 (1990): 395-418; Marvin Gettleman, “No Varsity Teams,” 353; William Patterson, *The Man Who Cried Genocide*, 155; Rick Halpern, *Down on the Killing Floor*, 235.

union) later led a right wing within the union to try and pressure Helstein's acquiescence to Taft Hartley in 1948.³²¹

It was not until the 1948 strike and its tumultuous aftermath that the UPWA (under the shrewd leadership of Helstein) started to work towards integrating its formal efforts at worker education with what would become the program for the union's Anti-Discrimination Department in 1950. The UPWA was clearly open to a wide range of possibilities for the form and direction that workers education might take. Helstein reflected that for a brief time they even considered employing local progressive Chicago radio personality Studs Terkel to direct the effort. But President Helstein had developed a rapport with a group of social gospel socialists who ran the Monteagle, Tennessee-based Highlander Folk School with whom he shared a commitment to progressive social change and pacifism. The UPWA decided to enlist staff from this renowned institution in 1949 and stayed "within" the labor movement to revamp its worker education programs. As these worker education programs developed at Highlander, they fostered what Highlander's director, the famed southern labor educator Myles Horton, called the "percolator" or "drip" process of worker and adult education that deliberately came from the bottom-up. This pedagogy affirmed rank and file participation in the formation of union policy and the implementation of important programs like anti-discrimination at the level of local unions throughout the country.³²²

³²¹ Jeffrey T. Zacharakis-Jutz, "Straight to the Heart of a Union, Straight to the Heart of a Movement": Workers' Education in the United Packinghouse Workers of America Between 1951-1953," (PhD Dissertation, Northern Illinois University, 1991), 22, 164-165, 174; Roger Horowitz, *Negro and White, Unite and Fight!*, 213; Rick Halpern, *Down on the Killing Floor*, 235.

³²² Kermit Eby, "The 'Drip' Theory in Labor Unions," *Antioch Review* 13:1 (March 1953): 97, 99; Roger Horowitz, *Negro and White, Unite and Fight!*, 234; quoted in Rick Halpern and Roger Horowitz, "Interview with Ralph Helstein, July 18, 1983," 7.

Highlander was one of the last independent labor school's in the country during this time and had been active since the 1930s as a bastion of southern progressivism.³²³ From the mid-1940s, Highlander's education programs hosted a growing number of African American unionists from around the country in its residential programs. Unions that enrolled included the fairly centrist and liberal United Auto Workers as well as the left-wing Packinghouse Workers. It had also been a base of support for the Southern Negro Youth Congress in the 1930s, a Communist-led youth organization that helped support and organize Alabama sharecroppers and tobacco farmers in Virginia. In 1951 the UPWA hired Horton himself to run its Anti-Discrimination Department and worker education initiatives, which became the last major assignment Highlander undertook with a labor union during the early Cold War era. After this assignment, the folk school shifted its attention directly to civil rights through the 1950s and became a significant support base for the Southern civil rights movement. With the UPWA, Horton's vision of worker education was to build a "grass roots, democratically-based education program" implemented through the "steward structure."³²⁴ According to Horowitz, in 1951

³²³ Others included the Philadelphia Labor College, the Brookwood Labor College in Katonah, New York, the Jefferson School of Social Sciences in New York City, and the Abraham Lincoln School in Chicago. In the U.S. South, various independent labor colleges existed alongside Highlander through the 1930s with various affiliations to different segments of the U.S. radical left (ranging from social gospel progressivism to populist socialism). For example, Arkansas had the New Era School of Social Action and Prophetic Religion as well as the socialist-run Commonwealth College – many of which challenged southern racial mores. See Clyde Barrow, "Counter-Movement Within the Labor Movement"; Erik Gellman and Jarod Roll, *The Gospel of the Working Class: Labor's Southern Prophets in New Deal America* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2011), 64-65.

³²⁴ Aimee I. Horton, *The Highlander Folk School: A History of its Major Programs, 1932-1961* (Brooklyn: Carlson Publishing, 1989), 198. One dissertation specifically treats the conflicted tenure of Highlander as the base for the union's worker education efforts. See Jeffrey T. Zacharakis-Jutz, "Straight to the Heart of the Union, Straight to the Heart of a Movement." For a brief appraisal and useful documentary snapshot of Highlander's role in the southern civil rights movement, see Kathy Emery, Linda Reid Gold, Sylvia Braselmann, eds., *Lessons From Freedom Summer: Ordinary People Building Extraordinary Movements* (Monroe: Common Courage Press, 2008), 89-98; Erik Gellman, *Death Blow to Jim Crow*, 63-107; Robin D.G. Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe*, 225-227; Charles Payne, *I've Got the Light of Freedom: The Organizing Tradition and the Mississippi Freedom Struggle* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996).

alone, “more than 1300 stewards and union officers attended union training sessions” under Horton’s leadership.³²⁵

In its development of formal education programs, the UPWA also sought to draw on the militant interracial activism and traditions that had united black and white workers on the shop floors of Chicago’s packinghouses through the 1930s and 1940s. No segment of the union symbolized these specific traditions more than the UPWA’s District 1. “Negro and White, Unite and Fight!” or “Black and White Unite!” were slogans that still resonated with many in Black Chicago through the late 1940s. Key figures from District 1 included Herb March, Vicky Starr, Sam Parks, Lyle Cooper, Jesse Prosten, Harold Neilson, Charles Hayes, Richard Saunders, and Todd Tate among others. They consistently led the way on the formulation and implementation of anti-discrimination measures during most of the union’s early history to the time that the Anti-Discrimination Committee was established in 1950 (most of these policies were informal and worked out on the shop floors). With that said, when it came to formally implementing worker education, the Communist-influenced and African American majority District 1 developed a mistrust of “outsiders,” given the repressive political climate of early Cold War America. As such, Horton’s input into what was happening on the ground in Chicago was never very direct for very long during his actual tenure. Horton only approached the leaders of this key UPWA district about coordinating with his education program at the national convention in Denver, Colorado in May of 1952.³²⁶

³²⁵ Roger Horowitz, *Negro and White, Unite and Fight!*, 214.

³²⁶ St. Clair Drake and Horace R. Cayton, *Black Metropolis*, 734; Jeffrey T. Zacharakis-Jutz, “Straight to the Heart of a Union, Straight to the Heart of a Movement,” 203-218.

More specifically, the union's formalized anti-discrimination efforts were a top priority for District 1 from the inception of the A/D Department in 1950. In many ways, this reflected the centrality of local concerns that were specific to the struggles of blacks and Mexicans in the city through midcentury (and likely other major northern urban locales as well). A civil rights report from that year made specific reference to civil rights campaigns in the "Plant vicinity" that were already being carried out by District 1 members surrounding instances of discrimination against "Negroes and Mexicans" in local taverns and restaurants. This was likely a specific reference to the campaign at Goldblatts, a lunch counter restaurant near the Back of the Yards neighborhood which District 1 activist Sam Parks campaigned to desegregate during the early 1950s. Like Herb March, Parks was another casualty of the strike of 1948, fired from his position with the Wilson Local for his CP affiliations and open militancy in the action. Parks managed to stay on as a chair of the District 1 A/D Committee through the mid-1950s.³²⁷ The report noted how the "owners of these establishments" appealed to the "prejudices of white workers by giving them a feeling of superiority." It projected the "lessons of unity" learned by District 1 organizers in the late 1930s (when they spearheaded the formation of the Packinghouse Workers Organizing Committee and what became the UPWA) as usable pasts to be imparted to locals throughout the nation: "beyond the plant."³²⁸

The 1950 report also cited the union's ongoing engagement with housing struggles in Chicago but withheld some details about just how far ahead District 1 activists were in terms of expressing cosmopolitan solidarities. For example, without giving names and details, the report cited an incident in the Summer of 1949 in the city at the home of a "white trade union leader"

³²⁷ "Civil Rights Report of the Anti-Discrimination Committee of the UPWA-CIO," Rick Halpern, *Down on the Killing Floor*, 241-242.

³²⁸ "Civil Rights Report of the Anti-Discrimination Committee of the UPWA-CIO," 6.

which was “attacked, windows broken, fire-bombs thrown” by white rioters. However, the report only mentioned the reactions of neighbors to eight African American trade unionists who visited the home. As Rick Halpern has shown, the home belonged to Aaron Bindman, a member of the International Longshoremen and Warehouse Union (ILWU) in Chicago who had offered his home to help Chicago workers convene with a Hawaiian trade unionist. District 1 also organized a citywide rally joined by the ILWU and Local 453 of the UAW later that Fall at the UPWA’s new Bronzeville headquarters at 49th and Wabash to protest the “anti-Negro” and “anti-Jewish” violence of the incident. These collaborations across sectors and across races underscored how there was a strong cosmopolitan current within the UPWA in Chicago that persevered against the racial tensions of early Cold War America.³²⁹

To be sure, the union’s decision to move the District 1 headquarters from Sikora Hall at South Marshfield to the old Bacon’s Casino/DuSable Community Center location in the heart of the black community in 1949 was a highly controversial move within the union. Many whites in the union who were part of Chicago locals felt averse to entering Chicago’s black belt when the union moved its District 1 headquarters there. This was equally true of the UPWA’s decision to rebuild after 1948 around its black membership as it did in some other locales nationally. As scholars of the UPWA have duly noted, many white members refused to travel to union meetings at the new Bronzeville location and the District headquarters became increasingly associated with CP activities.³³⁰

³²⁹ Rick Halpern, *Down on the Killing Floor*, 240; “To All District Locals in the Chicago Area,” November 22, 1949, Box 52, Folder 10, UPWA Papers, WISC.

³³⁰ Randi Storch, “The United Packinghouse Workers of America,” 79-80.

But the union's influence and reputation in the city and through its new location in Bronzeville still impacted and influenced wider civil rights struggles, especially the protracted (often violent) negotiations for urban and residential space on the Southside. The UPWA's District 1 succeeded at getting Martin Luther King, Jr.'s lieutenant Ralph Abernathy, Jr. to appear in September of 1958 at the new union hall's dedication before over 1,000 union members and supporters – a move that connected District 1's activities locally to wider struggles for civil rights.³³¹ Indeed, The UPWA was front and center in other major housing struggles of Chicago during this period. Most notably, members of District 1's A/D committee along with international vice-president Russell Lasley joined the Chicago Urban League's Sidney Williams to help organize the Committee to End Mob Violence (CEMV). The CEMV was a coalition of local activists that focused especially on scattered but still widespread instances of white violence against black homeowners on the Southside and included a diverse cross section of Black Chicago's civic leaders, such as Day Care Crisis founder Sylvia Cotton (wife of UPWA attorney Eugene Cotton), local club woman and republican Irene McCoy Gaines, *Chicago Defender* publisher John Sengstacke, local United Auto Workers (UAW) leader and local Progressive Party leader Willoughby Abner, Senator Christopher Wimbish, black clergy, and supportive Rabbi from the Jewish community like M.N. Berman.³³²

Historians of Chicago are now beginning to expand upon just how extensive and continuous various neighborhood campaigns for equal and public housing were from the 1940s

³³¹Martin Luther King, Jr. was originally slated to address the inauguration, but fell ill in Harlem and needed to be hospitalized. "Martin L. King Speech to Dedicate New Union Hall," *The Chicago Defender* (Daily Edition) (September 22, 1958), 9; "Rev. Abernathy Dedicates Hall," *The Chicago Defender* (National Edition) (October 4, 1958), 9.

³³² "The Chicago Conference to End Mob Violence," November 22, 1949, Box 52, Folder 10, UPWA Papers, WISC.

through the 1960s. This was true not only on the city's Southside, but also increasingly on the city's West Side, which was quickly growing into another large African American enclave through mid-Century in neighborhoods such as East and West Lawndale and Garfield Park.³³³ Of particular note for the UPWA were its efforts to support African American homeowners in Trumbull Park, a housing development on the far south side of the city.

The UPWA's involvement in the Trumbull Park housing struggles was the basis for one of Black Chicago's most important and enduring cultural expressions of the 1950s: the novel *Trumbull Park*. The novel was written in 1958 by one of District 1's former program coordinators, Frank London Brown, who also worked as an A/D field representative for the union in Kansas City through the mid-1950s. In 1954, he moved with his family back to Chicago (where he originally grew up) to work with District 1 and attempted to move into the Trumbull Park housing project in South Deering on the far south side. Built in 1938 as a New Deal project, "Trumbull Park" had a stated objective from its inception to bar any black families from moving in.³³⁴ Oscar Brown, Jr. along with Sam Parks and other District 1 representatives joined NAACP activists and other local groups to support the African American families (including Brown's)³³⁵ who had tried to move into the predominantly white veterans housing project.³³⁶ As in many other scenarios where African Americans tried to move into white areas, these families were met with Molotov cocktails through their windows, rock throwing, and constant verbal

³³³ Beryl Satter, *Family Properties*; Joe Allen, *People Wasn't Meant to Burn*; D. Bradford Hunt, *Blueprint for Disaster: The Unraveling of Chicago Public Housing* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009).

³³⁴ Mary Helen Washington, Foreword in Frank London Brown, *Trumbull Park*, IX; Mary Helen Washington, "Desegregating the 1950s: The Case of Frank London Brown," *The Japanese Journal of American Studies* 10 (1999) 15-32; "Report by Marian D. Simmons, 1955," 3, Box 386, Folder 6, UPWA Papers, WISC.

³³⁵ No relation to Oscar Brown, Jr.

³³⁶ Oscar Brown, Jr. to Robert Levin, October 8, 1953, Box 349, Folder 32, UPWA Papers, WISC; Roger Horowitz, *Negro and White, United and Fight!*, 229

abuse on a daily basis by whites who wanted to “sabotage” integration efforts. The riots also amounted to a form of “psychological warfare.” From this trauma, Frank London Brown penned his famous novel, *Trumbull Park*, in the late 1950s to document the “mob violence and intimidation experienced by blacks in the desegregation” of their eventual homes.³³⁷

Trumbull Park is an outlier to the canon of African American fiction written during the 1950s. As literary scholar Mary Helen Washington writes, the novel should not be read simply as a “suppressed literary work of the 1950s” but rather “in relation to the social and political work black writers were engaged in” in its time. In Washington’s view, this novel fits “more fully in [a mode of] radical and progressive political activism.” As such, Brown’s work enables a reconstitution of “the period, to see it, not as one of gradualism, passivity, and assimilation but as one which projects an assertive and vital kind of progressive politics, and one that maintains at its core an affirmation of the distinctiveness of African American culture.”³³⁸

Like Oscar Brown, Jr., Frank London Brown grew up on the South Side, but grew up in a tougher area of the Southside on a part of 58th Street known as “Blood Alley.” As Washington writes, Brown lived in close proximity to “junkies and gang members” where he “learned to be an intense chronicler of the lives of the people he knew there.” Brown’s novel is laced with references to the blues, jazz, and gospel music that infused the cultural world of Chicago in the period he grew up.³³⁹

³³⁷ Mary Helen Washington, Foreword in Frank London Brown, *Trumbull Park*, x; Arnold Hirsch, “Massive Resistance in the Urban North: Trumbull Park, Chicago, 1953-1966,” *Journal of American History* 82:2 (September 1995): 522-550.

³³⁸ Mary Helen Washington, “Desegregating the 1950s: The Case of Frank London Brown,” 30.

³³⁹ Mary Helen Washington, Foreword in Frank London Brown, *Trumbull Park*, x.

Brown had a significant influence on many of the black public history groups that emerged in Chicago during late 1950s and early 1960s in conjunction with the wave of civil rights and black nationalist insurgencies that spread across the country during this period. Indeed, one local history group, the Frank London Brown Negro History Club, emerged in early 1962 out of a group of black and white University of Chicago students who had taken classes from Brown when he taught “union leadership” briefly at the university through the early 1960s and before he became fatally ill with cancer at the young age of thirty four. This program emphasized “liberal arts” and included “history” and “philosophy” and offered a relatively open curriculum that helped Brown pioneer the teaching of African American history at the university’s near northside campus downtown. His students commemorated their mentor’s tragic passing in 1962 by carrying on his name in the form of activist projects that advanced civil rights through publicly accessible events that featured black history presentations. When Brown passed, local poet Gwendolyn Brooks commemorated him in decidedly cosmopolitan terms as a “tenant of the world.” As his obituary in *The Chicago Defender* noted, “[d]uring his short life [Brown] worked as a machinist, loan interviewer, union organizer, union program co-ordinator, bartender, government employe (sic), jazz singer and newspaper and magazine writer.”³⁴⁰ Though he is much less well known than Lorraine Hansberry (who also died young at 34), Brown’s life embodied the cosmopolitanism life experiences and knowledge projects undertaken by many of Black Chicago’s cultural workers who had to endure the restrictions of the Cold War 1950s.

³⁴⁰ “Union Leadership Meet at UC Oct 16,” *The Chicago Defender* (National Edition), 3; Beatrice Young, interview with Ian Rocksborough-Smith, May 18, 2010, Chicago, Illinois; “Frank L. Brown, Author of ‘Trumbull Park’ Dies,” *The Chicago Defender* (Daily Edition) (March 13, 1962), 1; “Friends Bid ‘Farewell’ To a ‘Tenant of World,’” *The Chicago Defender* (National Edition) (March 17, 1962), 1; Melvin S. Smith, “The People Speak: Negro History,” *The Chicago Defender* (Daily Edition) (June 11, 1962), 11.

In this setting, the UPWA's A/D Committee sought to advance, formulate, and implement extensive educational programs in locals throughout the union. These programs included "quickie" classes on "anti-discrimination" in conjunction with shop steward meetings; district schools that focused on "anti-discrimination" and "leadership" for union programs; regular areas for civil rights conferences, movies, and forums with "expert" speakers on discrimination. The methods of a 1949 Fisk University study's in-plant surveys of race relation surveys became models for the establishment of the UPWA's Anti-Discrimination program. As such, the program continued to circulate questionnaires to gauge progress on the levels of "minority" participation in union affairs and their relative access to equal employment measures and work conditions.³⁴¹ As such, from its inception, the A/D Committee offered a comprehensive program for the advancement and collection of important racial knowledge at the local level.³⁴²

A variety of films shown through the program would have provided provocative material for the discussion of anti-racism measures in the union. Universal in orientation, these films were presented as important scientific forms of knowledge; in effect they were pedagogical counterpoints to the ascendant forces of racial reaction then prevalent in Cold War America.

These included the "Brotherhood of Man," a film that espoused "scientific facts on mankind's basic brotherhood (similarities in brain capacity, blood etc...)" in the interests of a humanitarian universality and to counter still prevalent racial science that espoused fundamental racial hierarchies. The program also promoted a documentary on the African American scientist

³⁴¹"Civil Rights Report of the Anti-Discrimination Committee of the UPWA-CIO," 3.

³⁴² John Hope II, *Equality of Opportunity: A Union Approach to Fair Employment* (Washington, D.C.: Public Affairs Press 1956).

George Washington Carver who pioneered agricultural innovations. The report recommended this film be shown in conjunction with the “Brotherhood of Man” as “one more proof that no group has the edge on brain-power.” Other films included “Don’t be a Sucker,” featuring actor Paul Lukas who played a German who warns a young American about the “dangers of racial and religious prejudice.” The film compares “soap-box peddling” in an “American town,” to the “harmless” beginnings of Nazism in Germany (presumably a reference to the rise of white reactions to civil rights reform). Finally, the program promoted the “House I Live” starring rat pack member: Frank Sinatra – a decidedly patriotic film that still demonstrated how the country’s history and culture was defined by “contributions from all races and religions.”³⁴³

Studies produced by the A/D Department in the early 1950s focused especially on issues related to advancing the economic citizenship rights of racial minorities and women.³⁴⁴ In particular, these studies posited alternative histories of racial minorities within the U.S. labor movement. Like the curriculum reform efforts of Southside teachers discussed in Chapter 2, such projects drew upon important revisionist historical scholarship through the mid-20th Century about U.S. colonial history and racial slavery. Many of these programs focused on the history of minorities and multiculturalism in the making of America’s labor movement in a moment when racial antagonisms reached new heights nationally. Moreover, they specifically analyzed the history of Mexican Americans and African Americans in the packing industry itself and as racial minorities in the nation more generally.

³⁴³ Ibid. 12.

³⁴⁴The notion of “economic citizenship” is drawn here from Alice Kessler-Harris suggestion that economic citizenship is a broad concept that denotes the “achievement of an independent and relatively autonomous status that marks self-respect and provides access to the full play of power and influence that defines participation in a democratic society.” See Alice Kessler-Harris, *In Pursuit of Equity*, 12.

The UPWA produced a study entitled *Minorities in the UPWA: A History of Negroes and Mexican Americans in the Packing Industry* in 1951 that demonstrated these connections explicitly. *Minorities* drew on scholars such as E. Franklin Frazier, W.E.B. DuBois and Herbert Aptheker for African American history and Carey McWilliams and Manuel Gamio for Mexican migration history. All these activist scholars were among the more progressive revisionist historians of their generation; their work advanced understandings of how America was in fact a colonial nation founded by white European settlers who largely overtook indigenous and Spanish American populations and utilized indentured and racial slave labor to build a modern nation. On the study's second page, the editors noted how a "doctrine of white supremacy and prejudiced historians have prevented most Americans from understanding and appreciating [Frederick] Douglass' historic and decisive role in winning Negroes and whites, at home and abroad, to the cause of saving the American union."³⁴⁵ *The Packinghouse Worker* paper advertised the study as "easy to read" and as a "booklet" that covered the "role of minorities in the meat industry from the time they first became an important element" and the "facts which are presented to clarify the old divide-and-conquer lies of the packers."³⁴⁶

Consistent with the anti-fascist scholarship of figures like E. Franklin Frazier, W.E.B. DuBois, and Carey McWilliams, the UPWA study also noted how the doctrine of "white supremacy" was used in the Southern States to "restore its political domination" in the country after reconstruction. It reviewed the history of African Americans in the U.S. labor movement from their role alongside Poles as "strikebreakers" when packinghouse workers supported the 1894 railway workers strike. The narrative then moved through the early 20th Century right up to

³⁴⁵ Rick Halpern, *Down on the Killing Floor*, 78; *Minorities in the UPWA: A History of Negroes and Mexican Americans in the Packing Industry* Box 347, Folder 13, UPWA Papers, WISC.

³⁴⁶ "History of Minorities in Packing is Ready," *The Packinghouse Worker* 10:7 (July 13, 1951), 11.

the key role that blacks played in the entry of the union into the CIO in the late 1930s and early 1940s. The study's authors emphasized that despite their conflicted relations to organized labor, African Americans were not "anti-union, but rather" were only "convinced that organized labor was anti-Negro." Likewise, the study cited Carey McWilliams' assertion that "Mexicans" were simply "annexed by conquest, along with the territory they occupied." The study charted the various restrictions placed on Mexican labor migration since the 1920s – a process that compelled many into arduous agricultural work in the Southwest and reinforced "stere-eotypes (sic)" of "inferiority" that employers "stamped on the Mexican worker."³⁴⁷ Clearly unfree migrant labor was a prevalent theme throughout the study of both racialized groups.

Moreover, its interesting to consider how such work produced under the tenure of a figure like Richard Durham at the UPWA occurred a the same time that Johnson Publishing's pictorial and image-centric *Ebony* magazine achieved its greatest popularity through the mid-1950s. For example, Durham wrote and published a one-issue pictorial magazine entitled *Operation Killer* that featured captioned photographs of the UPWA's multiracial membership on their jobs and in the community. The magazine began with the story of Pauline Wilson, pictured on the cover with her children. Another publication Durham authored in the early 1950s for the UPWA was *Action Against Jim Crow*, "a documentary record of two historic arbitration cases involving discriminatory hiring practices in the meat industry" that was significant for how it dramatized "the method by white and Negro members joined hands to protect their rights." Both

³⁴⁷ *Minorities in the UPWA*, 9; Carey McWilliams quoted in *Minorities in the UPWA*, 25.

publications were widely circulated throughout the union and around the country as part of the union executives extension of the union's A/D programming.³⁴⁸

Together these publications stand as examples of how through its left wing base, the UPWA produced important and innovative racial knowledge at a local level. These forms of production paralleled important shifts in media and academic forms at mid-century that were starting to take shape in more mainstream sectors of the public sphere.

There were certainly limits to the extent and success of the UPWA's anti-discrimination programs through the late 1950s. This was sometimes articulated in terms of how the union promoted women's rights. The union focused intensely on women's rights during this period and had addressed the controversial issue of women's seniority rights since World War II. The union held a number of women's conferences from the mid-1950s and African American women like Addie Wyatt, Rosalie Wideman and others obtained important organizational positions within the union as did white women in earlier decades, such as Vicky Starr (née Stella Nowicki). In 1955, Marion Simmons (who was one of Richard Durham's allies during his tenure as program director with the international) became the first woman to head a district when she took over for Kermit Fry in District 4 (Kansas City). However, as Roger Horowitz notes, while women "composed 20 percent of the packinghouse workforce, many male workers retained the belief that women were temporary wage earners." By 1955, only 65 women had been elected officers in the union.³⁴⁹ Such limits were to a degree reflected in the A/D Committee work through the

³⁴⁸ "Operation Killer", Richard Durham Papers, HARSH; Russell Lasley to Sidney Hillman Foundation, February 2, 1953, Box 351, Folder 1, UPWA Papers, WISC.

³⁴⁹ Roger Horowitz, *Negro and White, Unite and Fight!*, 227; "Woman Gets UPWA Post," CIO News (February 21, 1955), Box 368, Folder 5, UPWA Papers, WISC; Richard Durham to Marian Simmons, March 8, 1955, Box 368, Folder 5, UPWA Papers, WISC. For a good assessment of how the labor movement as well as

1950s. In the union's study of African American and Mexican American workers, the preface suggested a "future study" would focus on women" but it never materialized despite several inquiries from the public.³⁵⁰

Still, these broader limitations did not stop a feminist movement led by figures like Wyatt, Simmons, and Rosalie Wideman, from emerging within the UPWA. These figures drew specifically upon the experiences and traditions of black women in local community organizing. As historian Bruce Fehn argues, black women in particular provided leadership for this internal movement, which used the "UPWA as a vehicle, not only to attack race discrimination in the meatpacking industry, but extended activities to local and national civil rights struggles" that also helped bridge "racial antagonisms" between whites, blacks, and Hispanic women.³⁵¹

During the mid-1950s, the UPWA's District 1 also became an important locus of African American women's activism in ways that continued the cultural fronts of past Black Chicago Renaissance activities - especially in areas of community education and public history. For example, Addie Wyatt acted as District 1's Women's Activities Committee chairperson and headed a group of women who hosted labor and community "tea" socials that appealed to Black Chicago's diverse gatherings of clubwomen who advocated for racial reform in U.S. life. Wyatt's committee also headed a group that advocated for "labor and the community"; "negro

federal labor policies consistently ascribed to these masculine norms in terms of defining women's rights to work and earn livings in American industry, see Alice Kessler-Harris, *In Pursuit of Equity*.

³⁵⁰ *Minorities in the UPWA*, 2; Richard Durham to Elizabeth Foster, January 21, 1954, Box 357, Folder 20, UPWA Papers.

³⁵¹ For more on the women's activism in the UPWA, see Bruce Fehn, "Striking Women: Gender, Race and Class in The United Packinghouse Workers of America (UPWA), 1938-1968," (PhD Dissertation, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1991), iii; Bruce Fehn, "African American Women and the Struggle for Equality in the Meatpacking Industry, 1940-1960," *Journal of Women's History* 10:1 (Spring 1998), 45.

women and their jobs”; “choral numbers”; “peace and full employment.” Male allies of the committee included Sam Parks and Frank London Brown.³⁵² Other African American women, like Pat Lewis (who was District 1’s education director) conducted discussions at regional union meetings on “the history behind” the “problem of discrimination.” She used “North-South” wage differentials among packinghouse workers as a “starting point” and “brought out the economic and political background of the South and tied this in with problems up North.”³⁵³

Despite the apparent gains that the union’s overall A/D work appeared to have made through the mid-1950s, it must be recalled how these very programs also became the source of significant conflict and misunderstanding within the union itself. Over the course of the mid-1950s, these programs would be at the center of a variety of competing and centralizing bureaucratic tendencies, especially at the International’s level. As Roger Horowitz notes, this dynamic over time revealed the limits of the union’s “social unionism” in the UPWA. This was also true for the union’s majority white rank and file outside of Chicago, who often responded ambivalently to the implementation of anti-discrimination measures (notably across the mainly white and rural mid-west and in the Southern U.S. excepting major urban areas).

It was not necessarily that white workers elsewhere in the union were outright opposed to the implementation of anti-discrimination policies. This occurred to a degree in many southern locals to be sure, but it was also often simply a question of fitting square pegs into round holes in terms of realistically applying policies in regions with few members of color to turn to. Helstein reflected how at one Iowa District convention, an exasperated member, “almost in tears,” spoke

³⁵² “Program”, UPWA Papers, WISC, 117:11.

³⁵³ “District 1 Pitches School for UPWA Wage Fight,” *The Packinghouse Worker* 10:2 (February 2, 1951): 11.

of efforts to find an African American for their local A/D committee. In this case there “wasn’t a black in town” to be found. This particular member had apparently driven around frantically one night for nearly forty miles before he finally found a “Mexican” to enlist.³⁵⁴ Such a bizarre incident underscores one of many likely unintended consequences of the UPWA’s anti-discrimination measures – that some central policies simply did not work in certain areas. Moreover, the situation also reflected Randi Storch’s observation that historians need to better “understand that racial attitudes were not inherent and unchanging among America’s unionists, but complex and often conditional.” Far more controversial for conservative members elsewhere in the country (especially in southern U.S. districts) were measures such as taking down Jim Crow partitions, desegregating locker rooms, and water fountains. Still, most scholars will agree that the implementation of these policies (as they were designed) could only go so far without a fuller and more widespread participation of the whole union’s rank and file in new measures and programs. In some cases, like the UPWA’s efforts among Louisiana sugar workers, the union was nearly destroyed by white workers who feared competition with blacks as the union’s progressive civil rights program became policy through mid-Century.³⁵⁵

The education program also became the source of considerable tension at the level of the international union. In particular, a conflict developed between Myles Horton and Vice President A.T. Stephens over the course of the Highlander Director’s short 18-month tenure as head of the

³⁵⁴ Quoted in Rick Halpern and Roger Horowitz, “Interview with Ralph Helstein, July 18, 1983,” 10.

³⁵⁵ Roger Horowitz, *Negro and White, Unite and Fight!*, 208-209; Randi Storch, “The United Packinghouse Workers of America,” 82; Rick Halpern, “The CIO and the Limits of Labor-based Civil Rights Activism: The Case of Louisiana’s Sugar Workers, 1947-1966” in Robert H. Zieger, ed., *Essays in Recent Southern Labor History*, (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1997).

UPWA's education program. The conflict ended abruptly at the end of 1953 with Horton's sudden resignation.³⁵⁶

Each man had very different views on how the union's education program was to be run. Horton wanted to maintain his "percolator" bottom-up approach to pedagogy and advocated patience with the union's ostensibly intransigent white rank and file. Stephens was more in line with the centralizing and bureaucratizing tendencies of the labor movement writ large centered in large urban centers like New York and Chicago. He advocated a more top-down implementation of A/D policies that placed the direction of worker education in the purview of the UPWA's executive branches where education staff taught field representatives who in turn communicated policy to locals and members. By contrast, Horton insisted that education staff work directly with local membership. The fallout from this dispute and Horton's resignation resulted in a sudden shift in the direction of the UPWA's worker education department. Thus, the Anti-Discrimination Department (which had been led to that point by Russell Lasley) became known as the Program Department, headquartered with the international office in downtown Chicago. Stephens won this battle, which for him (according to historian Roger Horowitz) was part of a maneuver for the leadership of the union against Helstein. In Horton's place, Stephens arranged for the appointment of former Illinois Writers Project and *Chicago Defender* writer, Richard Durham, who had been working with the union since 1950 as an editor with *The Packinghouse Worker*. Stephens' takeover of the education program "illustrates how anti-discrimination

³⁵⁶ Roger Horowitz, *Negro and White, Unite and Fight!*, 234-236; Jeffrey T. Zacharakis-Jutz, "Straight to the Heart of a Union, Straight to the Heart of a Movement," 253-260.

activities could be manipulated to serve as a foil for expanding the power of the union's bureaucracy."³⁵⁷

It is true that with the appointment of Richard Durham, the UPWA's Program Department shifted away from the drip approach promoted by Myles Horton. Under Durham, the Program Department focused more on national anti-discrimination conferences and International staff schools and less on interactions with locals throughout the country.³⁵⁸ But to suggest Durham's appointment was a mere "foil" diminishes the asset many staffers within the union felt they had with the former *Defender* writer connected as he was to Black Chicago's world of prolific cultural producers and makers.

Durham had actually been on the radar of UPWA for some time and was not just a token hire by Tony Stephens in his power play for union leadership. Durham had been considered as a "black" hire for Highlander's coordination of UPWA work under Myles Horton himself in 1951.³⁵⁹ When publications director Norman Dolnick first came to work for the UPWA in Chicago during the 1940s after working as an information officer at the National War Labor Board he took a self-described "temporary" job as editor of its paper, *The Packinghouse Worker*. Despite his later apprehensions of Durham's motives, Dolnick hired him to work at the union paper based on Durham's professional reputation stemming from his time with the Illinois Writers Project and *The Chicago Defender* during the early-mid 1940s (when Durham participated in a union organizing drive at the famous African American newspaper which got

³⁵⁷Roger Horowitz, *Negro and White, Unite and Fight!*, 234-236; 258; Norman Dolnick, "Packinghouse Workers Face the Cold War: A Memoir," *Labor History* 38:4 (Fall 1997), 506-507.

³⁵⁸ "Memo, October 15, 1954," Box 357, Folder 20, UPWA Papers, WISC.

³⁵⁹ Myles Horton to Ralph Helstein, December 11 1951, Box 75, Folder 3, UPWA Papers, WISC.

him and other left-wing editors and writers fired).³⁶⁰ Durham also continued to organize staff schools at Highlander under his tenure.³⁶¹ Clearly, his credentials were recognized among staff at the union well before his appointment in 1953 as part of Stephens' differences with the UPWA leadership.

Horowitz also notes how the union's anti-discrimination policies encouraged a new generation of African American workers within the union to form an "insipient 'black power' movement" centered in Chicago.³⁶² According to Richard Durham's wife, Clarice Durham, he "continued his protest mode" once appointed UPWA Program Director in 1953, and "recommended... and started what they called Negro caucuses in the packinghouse union."³⁶³

The Black Caucus Movements within post-WWII industrial unions generally encompassed groups of mainly left wing African American workers who led widespread efforts for social change from within their unions and in their communities. In many ways, they were important precursors for the radical left-nationalist African American workers movements and mostly urban-based Black Power movements of the 1960s and 1970s. For example, in Detroit, a "civic unionism" was sustained from the 1940s through the acclaimed Detroit Revolutionary Union Movement of the late 1960s and 1970s - not unlike the "social" and "civil rights"

³⁶⁰ Norman Dolnick, "Packinghouse Workers Face the Cold War: A Memoir," 506-507. For more on the left wing movement of cultural workers inside *The Chicago Defender* during the 1940s, see Bill Mullen, *Popular Fronts*; Ben Burns, *Nitty Gritty*. For more on Richard Durham, see J. Fred MacDoald ed., *Richard Durham's Destination Freedom: Scripts from Radio's Black Legacy, 1948-1950* (New York: Praeger), 1-11; Barbara Savage, *Broadcasting Freedom*, 261-263; Patrick Daick, "Richard Durham" in Steven C. Tracy ed., *Writers of the Black Chicago Renaissance* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2011), 185-192.

³⁶¹ Marion Simmons et al. to Les Orear, June 9, 1954, Box 436, Folder 1, UPWA Papers, WISC.

³⁶² Roger Horowitz, *Negro and White, Unite and Fight!*.

³⁶³ Clarice Durham, interview with Ian Rocksborough-Smith.

unionism ascribed to the packinghouse and southern tobacco workers during the World War II generation.³⁶⁴

The path not taken by the UPWA coincided with its “insipient” Black Power movement and reflected the assertiveness in Chicago of the union’s black majority membership. Indeed, Durham’s hiring with the UPWA’s Program Department coincided with other important openings for other staff members with both the International and with District 1. Collectively, they represented the apogee of the Black Caucus Movement within the UPWA. Among others, this group included especially Sam Parks, Charles Hayes, Russell Lasley, Oscar Brown, Jr., Frank London Brown, Marion Simmons, Hazel Hayes, Addie Wyatt, Leon Beverly, Herman C. Gilbert, and Richard Durham.³⁶⁵

This shift in direction, and the emergence of a Black Caucus Movement within the union, clearly upset many staff who felt it threatened the continuation of the interracial ideals of past decades. For example, post-war UPWA staffer Norman Dolnick, disapproved of the Black Caucus Movement tactics that sought to recruit African Americans primarily from Chicago plants. Dolnick felt this amounted to a “destructive dual unionism” which worked against the

³⁶⁴ See for example, Michael Coleman-Lewis, *Race Against Liberalism: Black Workers and the UAW in Detroit* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2008) on autoworkers in Detroit from the 1940s through the militant Detroit Revolutionary Union Movement as well as Marvin Surkin and Dan Georgakas, *Detroit, I Do Mind Dying* (New York: St. Martin’s, 1975). Also see the 1970 documentary, *Finally Got the News* (1970). Studies of other sectors in other key industrial cities have focused on Black Caucus Movements as well. Robert Korstad, *Civil Rights Unionism*; Robert Zeiger, *The CIO*, 155-156. One can chart similar caucus-like movements in AFL unions before the federation merged with the CIO in 1955, see for example, Michael Honey, *Down Jericho Road: The Memphis Strike, Martin Luther King’s Last Campaign* (New York, Norton, 2011); Michael Honey, *Southern Labor and Black Civil Rights: Organizing Memphis Workers* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993); Beth Bates, *Pullman Porters and the Rise of Protest Politics in Black America*; Eric Arnesen, *Brotherhoods of Color*.

³⁶⁵ Clarice Durham, interview with Ian Rocksborough-Smith; Roger Horowitz, *Negro and White, Unite and Fight!*, 235.

union's "unified strengths" and eventually led him [and arguably others] to abandon their work with the UPWA.³⁶⁶

The UPWA's District 1 as well as its international office also were surely susceptible during this period to what liberal historian Richard Hofstadter described as the "paranoid style" of U.S. politics – a style that infused both left and right modes of political thought with irrational behaviors and actions during the apex of the Cold War.³⁶⁷ Indeed, a number of incidents through this period demonstrated how this style affected the UPWA's (and the CP's) efforts to apply anti-discrimination policies in the union and in the community.

Committed UPWA staffer, Les Orear found himself at the center of a controversy played out in the pages of the union's paper, *The Packinghouse Worker*, which he edited in the early 1950s. Kansas City program coordinator Marion Simmons (an ally of Richard Durham and a key figure in the Black Caucus wing of the union) and her field representatives issued a complaint to the union about Orear's decision to run a headline in a May 1954 edition of *The Packinghouse Worker* entitled "Birthday Boy Don Smith." They took issue with the fact that Don Smith (an African American) was the only person referenced as "boy" in the article (and that it *was* Smith's birthday and no one else's). In response, Simmons group (who were allies of Richard Durham's) antagonized Orear by writing him facetiously: "when in your opinion does a Negro Male Homo sapien become a man?" Such language touched on a nerve for these members but their concerns were overstated. Orear in fact had a great appreciation for the union's civil rights and anti-discrimination programs and frequently made use of his position as editor of the union paper to

³⁶⁶ Norman Dolnick, "Packinghouse Workers Face the Cold War," 506-507; Les Orear, interview with Ian Rocksborough-Smith.

³⁶⁷ Richard Hofstadter, *The Paranoid Style in American Politics and Other Essays*.

promote this agenda. He responded to these accusations that he had been under the impression that Don Smith was simply a “birthday boy” like any other person celebrating an anniversary. Still, Orear was compelled to write an apology directly to Smith to insist that the caption was intended in “jocular” terms and that O’Rear had meant no harm or offense.³⁶⁸

The hypersensitivity and heightened paranoia such racial matters elicited through the exchange between O’Rear and Simmons’ group in Kansas City was mirrored, more destructively, in the fate that befell one of the UPWA’s chief organizers Herb March during this same period. A Jewish native of Brooklyn, March had been one of the most militant local CP organizers in Chicago involved with the organizing of the packing industry. March played a key role in the building of the UPWA through the 1930s and 1940s. Though he had had to step down from any official leadership in the wake of the Taft-Hartley controversies of the late 1940s, he continued to be an engaged activist with Armour Local 347 in Chicago through the early 1950s. As the CP sought to more closely engage civil rights organizations through the 1950s and shifted away from its past vanguardism, it simultaneously implemented a strict line against what Party leaders deemed to be “white chauvinism” from within their ranks. As Randi Storch suggests, although “the campaign exposed traces of racism within the party, its assumptions and tactics fostered hostility and suspicion between party members and thereby exacerbated the party’s external problems.”³⁶⁹ In 1951, Herb March was accused by Illinois CP leaders Claude Lightfoot and Sam Kushner of allegedly blocking black women from appointments to leadership positions within the union. Despite March’s appeals to top CP leaders in New York, he found himself

³⁶⁸ Marion Simmons et al. to Les Orear, June 9, 1954; Les Orear to Edward Bruner, June 15, 1954, Box 436, Folder 1, UPWA Papers, WISC; Les Orear to Donald Smith, June 2, 1954, Box 436, Folder 1, UPWA Papers, WISC; Les Orear, interview with Ian Rocksborough-Smith.

³⁶⁹ Randi Storch, “The United Packinghouse Workers of America,” 80-82; Rick Halpern, *Down on the Killing Floor*, 243.

faced with condemnation from “fellow party members” and former friends who “believed he was trying to prevent the political development of future black leaders.”³⁷⁰ The experience left March embittered and disappointed with Chicago politics and he ultimately left with his family for Los Angeles in a couple years for good where he continued his work on the left.

Despite the destructive results of these Cold War influenced paranoia’s about racial matters associated with the rise of the Black Caucus Movement’s agenda within the UPWA, its worth examining the dynamic Oscar Brown, Jr. expressed in his oral history about packing work. Brown explicitly saw himself as a “cultural worker” who ran into an intransigent labor movement. But, upon reflection, Brown conceded he had “learned a lot.” This perception suggests a more nuanced agenda on the part of Black Caucus Movement members beyond just their greater focus on race issues or attention to nationalisms. Indeed, Brown, Durham, Frank London Brown and others were cultural workers - that is they were aspiring middle class writers, artists, educators, and creative intellectuals who sought to make important interventions in the public sphere. They expressed a cosmopolitanism that did not fit neatly with the blue collar traditions that had defined the union from its inception nor the high level political conflicts at the top of the union between executives like Heltstein and Stephens (or within the CP for that matter). In this sense, they were not unlike the “educators” and “researchers” Kermit Eby wrote critically about in 1951 in his appraisal of attempts to resuscitate workers education in the 1950s. Eby felt that while well-intentioned (indeed such people within the labor movement offered promising programs in terms of anti-discrimination), ultimately their success would be limited. Why? Eby’s conclusion was fairly straight forward: these figures simply had “no base in the rank

³⁷⁰ Randi Storch, “The United Packinghouse Workers of America,” 82

and file.” They were therefore, in Eby’s estimation, of “little use in the political struggles within the union.”³⁷¹

Nonetheless, an analysis of what Durham’s cohort did attempt reveals just how expansive a vision for workers education was during these repressive Cold War years. Moreover, these labors demonstrated how a modern labor union could accomplish in terms of advancing important creative racial knowledge projects at the local level. For example, Durham clashed with Les Orear over Durham’s desire to create a regular book review section in *The Packinghouse Worker* during the mid-1950s to feature the works of important up-and-coming African American novelists. Orear opposed such content for a union paper and, moreover, felt that a novel like John Oliver Killens’ *Youngblood* would be inappropriate for readers because it depicted a gruesome rape scene of a young black girl in its opening pages. However, the novel (Killens’ debut work) ultimately portrayed “the struggle on Jim Crow terrain toward black self-determination and workers’ solidarity over the first third of the twentieth century” and would have fit well with the union’s A/D agenda through this period. Moreover, Durham, Oscar Brown, Jr., and Frank London Brown expended a great deal of time liaising with Killens and helped him arrange a book tour through Chicago in 1954 as well as communicated with Killens about circulating pocketbook editions of the book among packinghouse workers. These connections were not surprising, given the union’s reputation as a shelter for the Communist and fellow-travelling left. Unlike many African American authors of his generation who had once been associated with the CP but distanced themselves over time, Killens “never adopted” the

³⁷¹ Kermit Eby, “Workers’ Education for What?,” *Antioch Review* 11:2 (June 1951): 185-187.

“hypercritical tone” through the 1950s that his more famous contemporaries with similar pasts like Richard Wright, Ralph Ellison, and Chester Himes did.³⁷²

Effectively, the dispute between Durham and Orear represented yet another example of the paranoia’s and personality conflicts that tragically afflicted many union cultures through the Cold War era. Such incidents led to failed alliances that over time ultimately hampered the fullest expression of the UPWA’s social justice agenda.

Still, other developments surrounding discussions about Killens writing at the UPWA in Chicago also led to another important episode in Durham’s tenure with the union. This involved the famously blacklisted film *Salt of the Earth* (1954) which depicted a real life CP-led Mine, Mill and Smelters workers struggle against the Zinc Mining Corporation a few years earlier in New Mexico and featured a cast made up mainly of local Mexican American workers and residents. The film’s producer Herbert Biberman, who was a Party member and one of the exiled Hollywood Ten, was struggling throughout the early 1950s to cast, shoot, produce, and distribute the film. *Salt* was eventually edited and cut from a film lab in Chicago so Biberman already had connections to the Windy City and hoped that the city’s reputation as a hub of working class radicalism would bode well for the films reception there in the mid-1950s. However, Biberman found himself disappointed by intransigent projectionists who refused to show the film in the city (and in many other places around the country). Biberman and his associates attempted to set up two dates in Chicago, but these dates were cancelled because of the anticommunist hysteria that surrounded the film’s release and because projectionists and their unions were heavily aligned

³⁷² Keith Gilyard, *John Oliver Killens: A Life of Black Literary Activism*, 113-115, 166; Herbert Biberman to Richard Durham, September 14, 1954, Box 357, Folder 20, UPWA Papers, WISC; John Oliver Killens to Richard Durham, October 21, 1954, Box 357, Folder 20, UPWA Papers, WISC; Les Orear, interview with Ian Rocksborough-Smith.

with mainstream Hollywood producers and conspired to thwart its wide release.³⁷³ At the second showing, a Friday night on Memorial Day weekend at the Cinema Annex Theater on the North Side, two thousand ticket holders were turned away after its cancellation.³⁷⁴ The film clearly resonated with a significantly large audience despite its censure.

The packinghouse workers in Chicago were among the few unions in the country who supported the film during this quintessential U.S. cultural Cold War moment. Even the Amalgamated Meatcutters president, Patrick Gorman (normally known for his centrist leanings) came out in support of the film and offered a ringing endorsement for it as *Salt* came under fire from press across the country. Gorman felt the film told a “human interest story” in a manner such as no other labour film... shown before.” He also insisted that the “picture contained nothing ‘that could be construed as Communist propaganda.’”³⁷⁵ Richard Durham was the most supportive meatpacking unionist and got closely involved with the film’s endorsement both at a local level and national level. His correspondence with Biberman about the film was extensive and he made efforts to promote the film within the union in Chicago and in districts elsewhere, especially Des Moines, Iowa. Durham along with Armour Local 347 “promised to ‘see that [its] entire membership received [*Salt*’s] dynamic message.’”³⁷⁶

³⁷³ James T. Lorence, “*Salt of the Earth*” in *Midwest America: The Underside of Cold War Culture in Detroit and Chicago*, *Film History* 10:3 (The Cold War and the Movies, 1998): 352-353; Benjamin Balthaser, “Cold War Re-Visions: Representation and Resistance in the Unseen *Salt of the Earth*,” *American Quarterly* 60:2 (June 2008): 347-371.

³⁷⁴ Herbert Biberman, *Salt of the Earth: The Story of a Film* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1965), 189; “Salt of the Earth,” flyer, Box 359, Folder 12, UPWA Papers, WISC.

³⁷⁵ Patrick Gorman quoted in James T. Lorence, “Salt of the Earth,” 352.

³⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 352; Dick Bruner to Richard Durham, December 1, 1954, Box 359, Folder 12, UPWA Papers, WISC.

The correspondence Biberman had with Durham demonstrates the expansive concerns Durham had as a cultural worker within the union – concerns that demonstrated how Durham’s interests extended well beyond any sort of narrow nationalism. Indeed, over the course of the Summer and Fall of 1954, Biberman visited Chicago and wrote Durham several times to discuss *Salt*. Their dialogue revealed a great deal about the political stakes of their respective creative projects and solidarities as fellow travelling cultural workers. For example, Biberman wrote Durham in August of 1954 to express his concern about the film “On the Waterfront,” an anti-union film made “almost entirely by [labor] informers” that was getting all the positive Hollywood press in the same period. The “existence of [On the Waterfront] is another indication of the absolute crying need for *Salt of the Earth* in this country,” wrote Biberman.³⁷⁷ For his part, Durham had already been busy earlier that Summer writing to district directors within the UPWA to promote the film. For example, he wrote Russell Bull, then director of District 3 (Iowa) about how *Salt* was “the most effective labor story done in this country so far” and about the “terrific authenticity of the story itself.”³⁷⁸ Durham also supported Patrick Gorman’s stand and echoed Gorman’s sentiment to the UPWA’s executive to achieve their support for the film.³⁷⁹

Moreover, when Biberman visited Chicago to promote *Salt* and interacted with Durham and other packinghouse workers he also endorsed John Oliver Killens entry into the literary scene of the city. As Killens biographer notes, “Biberman proved catalytic for opening up

³⁷⁷ Herbert Biberman to Richard Durham, August 19, 1954, Box 359, Folder 12, UPWA Papers. Other CP-fronted campaigns around films during the 1950s were led by the Civil Rights Congress in Chicago. Notably around the films “Desert Fox” which sympathetically portrayed Nazi war general Rommel as well as “Oliver Twist” which was seen as anti-semitic. See Gerald Horne, *Communist Front?*, 42.

³⁷⁸ Richard Durham to Russell Bull, June 30, 1954, Box 359, Folder 12, UPWA Papers, WISC.

³⁷⁹ Memo to Ralph Helstein et al, July 2, 1954, Box 359, Folder 12, UPWA Papers, WISC.

Chicago for Killens.”³⁸⁰ In a letter to Richard Durham in September of 1954, Biberman sang the praises of *Youngblood*. It was in his “opinion the most stirring, important and useful novel to have been published in America, by an American in decades.” Biberman’s take on the novel elicited the romance past white progressives had for black creative works. For in his view, it was a novel “concerned with the beauty, dignity, resourcefulness, pride and indestructibility of this noble segment of Americans.”³⁸¹ Still, Biberman indicated how Killens’ book was published by a “conservative” publishing house and that the book had done its “duty” merely by virtue of having been pressed. Therefore, in Biberman’s estimation, *Youngblood* would “require the real support of many who love cultural works and who recognize their importance in the battles we are waging in our country today.”³⁸² Durham and other members of the black caucus at the UPWA most interested in cultural affairs, like Oscar Brown Jr., and Frank London Brown, followed through on this sentiment and helped arrange visits for Killens at the Packinghouse Workers District 1 headquarters, the Chicago Branch of the NAACP, the Emma Lazarus Women’s Club, the Cleveland Hall Branch Library, and a visit to Johnson publishing.³⁸³

These engagements by black cultural workers within the union were difficult to sustain through the Cold War era. As Brown indicated, he, Durham and the rest of the Black Caucus ultimately ran into the labor movement. They were inevitably caught up in the larger factional conflicts within the union movement at large related to impending mergers between the UPWA and the meatcutters (and the CIO and the AFL) in light of contractions beginning to take shape

³⁸⁰ Keith Gilyard, *John Oliver Killens*, 113.

³⁸¹ A perception of these racist views has been made by Benjamin Balthaser in his analysis of *Salt of the Earth*’s production, see Benjamin Balthaser, “Cold War Re-Visions.”

³⁸² Herbert Biberman to Richard Durham, September 14, 1954, Box 357, Folder 20, UPWA Papers, WISC.

³⁸³ Keith Gilyard, *John Oliver Killens*, 114.

across North America's basic industries.³⁸⁴ Caught in the crossfire was the expansive agenda for anti-discrimination work that Durham and his cohort envisioned for the UPWA. Clearly misunderstood by a large segment of the union due to the paranoia's and high stakes of Cold War political conflicts, they were also not willing to return to the more grassroots "drip approach" approach that Horton had recommended for approaching and educating locals throughout the country. Focused mainly on local Black Chicago concerns and middlebrow cultural work, the caucus movement under Durham's tenure was doomed to failure in a larger labor movement context. Durham's alignment with VP Stephens against Helstein and their insistence on "forcing compliance" of A/D policy in locals outside of Chicago who resisted compliance ultimately became too much of a risk for president Heltsein to tolerate. Durham "resigned under pressure" in March of 1957 and his main allies, Oscar Brown, Jr. and Marion Simmons were "dismissed."³⁸⁵ In Clarice Durham and Les Orear's view, Durham was simply fired along with his cohort - as was Tony Stephens.³⁸⁶ In many ways, the difficulty one scholar suggests afflicted the efforts to show *Salt of the Earth* in this period applies equally to the experiences of the cultural workers in the UPWA's Black Caucus Movement. It was very difficult to create a "cross-class alliance among progressives as 'cultural workers,' unionists, and civil libertarians" on the basis of "creative freedom" in such a repressive era.³⁸⁷

³⁸⁴ The merger in meatpacking actually did not happen until the late 1960s.

³⁸⁵ Roger Horowitz, *Negro and White, Unite and Fight!*, 236.

³⁸⁶ Clarice Durham, interview with Ian Rocksborough-Smith; Les Orear, interview with Ian Rocksborough-Smith.

³⁸⁷ James J. Lorence, "The Suppression of "Salt of the Earth" in Midwest America," 347.

A Freer Union?

When District 1 held the opening for its newly renovated facility at 49th and S. Wabash in the heart of Bronzeville in September of 1958 it was after Durham's cohort and Stephens had left the union. Charles Hayes, the controversial replacement for Harold Neilson as District 1 director in the early 1950s had been emblematic of the Black Caucus Movement through this period - just as the headquarter relocation appeared as the movement's opening wedge. However, Hayes (as well as UPWA women's rights activist Addie Wyatt) survived the purge of figures like Durham, Oscar Brown, Jr. and Sam Parks in the mid-1950s whose militancy ultimately did not sit well with the union's executive. As Clarice Durham recalled "Hayes was not as openly and forceful in his beliefs as Sam Parks was. He didn't project himself like a Parks. Hayes was more wanting to be a good fella."³⁸⁸ Indeed, such pragmatism on the part of Hayes led him later into a successful career in Illinois politics. In Wyatt's case, she went on to pastor an important South Side Baptist church with her husband.³⁸⁹

A souvenir journal commemorating the opening of the newly renovated facility in 1958 recalled the Packinghouse Workers Community Center. The journal offered a compelling history of the District and its role in the founding of the UPWA from the 1930s. But it also confirmed that the Black Caucus Movement's vision for an expansive union culture, which included innovative approaches to racial knowledge within the UPWA, would not fully come to pass. Indeed, the souvenir journal made little mention of the heated factional struggles that had recently taken place within the union just years before its renovation. New District 1 Director,

³⁸⁸ Clarice Durham, interview with Ian Rocksborough-Smith.

³⁸⁹ Marcia Walker, "Faith in the Struggle: Rev. Addie Wyatt and the Fight for Labor, Civil Rights and Women's Rights," (PhD Dissertation, University of Chicago, 2012).

Charles Hayes alongside Mayor Richard Daley and one of his chief black lieutenants at the time (Alderman Ralphe Metcalfe) were pictured side-by-side at the renovated facilities inauguration. If the UPWA's District had been at the forefront of radical labor and political struggles in the past, the opening of the new facility with Daley's presence demonstrated how by the end of the 1950s (after the exhaustive internecine struggles of the early Cold War) the union was ready to adopt a more pragmatic approach to its public representations in the community – an approach ultimately more in line with a Cold War liberal-aligned labor movement nationwide.³⁹⁰

The specter of the UPWA's association with the CP remained constant throughout this period and into the 1960s and surely impacted the union's careful steps after the internecine conflicts of the mid-1950s had subsided. Indeed, former VP Tony Stephens made himself available to a government hearing in 1961 and accused District 1 organizers and personnel of being Communists throughout his time with the union. A blue ribbon panel was enlisted to review the case, including Martin Luther King, Jr. who had appeared at District 1's union hall dedication in 1958. King insisted that the union was now following a path of "honest democratic trade unionism."³⁹¹ As such, the direct accusations by virulent anti-communists were ultimately dropped. Still, it's worth noting that the Chicago Red Squad still felt in 1963 the need to keep tabs on numerous younger UPWA members, like Sam Curry, Leon Beverly, Jose Ramirez and others who were likely fellow travellers of the Party, active in front organizations and related civil rights work or had at least been identified by HUAC in the past for such associations.³⁹² These

³⁹⁰ Souvenir Journal: District One United Packinghouse Workers of America (September 23-27, 1958), 4859 South Wabash Ave, Chicago, Illinois, Box 42, Folder 11, Rev. Addie and Rev. Claude Wyatt Papers, HARSH.

³⁹¹ "Concurring Statement of Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr" [1961] Box 162, Folder 7, UPWA Papers, WISC.

³⁹² "CPUSA – Organizational Structure, 1963" Box 283, File 283, Red Squad Files, CHM.

connections and concerns, whether real or imagined, remained very real for the duration of the UPWA's history.

In the end, the UPWA's unique democratic structures were sustained through the 1960s as were its efforts to broadcast innovative anti-discrimination policies. These efforts remained in step with the heightened civil rights and Black Power struggles beginning to take center stage in the national public sphere. It was these organizational (effectively educational) structures within the union that enabled its anti-discrimination programs to offer important openings to African Americans, Mexican Americans, and women in ways that reached well beyond workplace settings. At District 1 conventions, issues like South African apartheid were widely discussed, as was Latin American independence from the exploitation of U.S. and European capitalism, the illegal deportations of Mexicans whose colonial era birthright to much of the Americas had been disregarded by U.S. authorities, and the challenges organizers in the union faced in addressing the concerns of a multiracial membership. In 1953, District 1 field representative George Aguilera led the formation of the UPWA's first Spanish Speaking Committee, which featured an official installation of officers celebrated at District 1 headquarters in the black community. The event featured speeches by Herb March still active with union affairs and a speech from the Mexican Consul general: Luis Duplan.³⁹³ A District 1 convention in 1958 at the Washington Park YMCA discussed the evolution of this committee within the union and spoke directly to the problems organizers of Spanish workers faced given the growing diversity of Spanish-speaking people in the United States. At the convention, District 1 staffer, Jose Ramirez suggested that it was "hard" for him alone to "speak on behalf of the Mexican people." He noted how in 1958, there were "nearly ten million Spanish-speaking people... six and one-half million of these are

³⁹³ "El Comite de Habla Espanola de Distrito 1, UPWA-CIO," Box 349, Folder 14, UPWA Papers, WISC.

Mexican. We also deal with Puerto Ricans, who represent a very large number too. I believe this is one of the main problems, not for our union alone, but for every union in the U.S.”³⁹⁴

Sentiments about achieving unity for a growing majority of non-white people in the U.S. can be seen in the remarks Ralph Helstein made to the National Institute of Human Relations in Des Moines, Iowa to observe Brotherhood Week in February 1955. In Des Moines, Helstein stated categorically how the biggest world problems which the mainly “white” West would have to reckon with in the near future was how most of the world “lives in Asia,” is “non-white,” “poor” and “ill fed.” He also stated emphatically that an “end to colonialism” was required “at home and abroad because it is morally evil, economically bankrupting and politically suicidal.”³⁹⁵ Such radical observations at the height of the Cold War 1950s spoke directly to the cosmopolitan outlook of the union’s first District and its influence on the culture of the UPWA throughout this period - especially after it became firmly based on the black Southside.

The UPWA’s District 1 hall continued to be a base for similar celebrations through the late 1950s, through the 1960s and into the 1970s. In 1959, “rat pack” member Sammy Davis, Jr. gave a concert for Negro History Week at a function organized at the packinghouse workers’ District 1 headquarters by the Afro-American Heritage Association, a group that as noted elsewhere in this dissertation, was headed by Southside CP-er Ishmael Flory and his associates. The “public meeting” also featured Robert F. Williams, the renegade local NAACP leader from Monroe County, North Carolina who advocated armed self-defense for African Americans. Labor speakers at the event included Charles Hayes, District 1 Director of the UPWA and Ernest

³⁹⁴ “UPWA District 1 Conventions, 14th Annual, Chicago, Illinois, 1958,” Box 42, Folder 1, Rev. Addie and Rev. Claude Wyatt Papers, HARSH.

³⁹⁵ “‘Major Human Relations Problems Facing Labor and Industry,’ Speech Delivered by President Ralph Helstein, UPWA-CIO Before National Institute of Human Relations,” Box 114, Folder 9, UPWA Papers, WISC.

DiMaio of the United Electrical Workers (UEW). The event included fairly mainstream figures from the black community like A.L. Foster of the Cosmopolitan Chamber of Commerce and former local Urban League leader, Annie Hightower from the local Council of Colored Negro Women, and Rev. Dorothy Sutton Branch. Music at the event was provided by Arthur W. Logan and his Monumental Baptist Ensemble and from Impressario Princess Dashnashee and her African Creations group. Other events at the Packinghouse workers hall at South Wabash featured parties that made the society pages of *The Chicago Defender* and celebrated the emergence of the first black major league baseball players in Chicago, like the Cubs' Ernie Banks and White Sox's Minnie Minoso. The packinghouse workers' hall also hosted "fashion teas" put on by local middle class clubwomen. Overall, there was a diversity of both local community-based figures at the event as well as national celebrities who represented important liberal and radical left coordinates in the black public sphere right through the Cold War 1950s.³⁹⁶

Such events underscored how the UPWA's District 1 served a broader role as yet another institutional base for Black Chicago's cultural renaissance through the 1950s just as the industry declined in the North American urban North. Like their peers who worked at the Cleveland Hall Branch Library or those who were social reform-minded school teachers, conveners of the 1959 event highlighted important forms of revisionist racial knowledge promoted at the grassroots local level throughout the postwar era. For example, Miss Leo Sparks, president of the AAHA,

³⁹⁶ "Sammy Davis, 'Kiss Case' Leader Here History Week," *The Chicago Defender* (National Edition) (February 14, 1959), 9; "Negro History Week" Advertisement, *The Chicago Defender* (Daily Edition) (February 19, 1959); "So They Say," *The Chicago Defender* (Daily Edition) (January 24, 1961), 17. For more on the nascent Black Power activism of Robert F. Williams during the post-WWII and early Cold War eras see Timothy Tyson, *Radio Free Dixie: Robert F. Williams and the Roots of Black Power* (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina, 1999). For a brief discussion of the relationship between the left and its role in integrating baseball, see Martha Biondi, *To Stand and Fight*, 34.

was quoted in *Defender* coverage as follows:

More and more are we bringing the point home that the history and heritage of Africans and Americans of African descent, are everybody's business. But above all, we are now beginning to get the message over, first to Negro leadership of how important it is that the masses of Negroes and Americans know the scientific history of African and Americans of African descent. We are getting ready now for 1960, when we expect and hope to have every home in the Negro community afire with the spirit of Negro History Week and the rich heritage of the Negro.³⁹⁷

Sparks' message can be read in a way that suggests Negro history served in this time as a form of scientific racial universalism, that it was a form knowledge that could and should be "everybody's business." Sparks also expressed a more immediate goal for the spread of this knowledge, that appealed across classes within the black community and especially to the African American working classes who she imagined could be imbued with the "spirit" of "Negro History Week." In this way, Sparks saw these celebrations as progressive forms of racial knowledge that were in need of circulation at the local level to instill pride and purpose (and to ultimately foster progressive social changes) within the community. As such, District 1's headquarters, like the Cleveland Hall Branch library and other Southside Black Chicago renaissance institutions served through mid-Century as important physical sites for the staging of such educational activities.

Despite the important openings for cultural work sustained through District 1 headquarters in the black community, complex questions remained about what would come from the UPWA's unique democratic legacies. The meatpacking industry itself was beginning to downsize over this period and many of its production facilities were moved to more rural areas

³⁹⁷ "Sammy Davis, 'Kiss Case' Leader Here History Week."

and the global South.³⁹⁸ With the factional conflicts of the 1950s, figures who ran the UPWA's anti-discrimination campaigns as well as local District 1 program coordinators and leaders who helped build the union in the 1930s and 1940s, like Herb March and Sam Parks, fell out with the union's leadership as the union centralized and bureaucratized in the wake of Cold War scars and shrinking U.S. domestic industries. Other black UPWA unionists like Charlie Hayes and Addie Wyatt certainly went on to thrive through their union activism and later pursued successful careers in community activism and local politics. District 1 headquarters was eventually named after Hayes when it became a community center -its history commemorated through a mural by Chicagoan William Walker in 1974 (see figure 3). These complex outcomes certainly had an effect on how the union's worker education initiatives were carried on and sustained.

Nonetheless, for a short time through the mid-1950s, the Black Caucus Movement found a way to push the forms of racial knowledge produced by the UPWA through its A/D and worker education programs in imaginative ways. The production of this knowledge offered opportunities for the creative pursuits of cosmopolitan cultural workers in a period of tremendous political repression. Ultimately, however, using labor unions as vehicles for redressing racial discrimination in these ways became less and less viable in the context of an increasingly conservative labor movement during the 1950s. In Black Chicago, the cosmopolitans most interested in continuing these racial knowledge projects did so more closely in conjunction with resurgent civil rights, nationalist modalities and groupings, and nascent Black Power activism at the local level independent of organized labor.

³⁹⁸ For an expanded discussion of this downsizing process see Roger Horowitz, *Negro and White, Unite and Fight!*, 246-247.



Figure 3: Mural by William Walker, "History of the Packinghouse Worker," 1974. 4859 South Wabash, Chicago, Illinois. Photo by Farah Moosa (2010).

Chapter 4

“Under the Banner of ‘the History and Heritage’”: Black Nationalism and The Afro-American History Association

Just as the United Packinghouse Workers of America’s District 1 opened its doors to the newly renovated facility at 49th and Wabash in September of 1958 in the heart of the black community, a Negro Emancipation Centennial celebration was held at nearby Dunbar High School at 29th and South Parkway. At this event, Margaret Burroughs worked closely with the Afro-American Heritage Association (AAHA) to organize a display of artwork by black Chicagoans at the Southside high school to commemorate the 96th Anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation’s issuance. The AAHA was established in 1958 by Nation of Islam University teacher Christine Johnson and Southside CP-leader Ishmael Flory. More than any other local black history group in the city it operated as an activist organization through the 1960s.

Given the curious overlap of Nation of Islam and Communist Party members who made up the leadership of the AAHA, this chapter sharpens the still fairly imprecise definition of “Black nationalism” and its resurgent paradigms through the late 1950s. “Black Nationalism,” as it is conventionally termed, is an implicitly and narrowly defined component of the lexicon of postwar American and African-American history that vaguely describes what in actual practice was a multifaceted component of the black public sphere -- with many regional manifestations throughout the United States.³⁹⁹ It is almost always inferred to mean the forms of urban

³⁹⁹ Black nationalism manifested diversely in many northern and western urban locales throughout the country through the 1960s and 1970s in conjunction with Black Power movements. It has been studied for its regional characterizations especially. See Mathew Countrymen, *Up South*; Robert Self, *American Babylon*; Martha Biondi, *To Stand and Fight*; Komozi Woodard, *A Nation Within a Nation: Amiri Baraka (LeRoi Jones) and Black Power Politics* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999).

America's black activism that flourished in the black power era of the late 1960s, or the male-centered leadership of the Nation of Islam (NOI) and figures such as Malcolm X. Also included in this paradigm was the Garveyism of the 1920s and its legacies through mid-century and various charismatic male civil rights leaders such as A. Phillip Randolph, W.E.B. DuBois, and Paul Robeson as Black Power's primary precedents.⁴⁰⁰ To their credit, recent biographies of Malcolm X and boxer Muhammad Ali ground these prolific male figures in the complex political and cultural histories their respective biographies require.⁴⁰¹ Still, this scholarship lends itself to the reproduction of iconoclastic interpretations of history centered on cults of individual personality. As such, it sometimes loses touch with the diversity of nationalist modalities through mid-Century – especially in regional contexts that offered openings especially to black women activists to have major impacts on the ideological and actual forms of local struggles.⁴⁰²

The ideological forms that nationalism took on Chicago's Southside, including aspects of radical integrationism, racial liberalism, third world anti-colonialism, and variations of left wing nationalism, went beyond both the iconic and more conservative religious and business-oriented nationalisms that are usually the focus of study in the U.S. during this period.⁴⁰³ Such expansive

⁴⁰⁰William Van DeBurg ed., *Modern Black Nationalism: From Marcus Garvey to Louis Farrakhan* (New York: NYU Press, 1997); William Van DeBurg, *New Day in Babylon*.

⁴⁰¹Manning Marable, *Malcolm X*; Mike Marqusee, *Redemption Song: Muhammad Ali and the Spirit of the Sixties* (New York: Verso, 2005 [1999]).

⁴⁰² Important studies of black nationalism and the leadership important women took in these modalities (from Rosa Parks to Toni Cade Bambara) have been completed recently and are grounded in regional contexts. See Dayo Gore, Jeanne Theoharis, Komozi Woodard, eds. *Want to Start a Revolution?*; Elaine Brown, *A Taste of Power: A Black Woman's Story* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1992).

⁴⁰³ E.U. Essien-Udom, *Black Nationalism*; C. Eric Lincoln, *Black Muslims in America*; Claude Andrew Clegg III, *An Original Man: The Life and Times of Elijah Muhammad* (New York: St. Martin's, 1997); Edward Curtis IV, *Islam in Black America: Identity, Liberation, and Difference in African-American Islamic Thought* (Albany: State University of New York, 2002); Aminah B. McCloud, *African American Islam* (New York: Routledge, 1995); Richard B. Turner, *Islam in the African-American Experience* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1997); Louis A. DeCaro, Jr., *Malcolm and the Cross: The Nation of Islam, Malcolm X, and Christianity* (New York: NYU Press, 1998).

considerations for black nationalism's purview suggest clarification is needed of just what constitutes mid-20th century African-American nationalism when the term is deployed. Historians of Chicago like Adam Green and Jeffrey Helgeson have underscored the tensions between African American artists, intellectuals, and business leaders in the American Negro Exposition of 1940 which, as Helgeson feels, most succinctly "revealed the tensions between and within integrationist and nationalist forces" in the city during the 1940s as well as between "liberal and radical integrationist perspectives."⁴⁰⁴ But what were "nationalist forces"? The notion still seems vague and imprecise in these formulations - much like liberalism is vague and imprecise.

Both classic and recent studies of Black Chicago have analyzed nationalist organizations and politics from across the political spectrum active from the 1930s through the 1950s. Rich in content and research acumen, these collective works offer compelling reasons to further understandings of precisely what culturally-based nationalism was during the mid-20th Century. For example, one of the earliest studies of the Nation of Islam (NOI) conducted during the 1950s by University of Chicago sociologist E.U. Essien-Udom offers a fairly serviceable definition of black nationalism. In general terms, Essien-Udom suggests the concept consists of a common belief in a vision of nationhood, especially through ties of language, religion and culture. Still, even Essien-Udom concedes that it "would be foolish... to suppose that explanations have been exhausted concerning the behavior of the black nationalists" given the numerical marginality of

⁴⁰⁴ Jeffrey Helgeson, "Who Are You America but Me? The American Negro Exposition, 1940" in Darlene Clark Hine & John McCluskey, Jr. eds., *The Black Chicago Renaissance*, 128; Adam Green, *Selling the Race*, 41-47.

the black muslim movement in particular within the African American community (an assertion equally applicable today).⁴⁰⁵

Other scholars have traced the politically-inspired left nationalism advocated by the Communist Party USA during the 1930s when it advocated a territorial “Black Belt” type of self-determination for African Americans in the Southern U.S. Conversely, scholars of the Americas with more hemispheric vantage points have taken up studies of Marcus Garvey’s sustained influence on African American and West Indian communities throughout the continent and country, notably in the U.S. South.⁴⁰⁶ In Chicago, Garvey’s movement was most active in the 1920s when it was also at its height nationally and underwent a short period of revival in 1957 among local Garvey followers who remained active in the city.⁴⁰⁷

Overall, black nationalism (whether cultural, political or both at the same time) circulated in a variety of contexts and modalities on both the left and right sides of the political spectrum well before the 1960s.⁴⁰⁸ As historian Van Gosse notes, many “independent” groups from the

⁴⁰⁵ See E.U. Essien-Udom, *Black Nationalism*, 6, 325. Another classic study of the Nation of Islam was C. Eric Lincoln’s *Black Muslims in America*. See C. Eric Lincoln, *Black Muslims in America* (Trenton: Africa World Press, 1961). More recently, Susan Nance has examined the eschatological and occult nature of early black nationalist formations like the Moorish Science Temple in Chicago. Nance suggests that important aspects of African American public culture during the 1920s employed a form of orientalism that utilized symbols of an essentialist East to form their own local nationalist affectations in the United States and in this way contributed to the overall vibrancy of Black Chicago’s public sphere during the 1920s decade. See Susan Nance, “Respectability and Representation.”

⁴⁰⁶ Mary G. Rolinson, *Grassroots Garveyism: The Universal Negro Improvement Association in the Rural South, 1920-1927* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007); Raymond Carr, *Black Nationalism in the New World: Reading the African-American and West Indian Experience* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002); Judith Stein, *The World of Marcus Garvey: Race and Class in Modern Society* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State U Press, 1986); Robin D.G. Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe*.

⁴⁰⁷ U. Essien-Udom notes that “four factions” of Garveyites continued to meet in Chicago through the 1950s, but their numbers paled in comparison to the thousands involved locally in the movement during the 1920s. See E.U. Essien-Udom, *Black Nationalism*, 42; “Plan Revival of UNIA Here,” *The Chicago Defender* (Daily Edition) (May 21, 1957), 5.

⁴⁰⁸ See E.U. Essien-Udom, *Black Nationalism*, 6-7. On the Black Belt thesis of the CPUSA see also Mark Solomon, *The Cry Was Unity*; Robin D.G. Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe*; Kate Baldwin, *Beyond the Color Line and the*

1950s through the 1970s “assimilated both the revolutionary and the cultural approaches to nationalism into a rich stew of ideas and organizational experimentation.”⁴⁰⁹

The notion of black nationalism as a rich “stew” is helpful. It expands understandings about the parameters of political and cultural activism advanced through sectarian organizations ostensibly at polar ends of the political spectrum but who could be construed in some way as “nationalist” in orientation. This included groups like the Nation of Islam or even the Communist Party. For example, African American members of the UPWA like Richard Durham, Sam Parks, and Leon Beverley (discussed previously in chapter 3) and Ishmael Flory who were members of the CP, and Christine C. Johnson (with the NOI and a former Popular Front fellow traveller) operated outside the edicts of their respective affiliations. As discussed below, Johnson in particular worked to democratize the sexual politics of the University of Islam’s parochial education in the late 1950s, while Flory corresponded extensively with the elder scholar of Black America, W.E.B. DuBois, about the American Society of African Culture (AMSAC) and the politics of racial knowledge production. Moreover, each of these figures significantly impacted local efforts that connected racial knowledge production and history with civil rights through the late 1950s and early 1960s. As did fellow travelling figures in the orbit of the CPUSA like Margaret and Charles Burroughs who founded what became the Ebony/DuSable Museum of African American History in Chicago. Collectively, these activists helped form a windfall of

Iron Curtain; William J. Maxwell, *New Negro, Old Left*; Randi Storch, *Red Chicago*; Erik McDuffie, *Sojourning for Freedom*; Dayo Gore, *Radicalism at the Crossroads*; Bill Mullen and James Smethurst, eds. *Left of the Color Line*.

⁴⁰⁹Quoted from Van Gosse, *Rethinking the New Left*, 122.

public history efforts in the Windy City, led mainly by black women such Christine Johnson, Margaret Burroughs, and organizations like the AAHA.

Much of this chapter analyzes the work of local African American activists who skirted the sectarian divides between vastly different organizations like the Communist Party and the Nation of Islam through the deployment of their own nationalist political “stews.”⁴¹⁰ This happened specifically through labors in commemorative racial knowledge projects during the late 1950s (such as the event at Dunbar High School) hosted by groups like the Afro-American Heritage Association. These efforts helped animate both the intra-racial class tensions and collaborations of civil rights activity in the Windy City through the late-1950s in a moment generally viewed as “conservative” and fragmentary by most historians when the African American wards of the city fell in line with the city’s notoriously corrupt Democratic machine politics.⁴¹¹

The Afro-American Heritage Association

More than any other black public history group in the city, the AAHA combined its racial and historical knowledge producing efforts with civil rights activism and diverse expressions of black nationalism at mid-Century. According to a perceptive Chicago Police file, the AAHA’s major activities included both “celebrations and educationals (sic)” that stimulated “action around Afro-American History Week; Emancipation Proclamation Issuance Day, September 22, and Emancipation Day, Jan. 1; DuSable Week [which memorialized Chicago’s first settler];

⁴¹⁰ This tension is also captured by Mark Naison’s work on Communists in black Harlem during the Great Depression. See Mark Naison, *Communists in Harlem*.

⁴¹¹ Beryl Satter, *Family Properties*; Arnold Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto*, 14-15; William Grimshaw, *Bitter Fruit*, 96-100. Exceptions to these conventional views include the recent work of Adam Green and Jeffrey Helgeson. See Adam Green, *Selling the Race*; Jeffrey Helgeson, “Striving in Black Chicago.”

cooperation with other Afro-American History Groups; action and mobilization in support of school demonstrations” by major national civil rights organizations such as the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference,” the “maintenance” of a community-focused bookstore called the Afro-American Bookstore; and interest in disseminating materials on African American history, and political pamphlets on “national and international affairs”; as well as advocacy for “independent political candidates” and organizations. Above all, the organization placed “great stress upon history and heritage as an instrument for clear and effective action and struggle.”⁴¹²

Coverage of the AAHA in *The Chicago Defender* corroborated these connections between global activism against racism and the promotion of history and heritage in the public sphere. For example, in 1959 the AAHA added itself to campaigns that opposed the activities of the House of Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) - specifically subpoenas to members of the United Packinghouse Workers of America (UPWA) in the city who faced tremendous repression from government sources throughout the 1950s and early 1960s. Flory described these actions by HUAC as “an attack upon an oasis in a desert of Chicago lethargy.” *The Defender* further reported how Flory felt HUAC failed to look at racial lynchings and segregation “in its investigations.” The UPWA’s Leon Beverly, president of Chicago Armour Local 347, wrote an editorial to *The Defender* in 1952 that described HUAC as the “Un-American ‘lynch’ Committee.” Beverly’s use of lynching tropes to describe HUAC’s efforts to “smear” his union and red baiting strategies generally continued throughout the op-ed. For Beverly, HUAC’s

⁴¹² “The Afro-American Heritage Association,” August 23, 1967, Box 118, File 848, Red Squad Files, CHM.

“hangman’s noose” was “the familiar cry ‘Communist,’ a weapon of outright lies and half truths.”⁴¹³

The AAHA called for a local work stoppage in 1960 as part of its “Africa Freedom Day” celebrations. AAHA’s president, Christine Johnson appealed to “all governments of the work to join in recognition” of African independence movements “... not only to show solidarity with African independence, but also as a demonstration against racism anywhere in the world.” The AAHA was at the forefront of activities in Chicago that protested the CIA-orchestrated assassination of Patrice Lumumba, the exploits of UN-backed Belgium troops in the war-torn nation of the Congo, and connections between apartheid in South Africa and southern U.S. racial violence. Like their contemporaries involved in the establishment of the DuSable Museum, the AAHA worked to achieve civic recognition for Jean Point Baptiste DuSable – the city’s first settler.⁴¹⁴

Many of these activities suggest the AAHA represented a higher brow form of activism given its association with Southside community elites, African independence leaders, and intellectuals. For example, reports of the AAHA by the Chicago Police Department’s Red Squad also considered the organization to be a Communist front on the Southside “initiated for...

⁴¹³ “Afro-American Heritage Group Raps House Probers,” *The Chicago Defender* (Daily Edition) (May 6, 1959), 4; Leon Beverly, “What the People Say,” *The Chicago Defender* (National Edition) (September 20, 1952), 11.

⁴¹⁴ “Urge Airing of Racism in U.S.,” *The Chicago Defender* (Daily Edition), 19; “Plan Work Halt on ‘Africa’ Day,” *The Chicago Defender* (Daily Edition) (May 31, 1960), A10; “Urges UN Meet On Congo Row,” *The Chicago Defender* (Daily Edition) (July 14, 1960), 26; “Chicagoans Blast Tshombe As An ‘Uncle Tom,’” *The Chicago Defender* (Daily Edition) (February 14, 1961), 1; “Lumumba Mass Meet Set Friday,” *The Chicago Defender* (Daily Edition) (February 21, 1961), 8; “Chicago to Honor DuSable, First Settler,” *The Chicago Defender* (National Edition) (August 17, 1963), 6.

cultured Negroes.”⁴¹⁵ It is true that the AAHA’s focus on culture and history in the public sphere was consistent with the “culture as weapon” approach encouraged by some intellectuals within the CPUSA. Still, through the 1950s, this was considered one of the more important CP-strategies in the fight for racial equality in the United States given the restrictions placed on radical left political activism generally due to the nation’s Cold War climate.⁴¹⁶ The Chicago Police Red Squad characterization of the AAHA as an organization that catered to elite “cultured Negroes” also reinforces the belief of local Roosevelt College professor, St. Clair Drake (discussed in Chapter 1) that black Communists in Chicago had made a deal with the local civic political machine to stay away from direct action activism (like peace marches and direct protest) in the 1950s. Indeed, such higher brow characterizations seemed apt for a group focused on “culture” and “heritage.” Still, their activities in public history had a great deal to do with civil rights in the city – struggles that affected all classes of African Americans through the mid-20th Century.

The Dunbar High School event in September of 1958 organized by the AAHA demonstrated the interconnectedness of civil rights, culture, and heritage promotion, and how such activities could be construed as higher brow (or perhaps middle-brow) in orientation. The event displayed artwork by Burroughs and prolific African American artists whose careers began in Chicago such as Charles White, Bernard Goss, Fred Jones, and sculptor Marion Perkins. Moreover, a broad cross-section of Bronzeville’s community leaders were featured speakers,

⁴¹⁵ “Flory, Ishmael.” Investigators Report/ Chicago Police Department, Folder “Flory, Ishmael, 1968-1974,” Box 299, Red Squad Records, CHM.

⁴¹⁶As noted in Chapter 1 of this dissertation, CPUSA intellectuals such as Doxey Wilkerson and V.J. Jerome advocated cultural activism as a valuable “weapon” in global struggles for human rights. See Doxey A. Wilkerson, “Negro Culture: Heritage and Weapon”; V.J. Jerome, “Let us Grasp the Weapon of Culture,” 195-215; John J. Munro, “The Anticolonial Front,” 154, 160-161.

including realtor Oscar Brown, Sr. (father of Oscar Brown, Jr.), Leon Beverly of the UPWA, Lutheran Minister Massie Kennard, representatives of the Negro Business Directory, as well as music and entertainment conducted by the Vernon Duncan Dancers and dramatist O. Jean Ramsey who offered poetry readings. The works of diverse black authors were also collected for display and included books by novelist Richard Wright, poet Gwendolyn Brooks, sociologists E. Franklin Frazier and St. Clair Drake, and world traveler and community scholar F.H. Hammurabi Robb.⁴¹⁷ As noted in chapter one, Burroughs recalled these sorts of celebrations along with her museum work as part of the anticipation for the celebrations that commemorated the emancipation proclamation in the city through 1963.⁴¹⁸ The event at Dunbar High also brought together a significant number of the black Southside's well-travelled intellectuals and politically inclined community elites. Overall, it gathered together disparate left wing, liberal, and nationalist figures in the late 1950s.

Despite its middle-brow status, such a commemorative event and the related publications and local literatures promoted by the AAHA underscored the complex intra-racial class politics of Black Chicago and the connected terrains of civil rights and public history through the 1950s. For example, at the 1958 proclamation issuance observance, the AAHA presented "Merit Awards" to "individuals and organizations that... made significant contributions to the

⁴¹⁷ "Works of Artists to be Displayed," *The Chicago Defender* (Daily Edition) (September 15, 1958), A7; "Presents Merit Awards at Emancipation Day Program," *The Chicago Defender* (Daily Edition) (September 22, 1958), A15; "Photo Standalone 35 – No Title," *The Chicago Defender* (Daily Edition) (October 11, 1959), 13; "Photo Standalone 24 – No Title," *The Chicago Defender* (Daily Edition) (September 24, 1958), A15; E.U. Essien-Udom, *Black Nationalism*, 50; "Kerner O.K.'s Negro History Week Feb. 11," *The Chicago Daily Defender* (Daily Edition) January 24, 1962, 6; "Kerner Backs History Week," *The Chicago Defender* (Daily Edition) January 31, 1962.

⁴¹⁸ Which in Chicago culminated in the Century of Negro Progress Exposition held in that year at McCormick Place downtown. Wilbur C. Rich and Roberta Hughes Wright, *The Wright Man*, 289-290; Profile of Black Museums, 3-5; "Interview with Margaret Burroughs and Charles Wright 12/26/84," 1; Mabel O. Wilson, *Negro Building*, 242-247.

development and dissemination of Negro heritage and history.” These awards recognized the efforts of local Southside business brokers and cultural elites such as Claude and Etta Moten Barnett of the Associated Negro Press, local insurance executive Truman K. Gibson, and the publishers of Chicago’s other renown local black press outlets: John H. Johnson (*Ebony Magazine*), John H. Sengstacke (*Chicago Defender*), and Balm Leavelle (*Chicago Crusader*). Awards also went to local black artists and intellectuals like Margaret Burroughs for her art work and writings as well as authors Frank London Brown, Gwendolyn Brooks, and local librarians and teachers: Charlamae Rollins, Vivian Harsh, Marion Hadley, and Sam Stratton. A film on newly independent Ghana was screened. In a keynote speech, AAHA secretary, Robert Winbush suggested “Negroes and all Americans... need to take a look back in order to charter a course away from disaster in the future.” Clearly, the celebration was focused on using history in the service of civil rights and the freedom struggles of blacks around the world.⁴¹⁹ In outlook, the Dunbar High School event presented a united front for black nationalism widely conceived. As such, the event featured local business and liberal civic leaders fêted alongside radical artists, intellectuals, and local activists from organizations as diverse as the Nation of Islam and the Communist Party. While a range of political affiliations and modalities were represented, each participant at the event marked the importance of the celebration for signifying universal racial pasts within the black public sphere.

But to consider the AAHA an elitist (or middling) token of a toothless left wing cultural front through the late 1950s missed the organization’s larger vision and purpose as well its practical efforts to work towards social change. From its inception in 1958, the AAHA demonstrated an earnestness to produce viable local racial knowledge for the community that

⁴¹⁹ “Works of Artists to be Displayed”; “Presents Merit Awards at Emancipation Day Program.”

was consistent with the complexity of black nationalist modalities and expressions through the 1960s. The organization also appealed to a multifaceted constituency within the African American community as the event at Dunbar High demonstrated: from the Southside's working class majority to its more elite cultural brokers. The AAHA in fact promoted diverse forms of racial knowledge to those who wished to learn it and apply it.

It is true that by and large, civil rights organizations in the mid-20th Century were represented by middle class segments of the African American community – a reality duly noted by scholars of black nationalism during this period. The complexity of class-based politics within the matrix of nationalist modalities and their connection to racial knowledge production within Chicago's black community was certainly underscored in *Black Nationalism* - one of two foundational studies of the Nation of Islam conducted during the 1950s.⁴²⁰ In this study, E.U. Essien-Udom focused especially on the working-class appeal of the Nation of Islam (NOI) in the Windy City and the lack of attention offered to issues of identity, collective pasts, and heritage elsewhere in the black public sphere. He felt the NOI went further than other group who attempted to appeal to blacks on the basis of group identity and shared pasts. Essien-Udom noted how black efforts in Chicago to “stimulate and foster pride in their heritage and in Africa...” had “been minimal” and that “whatever information” was “available about their past” had “yet to reach the Negro masses.” Moreover, Essien-Udom noted how “Negro History Week” stemmed “entirely from the Negro intelligentsia....”⁴²¹ Overall, Essien-Udom remained apprehensive that organizations who promoted Negro History Week could bridge the experiential knowledge gap between classes within local black communities in the United States. “Even if such efforts were

⁴²⁰ E.U. Essien-Udom, *Black Nationalism*, 95. The other study was *The Black Muslims in America* by C. Eric Lincoln.

⁴²¹ E.U. Essien-Udom, *Black Nationalism*, 95.

extended to the Negro masses,” wrote Essien-Udom, “it remains doubtful that much would be changed unless they were matched with some evidence of solid Negro accomplishment in their present communities.”⁴²²

In a revealing footnote to his study, however, Essien-Udom suggested there was hope for some of the formations that appealed to working class blacks along the same lines as the NOI.

He noted that:

[e]fforts to give the Negro a sense of a past, a myth, pride and confidence in the capabilities of his race have been made largely by the black nationalists, Garvey, Muhammad, etc. The works of J.A. Rogers and Carter G. Woodson have been inspired by the same objective. Groups such as the American Society of African Culture [AMSAC] cater to a small group of intellectuals who lack the vision or courage to relate and interpret their findings to the Negro masses. In recent years, however, other groups are beginning to show greater interest in disseminating information among the masses about their heritage and African kinship. The Afro-American Heritage Association in Chicago is one of these groups. Its effort shows some promise.⁴²³

In fact, AAHA co-founder Christine Johnson accomplished exactly what Essien-Udom had hoped for through her teachings on the Southside with her principalship at the NOI’s University of Islam in the late 1950s. Moreover, Johnson helped democratize and internationalize aspects of the parochial education that the mainly working class students of the University of Islam received. The NOI first established parochial schools in both Detroit and Chicago in the early 1930s, initially at elementary levels. A high school was added to the Chicago location in 1954 and by 1959 the University of Islam had a total enrollment of 350 students from kindergarten through senior year.⁴²⁴ Christine Johnson oversaw the integration of

⁴²² Ibid, 95.

⁴²³ Ibid, 95. Fn. 13.

⁴²⁴ Essien-Udom offers an extensive first hand analysis of how classes were conducted at the NOI’s University of Islam in Chicago through the 1950s. See E.U. Essien-Udom, *Black Nationalism*, 234-235.

classes between girls and boys (the NOI kept boys and girls separate until 1959 when Johnson assumed her principalship/directorship). She also continued to oversee a diverse international faculty, notably two recent hires from Africa (Sierra Leone and Egypt) respectively to add to a record of teacher hires from Nigeria, Egypt, and Palestine. Like her contemporaries such as Margaret Burroughs, Madeline Stratton, and Charlamae Rollins (who were all South Side teachers), Christine Johnson wrote about African American history for audiences of children and youth. In 1962, Johnson produced a first grade textbook that treated “children at home, at school and at play” that included “the history of the black people, related in simple terms that the child can understand...” Johnson also felt skeptical of new government programs in the 1960s focused on helping the unemployed and single mothers. Rather she pointed to the independent track record of the University of Islam that helped numerous black Southsiders achieve college educations and vocational employment in technical fields like TV repairs as well as basic education.⁴²⁵

In fact, through the early 1960s, the Nation of Islam in Chicago offered many openings for African American leftists to continue to address a multiplicity of racial justice issues – notably through the locally published newspaper *Muhammad Speaks*. Not long after his tenure at the UPWA and a string of jobs on the political campaigns of various black civic leaders, Richard Durham became one of the editors of *Muhammad Speaks*. Durham’s wife Clarice Durham notes how he worked at the paper for nearly three years and helped steer the paper’s editorial direction “beyond the teachings of [NOI leader] Elijah Muhammad. To deal with arts and music and international affairs.” According to Clarice Durham, *Muhammad Speaks* “became quite a good

⁴²⁵“University of Islam Graduates Tomorrow’s Leaders,” *Muhammad Speaks* (April 1962), 13; “Textbook to be Published,” *Muhammad Speaks* (April 1962), 13; Sister Christine [Christine Johnson], “Education of Relief Clients Why is Chicago Afraid?” *Muhammad Speaks* (May 1962), 20.

newspaper and circulation grew as a result.” As historian Peniel Joseph has indicated the newspaper became one of the NOI’s most “profitable enterprises” and reached a circulation of over 500,000 through the 1950s. The paper of course gave space to exaltations about the NOI’s leader Elijah Muhammad, but it also “provided coverage of local and national civil rights struggles, black militancy and corresponding white resistance, and African and Third World liberation movements, explaining how all the elements figured into the international politics of the Cold War era.”⁴²⁶

Black nationalism even within the NOI through the 1950s was not simply a matter of men speaking militantly in public, wearing bow ties, and preaching about the specter of ‘white devils’ in their midst.⁴²⁷ As the actions and composition of the AAHA and figures like Christine Johnson, Richard Durham, and members of the UPWA’s black caucus like Leon Beverly demonstrated, the coordinates for black nationalist activity extended into many spheres best analyzed through a rubric like cosmopolitan knowledge production. Indeed, whether they were writers, teachers, or trade unionists (or at some point all three of these stations) their repertoires for cultural work surely contributed to the diversity of black nationalist forms in 1950s and 1960s Chicago and throughout the country for that matter.

W.E.B. DuBois, Ishmael Flory, and AMSAC

E.U. Essien-Udom’s analysis of black nationalism also included another organization, more national in scope than the AAHA. In the wake of U.S. participation at the Paris Peace

⁴²⁶ Clarice Durham, interview with Ian Rocksborough-Smith; Peniel Joseph, *Waiting ‘til the Midnight Hour*, 15-16, 25-26.

⁴²⁷ Recent studies about African American Islam have already underscored these gender tensions and dynamics. See especially Aminah B. McCloud, *African American Islam*, 135-162.

Congress in 1956, the American Society of African Culture (AMSAC) emerged as a think tank composed mainly of university-educated, liberal, and moderately left-leaning African American intellectuals based in Washington, D.C. In some ways, it continued the intellectual projects advanced by the left-leaning Council of African Affairs headed by W.E.B. DuBois and Paul Robeson through the late 1940s and 1950s which disbanded under the pressure of U.S. government red scares through the middle of the latter decade. While clearly designed to expand academic knowledge of Africa and to improve U.S./African diplomatic and intellectual exchanges with the continent, it was revealed nearly a decade later that AMSAC had received substantial funds from the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) to carry out its knowledge producing efforts.⁴²⁸ As such, it was certainly part of the U.S. government's widespread endeavors to shape both the outcomes of Third World anti-colonial struggles and the cultural fronts of the Cold War on the domestic front.⁴²⁹

At the same time, recent scholarship shows that AMSAC provided many U.S.-based leftists with important openings for cultural and knowledge producing labors after it was formed in 1957. Scholars Kevin Gaines and John Munro have written extensively about AMSAC. Munro notes how "AMSAC members were not automatons or dupes of [their] imperial master..." They were "without doubt concerned with ongoing radical expressions of African and African American solidarity." Munro adds that "AMSAC's directors wished to fill the gap left open by the demise of the Council on African Affairs while remaining opposed to the CAA's

⁴²⁸ Kevin Gaines, "African American Expatriates in Ghana," *Souls* (Fall 1999): 67; John J. Munro, "The Anticolonial Front," 392. For more on the dissolution of the CAA in the mid-1950s, see Brenda Gayle Plummer, *Rising Wind* and Penny Von Eschen, *Race Against Empire*.

⁴²⁹ For more examples of the U.S. government's cultural efforts during the Cold War, see Penny Von Eschen, *Satchmo Blows the Cold War*. The CIA also funded modern art as part of similar cultural front efforts on the part of the state. See Frances Stoner Saunders, "Modern Art Was CIA 'Weapon,'" *The Independent* (UK) (Sunday, October 25, 1995).

politics” but also “served other functions” – notably “a space, however ideologically circumscribed, through which transatlantic discussion about colonialism could continue.”⁴³⁰ Moreover, Kevin Gaines notes, AMSAC “sought to promote cultural exchange, collaboration, and heightened mutual awareness between African and African-American intellectuals.” While the organization’s “leading intellectuals were Cold War liberals,” AMSAC “provided a space for radical and liberal black musicians, artists, and writers to independently enact their international visions of solidarity.”⁴³¹

Prolific African American intellectuals and artists known for their leftist affinities became involved with AMSAC through the late 1950s and early 1960s in the wake of the cultural left’s organizational demise under various repressions. These included musicians like Abbey Lincoln and Max Roach, writers John Oliver Killens, Rosa Guy, Maya Angelou, Audre Lorde, and Paule Marshall, *Freedomways* contributors such as Julian Mayfield, John Henrik Clarke and Langston Hughes – all were associated at some point with AMSAC.⁴³² Chicagoans certainly attended AMSAC supported events and activities, notably writers Frank London Brown and Lorraine Hansberry who were at a black writers conference sponsored by the organization in New York in 1959. This event also featured Communists Lloyd Brown (author of the novel *Iron City* [1951]) and Louis Burnham, a former executive of the CP-fronted Southern Negro Youth Congress as well as more liberal figures, such as Roosevelt College and Chicago-based professor

⁴³⁰ John J. Munro, “The Anticolonial Front,” 392.

⁴³¹ Kevin Gaines, “African American Expatriates in Ghana,” 67.

⁴³² *Ibid.*, 67.

St. Clair Drake. Drake's colleague Lorenzo Turner also had the ear of AMSAC executives who sought to arrange meetings through him when they passed through Chicago in 1959.⁴³³

W.E.B. DuBois' academic accomplishments were widely recognized and debated in the circle of academics who headed AMSAC. DuBois' writings were featured in AMSAC publications, notably a reprint of a 1933 article on Liberia that appeared in a 1958 volume entitled: *Africa Seen by American Negroes*. Moreover, two of the organization's executives John Davis and Martin Kilson once argued vociferously over the significance of DuBois' classic work *Black Reconstruction*. Davis lambasted the study as a "disservice" to truth and "Marxist" while Kilson supported it as a "fine piece of historical interpretation." As John Munro indicates, "[s]uch exchanges mattered because they demonstrated the continuity of Du Bois's influence, including precisely his Marxism, for the 1960s generation. And despite its conservative elements and CIA funding, it was AMSAC that operated as the vehicle through which intergenerational anticolonialism could take place."⁴³⁴

During this same period DuBois expressed support for Ishmael Flory and the AAHA in Chicago in light of serious apprehensions the elder scholar clearly held toward AMSAC throughout this period. In particular, DuBois felt AMSAC tended towards elitism and entrepreneurialism. DuBois shared these sentiments with Flory in correspondence they shared about the prospective publication of the elder scholar's prolific writings on anti-colonialism and world socialism. DuBois cautioned Flory and the AAHA about extensively publishing local literatures "by and about people of African descent" since this sort of knowledge production

⁴³³ "American Society of African Culture Discuss Role of Negro at N.Y. Meet," *The Chicago Defender* (Daily Edition) (July 3, 1961), 5; John J. Munro, "The Anticolonial Front," 396; James T. Harris to Lorenzo D. Turner, Dec 17, 1959, Box 7, Folder 1, Turner Papers, NU.

⁴³⁴ Quoted in John J. Munro, "The Anticolonial Front," 393, 399.

would be “very costly” and that there were already various “efforts in that line being made” – notably those of the anti-colonial and French-based journal *Présence Africaine* led by Alioune Diop and Leopold Senghor (founded at the Paris Peace congress of 1956). Moreover, DuBois indicated to Flory “[s]ome American Negroes have tried to steal the idea” through AMSAC, and he was “afraid (sic) they” had “investment in mind or personal position instead of scientific work.” DuBois had “...heard of nothing yet worthwhile that they have done.”⁴³⁵ By this point in his life, DuBois was approaching Communism in his politics and expressed great hope in an African Institute founded “under the Soviet Academy of Science.” But the true substance of DuBois’ letter to Flory was to encourage local Chicago efforts at producing “small, cheap, pamphlets” that included his writings on issues of anti-colonialism and world socialism for distribution.⁴³⁶

DuBois certainly expressed Soviet political orientations in his correspondence with Flory. DuBois of course echoed the well-tread (and ill-fated) hope of ongoing Soviet-style nation-making experiments elsewhere in the world. But it would be a disservice to the broad circles of knowledge production that ranged across the left, liberal, and nationalist spectrums and that continued to circulate and consider his ideas well into the post-Second World War era to dismiss DuBois’ ideas during this period outright. DuBois knew the currency of his work and sensed that not all avenues for publication merited contributions. Moreover he worried about the elitist and

⁴³⁵W.E.B. DuBois to Ishmael Flory, Nov 5, 1959, Box 247, Folder 4609, W.E.B. DuBois Papers, UMass; Ishmael Flory from W.E.B. DuBois, April 16, 1960, Box 249, Folder 4645, W.E.B. DuBois Papers, UMass. For a good appraisal of *Présence Africaine* and its role in promoting and circulating important discussions about Black identity worldwide, see Marga Graf, “Roots of Identity: The National and Cultural Self in *Présence Africaine*,” *Comparative Literature and Culture (CLCWeb)* 3:1 (June 2001): Article 5.

⁴³⁶W.E.B. DuBois to Ishmael Flory, Nov 5, 1959. DuBois did not join the CP officially until 1961 when he moved with Shirley Graham to Ghana. See, Eric Porter, *The Problem of the Future World The Problem of the Future World: W.E.B. DuBois and the Race Concept at Midcentury* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 2.

commercial forms and genres they might continue to be transmitted in - hence his apprehensions about AMSAC (and perhaps the academy in general). It is crucial as well to recall that DuBois wrote to Ishmael Flory with his concerns well before it became known that the CIA had actually funded the organization as part of its cultural Cold War front. Moreover, it is also helpful to recall that DuBois was still a major intellectual figure for the emerging field of African studies in the late 1950s. Because of his prolific past writings and research, specialists in the field at this point could simply not ignore his work despite the increasing repression he faced as a scholar activist in Cold War America.⁴³⁷

Eric Porter indicates how DuBois continued to write voluminously from the 1940s until his death in 1963. He writes that DuBois “published six more books, composed his posthumously published autobiography and manuscripts that remained unpublished, wrote for African American newspapers, academic journals, left publications, and other venues, and maintained an active career as a public speaker.”⁴³⁸ Moreover, scholars and biographers alike generally have ignored this extensive corpus because the taint of leftism and Stalinism that marked the racial knowledge projects DuBois undertook late in his career. As such, Porter deftly suggests that DuBois’ midcentury work “cannot” be comprehended “without considering what [DuBois] gained by being part of a radical intellectual milieu,” but that his “leftist ideas and affinities,” pronounced as they were in his later life, must not stand as fully “determinative of his thought during these years in either positive or negative ways.”⁴³⁹

⁴³⁷ Eric Porter, *The Problem of the Future World*, 4-5; Van Gosse, *Rethinking the New Left*, 24; Gerald Horne, *Red and Black*.

⁴³⁸ Eric Porter, *The Problem of the Future World*, 2.

⁴³⁹ *Ibid.*, 10.

Rather, it is worth reading DuBois' and others similarly inspired and periodized-intellectual works for their insights into how racial knowledge was changing and contested from within the African American community especially. Such knowledge production varied mainly between left wing and nationalist idioms through the mid-twentieth century as white supremacy became increasingly and openly challenged worldwide. From the local vantage point of Chicago, African Americans sought to sustain such alternative forms of knowledge production, especially those that remained consistently independent of U.S. government controls and connected in various ways to leftist politics. For example, throughout this period, W.E.B. DuBois felt more supportive about the Chicago-based AAHA's role in racial knowledge production than he did an organization like AMSAC through the late 1950s based as it was in the diplomatic and knowledge nexus of D.C. While living in New York before he and his wife Shirley Graham moved to Ghana in the early 1960s, DuBois corresponded frequently with figures on the radical black left in Chicago and elsewhere.⁴⁴⁰

As noted above, a notable correspondent for DuBois was Ishmael Flory, whose activism in the 1950s typified the strategic yet precarious role played by black leftists in racial knowledge production. Flory was a mid-level CP-member of the Southside section and had been a community activist in the city for decades as well as a student activist at Fisk University and in Berkeley, California. He had also been a member of the defunct National Negro Congress (NNC) and was an experienced trade unionist. In the 1930s, Flory had worked with the Packinghouse Workers in Chicago on various local civil rights campaigns through work in his own union, the

⁴⁴⁰ Erik McDuffie, *Sojourning for Freedom*, 150; John J. Munro, "The Anticolonial Front"; James Smethurst, "SNYC, *Freedomways*, and the Influence of the Popular Front in the South on the Black Arts Movement," *Reconstruction* 8:1 (2008) <http://reconstruction.eserver.org/081/smethurst.shtml> (accessed April 25, 2013); Ian Rocksborough-Smith, "Filling the Gap."

AFL-affiliated Dining Car Cooks and Waiters (from which he was expelled in the early 1940 for his CP-affiliations).⁴⁴¹

Through much of the 1950s, Flory focused his attention on public history efforts while he achieved a decent living selling cars for Pontiac - much in the spirit of the affluent society and striving images of the 1950s. Such a change in employment certainly reflected the larger shifts away from militant trade unionism around the country, but Flory's correspondence to a former CP comrade in New York shows he kept the acquisitive nature of his new employment at arms length. Flory felt the "automobile business so far" was "very good, relatively to what I have made as wages in the past." He felt "modest and humble" about the occupation and realized that "luck plays a big part." Moreover, he did not "have any illusions about the economic trend." He also noted how he "never really" tried to sell his friends cars. Instead, he often told "them how to buy at the greatest advantage" elsewhere to "make the actual purchase." Flory's tone reflected how he had achieved economic security as a car salesmen through an industry that typified America's affluence, but his tone demonstrated a critical lens on the role he now played through this particular occupation.⁴⁴²

In the same letter Flory wrote more earnestly about his public history work during the late 1950s. In particular, he remarked how he was working to help establish a chapter of the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History (ASNLH) which gave him "some of the fire and enthusiasm of the old days" – a reference to his prior Popular Front era activism in the labor

⁴⁴¹ Erik Gellman, *Death Blow to Jim Crow*, 11, 55-57; D.G. Gibson, "California State News," *The Chicago Defender* (National Edition) (November 21, 1936), 9.

⁴⁴² Ishmael Flory to John Pittman, October 2, 1957, Box 1, Folder 30 Correspondence, 1956-1959, John Pittman Papers, New York University Tamiment Library and Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, New York City, New York (hereafter TAM).

and early civil rights movements of the 1930s and 1940s.⁴⁴³ Flory wrote about how his efforts in public history were to try and “stimulate the emergence of some sort of Negro group that can speak out with deeper historical and theoretical clarity on issues on which the present crop of ‘leaders’ are speaking out, in the face of what really is a great opportune moment, the kind of statesman–like clarity that a Fred Douglass had in the Civil War period...”⁴⁴⁴ Flory, much like Margaret and Charles Burroughs, sought to put public history directly in the service of social action.

With the AAHA, Flory worked through the late 1950s and early 1960s to publish affordable materials and pamphlets on African American history on the Southside to distribute to the community’s majority working class population. The AAHA focused especially on the publication of small pamphlets composed of DuBois’ writings and thoughts, notably on the history of African “colonialism” and on world “socialism.” These particular pamphlets originated as speeches that DuBois gave in both Chicago and California while on speaking tours in 1958 and 1959 respectively. DuBois’ visit to Chicago in the Fall of 1959 also helped raise funds for the AfrAm bookstore – a bookstore run by Flory and his colleagues. In a 1960 letter to Ishmael Flory, DuBois proclaimed that Flory and the AAHA were “making it possible for Negroes and others at small expense to read parts” of Dubois’ recent “work and that is more than is being done elsewhere in the United States. I appreciate it.” This support boosted the spread of

⁴⁴³ For more on the ultimately failed attempts to establish a chapter of the ASNLH in 1950s Chicago see Chapter 1.

⁴⁴⁴ Ishmael Flory to John Pittman, October 2, 1957.

black public history activism in the Windy City through the late 1950s and emphasized the second city's centrality to racial knowledge production in the nation through mid-century.⁴⁴⁵

An important recollection by Ishmael Flory in 1982 also further reflects on how public history labors had become a viable form of activism in Chicago through the Cold War 1950s. In a lengthy letter to the CPUSA's longtime chairman Henry Winston, Flory wrote about his experiences with the AAHA in Chicago organizing public history as well as his earlier activism in the labor-based civil rights struggles of African Americans. In particular he suggested that the AAHA was able in the 1950s and 1960s to work "with what was new in the long history of Afro-Americans in the struggle for Afro-American History...[and] was able to deal not only with the rising independence movements in Africa, with Afro-American History Week, hold public meetings and present prominent speakers and extravaganzas, but it was also able to act on issues." As such, Flory felt that a similarly organized black workers movement in the 1980s which ran "under the banner of 'the history and heritage' of African American labor "may be able to do many things."⁴⁴⁶

The AAHA's two pamphlets of DuBois' Chicago speeches demonstrated especially the utility of circulating accessible and readable interventions on racial knowledge and public history through the mid-20th Century. Sectioned by small paragraphs with headings such as "Legal Discrimination Fell on the Negro" and "Colonies: The Slums of the World" - these pamphlets

⁴⁴⁵ W.E.B. DuBois to Ishmael Flory, Nov 5, 1959, Box 347, Series 1, Folder 4645, W.E.B. DuBois Papers, UMass; W.E.B. DuBois from Eva Swan, Secretary, January 16, 1960, Box 347, Series 1, Folder 4645, W.E.B. DuBois Papers, UMass.; W.E.B. DuBois to Ishmael Flory, April 16, 1960, W.E.B. DuBois Papers, UMass; Speech by W.E.B. DuBois, "Africa: In Battle Against Colonialism, Racialism, Imperialism" (Chicago: AfrAm Books, 1960), Box 118, Folder 849 Exhibit, Red Squad Files, CHM; Speech by W.E.B. DuBois, "Socialism Today" (Chicago: AfrAm Books/Progressive Printers, 1960), Box 118, Folder 849 Exhibit, Red Squad Files, CHM; ; "Dr. DuBois to Speak Here Mon.," *The Chicago Defender* (Daily Edition) (November 23, 1959), A19.

⁴⁴⁶ Ishmael Flory to Henry Winston, January 9, 1982, Box 2, Folder 67, CPUSA: Biographical Files on Communist Activists 1907-1999, TAM.

and others on the writings by DuBois were sold for between .15 and .25 each. They were published with the aid of the CP's local printer (Progressive Printers located at 1153 E. 47th Street on the Southside) and through the small bookstore and distributor AfrAm Books that Ishmael Flory kept running through the 1950s (located at 102 East 35th Street).⁴⁴⁷ Correspondence between DuBois and Flory suggests that the pamphlet "Socialism Today" already had 4,000 copies run by early 1960 with another 4,000 anticipated for circulation and that the Chicago activist and elder scholar even exchanged proofs of DuBois' prolific Chicago-based speeches.⁴⁴⁸ This was significant distribution for the U.S. black left, since the influential civil rights journal *Freedomways* based in New York, the intellectual epicenter of U.S. liberalism and left radicalism, had only reached a circulation of 2,000 when first published under the direct tutelage of DuBois and Shirley Graham.⁴⁴⁹ Moreover, like *Freedomways*, Flory and his wife Cathern Flory sought to utilize Graham's extensive contacts in Africa to achieve transatlantic circulation for DuBois' speeches from Chicago.⁴⁵⁰ Though the DuBois' thoughts and ideas were obviously circulated more prolifically through other venues, it is significant that his later work received such erudite engagement for local distribution on Chicago's black Southside.⁴⁵¹

An analysis of the AAHA's pamphlet's form and content demonstrate exactly the sort of contentious cosmopolitanism exemplified by the activities of black public history groups on the

⁴⁴⁷Speech by W.E.B. DuBois, "Africa: In Battle Against Colonialism, Racialism, Imperialism."

⁴⁴⁸ Ishmael Flory to W.E.B. DuBois, February 8, 1960, Box 347, Series 1, Folder 4645, W.E.B. DuBois Papers, UMass.

⁴⁴⁹ Ian Rocksborough-Smith, "Filling the Gap," 15.

⁴⁵⁰ Ishmael Flory to W.E.B. DuBois, February 8, 1960,

⁴⁵¹ In this sense, I draw on the "translocal" notions of race, place, and space articulated in recent critical studies of transnationalism that situate the movement and locality of racialized communities in both global and urban contexts. See for example, Shompa Lahiri, "Remembering the City: Translocality and the Senses," *Social and Cultural Geography* 12:8 (2011), 855-869.

left in Chicago. Ishmael Flory offered a preface to each and added his own local filter to issues that were world-historical in scope. For example, the preface to the speech “Colonialism” was also a plug for the AAHA’s “African Freedom Day” celebrated in Chicago in 1960. “On this day...” wrote Flory, “...in Southern United States, in Africa, in Asia, people with less pigmentation in their skin than their western European and European-American cousins are in the forefront of preserving and extending all of the very best that has come down from history to the human race.”⁴⁵² Flory’s assertion was mirrored by the speech outlined in the pamphlet by DuBois who traced labor’s degradation in the context of the modern era, industrialization in the 19th Century, and the transatlantic African slave trade. For DuBois, this history of labor’s global degradations coincided with the “discovery” and “trade” of Europe with America and India respectively – all regions whose indigenous peoples had their wealth “brutally stolen” and in various ways subjected to forms of European-led colonialism and imperialism. DuBois offered a compelling expression of how racial knowledge by the mid-20th Century had “nearly” completely debunked the pseudoscience of “inherent inferiority of the majority of the people of the earth who happen to be colored.”⁴⁵³ This expression of how ideas of race had changed through the 1950s conceded that much work remained to be done to fully debunk the myth of racial hierarchies in the public sphere. In this sense DuBois’ thought (while increasingly sectarian in political modes through the mid-20th Century), still expressed important utopian and future ideals for social justice and racial equality.⁴⁵⁴

⁴⁵² Ishmael Flory, “Africa Freedom Day 1960,” preface to “Colonialism.”

⁴⁵³ W.E.B. DuBois, “Colonialism.”

⁴⁵⁴ As Eric Porter suggests, DuBois’ “quest for a fuller realization of democracy and his analysis of the present and future of the 1940s and 1950s were made possible by the political and analytical modes of Popular Front and statist Marxism, Keynesian economics, insurgent anticolonial nationalisms, social mobilizations against Jim Crow, and the state of civil rights and human rights discourse.” See Eric Porter, *Problem of the Future World*, 15-16.

DuBois' thoughts from the "colonialism" speech/pamphlet were echoed at the African Freedom Fête celebrated annually in Chicago. At the event in 1962, over 3,000 people attended Freedom Fête at the Parkway Ballroom on the Southside. Among the events speakers were Sister Christine Johnson, Principal of the University of Islam; Consul William H. Jones of Liberia; Fauzi Abadi, Director of the Arab Information Service; Consul Issa Serag Eil Din, United Arab Republic Consul General; and Chimere Ikoku, President of the Pan-African Students Organization in the Americas, Inc. Johnson spoke to the audience about the connections between black struggles in Africa and throughout the diaspora. She suggested that the "struggle" for black freedom would be "handicapped" until every "man, woman and child of African descent is made to realize and understand the relations of movements..." For Johnson, this meant fostering awareness "of Africa and throughout the world, the long history of lies, distortions and misrepresentations about Africa which still debase our schools and institutions of higher learning..." Until this situation changed, these problems of knowledge about race and history would engulf "the entire world." Johnson also read a message from W.E.B. DuBois in absentia to the festivities, that global black freedom struggles would be victorious and "absolutely certain."⁴⁵⁵

The AAHA's publication of "Socialism Today" explicitly connected local social equality struggles in Chicago with racial knowledge production about African Americans, Africa, and the role of the U.S. in the world. Flory's preface for this pamphlet noted how "Socialism Today" was an original publication by Afram books of DuBois' work. Flory further noted how the AAHA was "deeply concerned with bringing to African Americans in the first place, and Americans in general, the scientific facts on race and on African-Americans or Americans of

⁴⁵⁵ "Thousands at African Freedom Fete," *Muhammad Speaks* (June 1962), 1.

African descent.” Flory also emphasized his view that white Americans in particular were exceptional in the degree to which they bought into the “myth of race.” This myth persisted “out of a long history of lies about African and Americans of African descent.” In Flory’s view, the form that U.S. exceptionalism took with regards to “racism and falsified history” had a lot to do with how the country was viewed globally and underscored its increasingly imperial role in the world. As such, local acts of U.S. racism registered “before the world” and made the country into the “land of over 5,000 lynchings; where ‘free elections’ don’t exist for millions of black and white Americans; where at moments white men and women act like mad men from the caves as in the case of Trumbull Park in Chicago or Levittown in Pennsylvania, or Deerfield in Illinois...”⁴⁵⁶

DuBois’ speech to a Chicago audience in November of 1959 certainly reflected Flory’s local to global thoughts about histories of race and racial injustice. He began with a recollection of recent world travels from the previous year that came with the reinstatement of his passport after nearly a decade of harassment on that front from the U.S. government who had denied his travels abroad.⁴⁵⁷ These renewed travels took DuBois from Western Europe to the Eastern bloc (the Soviet Union and China). To DuBois, this experience gave him “the right to say that the West, and particularly the United States” could “no longer ignore the world or consider themselves the center of the universe...” More to the point, DuBois looked to various socialist and social democratic experiments taking place around the world as models for future social change. He asked his audience what a “socialist country” looked and felt like and compared Moscow to Chicago. For example, in Moscow, there was “more planning... of streets and

⁴⁵⁶ Ishmael Flory, “A Word from the Publishers,” preface to “Socialism Today.”

⁴⁵⁷ Brenda Gayle Plummer, *Rising Wind*, 204; Penny Von Eschen, *Race Against Empire*, 183

buildings; the people... are dressed in later styles, but the Moscovites are not in rags. They are satisfied with life and less worried than the people of Chicago.”⁴⁵⁸ Such explicit comparisons of regional contexts surely offered compelling examples to local audiences about the prospects for social change in the United States.

While such observations demonstrated DuBois’ increasingly Communist sympathies, they also underscored important realities about the precariousness of urban social life for citizens of the United States during the early Cold War and post-World War II era – especially citizens of color. Most Americans from all sections of society shared hopes for a prosperous future in an “affluent” consumer society driven by U.S. commerce and capitalism. But such hopes were not often reflected in material realities. This was especially true for African Americans through the mid-20th Century whose strivings for public accommodations and the often unattainable fruits of U.S. material progress through this period have been well documented and are reflected in recent historiographical syntheses that demonstrate how struggles for civil rights and social reform fit tenuously into the paradigm of an increasingly consumer-oriented society.⁴⁵⁹

Other prominent black Chicagoans of the 1950s and 1960s have reflected in ways that underscore how the terrain of local public history labors was an important site articulating the entrepreneurial and striving character of civil rights activity throughout the nation. In his autobiography *Succeeding Against the Odds* (1989), John H. Johnson (the owner of Johnson Publishing Enterprises Inc. in Chicago) recalled the cultural and political “awakenings” of Black America at midcentury which he characterized as a “quantum jump in black consciousness.” The founder and owner of the very successful *Ebony* and *Jet* magazines explained, that his multi-

⁴⁵⁸ Speech by W.E.B. DuBois, “Socialism Today”; “Dr. DuBois to Speak Here Mon.”

⁴⁵⁹ Elizabeth Cohen, *Consumers Republic*, 166-191.

million dollar publishing companies “played a leadership role in this process” by creating the “foundations” of “struggle” in the “forties and fifties when the ground was hard and there were few laborers.” Johnson insisted that his magazines “anticipated the changes” of the 1960s “and gave focus and form to them.” He recalled that in 1959 there was a “growing interest in Black history.” And so among other efforts to publish books on black history and culture, Johnson “authorized a pathfinding Black history series.” Authored by *Ebony* staff writer, Lerone Bennett, Jr., the series was eventually compiled and published in 1962 as a comprehensive book entitled, *Before the Mayflower: A History of Black America: The Classic Account of the Struggles and Triumphs of Black Americans*, and has since been revised numerous times to commemorate changes in the African American freedom struggle over the course of the 1960s and beyond.⁴⁶⁰ *Ebony* was certainly at the forefront of reporting progressive change throughout this period. For example, a report commissioned by the magazine (known for its glossy portrayal of African American lifestyles and consumption patterns) *still* offered important reports about structural changes in U.S. society. As just one example, one key *Ebony* report highlighted the slow but significant increase in the number of African Americans who worked in colleges and universities (by 1958, there were more than 300 African American educators teaching white students in 106 post-secondary institutions across the country).⁴⁶¹

It is important to underscore how more than anything, Johnson’s boastful recollections privilege black entrepreneurialism as the engine for the cultural and social awakenings of the 1960s. Such recollections are useful because they frame a two decade period that has cast the

⁴⁶⁰ John H. Johnson, *Succeeding Against the Odds*, 287; Lerone Bennett, Jr., *Before the Mayflower: A History of Black America; the classic account of the struggles and triumphs of Black Americans* (Chicago: Johnson Publishing, 1962).

⁴⁶¹ Lee Blackwell, “Off the Record,” April 29, 1958.

postwar struggles for civil rights by African Americans in very specific terms - as one of changing public culture and U.S. social life in light of changing forms of capitalist consumption and prevailing forms of consumerism. This is especially true if we consider how increased African American engagements with entrepreneurial and consumer activism helped usher in the use of new medias of the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s. For example, these decades saw the rise of pictorial magazines, radio, and television mediums which in many ways (as Johnson suggests in his autobiography), helped “anticipate,” give “foundation” to, and “form” efforts towards social change underway by the 1960s. This was especially true given the long-tested strategies of consumer boycotting campaigns and Johnson’s own efforts to promote the notion of a black consumer market to larger white-owned advertising firms from the 1940s through the 1960s. In his own words, Johnson described how he approached potential advertisers by describing black consumers in the same way you would describe a “foreign market,” defined in decidedly nationalist parameters.⁴⁶² Johnson’s engagement with civil rights issues can also be understood as a reconstruction of collective grammars for black identity through the 1960s which also implicitly combated racial prejudice. As historian Adam Green suggests, these grammars demonstrated a contingency about racial identities (in flux and ever-changing) that emphasized the preeminence of entrepreneurial forms in public efforts for African American recognition in the public sphere.⁴⁶³

⁴⁶² For useful studies of African Americans increasingly engaged in post-World War II consumer society’s cultural fields such as advertising, pictorial magazines and radio, see Robert J. Weems, *Desegregating the Dollar: African American Consumerism in the Twentieth Century* (New York: New York University Press, 1999); Jason Chambers, *Madison Avenue and the Color Line: African Americans in the Advertising Industry* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008). Lizabeth Cohen indicates the decade long efforts by civil rights activists to conduct consumer boycotts. See, Lizabeth Cohen, *Consumers Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Random House, 2003), 275-276. John Johnson writes about challenges of convincing white advertising agencies about incentives of advertising directly to African American publics. See, John H. Johnson, *Succeeding Against the Odds*, 179.

⁴⁶³ Adam Green, *Selling the Race*, 132,175.

The teleology Johnson employs in his autobiography is worth analyzing further given the “foundations” he saw within his business pursuits for public history labors. As such, Johnson’s autobiographical narrative obfuscates a complex field of political and intellectual exchanges in the late 1950s and 1960s about how images and representations of African American life, history, and culture were to be crafted, by whom, for what means, and to what ends. It is certainly true that the book *Before the Mayflower* by Lerone Bennett as well as Bennett’s many other writings became household and highly influential texts for many African Americans (and white Americans like Bill Clinton). Johnson publishing itself, given its prolific output through magazines like *Ebony*, *Negro Digest*, and *Jet* certainly became a shining example of African American enterprise.

Nonetheless, as discussed above, the correspondence between W.E.B. DuBois and Ishmael Flory about organizations like the American Society for African Culture (AMSAC) revealed earnest concerns about the politics behind the future production and circulation of accessible black public history. These concerns contrasted in form with the entrepreneurial *foci* of the Johnson publishing empire and its specific forms of cultural production - which emphasized making money. Moreover, it is clear that these sorts of concerns extended for decades after the 1960s. For example, in Ishmael Flory’s letter to Henry Winston in 1982 (not long before Johnson published his autobiography during the late 1980s) Flory indicated how he had been in conversation with the DuSable Museum of African American history about establishing exhibits and programs on African American labor history in far less acquisitive terms. Flory was particularly worried that “opportunistic social democrats” might pick up the “idea

of Black history with emphasis on Black workers... [to] use it to distort that history and heritage.”⁴⁶⁴

In fact, many people were involved in the contested fields of racial knowledge production and how such forms of knowledge could and should be deployed in the service of civil rights through the mid-20th Century. In Chicago, black public history efforts were at the center of these contestations. The *Chicago Defender* documented W.E.B. DuBois’ visits to Chicago despite the neglect the African American press treated him with in the later years of his life.⁴⁶⁵ Like the emancipation issuance celebration in 1958, a birthday celebration earlier that year also held at Dunbar High School became an occasion for black Chicagoans to present a united front on issues of black history commemoration, tribute, and celebration. The event reflected the multiplicity of modalities through which African Americans sought social equality in the public sphere. Not unlike Negro History Week celebrations in the city, the DuBois Birthday Salute was organized by the Chicago DuBois Committee in May of 1958 and received official recognition from mayor Richard J. Daley. This recognition mirrored the Democratic machine’s attempts to co-opt social movement activities in the Windy City as part of its campaign to fully secure African American civic voters through the 1950s.⁴⁶⁶ But Daley’s token pronouncements notwithstanding, the DuBois Salute still presented openings that African Americans in the city had found for couching civil rights activism as forms of public history observance. Like his predecessors had done during the 1940s to recognize public school curriculum reformers, mayor Daley “kindly” turned down the invitation to address the commemorative gathering at Dunbar High but instead offered

⁴⁶⁴Ishmael Flory to Henry Winston, January 9, 1982.

⁴⁶⁵ Lee Blackwell, “Off the Record,” *The Chicago Defender* (Daily Edition) (April 29, 1958), A10.

⁴⁶⁶William Grimshaw, *Bitter Fruit*, 96.

kind words about the elder, embattled scholar of black America. To Democratic kingmaker Daley, DuBois (the now Communist) was still a “renowned leader whose life span has encompassed much of the most significant stirring history of our nation.”⁴⁶⁷ While surely symbolic and ripe with the sort of disingenuousness that highlighted Daley’s relationship to the black community, such recognition was not widely held within the U.S. academy or its general society given DuBois’ increasingly exiled status through the late 1950s.⁴⁶⁸

Like the emancipation issuance centennial celebration later in the year, the DuBois testimonial featured a who’s who of black Chicago and its liberal and left wing white allies. The event also further demonstrated the multiplicity of political modalities held by local community leaders: particularly integrationist, entrepreneurial, liberal and leftist *and* nationalist (as well as some combination of all these). The very focus of DuBois’ talk at his birthday celebration demonstrates how public history, entrepreneurial, and nationalist modalities were articulated simultaneously. For example, the title of DuBois’ Chicago talk was “The Negro in Business in a Changing World (1908-1958).” Local businessman Truman K. Gibson chaired the committee that organized the Dunbar testimonial dinner. The event also served to aid DuBois’ efforts to continue to self-publish his work and distribute it globally in affordable and accessible ways. Other members of the committee included Golden B. Darby from the Southside Community Committee, Roosevelt College professor St. Clair Drake, Northwestern University’s Melville Herskovitz, *The Chicago Defender* and Urban League’s Al Foster, local attorney and businessman Earl B. Dickerson, the white liberal Hyde Park couple Ed and Joyce Gourfain, and

⁴⁶⁷ Telegram to W.E.B. DuBois via Truman Gibson, May 5, 1958, Correspondence, 1958, Box 217, Folder 4063, W.E.B. DuBois Papers, UMass.

⁴⁶⁸ Gerald Horne, *Black and Red*; Penny Von Eschen, *Race Against Empire*; Eric Porter, *The Problem of the Future World*.

local high school teachers Timuel D. Black and Samuel and Madeline Stratton. Even more left wing members of the committee known for their associations with CP-circles included artists Marion Perkins, Margaret and Charles Burroughs, Fern Gayden, Dorothy and Charles Hayes, and Ishmael Flory's wife, Cathern Flory. The event also featured the support of Oscar Brown Jr.'s parents: Mr. and Mrs. Oscar Brown, Sr. who had helped initiate a short-lived 49th State movement from Chicago in the 1930s - a significant antecedent to later nationalist formations in the city and nation.⁴⁶⁹

DuBois' birthday celebration program booklet articulated how the scholar's prolific career and body of work treated nearly all geographies of the African diaspora and its political imaginaries – including African nationalist movements. The program noted how DuBois was a “scholar, historian, writer, sociologist, educator, and pioneer in the movement of equal rights for Negroes” having “served his people nobly over sixty years.” It also mentioned DuBois' multifaceted intellectual works: from the founding of departments in Atlanta and Nashville; his pioneering urban studies (ie. Philadelphia, 1899); and his prolific work with journals such as *Phylon* and *The Crisis*. The program underscored DuBois' role in the founding of both the NAACP and the Pan-African Congress movements that persisted from the First World War era through the mid-20th Century in European cities like Paris, France, and Manchester, England. In particular, the program indicated DuBois' collaborations with emerging African nationalist leaders such as Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana - who incidentally also visited Chicago in 1958 and was fêted by both mayor Daley and Chicago's black elites and featured in a public motorcade

⁴⁶⁹E.U. Essien-Udom, *Black Nationalism*, 50; “Lecture Dr. W.E.B. DuBois.”

that attracted thousands.⁴⁷⁰ Most importantly perhaps, the program noted how DuBois' life and work, from his recent speaking engagement to capacity audiences in Washington, D.C. and New York earlier in 1958, to his broader intellectual influences, had touched nearly the "whole dark world from Alabama to Africa." In the program committee's estimation, DuBois could easily be compared with great American thinkers like Henry Steel Commager, Thomas Jefferson, or Benjamin Franklin. Such juxtapositions positioned DuBois' significance as a knowledge producer in the same tradition as founding figures of U.S. liberal traditions. At the same time, the program placed DuBois in a lengthy, globalized discussion about the "darker" majorities of the planet whose fates were historically conditioned and impacted by the ongoing exploits of European colonialism and imperialism.⁴⁷¹

Like the AAHA, the testimonial dinner also sought to aid DuBois' efforts to circulate and sustain the legacies of his ideas in print through the 1960s. The testimonial dinner's program indicated how the over \$200 raised on the occasion for these endeavors would aid the resuscitation of DuBois' "out of print" scholarship and get volumes re-circulated especially to institutions he had taught at - namely Fisk University in Nashville, Atlanta University, and Wilberforce in Ohio.⁴⁷²

Another instrumental member of the Chicago DuBois Committee was Margaret Burroughs. It is worth considering how Burroughs' involvement as coordinator of the event was part of the broader public history efforts she was at the center of in the city. Chicago native and

⁴⁷⁰Antonio Lopez, "In the Spirit of Liberation": Race, Governmentality, and the Decolonial Politics of the Original Rainbow Coalition of Chicago," (PhD Dissertation, University of Texas, 2012), 107-108.

⁴⁷¹"We, a Committee of Chicago Citizens," Box 245, Folder 4578, W.E.B. DuBois Papers, UMass.

⁴⁷²"We, a Committee of Chicago Citizens"; Truman K. Gibson to W.E.B. DuBois, December 3, 1958, Box 245, Folder 4578, W.E.B. DuBois Papers, UMass.

cultural historian Sterling Stuckey writes in the preface to Burroughs' autobiography *Life With Margaret* that Burroughs had indeed led the "movement to have [DuBois] brought to Chicago in 1958 to speak on the South Side." Stuckey notes how the famous Chicago poet Carl Sandburg was being honored by the city and, as such, Burroughs felt "a great black figure should be honored as well."⁴⁷³

For Margaret Burroughs, such forms of recognition extended into areas of public education and the push for black studies on college campuses and in public schools through the 1960s. Burroughs recognized the challenges she and many of her generation faced building independent black-led cultural institutions through the 1940s and 1950s. These very issues and had intimately paralleled hers and many others labors as public school teachers to strive for far-reaching social changes in areas of curriculum reform and quality education for inner-city children. In an open letter in 1969 to "Black Students and Black Students Organizations of Chicago..." that appeared in *The Chicago Defender*, Burroughs positioned herself as a "pioneer in the black history, black pride and black is beautiful movement, (I wore a natural or 'Afro' fifteen years ago and have been rapping black pride long before you were born)..." As such, she felt she had "the right to issue" local youth a "challenge." Her letter spoke to the salience of self-determination in late 1960s black Power and nationalist modes of that period. For example, she noted that while "schools, universities and libraries may... supplement" their studies of African American history, students had the responsibility for teaching themselves knowledge of "heritage and culture." At the same time, her challenge also served as a promotional appeal for financial support to older Bronzeville institutions like the Southside Community Arts Center and the

⁴⁷³ Margaret Burroughs, *Life With Margaret*, 14; "Lecture Dr. W.E.B. DuBois," Box 242, Folder 4578, W.E.B. DuBois Papers, UMass.

DuSable Museum. “You demand your schools to set up black studies departments and black cultural centers,” wrote Burroughs, “when you have not even taken advantage of, or supported such related institutions which exist in your own black community.”⁴⁷⁴ Burroughs also clearly expressed the generational tensions of the late 1960s in ways that revealed the complexities of black nationalist modes through this moment.

Burroughs crafted a left nationalism in the 1950s and 1960s that appealed to both older notions of civil rights integrationism and resurgent ideas for black self-determination and cultural nationalism. She had been active in the independent caucus of the Chicago Teachers Union (CTU) during the 1950s that pressured the union and the City of Chicago to adopt curriculum reforms and fairer hiring standards for blacks and minorities. Burroughs was also part of Teachers for Integrated Schools – a teachers group started in 1961 that was an important independent left-leaning organization made-up of public school and city college educators who supported the Coordinating Council of Community Organizations on school desegregation issues. The CCCO and Teachers for Integrated Schools both worked with Martin Luther King, Jr. when he and SCLC came to Chicago in 1966 and formed the Chicago Freedom Movement (CFM) after a famous rally at Soldiers Field to take on issues of open housing and public school inequities - focused mainly on the city’s most poverty-stricken West side wards.⁴⁷⁵

While not directly involved in the protest activities these organizations embarked upon, Burroughs offered ideological and intellectual support that helped frame the high stakes of struggles for racial justice in public education. In a 1966 *Negro Digest* article, she wrote of a

⁴⁷⁴ Margaret Burroughs, letter to *The Chicago Defender* (Big Weekend Edition) (April 5, 1969), 17.

⁴⁷⁵ Carl R. Weinberg, “Marching in Marquette Park,” *OAH Magazine of History* 26:1 (2012): 3.

need to “integrate” public school learning materials “now”! By integration she did not mean simply seating “Negro and white children” together in classrooms or the same schools. Instead, she urgently called for “additional [historical] research and much revision and rewriting.” Burroughs noted how distortions about America’s racial history in school textbooks especially contributed to the long-standing and willful disavowal of African American civic virtues in the public sphere – which also led to the prevalence of “white supremacist” views among many white Americans. To her, there was a “direct connection between the question of a positive image for the negro American and the programs to aid... poverty stricken” blacks, who themselves were “culturally deprived” because they lacked “knowledge of self.” Burroughs felt that the “millions of dollars” used in the vaunted War on Poverty of the mid-60s would “go down the drain,” unless the “positive self-image, heritage, Negro history - call it what you will – is faced up to.” Such a perspective surely reflected the malleability of racial knowledge and identities through the mid-twentieth Century, their contested forms, and public receptions. For instance, Burroughs categorically collapsed notions of self-image, cultural heritage, and black history. But her suggestion that one could “call it what you will” simultaneously underscored the significant political urgency and earnestness felt by many (from social reformers to left and nationalist revolutionaries) during the insurgent moments of the mid-late 1960s that surely emboldened many forms of global activism. Burroughs concluded that the circulation and revision of America’s “missing pages” of history was urgently needed to adequately redress the pressing racial grievances of African Americans.⁴⁷⁶

⁴⁷⁶ Margaret Burroughs, “Identity for the Negro Child: Integration of Learning Materials... NOW!,” *Negro Digest* (March 1966), 30-34.

Burroughs' article offered a number of solutions to redress these gaps in public knowledge of America's racial past. More than just rewriting the "missing pages," she outlined a program that addressed a good deal of the innovative and creative cultural forms that highlighted the activities of Black Arts activists as well as African American educators through the late 1960s. As such, not only did revisions of curriculum units, "lesson plans, readers, language and historical texts" need to take place. But also, this knowledge needed to be "diagramed" into "pictures, charts, films, film strips, and recorded onto tapes, and records" – in other words, a whole range of new media for creative work available to cultural producers by the late 1960s.⁴⁷⁷ Beyond the materials themselves, Burroughs noted how reforms would need to be initiated by "[c]ommittees of teachers, administrators and specialists in the field of Negro literature and history" to "review and make recommendations" for these changes. "Their aim should be to reflect... not only the [positive contributions] of the Negro to society, civilization and American history but of other ethnic groups who have been neglected or ignored."⁴⁷⁸

These solutions were enacted through the African American History Museum's efforts to promote public history. Beginning in 1965, the museum offered classes to school teachers and by 1967 had extended invitations to "youth leaders" and "other educators." These were introductory African American history courses that began with overviews of ancient Africa, histories of racial slavery and continued through to topics that dealt with "contemporary America." Coursework was designed to assist teachers in developing supplementary units for their classrooms.⁴⁷⁹ When

⁴⁷⁷ Many of these activities were central features of the Black Arts movement in Los Angeles, Atlanta, New York and numerous other locales where African Americans partook in diverse cultural production of the late 1960s especially. See Daniel Widener, *Black Arts West*; James Smethurst, *The Black Arts Movement*.

⁴⁷⁸ Margaret Burroughs, "Identity for the Negro Child," 34.

⁴⁷⁹ Eugene Pieter Feldman, "Negro History Class Scheduled at Museum," *The Chicago Defender* (National Edition) (October 16, 1965), 8.

Burroughs announced the program in *The Chicago Defender*, she suggested that “[m]any” schools had independently introduced “African-American history to their students,” but that “a large number of teachers” were “not prepared to introduce this subject to their students.” The museum’s education committee prepared a range of materials for distribution in these classes; from paperback booklets and brochures that featured 137 “biographical sketches” of “Figures in Negro History” which featured such Black Chicago “old settler” personalities as journalist and anti-lynching advocate, Ida B. Wells and, of course, the city’s first settler, Jean Baptiste Point DuSable alongside Reconstruction era officials like Mississippi’s Hiram Revels and Alabama’s James T. Rapier. The museum also used its extensive collection of artwork to make a film strip entitled: “The African-American in the Making of America.”⁴⁸⁰

The focus of many of those in Black Chicago who were closely involved in knowledge production, whether through teaching, public advocacy, or public history endeavors demonstrated the contested terrain of African American nationalist modalities through the 1950s. Through a focused discussion of black nationalism’s alternate coordinates in 1950s Chicago, this chapter offers an important amplification of the idea that the African American public sphere remained vibrant throughout the entire post-World War II period. As the work of Adam Green on Johnson publishing attests alongside the alternative forms of knowledge promoted by a public history organization like the AAHA and figures like Ishmael Flory and Christine Johnson and others, there is still much to be uncovered about the intricacies of black Chicago’s mid-20th racial knowledge producing efforts. Indeed, Chicago became the site for the expression of a variety of nationalisms through the 1950s beyond the Nation of Islam. These expressions came from a range of organizations that represented the radical left, as well as liberal entrepreneurs and

⁴⁸⁰ “Museum of African American History,” Miscellaneous Pamphlets, CHM.

strivers generally who deployed many nationalist “stews” at different points in their activist labors. Of course, not all these endeavors originated from the same ideological source. Also, tactics often varied - whether forms of racial knowledge were advanced through pictorial magazines and journals as was the case for Johnson publishing, or through cheaper street-level pamphlets and publically accessible forums and celebrations as the AAHA did. Still, their collective efforts used public recognition for black history as a way to advance civil rights in the U.S.

As such, public history efforts contributed to the diversity and richness of nationalist expressions beyond the conventional conservative and iconoclastically male variants that typically stand as definitive standards of these modalities through the middle 20th Century. This was demonstrated especially by the ongoing labors of Southside school teachers like Margaret Burroughs and significant figures who were a part of her museum-making cohort and Christine Johnson who used her position as principal at the University of Islam in Chicago through the late 1950s and early 1960s to democratize the forms of parochial education the NOI offered to working class Southside black children. The final chapter of this dissertation will demonstrate especially how these efforts coalesced in the institutional expansion of local museum-making efforts in the Windy City since at least the 1940s.

Chapter 5

The DuSable Museum of African American History in the Black Power Era: The Washington Park Relocation

By the end of the 1960s, the DuSable Museum was having trouble accommodating a growing range of programs and visitors to its historic Gold Coast mansion located at 3806 South Michigan Avenue where it had been located since it was founded in 1961. The museum's activities now included numerous tours of both the museum and surrounding south side neighborhoods. Other activities included curatorial exhibits from Africa as well as from regional Afro-diasporic communities throughout the Americas, archival collections, and popular educational functions such as regular black history classes and lectures. The museum began with only 525 annual visitors in 1961. But by 1966 it recorded 7,304 visitors in that year alone and by 1971-72 it hosted over 25,000 visitors annually. Most of these visitors were elementary school students from surrounding Chicagolands. Given the spatial privations of the 3806 South Michigan Ave mansion's Victorian living spaces, the museum could only reasonably accommodate fifty visitors at any given time.⁴⁸¹

In their discussions about expansion, museum staff considered other physical sites, most notably vacant properties beside its Bronzeville location. A group of local African American doctors who supported the museum solicited an architect in 1967 to draw up designs for a new building. This initiative also reached out to local writers and dignitaries such as *Ebony* editor and popular history writer, Lerone Bennett, *Jet* magazine managing editor Robert Johnson, Dave Potter, a news editor at the *Chicago Defender*, a local dentist named Dr. Benjamin Coble, and

⁴⁸¹Carline Evone Williams Strong, "Margaret Taylor Goss Burroughs," (PhD Dissertation, Loyola University, 1994), 197; Margaret Burroughs, "Annual Report 1966," CHM; Margaret Burroughs, "Museum of Negro History Cultural and Historical Tour," CHM; "Black Museum Seeks Park Site," *Chicago Daily Tribune* (November 10, 1971), A18.

Rev. James Mack, a pastor at South Congressional Church. This particular effort also sought unnamed representatives from independent African nations as consultants to the project.

However, plans fell through when the surrounding properties were sold to other buyers.⁴⁸² In the end, the museum did not follow the plans envisioned by the group of local doctors, dignitaries and elites.

Though prominent black public figures would play a role in the museum's expansion, local college students actually provided the catalyst for moving the institution to Washington Park where it remains to this day. This site was first considered when students of Margaret Burroughs at Wilson-Junior College (now Kennedy-King) alerted her to a vacant police building in the park right next to the University of Chicago. By then, Burroughs was an art history professor at Wilson Junior, following a lengthy career as a public school teacher on the South Side. As she later recalled in her autobiography, the site "seemed like a perfect place for the museum to expand."⁴⁸³ Washington Park did seem like a natural site for relocation. For much of the 20th century, it had been a space for African American cultural celebrations on the South Side of the city. For example, it had been an end point of the Bud Billiken Parade for decades as well as a public space for community assembly dating back to at least the 1930s when the neighborhood (like many located outside of historic Bronzeville during and after the Second Great Migration) became mostly African American in residency.⁴⁸⁴

⁴⁸² "Negro History Museum Planned," *The Chicago Defender* (National Edition) (May 20, 1967), 3.

⁴⁸³ Margaret T.G. Burroughs, *Life with Margaret*, 155; Carline Evone Williams Strong, "Margaret Taylor Goss Burroughs," 123, 232.

⁴⁸⁴ Christopher R. Reed, *The Rise of Chicago's Black Metropolis, 1920-1929* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press), 28; Richard Wright, *American Hunger* (New York: Harper, 1944 [1977]), 37; William L. Patterson, *The Man Who Cried Genocide*, 148-149; Bill Mullen, *Popular Fronts*.

Since at least the Depression era of the 1930s, community historians, radical orators, elders, nationalists of many stripes, and griots lectured in Chicago's Washington Park on a variety of political and cultural subjects. As noted in Chapter 2, their militant tenor was vividly recalled in the prolific writings of figures such as Richard Wright and William L. Patterson and in the seminal urban study of the 1930s and 1940s, *Black Metropolis*, by St. Clair Drake and Horace Cayton.⁴⁸⁵ The neighborhood of Washington Park was also significant for the strivings of upwardly-mobile black Chicagoans through mid-century. The notion of "striving" casts the neighborhood in more diverse terms than the middlebrow enclave it is often characterized as.⁴⁸⁶ One former resident who grew up there recalled how the neighborhood was home to many politically engaged folks who attended churches where figures like W.E.B. DuBois and James Weldon Johnson spoke when they came to town. They were a diverse lot of "railroad workers and train porters, postal workers and social workers, small businessmen, schoolteachers, ministers, homemakers, and [a] scant few doctors and lawyers." Residents insisted on making their neighborhood a "ceremonial ground" for uplift and striving in spite of the racism they faced from white residents and police forces, no matter their class position.⁴⁸⁷ In this sense, it was a neighborhood that promoted uplift and respectability, but also one that engaged many of its residents in significant political and cultural activisms.

Given the political legacies that mark the histories of Washington Park and its surrounding neighborhoods, this concluding chapter looks at how the DuSable Museum of

⁴⁸⁵Clarice Durham, "Bronzeville's Venerable Historian," 1; James Smethurst, *The Black Arts Movement*, 193-200, 195; St. Claire Drake, Horace Cayton, *Black Metropolis*.

⁴⁸⁶ A recent dissertation by Jeffrey Helgeson entitled "Striving in Black Chicago" explores this notion more fully and with greater detail.

⁴⁸⁷ Robert Stepto, "Washington Park," in Genevieve Fabre ed. *History and Memory in African American Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 273.

African American History negotiated its relocation into a former police station in the Park. It took approximately two years before the city finally granted the museum the right to move into the park by the city in the early months of 1972, and another two years before it actually shifted its main programs there.⁴⁸⁸ The museum's move re-imagined a historically African American social space into the city's geography and can be considered alongside the highly diverse engagements of Black Power and Black Arts⁴⁸⁹ movement activists around the country with civic-level politics.⁴⁹⁰ The politics this expansion effort brought into play also demonstrated how museum work became a significant part of the broad repertoires of local movements for urban racial equality through the 1960s and early 1970s -- a process that further reflected growing interest in African American heritage, culture, and history.⁴⁹¹

⁴⁸⁸ Eugene Feldman, *The Birth and the Building of the DuSable Museum*, 84; "Du Sable Museum to Begin Drive for Remodeling Funds," *Chicago Daily Tribune* (Feb 17, 1972), S4; "DuSable Museum's move fulfills founder's dream," *Chicago Daily Tribune* (Feb 7, 1974), S3; "New building for museum fulfills dream," *Chicago Daily Tribune* (Feb 7, 1974), N6.

⁴⁸⁹ I am taking my cue from scholars like James Smethurst and Daniel Widener who emphasize the significantly larger roles that cultural activists played in the Black Power era of the 1960s and 1970s than is generally acknowledged. Activists from this era earnestly debated issues of self-determination, nationalism, and racial identity in ways that demonstrated extensive engagement with diverse political movements for social change through their primary involvement in cultural fields. For example, Smethurst suggests that the Black Power movement might more correctly be characterized as the "political wing" of Black Arts (rather than the more usual notion that the Arts movement was a subordinate "cultural wing"). I similarly deploy these terms with an understanding that "Black Power" and "Black Arts" were "elastic terms" during their time, just as ideological notions of left and right wing have been fluid and malleable concepts over time and place. As such, Black Power and Art simultaneously represented "interlocked" and related cultural and political movements, with "no real center" in terms of organizational praxis or hegemonic ideology (an assertion that works against the weighted image that groups like the Black Panther Party had in late 1960s radical imaginaries and representations). Still, the Black Power and Arts movements remained united in what Smethurst calls a "shared belief that African Americans were a people, a nation, entitled to... self-determination of its own destiny." Similarly, and with specific reference to historiography, Daniel Widener suggests that we think more about the study of Black art from this period "as a place of social struggle," for it facilitates "the ongoing revision of African American history that seeks to transcend the spatial, temporal, and ideological partition of the postwar period into distinct and sealed moments characterized by the dual triads Southern/Civil Rights/1954-65 and Northern / Black Power / 1965-75." See, James Smethurst, *The Black Arts Movement*, 14-15; Daniel Widener, *Black Arts West*, 8-9.

⁴⁹⁰ This literature is extensive and growing. For good examples, see Robert Self, *American Babylon*; Martha Biondi, *To Stand and Fight*; Mathew Countryman, *Up South*; Thomas Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty*; James Smethurst, *The Black Arts Movement*; Peniel Joseph, *Waiting 'Til the Midnight Hour*.

⁴⁹¹ Despite the fact that most African Americans did not ascribe to ideologies of Black Power public interest in aspects of African American history and culture increased exponentially during this era. (Robert L.

As will be demonstrated below, the museum's push for relocation constituted an example of how Black Power and public history worked together. It was the Black Power movement's intergenerational collaborations and left cosmopolitan affinities that ultimately set the stage for the museum's push for relocation.⁴⁹² The museum's expansion period demonstrated a cosmopolitanism that intersected the political realities of black urban life and the lived experiences of intellectual and social life on the Southside. Throughout the late 1960s and early 1970s, local black public history in Chicago contributed to important revisions of America's racial history, especially at the local level. As the DuSable museum expanded its programs, its founders engaged with younger generations of Black Power and Arts activists energized by the widespread urban rebellions of many inner-city working-class communities of color around much of the United States and by various left wing and nationalist currents mobilized by affinities to Third World anti-colonialism and revolution.⁴⁹³

Harris, Jr. "Coming of Age: The Transformation of Afro-American Historiography," *The Journal of Negro History* 67:2 (Summer 1982): 107-108; William Van Deburg, *New Day in Babylon*; Pero Dagbovie, *African American History Reconsidered*, 31.

⁴⁹² My use of the term Black Cosmopolitanism is derived from both Nwankwo's definition of the term (as a significant, critical response to traditional definitions connected to Eurocentric worldviews) and Timothy Brennan's more contemporary anti-corporate theorizations of cultural politics and practices. As Nwankwo writes, "Cosmopolitanism, the definition of oneself through the world beyond one's own origins, was a crucial element of modernity (and the Enlightenment)." Nwankwo suggests that the, "Blackness of Black cosmopolitanism inheres not in the race of the individuals who express it... but rather in the ways individuals and entities seek to define people of African descent and articulate the relationship among them and between them and the world at large." Such a definition allows for the ambiguities of global affinities to be expressed by individual social actors through their activism and intellectual work in local, regional and national contexts. Likewise, Timothy Brennan's reads non-Western rhetoric in mid-late 20th Century sources, like the cultural politics and practices exemplified by C.L.R James' experiences in America. Brennan examines how such figures formulated alternative utopias, flexible left wing and nationalist modalities to elicit a "non-corporate popularity" that consistently opposed the commercially-focused and elite globalism more commonly attributed to cosmopolitan views of the world in the public sphere – especially in cultural fields. See Ifeoma Kiddoe Nwankwo, *Black Cosmopolitanism*, 9-11; Timothy Brennan, *At Home in the World*, 82, 230, 251.

⁴⁹³ Coverage in *Freedomways* magazine demonstrated how these rebellions spread to over 257 cities across the U.S. in response to the ineffectiveness of voting rights reforms, widespread white backlash to social reforms, and

By the late 1960s, Chicago had become a symbol for a decade that began with redemptive promise but appeared to devolve into one of intractable urban decline. The usual story centers on Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s beleaguered efforts with the Chicago Freedom Movement (CFM) to promote "open" housing mainly in the poverty-stricken wards of the city's West Side (1966). As was tradition in the machine-dominated Windy-City, dissent was quickly silenced. Mayor Richard J. Daley, a king-maker in the Democratic Party during the 1960s, was quick to issue his famous "shoot to kill" orders in response to both anti-war demonstrators at the 1968 Democratic National Convention and in light of West side riots that erupted in the wake of King's assassination also in 1968. Chicago's fall from grace was further marked by the tragic yet targeted assassination of local Black Panther leader Fred Hampton by city police in 1969.⁴⁹⁴

This tragic denouement to the hopeful arc of mid-late 20th Century racial liberalism belies a far more complex story of social struggle for local African American communities nationwide from at least the 1940s through the 1970s; this was especially true in cities as big and

the starkness of urban poverty. John Henrik Clarke, "Introduction," *Freedomways* 7:1 (1967): 34; John Henry Jones, "Revolt in the Ghettos," *Freedomways* 7:1 (1967): 35-41; John Pittman, "Negroes Challenge the Jackboot in San Francisco," *Freedomways* 7:1 (1967): 42-53; Donald Wheeldin, "The Situation in Watts Today," *Freedomways* 7:1 (1967): 54-59; Joseph Boskin, "Historical Roots of the Riots," *Freedomways* 7:1 (1967): 60-63; Komozi Woodard, *Nation Within a Nation*, 71; Laura Pulido, *Black, Brown, Yellow, and Left Radical Activism in Los Angeles* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005); Nikhil Singh, *Black is a Country*, Ch. 5; Max Elbaum, *Revolution in the Air*.

⁴⁹⁴ Anderson and Pickering, *Confronting the Color Line*; Cohen and Taylor, *American Pharaoh*; David Farber, *Chicago '68* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988); Jon Rice, "The World of the Illinois Panthers," in Jeanne Theoharis and Komozi Woodard, eds., *Freedom North: Black Freedom Struggles Outside the South, 1940-1980* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 49-50. Jeffrey Haas, *The Assassination of Fred Hampton: How the FBI and the Chicago Police Murdered a Black Panther* (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 2010), 99. Even James Ralph, who privileges King and CFM's campaign for civil rights and open housing in Chicago points to broader movements in the city that had a lasting impact on the shift to an "independent black political" movement in the city through the 1970s. This movement coalesced in the eventual undermining of Daley's civic machine in part through the efforts of organizations like Jesse Jackson's Operation Breadbasket which closely associated with SCLC's work, but also reflected the initiative of many other local movements active in different neighborhoods of the city. See, James Ralph, *Northern Protest*, 221-230.

racially segregated as Chicago was. The DuSable Museum's development contributes to the diversity and range of the Black Power era's challenge to U.S. liberal teleologies through the 1960s and 1970s.⁴⁹⁵ While Black Power's context provided important intellectual and organizational catalysts for the museum's move, its relocation occurred after a series of specific engagements with local and federal power brokers. These brokers included mainstream civil rights and black society figures, politicians, prominent businessmen, city officials, as well as liberal foundations. Many of these elites were interested in promoting harmonious and pluralist race relations in light of late-1960s urban strife and wanted the necessary funds and legislation to achieve these ends. As this chapter will show, relationships with these social actors, while conflicted and often problematic, certainly helped the museum move into a historically significant expository space in Chicago's biggest public park. More than anything, however, the DuSable's relocation moment demonstrated how black public history made a significant mark on local movements. These movements ultimately shaped the parameters for multiracial civic politics throughout much of urban America well into the 1970s.⁴⁹⁶

⁴⁹⁵ Important works on Chicago which do this includes: Beryl Satter, *Family Properties*, Chapters 8-10; Erik S. Gellman, "'The Stone Wall Behind': The Chicago Coalition for United Community Action and Labor's Overseers, 1968-1973" in David Goldberg & Trevor Griffey, eds. *Black Power at Work: Community Control, Affirmative Action and the Construction Industry* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010); Erik S. Gellman, "'In the Driver's Seat: Black Power Unionism and Chicago's Bus Drivers,'" *Labor: Studies in Working-Class History of the Americas* (Forthcoming 2012); Dionne Danns, *Something Better for Our Children*; John Lyons, *Teachers and Reform*, Ch 6; Adam Green, *Selling the Race*.

⁴⁹⁶ Drawing on critical theories about social engineering forwarded by scholars like James Scott, historian Karen Ferguson writes about the role that white liberal establishment elites had in administering funds through institutions like the Ford Foundation. Ferguson demonstrates how power imbalances between such institutions and grassroots organizations ultimately compromised the democratic visions for Black community intended by some activists involved with civil rights/Black Power groups like the Congress on Racial Equality (CORE). See Karen Ferguson, "Organizing the Ghetto: The Ford Foundation, CORE, and White Power in the Black Power Era, 1967-1969," *Journal of Urban History* 34:1 (November 2007): 69. Other useful critical perspectives on the Ford Foundation's involvement with "black struggles" include: Robert L. Allen, *Black Awakening in Capitalist America: An Analytic History* (New York: Doubleday, 1969), 61; Joan Roelofs, *Foundations and Public Policy: The Mask of Pluralism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003), 95; Vernon Jarrett, "Beware! Here Comes the Foundation Black," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, (October 4, 1970), A5. For a study that sympathetically treats the Ford Foundation's involvement in the promotion of Black studies as an academic field, see Farah Jasmine Griffin,

Museums and Historiography

The DuSable Museum's expansion further underscores the uniqueness of history museums as a specific form of cultural practice and knowledge production. From their inception, museums like the DuSable sought to function as important transmitters of cultural values for regional African American communities. As such, they were involved in the widespread efforts of African American community's to come to terms with the paradoxes of U.S. democratic ideals. To better grapple with many of these issues, black museums sought to become repositories of material culture and research for the African diaspora as well as regional knowledge centers for metropolis' like Chicago, which of course became central to northern, urban African American community-formation through the mid-20th Century.⁴⁹⁷

In his history of the DuSable, museum co-founder Eugene Feldman wrote that “[a] museum was not only a place for exhibits...but also for library, documents, musical records, the whole life of a people's culture, history, struggles and efforts.”⁴⁹⁸ Language about the “purpose”

Inclusive Scholarship: Developing Black Studies in the United States: A 25th Anniversary Retrospective of Ford Foundation Grant-Making, 1982–2007 (New York: Ford Foundation, 1985 [2007, 2011]).

By the late 1960s – prolific civil rights organizations like CORE and SNCC which had helped usher in a new generation into the African American freedom struggle increasingly adhered to more independent and separatist modes for political organizing. SNCC was one of the first formerly civil rights organizations to support Black Power, while CORE followed a more cultural nationalist line. The seminal study of CORE remains August Meier and Elliot Rudwick, *CORE*. For SNCC, see Clayborne Carson, *In Struggle: SNCC and the Black Awakening of the 1960s* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995).

⁴⁹⁷ This paraphrases the contentions of John Fleming in his assessment of African American history museums created from the mid-20th Century. See John E. Fleming, “African American Museums, History, and the American Ideal,” *Journal of American History* 81:3 (December 1994): 1020.

⁴⁹⁸ Eugene Feldman, *The Birth and the Building of the DuSable Museum*, 80; Moira G. Simpson, *Making Representations: Museums in the Post-Colonial Era* (Routledge: New York, 2001), 96-98.

of the Museum of African American History⁴⁹⁹ from a promotional pamphlet reflected

Feldman's recollection about its diverse functions:

The purpose of the Museum is to develop a center of materials on the Negro to serve the research students and schools and universities of the Midwest. It gathers, preserves and displays books, relics, souvenirs, artifacts, documents, letters, pictures, art, sculpture, phonograph records, tapes and slides, relating to the Negro past and present. Pride and knowledge in the accomplishments of the past will instill confidence and security in the future⁵⁰⁰

The brochure's rhetoric expressed the intent to develop local knowledge about pride in past and present cultures and, in this sense, accords with the recent findings of museum scholars. For example, Jennifer Barrett contends that the "contemporary museum often struggles to negotiate between the remnants of an earlier rhetoric of 'public'... and new practices and types of spaces designed to attract new audiences, engage new communities and respond to the locality or nation within which they are situated."⁵⁰¹ Without getting into an in-depth analysis of the museums day to day activities (ie. use of material culture, exhibit arrangements etc...), I suggest these democratic changes in museum practices provide one useful entry point to examine some of the cultural politics of representation and tactical forms of museology that were evident as the DuSable relocated.⁵⁰² Aside from the concerns about historiography expressed above, it is these questions about the politics and function of modern museums that run throughout the considerations of the Du Sable's relocation that follow.

⁴⁹⁹ This was prior to its 1969 name-change to DuSable.

⁵⁰⁰ *Museum of African American History*, (Chicago: Museum of African American History [undated]), Miscellaneous pamphlets, etc., CHM.

⁵⁰¹ Jennifer Barrett, *Museums and the Public Sphere*, 3, 12.

⁵⁰² In particular, I am attempting to draw upon museum studies scholars like Ivan Karp and Gustavo Buntinx who write about community museums that have existed in "frictional relationship" with "either... established museums and/or to the broader social order" particularly in South Africa. See, Gustavo Buntinx and Ivan Karp, "Tactical Museologies" in Ivan Karp, Corinne A. Kratz, Lynn Szwaja, and Tomas Ybarra-Frausto, eds. *Museum Frictions: Public Cultures/Global Transformations* (Duke University Press, 2006), 219.

Why Relocation?

As noted above, the proposed site for the museum's relocation was an abandoned police headquarters located directly next to the University of Chicago. The city had moved the police station closer to the Dan Ryan Expressway (built in 1962) – a highway that deliberately bisected and displaced some of the South Side's growing African American population through the mid-20th century and represents yet another story of racist urban planning. As such, the DuSable Museum's relocation into the old police headquarters in Washington Park demonstrated a small but significant victory in the many battles African Americans waged in urban politics through the mid-late 20th century – especially given the history of the University of Chicago's predatory use of space on the South Side and the ongoing issues of police violence in surrounding black communities. One even could invert the teleology of Tony Bennett's assertion that museums and fairs accommodated working class publics by facilitating panoptic spaces that worked to self-police middle class behaviors and discourage urban vice.⁵⁰³ The move into the Washington Park neighborhood next to a prestigious university and park landscape surely reflected an aspect of Black Chicago's middle-class strivings for tidy urban spaces unmarked by vice and decay.⁵⁰⁴ But the museum's very adoption of a former police headquarters also literally displaced a historic and overt site of racial surveillance, violence, and power and replaced it with a community-oriented space for knowledge production. As such, while never explicitly stated by the museum's founders and supporters, the move needs to be characterized as a highly political act for its time and for the local histories it evoked in effectively reclaiming such public space.

⁵⁰³ Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 28, 48.

⁵⁰⁴ For a recent study that examines these issues of neighborhood space and class in the Black community, see Jeffrey Helgeson, "Striving in Black Chicago."

Many historians of the city's sordid housing policies have demonstrated how its older neighborhoods, like those closest to the Southside and on large boulevards, also used to contain the palatial homes of the city's richest white industrialists during the 1880s and 1890s. As African American southerners moved to urban areas during WWI and around WWII (many of them in the north), these same South Side neighborhoods transitioned from mainly white to mainly black, expanding the black metropolis' boundaries southwards and westwards exponentially. These changes took place despite the city's overall housing shortage through the 1930s and 1940s and the consistent attempts of urban elites to design local housing policies that restricted the movements of African Americans out of the boundaries of historic Bronzeville. As a result, many black southerners were forced to move into overly-partitioned, cramped kitchenettes in the former homes of some of the city's earliest business elites – who had long since moved to northern or western suburbs.⁵⁰⁵

The Dusable Museum's two locations defied these images of urban decay and also reflected the city's history of neighborhood change through the late 1960s. As such, even a brief appraisal of architectural styles from these locations highlights the racial history of neighborhood change on the South Side and the race and class-conscious aspects of the museum's relocation strategies. The architectural styles of the buildings that the museum occupied further underscore

⁵⁰⁵ Arnold Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto*; Allan Spear, *Black Chicago*, 148-150. Recent scholarship demonstrates how these processes of racial change were complex and varied from neighborhood to neighborhood. Many white and black liberal elites benefited in certain ways from the different forms of racial segregation in housing. For example, Carl Hansberry, the father of Lorraine Hansberry, became a major real estate-broker on the South Side because he was able to sell "kitchenettes" to many African American migrants who moved to Chicago and became desperate to find housing during the city's housing shortage – a situation that was exacerbated by the racial restrictions which existed elsewhere in the city. At the same time, Hansberry simultaneously and more famously challenged Chicago's notorious racial covenants that barred access to decent middle class housing for many African American families in South Side neighborhoods like Washington Park. See, Judith Smith, *Visions of Belonging*, 284-289; Robert J. Blakely, *Earl B. Dickerson*, 95-110; Beryl Satter, *Family Properties*.

the importance of the institution's efforts to occupy symbolic city spaces connected to Chicago's civic modernity.

For example, the museum moved west from a Gold Coast mansion in Bronzeville to an equally majestic Washington Park building formally used as a police citadel that guarded the prestigious/infamous University of Chicago. As such, it re-imagined the local legacies and strivings of African Americans onto and near some of the city's most significant landmarks for high culture. The mansion, which became the primary residence of the Burroughses in the late 1950s on South Michigan, had been one of the city's "premier" residential streets in the late 19th century. It was designed in a French Chateausque style by one of Chicago's acclaimed architects, Solon S. Bemen (who also designed the nearby rail company town of Pullman). The South Michigan Avenue location was first owned by local development mogul John W. Griffiths. Griffiths' company built many of the city's most "iconic" structures like Union Station, the Merchandise Mart, and the Civic Opera House. While the Washington Park police armory had been part of architect Daniel Burnham's famous Beaux Arts developments from the World Fair of the 1890s, the Fair's development was largely a Jim Crow endeavor that excluded African Americans from any substantive participation in its operations. In this sense, it was significant that pictures of both the mansion and the old police station appeared on the museum's promotional materials. Such use of architectural imagery in the DuSable's public representations underscored Black Chicago's indispensability to the city's modern history.⁵⁰⁶

⁵⁰⁶Terry Tatum & Susan Perry, "Griffiths-Burroughs House 3806 S. Michigan Ave: Final Landmark recommendation adopted by the Commission on Chicago Landmarks (November 5, 2009) (<http://www.cityofchicago.org/landmarks>) (accessed November 1, 2011); Christopher R. Reed, *All the World is Here: The Black Presence at White City* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000); Robert Rydell, *All the World's a Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1876-1916* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press 1995); "The DuSable Museum of African American History: Educators' Committee Second Annual Luncheon – Colloquium," February 16, 1974, Box 59, Folder 416, Erwin A. Salk Collection, University of Illinois-

This subversive reclamation of many of Chicago's historically white spaces for "high culture" were consciously promoted through the continuation of cosmopolitan and bohemian cultural activities along South Michigan Ave in the 1970s. For example, Theresa Fambro Hooks reported in *The Chicago Defender* how Margaret Burroughs joined younger poets Haki Madhubuti and Eugene Perkins in 1970 at a coffee house event that took place across the street from the museum at the closely associated Southside Community Arts Center (SSCAC). Hooks asked her readers whether they could "dig" listening to poetry recited in a "scene where early in this century some of Chicago's wealthiest families gathered for grand balls, soirées and stuffy social occasions."⁵⁰⁷

The decision to relocate the DuSable Museum into Washington Park was highly symbolic and hence political in nature. The move reclaimed a historically African American space in Chicago's largest public park. Just as the museum's first location at 3806 South Michigan adjacent the Southside Community Arts Center was in one of the city's historic mansions, the move into the former police headquarters in Washington park next to the University of Chicago in Hyde Park presented a subversive freeing of public space in an otherwise highly policed and racially controlled part of the city.

Chicago (Hereafter UIC); "Interview with Margaret Burroughs and Charles Wright 12/26/84," 2; Margaret Burroughs to Daniel J. Shannon, October 5, 1970, Box 184, Folder 5, Abbott/Sengstacke Papers, HARSH.

⁵⁰⁷ Theresa Fambro Hooks, "Friday Eve Coffee House is New Groove Mecca," *The Chicago Defender* (Big Weekend Edition) (December 5, 1970), 20.

Museum and State

Museum-making represents a greatly understudied facet of cultural forms during the Black Power era, especially in the institutionally vibrant settings of the Midwest.⁵⁰⁸ Early African American-led museum efforts, like the DuSable, were especially significant because they demonstrated the specificity of public history work as an independent cultural form for black community knowledge production. In essence, these museum-making efforts represented the beginnings of a nation-wide African American museum movement started by the mid-1960s. As noted in previous chapters, the Burroughses museum work through the early part of the decade connected them with Charles H. Wright in Detroit, a prominent medical doctor who started that city's Museum of African American History in 1965.⁵⁰⁹ In 1967, the Burroughses and Wright organized a series of forums and conferences together with their respective museum staff that culminated in a movement that eventually formed the Association of African American Museums (AAAM) in 1978. In September of 1967, the first conference of African American museums was held and attracted numerous delegates came from museums and historical associations in Chicago, Boston, Washington and New York as well as from Ohio, Alabama and letters of support from a museum planned for San Francisco. The establishment of the first two major independent black history museums in the U.S. in Detroit and Chicago broadens James Smethurst's suggestion that because of the "numerous direct exchanges" between both cities,

⁵⁰⁸ To date, only one dissertation/book exists for African American-led expositional activities in Chicago. While it treats aspects of the history of the DuSable Museum, it covers over one hundred years of history. See Mabel O. Wilson, "Making History Visible"; Mabel O. Wilson, *Negro Building*.

⁵⁰⁹ For an excellent treatment of black public history in Detroit and the founding the Charles Wright Museum of African American History see, Mabel O. Wilson, *Negro Building*, 249-296.

these two metropolis' and the Midwest itself were among the most vital centers for the Black Arts Movement in the United States, institutionally more diverse than New York City.⁵¹⁰

This movement towards a national association of black museums began as a critical response to federal officials who wanted to pass a bill to establish “a Federal Commission of Negro History” in the late 1960s. Early discussions to form such a commission began in 1965 but were shelved until March of 1968 when the idea resurfaced at a congressional hearing in New York City. Congress eventually passed the bill in September of 1968 but it was never enacted. Its chief supporters in the government were Congressman James Scheuer, a liberal white Democrat from New York who and Gus Hawkins, an African American congressman from California. Scheuer wanted this commission to take the necessary steps of “collecting and preserving historical materials dealing with Negro history and culture” and to consider “the possibility of establishing a Museum of Negro History and Culture.”⁵¹¹

As Mabel O. Wilson has indicated, however, this Commission was also a “response to the growing prominence of Black Nationalist organizations such as the Black Panther Party” and represented the fears among white government officials of “another hot summer of racial unrest...” given the spread of urban rebellions through the late 1960s. The project was intended to help with the formation of a national “museum or center” that could devise broad “methods of

⁵¹⁰ “Interview with Margaret Burroughs and Charles Wright 12/26/84,” 1. For another treatment of the collaboration between Margaret Burroughs and Charles Wright, see Mabel O. Wilson, “Making History Visible,” Ch 4; James Smethurst, *The Black Arts Movement*, 180; Charles Wright, “An Early History of the African-American Museum Association”: 1-2, [undated], Box 3, Folder 21, Wright Papers, WMAAH. Indeed, these connections between public history projects in Detroit and Chicago paralleled important literary exchanges between writers at Broadside Press in Detroit like Dudley Randall and Margaret Danner and writers at institutions like Third World and Lotus Press – to say nothing of the very long history of jazz, and rhythm and blues music in both cities.

⁵¹¹ Howard N. Meyer, ed. *Integrating America's Heritage: A Congressional Hearing to Establish a National Commission on Negro History and Culture* (College Park: McGrath, 1970), 1; Charles Wright, “An Early History of the African-American Museums Association,” 1.

distributing information” about African American history and culture in ways that “might be integrated into the mainstream of American education and life.”⁵¹² The idea of a federally-mandated museum devised for these popular purposes attracted qualified support from diverse African American public figures such as writer James Baldwin, Betty Shabazz (Malcolm X’s widow), the Congress on Racial Equality’s Roy Innis, and baseball icon Jackie Robinson, the latter a lifelong Republican and often recalled as a moderate on civil rights.

Despite this support, most of the African Americans who attended the Commissions’ hearing adamantly emphasized the need for locally-led “black educational institutions” to take the lead with this project in light of the failures to equitably integrate public schools after the *Brown* decision of 1954.⁵¹³ The most vociferous speaker on this point was Roy Innis, who became the leader of CORE in the late 1960s. While he supported the idea of a federal commission to oversee nation-wide initiatives in black history, Innis turned most of his testimony into a circular joust with Scheuer and Hawkins about the need for all-black representation on the commission. Innis’ position was in line with the variant of cultural nationalism CORE had shifted to by the late 1960s, which nominally supported grassroots initiatives but whose programs became increasingly beholden to white liberal institutions like the Ford Foundation. Historian Karen Ferguson demonstrates how the Ford Foundation favored projects that boosted black capitalist strategies for the development and uplift of inner-city communities.⁵¹⁴ Most of the other African Americans asked to speak at the hearing disagreed

⁵¹² “Bill Would Establish National Commission,” *New York Amsterdam News* (September 16, 1967), 6; Mabel O. Wilson, *Negro Building*, 284-285.

⁵¹³ Howard N. Meyer, ed. *Integrating America’s Heritage*, 26-27, 31, 32-33.

⁵¹⁴ Howard N. Meyer, ed. *Integrating America’s Heritage*, 22-34. For excellent examinations of CORE and the Ford Foundation, see Karen Ferguson, “Organizing the Ghetto,” 70; Karen Ferguson, *Top Down: The Ford*

with Innis' overt racial separatism but nonetheless shared his rhetorical qualifications about federal oversight on these matters. All agreed that judicious consultation with existing local black-led public history and educational groups was required before any commission could establish a federal institution.

Those who firmly supported the idea of the commission were the most explicitly aligned with America's prevailing Cold War racial liberalism through mid-century. As such, they offered no real objections to the commission's ideas and saw it as fully complementary to their ongoing work – which was mainly academic. These included John A. Davis of the American Society for African Culture (AMSAC) and Charles Wesley from the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History (ASNLH). Davis' position was especially revealing given AMSAC's origins. As noted in chapter 4, the organization began during the mid-1950s when a group of African American and western-based intellectuals and scholars held a conference in Paris, France about the histories of Africa and its diaspora as a way to serve the movements for colonial independence. As James Smethurst notes, the CIA “secretly funded AMSAC to channel African American anticolonialism and Pan-Africanism away from the Communist Left (and radical nationalists).”⁵¹⁵ Fitting this proximity to government power, Davis and AMSAC were given the

Foundation, Black Power and the Reinvention of Liberalism (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013); Joan Roefels, *Foundations and Public Policy*, 95.

⁵¹⁵ Smethurst also notes how “... Leftists and nationalists, particularly in New York, used AMSAC as a vehicle for a more radical politics with some success,” see James Smethurst, *The Black Arts Movement*, 120; Rebeccah E. Welch, “Black Art and Activism in Postwar New York, 1950-1965.” The CIA funded many cultural initiatives as a national strategy during the Cold War years. This had the effect of casting many avant-garde and abstract expressionist as well as other artistic and intellectual endeavors as avowedly anti-communist. At the same time, the CIA deliberately set up a “long leash,” which enabled many left wing artists to occupy these tangentially funded spaces since it was easy to fashion oneself against the rigid aesthetics represented by Soviet art through Cold War era lenses. See, Frances Stonor Saunders, “Modern Art Was a CIA Weapon,” *The Independent* (Sunday, October 22, 1995). See Chapter 4 of this dissertation for a more extensive analysis of AMSAC.

opening remarks at the hearing. To his credit, Davis outlined the ways academic historiography had misrepresented African Americans in national histories, notably through the work of figures like William Dunning who did much to perpetuate “Sambo” misrepresentations of African Americans from post-Civil War Reconstruction. He pointed to a new generation of scholars, led by the likes of C. Vann Woodward, Oliver Cromwell Cox, and others who had been “setting the record straight” on these matters over several decades. Davis felt that a Federal Commission might help circulate such history to “all Americans” and thereby “rid America of the vulgar concepts of race.” For his part, Charles Wesley felt that no “local museum or library would be injured by any action on the part of a commission.” Wesley credited the work of the ASNLH in Washington, D.C. alongside the Schomburg Library in New York but only briefly recognized the museum projects in Detroit and Chicago (perhaps due to their presence at the hearing). While Wesley and Davis offered some useful appraisals of revisionist American history, they were each very comfortable with the idea of further government oversight in their respective fields of intellectual labor.

There was opposition to the bill among African American public figures who were not asked to testify at the hearing. One columnist from the influential Harlem-based *Amsterdam News* doubted whether the bill would be “greeted by dancing in the streets” from many of Scheuer’s own constituents in the 21st Congressional District of upstate New York. The author, Marietta J. Tanner, felt the community (which included towns like Albany and Schenectady with large African American populations) had not been very well consulted on the matter.⁵¹⁶ African American congressmen Charles Diggs and Jon Conyers of Michigan along with Adam Clayton Powell (who represented Harlem) supported the Burroughs/Wright opposition for the bill. In the

⁵¹⁶ Marietta J. Tanner, “Community Conscious,” *New York Amsterdam News* (May 11, 1968), 13.

end, these notable representatives agreed to support the movement towards an independent African American museum association.⁵¹⁷

Charles Wright and the Burroughs had good reason to be concerned about the motives behind the bill. Scheuer made it clear over the course of his testimony at the hearing that the underlying reasons for the bill were for the federal government to open another front in ongoing efforts to allay racial strife in urban America. Just as the U.S. President's recent Anti-Riot Commission Report had "laid the responsibility squarely on the door of white America and placed the challenge where it belongs [sic] – with the Congress and the President," Scheuer had "the same hope" for a federal commission on black history that might produce a similar kind of actionable "report."⁵¹⁸ The uncertainty caused by such ambiguous perspectives on urban issues eventually led black museum pioneers like the Burroughses and Charles Wright to form their own association free from the control of the federal government.

It was ultimately this top-down orientation to the proposed black history bill that figures like Wright and the Burroughses opposed. Wright felt "such a bill" would have placed "in the hands of the President... the authority to appoint commissioners and to oversee, direct, and interpret matters related to our history" – and by implication influence the ideological and programmatic directions of local organizations such as the museums in Chicago and Detroit.

⁵¹⁷ Charles Wright, "An Early History of the African-American Museums Association," 1. It would take until an act from Congress in 2003 for a federally-sponsored National Museum of African American History and Culture to be proposed and implemented. Construction was set to begin in February 2012 for a Smithsonian institution nominally devoted to African American public history and culture. It is slated to open to the public by 2015. See, Kim Severson, "New Museums to Shine Spotlight on Civil Rights Era," *The New York Times* (February 19, 2012), http://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/20/us/african-american-museums-rising-to-recognize-civil-rights.html?_r=2&smid=tw-nytimes&seid=auto (accessed February 24, 2012); Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture, <http://www.nmaahc.si.edu/About> (accessed February 24, 2012). For more on Powell's itinerancy during the Black Power era see, Peniel Joseph, *Waiting 'til the Midnight Hour*, 13-14, 174-175.

⁵¹⁸ Howard N. Meyer, ed. *Integrating America's Heritage*, 57.

Along with the Burroughses, Wright took “a dim view of Scheuer’s move and sought to arouse public interest in” their critical position on the proposed federal commission. For example, when the original bill was first discussed in 1965, Wright and the Burroughses approached the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History (ASNLH) at their annual meeting in Atlanta that year with concerns about the commission. At that time they were advised by the ASNLH to “wait and see how [the] measure fared.” In an echo of Margaret Burroughs’ mid-50s and Cold War inflected dispute with Chicago clubwoman Irene McCoy Gaines and the ASNLH’s national executive,⁵¹⁹ Wright noted how they “did not take [Wesley’s] advice.”

The other main concern that Wright and Charles Burroughs expressed at the hearing was the lack of consultation offered by Scheuer’s committee. Like many of the African Americans who participated in the hearing, they felt that greater recognition for the longer struggles of many local groups in these fields was required. For example, Wright emphasized how the DuSable group was the “largest and oldest of its kind in the country” and criticized Scheuer for not adequately reaching out to them. For his part, Burroughs clarified how Scheuer’s office had contacted them in 1965 to submit information about their museum. But Burroughs noted that when he and his wife Margaret promptly replied with materials detailing their public history work they never received an “answer” confirming their replies. Scheuer responded to Burroughs’ admonishment by claiming he had since consulted “dozens” of organizations. Clearly Scheuer had little recollection (if any) of interactions with the DuSable group. Moreover, Burroughs echoed many others at the hearing when he implored Scheuer to consider letting black leaders “in the field” appoint representatives to the commission because these local actors were better

⁵¹⁹ See chapter 1 of this dissertation.

equipped to consult “with the broad mass of people” in Detroit, Chicago, Boston, and elsewhere who had been “working in the field.”⁵²⁰

Such opposition was well founded. Those who formed the DuSable museum had been in the public history field for a long time and had been striving to connect their public history labors with diverse black political and cultural movements for decades. Their efforts predated the Black Arts moment of the late 1960s. As noted in previous chapters, the work of the DuSable group fits squarely into longer histories of activism that date back to the city’s African American creative renaissance of the 1930s. As veterans of Chicago’s left wing and African American popular fronts, cultural workers like Margaret and Charles Burroughs experienced many Cold War repressions, most notably harassment from the FBI and local police Red Squads, but also from Public school board employers and art center directors.⁵²¹ It was through their survival of such challenges that they remained engaged with educational and public history work and came to mentor younger artists, writers, and educators in the 1960s whose work has been more associated with the Black Power and Black Arts eras.

A Generation Gap?

The museum founders’ close connections to younger generations of African American artists, intellectuals and activists demonstrated how intergenerational collaborations were

⁵²⁰ Howard N. Meyer, ed. *Integrating America’s Heritage*, 98.

⁵²¹ These milieus have been treated extensively in the following works and in previous chapters of this dissertation. See for example, Robert Bone and Richard A. Courage, *The Muse in Bronzeville: African American Creative Expression in Chicago, 1932-1950* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2011); Anne Meis Knupfer, *The Black Chicago Renaissance and Women’s Activism*; Bill Mullen, *Popular Fronts*; Darlene Clark Hine & John McCluskey, Jr. eds., *The Black Chicago Renaissance*; Adam Green, *Selling the Race*.

especially evident in the Black Arts Movement at the local/regional level.⁵²² For example, the Burroughses mentored prominent South Side poet and activist Haki Madhubuti. Before he started Third World Press in Chicago in the late 1960s, Madhubuti (born Don L. Lee in 1942) volunteered as an assistant curator and membership director for the museum from 1962 to 1967. Madhubuti worked closely with the Burroughses on their public history work through this period. Among his many activities with the museum, Madhubuti joined DuSable's research publications director Eugene Feldman to teach black history classes for a parents group in the home of one of its members. In turn, the Parents Guild (as it was called) donated money and provided volunteers to conduct visitor tours so the museum could hold longer hours. Another important figure from the Black Power/Black Arts generation in Chicago closely mentored by the Burroughses (though ten years older than Madhubuti) was poet, dramatist, and youth worker Eugene Useni Perkins - son of the late South side sculptor Marion Perkins. Both Perkins and Madhubuti volunteered at the museum in the mid-late 1960s through its diverse educational activities conducted in the community.⁵²³

The museum's founders worked to promote the poetry of these two figures in ways that defied the late 1960s dissolution of traditional civil rights alliances (such as those between progressive Jewish Americans and African Americans). For example, the museum's research and publications director, Eugene P. Feldman, reviewed the early poetry collections of both

⁵²² This contrasts with the generation gap greatly emphasized by most scholars who have written on the youthfulness of many left social movements through the 1960s in national frames. For example, see William Van DeBurg, *New Day in Babylon*, 64-111; George Lipsitz, "Who'll Stop the Rain: Youth Culture, Rock 'n Roll, and Social Crises," David Farber, ed. *The Sixties: From Memory to History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994): 206-234; Sharon Monteith, *American Culture in the 1960s* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008), 153-154. James Smethurst's recent work is exceptional in the manner it interrogates and complicates the accepted notions of generation gaps from the 1960s. See, *The Black Arts Movement*.

⁵²³ Eugene Feldman, *The Birth and the Building of the DuSable Museum*, 44-45, 73, 82; "Parents Guild Backs Negro Museum," *The Chicago Defender* (National Edition) (October 26, 1966), 31; Margaret Burroughs, "Annual Report 1966."

Madhubuti (Don L. Lee) and Perkins in the *Chicago Defender*. The reviews demonstrated the openness with which the museum's founders received new aesthetic ideas on black identity expressed by younger artists and activists from the late 1960s. Feldman quoted Don Lee's poetry to highlight the racial hypocrisies of America's involvement in the Vietnam War: "Viet-brothers come give us a hand / we fight for freedom, / Give me my forty acres / Broken promises and hypocri / sies." Here was a "young, Black poet of America," wrote Feldman, "who belongs to the new generation of men and women who cannot be kidded any longer." Feldman also reported the circulation of Lee's poetry in prolific Blacks Arts movement journals from New York City like *Kauri* and *Liberator* magazine as well as through the Illinois Teachers College publication, *The Torch*. Similarly, Feldman reviewed a poetry collection edited by Eugene Perkins that published contributions from African American school children involved in a summer writing workshop. Feldman's support for this work fit with his part-time contract jobs as a teacher for high school drop-outs and adult education in Chicago through the 1960s and his primary volunteer work with the museum. His reviews did not challenge the aesthetic cultural nationalism expressed by younger poets for he recognized the imperative of understanding the "hearts and minds of Afro-Americans in 1967." These thoughts stand against the general indifference expressed by much of white America to the plight of inner-city African American youth during this same period.⁵²⁴

The public support that the museum's founders offered younger activists did not mean they completely transcended the generation gap. It is more accurate to suggest that relationships

⁵²⁴ Eugene P. Feldman, "Black Expression Stirs the Heart," *The Chicago Defender* (National Edition) (September 16, 1967), 14; Eugene P. Feldman, "'Think Black' Reviewed," *The Chicago Defender* (National Edition) (March 26, 1967), 11; Eugene P. Feldman to Ann Campbell, May 8, 1969, Box 1, Folder 5, Eugene P. Feldman Papers, DuSable Museum of African American History, Chicago, Illinois (hereafter DuSable); Eugene P. Feldman, *The Birth and the Building of the DuSable Museum*, 16. For a good assessment of *Liberator* magazine and the milieu of New York Black Power and Arts journals, see Christopher M. Tinson, "Harlem, New York! Harlem, Detroit! Harlem, Birmingham!" *Liberator Magazine and the Chronicling of Translocal Activism*, *The Black Scholar: Journal of Black Studies and Research* 41:3 (Fall 2011): 9-16.

between Black Arts movement activists of different generations with working class populations and movements were complex and need to be characterized in subtle terms. James Smethurst demonstrates how intergenerational interactions between activists often consisted of “uneven” dialogues. For example, Smethurst points to a 1969 tribute event hosted on the South Side for Chicago poet Gwendolyn Brooks – an elder figure who fully embraced the Black Arts generation of the late 1960s through her mentorship of younger writers. At this tribute, Margaret Burroughs criticized the uncritical aesthetic forms for black pride she felt were expressed by younger artists and writers involved with the Black Arts Movement. To Burroughs, many younger artists lacked sufficient attention to questions of “craft” and instead embraced cruder visual and literary forms through their art that did not pay enough homage to older African American traditions and precursors. Such formalism alienated her and some of her generational cohort from younger Black Power radicals who expressed more militant forms of cultural nationalism and whose creative work was more aligned with the “individual passions” of America’s avant-garde generation through the 1960s.⁵²⁵

It is also possible to view these intergenerational tensions through the prism of shifting African American class politics. In Chicago, these divisions often manifested themselves as neighborhood rivalries. This was especially true through the 1960s and 1970s when poorer southern migrants moved to the city’s West Side neighborhoods like Lawndale.⁵²⁶ It was after all no coincidence that the Black Panther Party emerged in Chicago from these more working class neighborhoods in the wake of Dr. King’s assassination in 1968 and as a chiefly West Side

⁵²⁵James Smethurst, *The Black Arts Movement*, 198; Robert Bone and Richard A. Courage, *The Muse in Bronzeville*, 230.

⁵²⁶For good treatments of this process of neighborhood transition and intra-racial class politics, see William Grimshaw, *Bitter Fruit*; Beryl Satter, *Family Properties*.

organization. Forever impacted by the tragic police assassination in 1969 of their youthful leader Fred Hampton, the Panthers' local significance to the more homogeneously "southern" folk on the West Side also highlighted important differences with the larger and more class divided African American South Side where the group had less significance. As Jon Rice writes, "A minority of black South Siders had moved to the southern extremity of that ghetto – the Chatham neighborhood – and found some financial success by servicing the black poor as their school teachers, funeral directors, barbers, and postmen. Thus, the South Side had a range of incomes much broader than those [sic] on the West Side."⁵²⁷

Through the late 1960s, Margaret Burroughs continued to lead popular art fairs in the predominantly middle-class neighborhoods of Chatham and Lake Meadows and that the museum was a decidedly South Side cultural institution.⁵²⁸ There is also little indication in local newspapers, through available museum records, or from the many interviews and reflective writings of the DuSable's founders to indicate that groups like the Black Panthers (or even Southside youth gangs like the Blackstone Rangers with longer histories on the South Side) had much to do with the museum. However, Margaret Burroughs was part of a chorus of black community leaders in the late 1960s and early 1970s who eulogized Hampton and his compatriot Mark Clark after their brutal police assassination in a publication called *When One of Us Falls*.⁵²⁹

⁵²⁷ Jon Rice, "The World of the Illinois Panthers," 43.

⁵²⁸ "Chatham Area Art Fair Attracts Record Crowd," *The Chicago Defender* (Big Weekend Edition), June 29, 1968, 12.

⁵²⁹ Antonio Lopez, "In the Spirit of Liberation," 275-276.

The DuSable Museum still reached out to neighborhoods and schools on the more impoverished West side throughout the time that groups like the Panthers were under vicious attack by city police and the FBI. In 1969, Margaret Burroughs helped establish a visiting exhibit for a bust of Jean Pointe Baptist DuSable that had been completed by her contemporary Marion Perkins (and who was also Eugene Perkins' father) at the Emerson Branch of McKinley Upper Grade School. Students from nearby suburbs in the Southwest of the city with large numbers of African American residents, like Harvey, Illinois, regularly took field trips to the museum and the South Side Community Arts Center.⁵³⁰ Beginning in the mid-1960s (and as noted in chapter 4), the museum offered one of the city's first courses for public school teachers on "How to Teach African American History." As Margaret Burroughs recalled, they got "very good results from the people on the West Side who started to bring their children. Pretty soon, the yellow school buses were lined up in front of 3806 S. Michigan and people realized that something was going on in there."⁵³¹

Many museum functions also sought to reach at-risk youth from local slums as well as prisoners locked up in nearby penitentiaries. The Burroughses and the museum's research director, Eugene Feldman, became closely involved with prisoner education during the early 1970s as an extension of their public history efforts, notably at a state penitentiary in Pontiac,

⁵³⁰ Fred Hampton grew up in the predominantly African American southwestern Chicago suburb of Maywood, Illinois.

⁵³¹ "A First For Emerson," *The Chicago Defender* (Big Weekend Edition) (March 15, 1969), 3; "Photo stand alone 11 – No Title," *The Chicago Defender* (February 20, 1971), 12; "Conduct, Grammar Improve as Pupils Become Pen Pals"; Margaret T.G. Burroughs, interview with John E. Fleming, "Dr. Margaret T. Burroughs," 41; Eugene P.R. Feldman, "Negro History Class Scheduled at Museum," *The Chicago Defender* (National Edition) (October 16, 1965), 8; Eugene P.R. Feldman, "Negro History and Culture," A Fine Introductory Manual," *The Chicago Defender* (National Edition) (September 18, 1965), 6.

Illinois where they conducted history and creative writing classes.⁵³² By 1971, the museum had enrolled fifty prisoners state-wide in a twenty-lesson correspondence history course and supported poetry classes that solicited and published prisoners writing in an anthology produced by the museum's press. The correspondence course highlighted the contributions of African Americans to U.S. life and traced the history of "the earliest African civilization." Feldman felt he encountered some of his best students in prison through such programs. Feldman also donated regularly to the West Side-based Political Prisoners Defense Fund, a fund that was "devoted to the welfare of the people."⁵³³ Aside from his volunteer work with the museum, Eugene Perkins also became executive director of the Better Boys Foundation in Chicago in 1966 and worked in close proximity with criminalized young people – a position that allowed him to gain special insight and access into local gang and prison cultures.⁵³⁴ As such, he was chosen to direct an anthology of prison poetry published by the museum. To Perkins, the anthology demonstrated "that people behind prison bars can and have developed literary talent" and emphasized that the project was "not a paternalistic endeavor."⁵³⁵

Both Perkins and Feldman received correspondence from prisoners they taught black history classes to which revealed the level of engagement these courses received from within the prison itself. One student Omar Rashaan was an inmate at Pontiac in 1972 and wrote on behalf of "the other brothers" who attended history classes. Rashaan said they were all "looking forward"

⁵³² Margaret Burroughs, "For Prisoners," *The Chicago Defender* (Daily Edition) (September 27, 1971); "Claudia Davis Wins DuSable Museum Contest on History," *The Chicago Defender* (Big Weekend Edition) (March 17, 1973), 23.

⁵³³ Eugene P. Feldman to Ann Campbell, May 8, 1969.

⁵³⁴ Useni Eugene Perkins, *Explosion of Chicago's Black Street Gangs 1900 to the Present* (Chicago: Third World Press, 1987).

⁵³⁵ "Museum's Literary Project for Convicts Funding Sought," *Chicago Daily Tribune* (August 5, 1971), S8; conversation with Eugene Useni Perkins, August 2012.

to future classes and requested further reading materials from the museum.⁵³⁶ One of the lessons Feldman conducted at Pontiac was on the history of the Harper Ferry raid led by the radical abolitionist John Brown prior to the Civil War. Rashaan responded to this lesson by asking why Feldman had focused solely on the story of Brown and not his “black” and “white” compatriots. Feldman responded to Rashaan’s query and conceded his omission. Indeed, Feldman noted how he was “hungup on the idea of the hero in history. When I was young I was fed heroes.” Feldman re-read his lesson and wrote Rashaan back that he felt “ashamed” to “have left out the names and the work and the sacrifices of the black and white men who were with [John Brown]” during the raid.⁵³⁷ While perhaps overstated to boost Rashaan’s enthusiasm for the material, Feldman’s pedagogy rings through in this correspondence and demonstrates especially how it worked to keep prisoners in these programs engaged with their coursework and the pursuit of important knowledge.

Also in 1971, the museum and the South Side Community Arts Center helped sponsor West Side school children in pen pal programs that involved visits to the two Bronzeville cultural centers along the 3600 block stretch of South Michigan Ave. In the words of one student’s teacher sponsor: the project was designed to “build up their black pride by seeing the artifacts of their African culture and the historical documents of American blacks on display.” The students appeared receptive to the project. When DuSable Museum lecturer Ralph Turner asked them “Who Freed the Slaves?” the students managed to avoid the simple answer of Abraham Lincoln. Instead they “cited Harriet Tubman, conductor of the Underground Railroad,

⁵³⁶ Omar Rashaan to Eugene P. Feldman, February 9, 1972, Box 23, Folder 171, Eugene P. Feldman Papers, DuSable.

⁵³⁷ Eugene Feldman to Omar Rashaan (c/o Thomas Williams), May 18, 1972, Box 23, Folder 171, Eugene P. Feldman Papers, DuSable.

and Frederick Douglass.”⁵³⁸ Though obviously not a cutting edge scholarly response, it remains significant for it promoted African American heroes not yet accepted by mainstream U.S. history. One of the museum’s many volunteer teachers, David Thula, was an international graduate student from Sierra Leone attending Roosevelt University through the late 1960s. Thula volunteered regularly for the museum to teach craft culture, such as raffia weaving, and West African folklore to school kids. He seemed impressed with the many children who heard his lectures. Thula was “encouraged to see the interest... [they had]... in their heritage and culture” and that their questions were “surprisingly sophisticated for their age.” In contrast, Thula felt adults tended to be more “complacent about the past. It is the young person who really wants to know about the arts and crafts of the old country.”⁵³⁹

The museum’s activities in these settings certainly reflected the social reforming impulses of many U.S. middle class interlocutors in history. Such activities clearly sought to reform student and prisoner behaviors through their engagement in projects that promoted black civic virtues and cultural heritage – all activities that pointed to forms of respectability. Still, these diverse public history activities engaged participants in fulfilling endeavors that were not explicitly about racial uplift. For example, Eugene Perkins noted that the prisoners’ poetry anthology was not “paternalistic” - which implied participants had a great deal of creative agency in their writing. Likewise, as noted, Thula observed how many young people he had in his classes were more receptive to learning about African folk culture than their parents and other adults.⁵⁴⁰ Collectively, this work demonstrated the impact that diverse black public history

⁵³⁸ Conduct, Grammar Improve as Pupils Become Pen Pals,” *Chicago Daily Tribune* (June 17, 1971), W3.

⁵³⁹ “Children Spark African to Continue Teaching,” *Chicago Daily Tribune* (November 16, 1969), SCL5.

⁵⁴⁰ Conduct, Grammar Improve as Pupils Become Pen Pals,” *Chicago Daily Tribune* (June 17, 1971), W3; “Children Spark African to Continue Teaching,” *Chicago Daily Tribune* (November 16, 1969), SCL5.

efforts carried out through the DuSable Museum had at a local level. They also underscored how such diverse activities worked to bridge important knowledge gaps between generations. As demonstrated in previous chapters, such progressive pedagogies were sustained in Black Chicago through much of the postwar period despite the restrictions of Cold War politics. Such conditions channeled important forms of political dissent into underrepresented public history and related cultural endeavors. Even by the early 1970s, these instances of intergenerational and cross-class exchanges still represented significant political interventions on the part of museum workers in the public sphere.

These intergenerational issues reverberated in a revealing editorial that Margaret Burroughs wrote for the *Chicago Defender* in June of 1968. Her entry appeared in response to a letter-writing contest the paper ran that prompted readers to answer the question: “Do you believe in black pride?” The paper offered a \$5000 cash prize as incentive for submissions to “help influence others for... better.” Among the numerous letters published by the paper, Burroughs’ piece was written in a critical (perhaps sarcastic) tone and commented on the ubiquity and malleability of public assertions of black pride through 1968. “Certainly if such an influential newspaper as the *Chicago Defender*” felt it important to “run a contest” there was, in Burroughs estimation, obviously a great “need for black pride”.⁵⁴¹

Burroughs continued her piece in a more serious manner. In this way, she revealed the earnestness with which her generation of cultural workers approached the expression of both African American civic virtues and respectability in the public sphere. She suggested that a

⁵⁴¹ Margaret G. Burroughs, “How to Build Black Pride,” *The Chicago Defender* (Daily Edition) (June 12, 1968), 4. Margaret Burroughs also published a shorter but similarly themed letter in *Chicago Daily Tribune* later that year. See Margaret Burroughs, “African-American History,” *Chicago Daily Tribune* (November 25, 1968), 20.

“knowledge” of “ancestral heritage, and the contributions that” blacks had “made to society” must be imbibed by younger generations through “any crash means possible.” Burroughs’ assertion echoed the sentiments of younger generations who revered the militancy of martyred figures like slain Black Muslim leader, Malcolm X and sought to emulate their sense of political urgency. However, she felt such knowledge needed to be transmitted judiciously and generationally through parents to their children and further “nurtured” through traditional institutions like the “church, school, and indigenous community organizations”.⁵⁴²

Burroughs’ editorial was also published just over two months after Martin Luther King, Jr.’s assassination and when many African American neighborhoods around the country openly revolted. In Chicago, the West side exploded as it was in that impoverished part of the city that King and his organization SCLC had focused the bulk of their energies during the mid-1960s. As such, Burroughs’ *Defender* editorial further analyzed an important speech given by Martin Luther King, Jr. only weeks before his death at an at-capacity Centennial Celebration for the birthday of the acclaimed scholar-activist W.E.B. DuBois at Carnegie Hall in New York City. The event had been sponsored by her left wing contemporaries at *Freedomways* magazine in February of 1968 and highlighted King’s important views against the Vietnam War and against racial poverty in America, which he frequently expressed in the late 1960s.⁵⁴³

Burroughs was thus very attentive to the idea of forging a united African American political agenda in the wake of King’s assassination. She noted how King had remarked at the tribute in New York about the elder scholars’ refusal to “apologize for being black.” Burroughs

⁵⁴² Margaret G. Burroughs, “How to Build Black Pride.”

⁵⁴³ “Du Bois Centennial Celebration Poster,” February 23, 1968, Box 30, Folder 30, John Henrik Clarke papers, 1937-1996 (hereafter cited as John Henrik Clarke Papers), SCHM.

added that DuBois' pride in his people was not because "their color endowed them with some vague greatness," but rather, "because their concrete achievements in struggle had advanced humanity in all its hues, black, white, yellow, red, or brown." Burroughs added that DuBois was a "fitting guide... for anyone seeking black pride." She concluded her commentary with a plug for the Museum of African American History which had "taken upon itself the herculean task" of building "black pride" in the community and that its "founders" had "played some small part in focusing attention on the heroic black past" which also pointed "to a glorious future."⁵⁴⁴ Overall, the editorial was a shrewdly worded positioning of both DuBois' and King's connected and usable political legacies for the Black Power era. Seen in this light, Burroughs advanced a radical integrationism (humanity "in all its hues") that she heard expressed through King's revealing 1968 tribute to DuBois.

With her tactical nods to middle class and domestic respectability alongside a radical integrationist teleology traced from DuBois to King, Burroughs' editorial positioned her own politics with an older generation of African American leftists and cultural activists - many of them women. As noted in previous chapters, Burroughs contributed to *Freedomways* magazine during the early 1960s, becoming the journal's first arts editor alongside Shirley Graham DuBois (DuBois' wife) and other black popular front leftists and fellow travelling feminists like Esther Cooper Jackson. Throughout the 1960s, the editors of *Freedomways* established a politics of radical integrationism that enabled the magazine to partake in an "uneasy alliance" of left-nationalists, leftists, and civil rights liberals who were part of the milieu of writers around which

⁵⁴⁴ Margaret G. Burroughs, "How to Build Black Pride."

the magazine coalesced.⁵⁴⁵ Erik McDuffie writes that “*Freedomways* signaled the long-standing effort of black left feminists to center women in the black radical agenda” as the magazine regularly featured the work of women who had been involved with the Communist Left since the 1920s; these included Claudia Jones, Louise Thompson Patterson, Eslanda Robeson, Alice Childress, Dorothy Burnham and visual artists like Elizabeth Catlett and Margaret Burroughs.⁵⁴⁶ The radicalism of such women pre-dated the identity politics of the Black Power era and had been sustained through the repressive political settings of postwar and Cold War America. Recent scholars of black feminism note how many “working” African American women, unlike many of their middle class counterparts, struggled over the course of the whole middle-20th Century to reshape “dominant notions of respectability as a vehicle to promote radical change.”⁵⁴⁷

Like many of these contemporaries, Burroughs forwarded an intersectional feminism through her politics, museum work, and even expressions about her personal style. As such she critically and constructively engaged with resurgent forms of black nationalism. In an essay from the 1960s reprinted in her autobiography, Burroughs recalled how she herself, alongside Chicago-born dancer Katherine Dunham (b.1909), and younger figures like American folk-singer Odetta and South African singer Miriam Makeba (born in the 1930s), ascribed to natural

⁵⁴⁵ James Smethurst, “Poetry and Sympathy: New York, the Left, and the Rise of Black Arts,” in Bill V. Mullen and James Smethurst, eds., *Left of the Color Line*, 266. For more on *Freedomways* magazine, see Erik S. McDuffie, *Sojourners for Freedom*.

⁵⁴⁶ Erik McDuffie, *Sojourners for Freedom: Black Women, American Communism and the Making of Black Left Feminism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 202.

⁵⁴⁷ See Gore, Theoharis, Woodard, eds., *Want to Start a Revolution*, 12. For good examples of this type of intersectional left feminist nationalism, see James Smethurst, *The Black Arts Movement*, Ch 4; Peniel Joseph, *Waiting 'Til the Midnight Hour*, 45-53; Erik S. McDuffie, “The March of Young Southern Black Women: Esther Cooper Jackson, Black Left Feminism, and the Personal and Political Costs of Cold War Repression,” in *Anticommunism and the African American Freedom Movement*, 81-113; Erik McDuffie, *Sojourning for Freedom*.

hair aesthetics as a conscious rejection of European gender standards – well before such styles came into vogue by the late 1960s with resurgent forms of cultural nationalisms.⁵⁴⁸ A Freedom Calendar published in 1966 by the museum honored African American women in history from early abolitionist leaders like Sojourner Truth, to early 20th Century civil rights leaders like Mary McLeod Bethune and 1960s figures like Fannie Lou Hamer who were active with the freedom movement in places like Mississippi. It even included a vignette of Viola Liuzzo, a working class Italian American from Detroit slain on an Alabama highway by white supremacists in the Spring of 1965 while she was helping with the Selma-to-Montgomery civil rights march. The calendar also highlighted important materialist approaches about the need to form usable public knowledge that treated gender and racial inequalities. For example, its first page opened with a quote from sociologist Oliver Cromwell Cox’s classic work *Caste, Class and Race*: “For an appreciation of the possibilities of any society, at least in so far as social change is concerned, a knowledge of the social position of women is necessary.”⁵⁴⁹

A section of Burroughs’ autobiography also reflects on longer traditions of 20th Century African American radicalism in the world and specifically illustrates the coordinates for her and her husband’s left cosmopolitanism. Burroughs underscores the artistic and political sensibilities and sense of camaraderie they shared with black cultural activists (from her generation and older) whose collective travels to the Soviet Union in particular helped shape their critical outlook on the American scene:

⁵⁴⁸ Margaret Burroughs, *Life With Margaret*, 160; Ashley Farmer, review of Kimberly Nichéle Brown, *Writing the Black Revolutionary Diva: Women's Subjectivity and the Decolonizing Text*. H-1960s (September 2011), <http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=32916> (accessed February 22, 2011); Kimberly Nichéle Brown, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010).

⁵⁴⁹ “1966: Freedom Calendar,” Folder 1033, Box 182, Red Squad Records, CHM.

In the art of the times, there was a sort of coming together of influences that were multi-political, international and class conscious (in that they combined working class and rural Southern folkways), which resulted in the emergence of a new hybrid of black popular culture. Foreign influences, Russian included, became important to blacks, who felt they were treated better abroad than in their own country. The creation of a new Soviet citizen attracted African Americans to the Soviet Union, where they could explore a national identity free from the kind of class gender and racial biases that pervaded America. Paul Robeson, Langston Hughes, W.E.B. DuBois and Claude McKay all lived or traveled extensively in the USSR between the 1920s and 1960s, all of them using their Soviet experiences to rethink the practice of cultural exclusion and the ideas of citizenship and national belonging in the U.S. My late husband, Charles, spent much of his life there, as well. I think all these men traveled as much to obtain the proper perspective of distance, of awareness, as to gain a particular foreign perspective, in order to give them a vantage from which to consider the developing – or deteriorating – aspects of social and cultural life for black Americans back home.⁵⁵⁰

The Burroughses clearly saw themselves as fellow travelers with this older cohort of cosmopolitan African American cultural and intellectual icons. They eventually journeyed to Russia together in 1966/67 and a year later made their first trip to Africa, visiting Ghana in 1968.⁵⁵¹ As noted in chapter one of this dissertation, such cosmopolitan outlooks influenced the earliest stages of their visions for a museum project and had been highlighted by Cold War-induced sojourns to Mexico in the early 1950s and Charles Burroughs's own childhood experiences from Moscow. It is also worth reiterating as well how during the museum's formative years, salon discussions hosted by the Burroughses in their Coach House were always wide-ranging in topic, from international socialism to educational method and were essentially, in Eugene Feldman's characterization, "about the denial of Black history and culture in

⁵⁵⁰ Margaret Burroughs, *Life With Margaret*, 71-72. For recent scholarship which details the activities of figures like DuBois and McKay in the Soviet Union, see William J. Maxwell, *New Negro, Old Left*; Kate A. Baldwin, *Beyond the color Line and the Iron Curtain*; Glenda Gilmore, *Defying Dixie*.

⁵⁵¹ Doris Saunders, "Confetti," *The Chicago Defender* (Daily Edition) (March 20, 1967), 12; "Catalyst Sets Afro Program as a Benefit," *The Chicago Defender* (Daily Edition) (September 23, 1968), 8; Margaret Burroughs, *Life With Margaret*, 88. DuBois mapped a similar route from himself - albeit much earlier than the Burroughses and with the more explicit intent of influencing Ghanaian nation-building. See Kevin Gaines, "African-American and the Expatriates in Ghana Black Radical Tradition," *Souls* (Fall 1999): 65.

American and world life.”⁵⁵² Such critical perspectives on American life and history were surely bolstered by their later world travels that brought them to Africa for first the time. Reflections by such black cosmopolitans about the effects that America’s racial paradoxes had on issues of citizenship and national identity over the course of 20th Century’s long durée underscores why it is important not to overstate the racial uplift impulses (and hence political homogeneity) of all middle class social actors.⁵⁵³

The Burroughses also pragmatically incorporated these worldly experiences into their public history work upon their return from their many trips abroad. For example, they spoke at numerous Southside community events organized jointly with other local public history groups like the Afro-American Heritage Association (AAHA) about their travels – some of which benefited the museum’s eventual relocation. Many of these events were duly noted in the annals of Chicago’s Red Squad police surveillance files and signify how the state’s many Cold War registries continually monitored these cultural events through to the early 1970s.⁵⁵⁴ Margaret

⁵⁵² “Museum of Negro History & Art, File 1033,” Box 182, Folder 1033, Chicago Red Squad Papers, Chicago History Museum (hereafter CHM); Eugene Feldman, *The Birth and the Building of the DuSable Museum*, 12-13; Nikhil Pal Singh, *Black is a Country*; Clayborne Carson, *In Struggle*.

⁵⁵³ Critique of middle class intellectuals and artists is one of the major dynamics in Harold Cruse’s monumental *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual*. The book offers a scathing condemnation of the African American intelligentsia from the 1920s through the 1960s. Cruse saves a good deal of his animosity for what he calls an “integrationst elite,” particularly African American leftists from new York like the editors at *Freedomways* magazine, Lorraine Hansberry, Paul Robeson and others who he saw as disruptive to the labors of ostensibly genuine revolutionary nationalists (like himself). While Cruse gets at the strategic importance of culture industries to African American politics in the late 1960s, his diatribe, which also lambasts other self-proclaimed “revolutionary” nationalists, obscures important historical (and hence political) differences between middle class social activists themselves. See Harold Cruse, *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual*, 240-346.

⁵⁵⁴ “Museum of Negro History and Art,” Investigator’s Report / Chicago Police Department, File 1033, October 17, 1966, Folder 1033, Box 182, Red Squad Records, CHM; “Chicago’s Soul Brothers – Part 1,” *Internal Security Report: A Counter-Subversive and Intelligence Publication* 4 (February, 1968), Folder 1033:1, Box 182, Red Squad Records, CHM; Raymond S. McGann, “Hughes Memorial Tribute Benefits History Museum,” *The Chicago Defender* (Daily Edition) (February 6, 1968), 7; Doris Saunders, “Confetti”; “Catalyst Sets Afro Program as a Benefit.” For more about the FBI’s targeting of African American cultural workers and useful readings of Cold War archival texts, see William J. Maxwell, “Ghostreaders and Diaspora-Writers: Four Theses on the FBI and

Burroughs used her travels to West Africa especially to further professionalize as a museum specialist. She suggested that the field research she conducted in Ghana would “aid the work” she was trying to do “at the museum.” A year earlier, she told a *Chicago Tribune* reporter that she wanted to more accurately specify, in anthropological terms, “what part of Africa” a piece in the museum’s collection was from, “from what time and who made it.”⁵⁵⁵ In her autobiography, Burroughs also noted how after they had founded the museum, their travels were as much about research for “museological ideas” as they were leisure, “split equally between relaxing and learning.”⁵⁵⁶

Such cosmopolitan desires for knowledge demonstrated how the DuSable’s expanding functions accorded with democratic shifts taking place in both museum and academic disciplines through the mid-20th Century. They also suggest that earlier exhibits at the museum might have at times idealized and/or sentimentalized African and southern folkways in the absence of professional expertise. Still, Burroughs’ strivings for education and further professionalization through her global travels and left cosmopolitanism are particularly significant in this regard because she worked through her museum and other public history groups in a city like Chicago to further revisionist scholarly efforts against tenacious Victorian legacies of biological and evolutionary racism. As Robert Rydell demonstrates, anthropological exhibits in world fairs and museums the world over from the late 19th century through the 20th forwarded such dangerous

African-American Modernism,” in Claire A. Culleton and Karen Leick, eds., *Modernism on File: Writers, Artists, and the FBI, 1920-1950* (New York: Palgrave, 2008): 23-38.

⁵⁵⁵ Carol Kleiman, “Working Woman: Learns to Run a Museum,” *Chicago Daily Tribune* (November 15, 1967), C2; “Get Scholarships for African Tour,” *Chicago Daily Tribune* (June 9, 1968), SCL7.

⁵⁵⁶ Margaret Burroughs, *Life With Margaret*, 89.

forms of racial knowledge into the public realm. Moreover, from the 1890s the Midwest metropolis' role in staging such spectacles had always been pronounced.⁵⁵⁷

The museum's expansion period through the late 1960s and 1970s was highlighted by important critical engagements by figures like Margaret Burroughs with younger generations involved in the Black Power and Arts movements. These engagements emphasized the stakes for producing racial knowledge and public history through the mid-20th Century and the importance held by many of sustaining intergenerational and cosmopolitan coordinates for black radicalism in the years to come.

Mr. Turner's History Lesson

Burroughs' meditations on these cosmopolitan concerns continued through other diverse public history projects she carried out through the late 1960s. These projects helped further establish the context for the museum's expanding programs and its needs for relocation. One of the more unique endeavors in which she participated was a comprehensive citywide oral history project commissioned by historians at Chicago State College on the South Side. Through this project, Burroughs interviewed a number of elder African Americans in the community who had lived in Chicago since the beginning of the Great Migration.⁵⁵⁸

Though the full oral history project was never completed and published by the college, Burroughs' interview with Ralph Turner was unique and deserves special consideration for its

⁵⁵⁷ See Ch. 2 of this dissertation. For a short synopsis of how exposition spaces treated non-white people in "evolutionary" exhibits from the late 19th Century and how later, more democratic museums for the "people" risked sentimentalizing and idealizing folk cultures, see Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum*, 83, 109-110; Robert Rydell, *All the World's a Fair*, 7.

⁵⁵⁸ Henry E. Simmons to Archibald Carey, March 23, 1967, Box 1, Folder 81, CSC Oral History Research Program papers (hereafter CSCOHRP Papers), Chicago State University Archives and Special Collections, Chicago, Illinois (hereafter CSU).

range and scope. Turner had been the museum's founding treasurer and later became one of its senior lecturers. He first moved to Chicago from Missouri and had been a railway worker and union organizer for most of his life. He had also been a Marcus Garvey supporter during the 1920s when Garvey's movement advocated "Back to Africa" movements. His politics shifted through the 1930s and 1940s to a more Marxist nationalism when he supported African American struggles in the interracial CIO union movements of those decades and like Margaret Burroughs eventually did, visited socialist countries in the Eastern bloc to gain more critical perspectives on U.S. forms of racism and racial capitalism. By the late 1950s, he became a key supporter of the Burroughses efforts to buy the former railroad workers club for their museum project.⁵⁵⁹

This unpublished interview reveals a great deal more about how both these museum founders approached pedagogy and politics in similar ways through their public history work. Throughout the exchange, Margaret Burroughs offered leading questions that prompted a wide ranging discussion of the "generation gap" in ways that touched on everything from Black power nationalism to racial capitalism. For Turner, the first impressions of schools kids who came to the museum were conditioned by the fact of having first seen more impressive downtown museums, like the Field Museum. Nonetheless, he observed that when young people walked around the DuSable Museum and viewed its many exhibits, they began to see how "black people" had made "a contribution to America." He and other volunteer staff members made sure to emphasize to visitors that the museum was "theirs" – which projected a sense of community ownership and agency over the museum experience. In these instances, Turner felt there was "no

⁵⁵⁹ "Ralph Turner," 13-14, Box 4, Folder 17 [labor leader; interviewed by Margaret Burroughs], CSCOHRP Papers, CSU; Eugene P. Feldman, *The Birth and the Building of the DuSable Museum*, 4, 14-15, 67.

generation gap.” When he lectured to young people about black history, he was able to use his years of experience through a lifetime of auto-didactic study and involvement with working class African American social movements to “blend [his knowledge] with their thinking.” To Turner, these interactions seemed especially significant given the dearth of African American history content in the curriculum of most public schools - even by the late 1960s.⁵⁶⁰

Others at the museum observed Turner speaking to students and felt his impact on these visitors was a useful model for both teachers and local activists alike. Eugene Feldman described Turner’s teaching style as “down-to-earth” and “easy to understand.” Turner used “no platitudes, no terminology that sometimes people who are in a social movement use among themselves.” His lectures commanded attentiveness from students and were regularly interspersed by applause. This was usually followed by an open session for questions and comments that Turner welcomed. Turner’s lessons were so captivating that the University of Illinois eventually made a film about them entitled “Mr. Turner’s History Lesson.”⁵⁶¹

Over the course of their conversation, Burroughs asked Turner to trace his role in the 20th Century black radical tradition. She wanted to record his experiences in the history of the freedom struggle, his views of the “black problem,” and his experiences in diverse radical African American-led movements of the 20th Century (particularly the labor struggles of the 1930s and 1940s). For example, Burroughs asked if he recalled “early freedom fighters” and “organizations because many of the young people today feel that the fight for the rights of the people started in the ‘60s.” She singled out figures like Edward Strong and Louis Burnham,

⁵⁶⁰ “Ralph Turner,” 8-9. Chicago’s Board of Education finally implemented an official African American history curriculum supplement in 1968. John Lyons, *Teachers and Reform*, 174.

⁵⁶¹ Eugene Feldman, *The Birth and the Building of the DuSable Museum*, 67. An archived video of these lessons is held at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, but is unavailable for loan outside of the university.

national leaders with the National Negro Congress during the 1930s and 1940s as well as singer and Communist activist Paul Robeson, scholar-activist W.E.B. DuBois and the former National Maritime Union-head, Ferdinand Smith – all virtuous heroes of the African American Left.⁵⁶²

Turner's reply to Burroughs's queries returned their discussion to the issue of a generation gap. He did this in ways that told a specific history of the black freedom struggle - one that emphasized the accomplishments of black leftists alongside cultural tropes that connected to collective memories of the Great Migration experience. It was Turner's impression that "young people" felt older activists such as himself had not been "doing" their "job [as representatives of the African American community] and that they best "get out of the way and let...[younger generations] do it." Turner bristled at this thought and suggested that "these people" knew "nothing about history." He recalled his own activities in Chicago during the 1920s when he marched on South State Street for Garvey's "back to Africa" movement. He remembered the efforts of Chicagoans to protest laws against interracial prize-fighting in light of the exploits of acclaimed African American boxer, Jack Johnson in the 1910s and the later involvement of many South Siders in efforts to desegregate professional baseball. In Turner's account, these movements evolved into militant civil rights organizations of the 1930s and 1940s like the National Negro Congress and the National Negro Labor Council of the early 1950s that took up issues of wartime and post-war employment and economic discrimination in particular. While avowedly left wing in orientation, such organizations had been set up "by Black people" before they dissolved under the pressures of Cold War McCarthyism. For Turner, it was the

⁵⁶² "Ralph Turner," 12. See, Eric Porter, *The Problem of the Future World*; Gerald Horne, *Red Seas: Ferdinand Smith and Radical Black Sailors in the United States and Jamaica* (New York: New York University Press, 2005); Martin Duberman, *Paul Robeson: A Biography* (New York: Knopf, 1988).

militant leadership of figures like Paul Robeson from that earlier era that needed to be recalled and emulated in the Black Power moment of the late 1960s. Robeson “could not be made to run when the hounds began to see that the struggle for black dignity was coming in.”⁵⁶³ Turner’s metaphorical use of the term “hounds” also made creative use of the famous blues music trope. As such, he gestured to the Manichean struggles of African Americans against the devil’s hellhounds and signified longer, more complex histories of black struggles against racism’s many forms, particularly the struggles of multiple generations of trans-Mississippi southerners who made up the majority of participants in the Great Migration to Midwestern metropolis’ like Chicago.⁵⁶⁴

Turner’s reflection on the freedom struggle sidestepped the important roles played by mainstream civil rights organizations like the Urban League and the NAACP. Instead, he offered an important statement about the complex relationship between African American Old and New Left cultural and revolutionary nationalisms during the mid-late 1960s - namely over the potential pitfalls of black capitalism, the conflicted outcomes of colonial independence struggles in the Third World, and ongoing Western-led wars abroad.⁵⁶⁵ Despite his old guard leftism,

⁵⁶³ “Ralph Turner,” 12-14.

⁵⁶⁴ Ibid., 14. As blues historian Ted Gioia writes, the seminal lyrics of “Hellhound on my Trail” by the mysterious Delta Blues singer Robert Johnson suggest that listeners are “left to ponder whether the hellhound of the title is real or metaphorical, but the sense of being chased and hunted is powerfully evoked, as in those nightmares that leave you struggling to outrun some vaguely understood but deeply felt danger.” As such, the hound Turner evokes in African American vernacular is deliberately vague, possibly metaphorical, yet also a fitting image to use as a way to denote collective experiences of migration and struggle through the insurgent 1960s. See Ted Gioia, *Delta Blues: The Life and Times of the Mississippi Maters Who Revolutionized American Music* (New York: Norton, 2008), 182.

⁵⁶⁵ For a provocative treatment of the tensions and connections between the U.S. Old and New Lefts, see Maurice Isserman, *“If I Had a Hammer . . .”: The Death of the Old Left and the Birth of the New Left* (New York: Basic Books, 1987). Van Gosse’s more recent work on the New Left and Black Power judiciously demonstrates how these tensions between the Old and New Left were overstated within the Black community especially because of the sustained popularity of iconic figures like W.E.B. DuBois and Paul Robeson. Moreover, Gosse demonstrates how African American liberation struggles were the catalyst for America’s New Left movements in the late 1960s. Van Gosse, *Rethinking the New Left: An Interpretative History* (New York: Palgrave, 2005), 121-122. See also, Max

Turner offered critical praise to cultural nationalists who supported racial separatism, “young people who” were “saying that we [African Americans]” had to “go it alone.” They were, he conceded, “making gains.” But, in Turner’s view, the way to “bring about the greatest degree of equality in this country as black people” would be to deal with “economics...As long as we’re workers, we will have this problem.” Turner extended this decidedly materialist analysis of “the black problem” to a consideration of the Vietnam War’s hypocrisies and the peace movement that had only slowly attracted the support of civil rights organizations, despite the direct connections between U.S. military expenditures and the divergence of “Great Society” anti-poverty programs.⁵⁶⁶ Finally, Turner also felt that the renewed interest in black capitalism by younger activists in the African American liberation struggle through the sixties decade seemed untenable as a tactic for it would not benefit everyone. Like the newly independent states of Africa who were mostly “politically independent [by the 1960s]” but had not attained “economic independence,” Turner doubted whether black capitalism alone could benefit the majority of African Americans. As he stated: “Now, it might build up a few black businessmen who would want a front for the capitalists, but in so far as... [it might benefit] black people as a whole... [this appeared as] an impossibility.”⁵⁶⁷

Elbaum, *Revolution in the Air: Sixties Radicals Turn to Lenin, Mao and Che* (New York: Verso, 2002). Ralph Turner’s perspective also helps confirm the chronologies proposed in recent intellectual, cultural and social histories of the 20th Century African American freedom struggles as well as notions of a long civil rights movements across mid-century. See Nikhil Paul Singh, *Black is a Country*; Jacqueline Dowd Hall, “The Long Civil Rights Movement and Political Uses of the Past.”

⁵⁶⁶ “Ralph Turner,” 15-17. The classic example of this disconnect between the African American community and the peace movement against war in Vietnam came from within Martin Luther King’s own organization, the SCLC, which only slowly recognized the veracity of King’s antiwar stance in 1966 and 1967 when he issued his famous “Riverside Church” speech from New York city against the war. SNCC was one of the first groups to shift its position against the war in 1965. See Manning Marable, *Race, Reform, and Rebellion*, 103; Peniel Joseph, *Waiting ‘Til the Midnight Hour*, 178-180.

⁵⁶⁷ “Ralph Turner,” 20, 21.

This expansive conversation between Burroughs and Ralph Turner stands as a significant intellectual statement by two veteran activists of the 20th Century African American freedom struggle from Chicago. It further demonstrated how important ideas about generational exchange, political ideology, new movement tactics, and local knowledge of diverse racial pasts were discussed and framed through the many public history activities supported by the founding members of the DuSable Museum. In 1970, the museum even continued the methodological approaches of the Chicago State College project and initiated an oral history program of its own that enlisted fourteen teenagers from “remedial classes in south side schools” to interview community members. These students were trained in oral history techniques and sent out to “interview black Americans of all ages, occupations and walks of life.” According to an article in the *Chicago Tribune*, the project worked in two ways. Student interviewers accompanied portable museum exhibits to fourteen South Side locations. These exhibits used a variety of media, from “films, slides, pictures and narratives” to convey the “story of Black American history” at a local level. After residents viewed the displays, students recorded their responses and documented the “ages, names, occupations, attitudes, memories and other important aspects of [their subject’s] day-to-day existence.” The project’s director, Archie Listenbee, noted how those who participated in the project included “a cross-section of people... from young... to a 111-year-old.” The oral histories soon were archived at the museum and “made available to researchers.”⁵⁶⁸ These experiments with oral history and intergenerational exchange underscored the museum’s significant and innovative role in promoting local public history efforts in Black Chicago through the Black Power era.

⁵⁶⁸ “Teens Trained to Record Current Black Experiences,” *Chicago Daily Tribune* (August 23, 1970), S6.

Arts and Conventions

The mid-to late 1960s of course featured the upsurge of the Black Arts Movement (BAM) across the United States. As such it showcased an emerging younger generation's role in the development of many old and new sites for African American community knowledge and cultural production.⁵⁶⁹ This wider context for cultural production by black communities across the United States is an important backdrop for understanding the relocation and development plans of the DuSable Museum in Chicago through the same period.

Arguably a close rival of New York, Chicago's black arts scene was equally vibrant and included areas of visual arts, literature, and music that all influenced the city's physical, cultural and intellectual landscapes.⁵⁷⁰ One very notable project for its impact on the aesthetics of inner-cityscapes nationwide was the *Wall of Respect*, located at 43rd and Langley. Though short-lived (it was removed completely by the city in 1973), it inspired numerous other mural projects throughout Chicago and in urban areas around the country that have helped re-envision African American urban spaces as sites of community public history and cultural reflection.⁵⁷¹

The *Wall of Respect* project was the most prolific of many Blacks Arts movement activities led by the Organization of Black American Culture (OBAC) during the late 1960s and

⁵⁶⁹ James Smethurst, *The Black Arts Movement*, 14; Daniel Widener, *Black Arts West*.

⁵⁷⁰ Daniel Widener, *Black Arts West: Culture and Struggle in Postwar Los Angeles*, 4.

⁵⁷¹ Though highly significant, the *Wall of Respect* was a project that also highlighted the conflicted nature of cultural politics during the Black Power era. A factional dispute between the artists who started the project (namely William Walker and the artists who went on to form the Afri-Cobra collective) led to disagreements about how the mural was to be maintained and updated. These disputes took place under the duress of routine harassment (and often paranoia) from local FBI and police informants and surveillance encouraged by federal COINTELPRO activities that aimed to disrupt black movement activities nationwide in both political and cultural endeavors – especially through the late 1970s. In the wake of this charged political atmosphere, the wall was eventually removed by city officials in 1973. James Smethurst, *The Black Arts Movement*, 210, 213-214; Jeff Donaldson, "The Rise, Fall, and Legacy of the Wall of Respect Movement," *International Review of African American Art* (1998) 15:1: 22-26.

early 1970s. OBAC was joined by numerous other groups in Chicago who worked on diverse artistic genres and mediums such as AFRI-COBRA (a group of visual artists who made up the majority of painters who worked on the *Wall of Respect*). There were theatrical projects like Val Gray's Kuumba Theater and dance group and the Afro-Arts Theater through which Theodore Ward mentored many younger aspiring black theatrical workers. Literary engines flourished such as Third World Press, established by one of Margaret Burroughses protégés Haki Madhubuti (as noted above). There was Lotus Press and the journal *Negro Digest/Black World* edited by Hoyt Fuller - the latter of which was owned by Johnson publishing which of course also published the very popular pictorial lifestyle magazine *Ebony*. Acclaimed Chicago poet, Gwendolyn Brooks, ran creative writing workshops that brought her into contact with numerous young Black Arts Movement writers.⁵⁷² All this activity was paralleled regionally by other important mid-western institutions like the Karamu House in Cleveland and a performing arts center in the predominantly African American working class town of East St. Louis in Southern Illinois. The art center in East St. Louis was run by renown Chicagoan and dancer Katherine Dunham.⁵⁷³ These institutions were vibrant and supported a vast array of artistic endeavors and repertoires.

⁵⁷² James Smethurst, *The Black Arts Movement*, 180, 210, 213-214; Manning Marable, *Race, Reform, and Rebellion: The Second Reconstruction in Black America, 1945-1990* (Jackson: Mississippi University Press, 1991), 105-106. James Smethurst's work treats the Black Arts Movement with separate chapters on regional centers in New York, the U.S. South, the Midwest, and the West Coast. Scholars are beginning to examine these regional centers even more closely in ways that further reveal the complexities of Black Arts activisms and repertoires and their extensive engagements with civic power structures especially. Many of these new studies also underscore the role that activist women had in leading these forms of cultural and social struggle. See especially, Daniel Widener, *Black Arts West*; Dayo Gore, Jeanne Theoharis, Komozi Woodard, eds. *Want to Start a Revolution?*; Jonathan Fenderson, "'Journey Toward a Black aesthetic': Hoyt Fuller, the Black Arts Movement & the Black intellectual community," (PhD Dissertation, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, 2011).

⁵⁷³ James Smethurst, *The Black Arts Movement*, 179, 217-18, 220-21; Clarence Lang, *Grassroots at the Gateway*, 207.

As James Smethurst writes, “the most distinctive feature of the Black Arts movement in Chicago is that it is difficult, if not impossible, to pick out a dominant artistic genre.”⁵⁷⁴

Some of the OBAC artists who designed *The Wall of Respect* (perhaps Chicago’s most prolific project from the Black Arts era) knew the Burroughs well and often exhibited their work at the DuSable Museum. The museum’s former research director Eugene Feldman notes how two of the *Walls’* central artists, Eugene Edaw and William Walker, had discussed doing public artwork at coffee seminars hosted at the museum, which were also part of the regularly attended salon gatherings at the Burroughses. Two large rooms in the basement of the museum exhibited murals done by Eugene Edaw.⁵⁷⁵ Like much of the artwork at the museum, these paintings treated iconic episodes and heroes of African American history. Episodes included the long history of racial slavery in the Americas “and the hard, harsh... work” and “killing of Blacks to force obedience” alongside images of hope like slave revolts, Harriet Tubman and the “underground railroad,” Sojourner Truth and “her abolitionist travels and lectures” and the white abolitionist John Brown and “his efforts to free slaves” through martyrdom. Another mural by Edaw from the same period depicted Martin Luther King, Jr. and demonstrated the didactic aesthetics of such visual forms that connected to contemporary African American freedom struggles. About twenty other paintings completed by Edaw depicted ancient West Africa and were also housed at the museum.⁵⁷⁶

⁵⁷⁴ James Smethurst, *The Black Arts Movement*, 180.

⁵⁷⁵ William Walker was the more senior and the artists and later completed The Worker mural outside the Packinghouse Workers hall near S. 49th and Wabash in 1974, see James Smethurst, *The Black Arts Movement*, 199.

⁵⁷⁶ Eugene Feldman, *The Birth and the Building of the DuSable Museum*, 57, 78-79; Margaret Burroughs, *Life With Margaret*, 96; Michael L. Culbert, “Black History Lives in the DuSable Museum,” *The Chicago Defender* (Big Week Edition) (March 24, 1973), 32; “Mural of Black History,” *Chicago Daily Tribune* (June 28, 1970), SCL7.

These murals and paintings circulated well beyond the walls of the DuSable – notably at important regional African American festivals and expositions. Such exchanges demonstrated how the museum’s work paralleled and, at times, overlapped with other significant expositional spaces developed around the city by African Americans. For example, many of these paintings were exhibited at Chicago’s Black Expo from 1969 through 1974. Held at Chicago’s International Amphitheater and boosted by the *Chicago Defender* and Operation Breadbasket (headed by Jesse Jackson), Black Expo’s were “promotional festivals” geared towards supporting local business ventures. A “camera-view” of these Expo festivities in 1969 demonstrated some of the “massive” crowds that attended the three-day exhibits in the Chicago Amphitheater. The Expo had drawn close to 800,000 attendees by 1970. However, they were difficult to sustain. As one historian notes, nearly half of Chicago’s African American businesses would perish in the recession of 1974, along with Jackson’s Expo experiment. Edaw’s paintings also were lent by the DuSable Museum for the “Black Esthetics” festival in 1973 at the Museum of Science and Industry near Hyde Park alongside paintings by other Illinois artists who had done the artwork for the Negro Emancipation Centennial of 1963 held a decade earlier at McCormick Place. The *Chicago Defender*’s coverage of these festivals and its inclusion of the DuSable’s relocation to Washington how reflected the museum’s growing prominence in the local black public sphere. These efforts ensured that a space for the exposition of black history and culture could survive and be sustained through periods of hardship.⁵⁷⁷

⁵⁷⁷ “Expo ’69: A People’s Show,” *The Chicago Defender* (Daily Edition) (October 9, 1969); Earl Calloway, “DuSable Museum Art Highlights Black Festival” *The Chicago Defender* (Big Weekend Edition) (Feb. 3, 1973), 20; “Expo Root,” *The Chicago Defender* (Daily Edition) (November 3, 1970), 4. Jesse Jackson’s effort to promote the Expo as a “festival for black business” and his “discretely appropriated” funds for the affair from SCLC coffers led to his break with the parent organization of Operation Breadbasket. See Marshall Frady, *Jesse: The Life and Pilgrimage of Jesse Jackson* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996): 263-264, 290.O

The growth of African American-led expositions in Chicago and the Midwest became a significant part of a larger movement of widely-attended black conventions that increased with frequency across the United States from the late 1960s through the early 1970s. These conventions varied from region to region and in terms of emphasis (business, culture, and, politics) but certainly reflected the currency of black cultural politics to the public sphere. Major conventions took place in Newark and Atlanta – but likely the most well-known was the Gary (Indiana) Convention of 1972 (not far from the boundaries of Chicago’s far South Side). These conventions brought African American political elites, civil rights leaders, and grassroots cultural and left nationalist’s figures together to try and form a unified political agenda.⁵⁷⁸ It was at the Gary Convention where Jesse Jackson famously delivered his provocative “Nation Time” speech and where poet/activist Amiri Baraka sought to convene a dialogue between diverse segments of the Black Power and Black Arts Movements. The attempt to forge this united agenda revealed a major shift in African American political culture through the 1960s, wherein older divisions between militant black nationalists and civil rights integrationists had given way to new ones divisions, notably between a “grassroots” and black elected officials.⁵⁷⁹ A precursor to the Gary convention occurred in Northlake, Illinois – a western suburb of Chicago near O’Hare airport. Manning Marable estimated that this meeting was “probably the only instance

⁵⁷⁸ For more on the complexities and regional diversities of cultural nationalism during the Black Power Era see: Komozi Woodard, *A Nation Within a Nation*; Scot Brown, *Fighting for US: Maulana Karenga, the US organization, and Black Cultural Nationalism* (New York: New York University Press, 2003); James Smethurst, “Retraining the Heartworks: Women in Atlanta’s Black Arts Movement” in Gore, Theoharis and Woodard, eds. *Want to Start a Revolution?*; Manning Marable, *Race, Reform, and Rebellion*, 105-106.

⁵⁷⁹ As Komozi Woodard argues, “the Modern Black Convention Movement was an essential component of the Black Power movement which included the cultural, political, and economic programs proposed and developed by the Black Arts Movement...” The convention movement in Woodard’s estimation included organization’s as diverse from each other as the “... Black Panthers, US, Republic of New Africa, the Revolutionary Action Movement, the Nation of Islam,” and “the League of Revolutionary Black workers” who all came to these conventions at some point. “Together these cultural and political formations galvanized millions of black people in the broadest movement in African American history...” See Komozi Woodard, *A Nation Within a Nation*, 203, 184-223, 261.

between 1965 and 1983 when representatives of virtually every major tendency of the black movement sat down together in the same room.”⁵⁸⁰ As such, the locus of many of these important convention-based discussions was in the mid-west in or near Chicago.

While smaller in scale to the economically-focused festivities of the black expositional forms of the late 1960s, the DuSable Museum’s development was certainly a part of this context given the role that younger African American artists and activists had in the work of the institution. As noted above, the DuSable was also a major contributor to the coordinates of the Black Arts Movement in Chicago through the late 1960s. It offered an important site for the support of younger African American artists, intellectuals, and thinkers to fashion their efforts in ways that highlighted their contributions to late 1960s black cultural production.

Relocation

In 1970, when it came time to finally negotiate with civic officials for expansion into Washington Park, the DuSable Museum faced a difficult task. These officials made little effort to advertise the abandonment of the former police headquarters, let alone the possibility of its use by a small not-for-profit group of cultural workers from the South Side. This was especially true with Park District officials like its president, Daniel J. Shannon. Shannon acted slowly in his response to early inquiries about relocation. After some initial enthusiasm from a mayor’s assistant, Shannon only responded to Burroughs’ query with a terse letter in April of 1970 that expressed a mildly worded intent to check into the “possibility” of the museum “using” the former Washington Park Police Station Building. The summer of that year consequently passed

⁵⁸⁰ Manning Marable quoted in Komozi Woodard, *A Nation Within a Nation*, 191.

with little action from the Parks District on the matter.⁵⁸¹ At this early stage, the relocation process seemed to echo the long history of bitter disappointment for local African American politics in the face of lethargic, corrupt, and often indifferent machine-driven civic officialdom.⁵⁸²

To gain momentum, the museum's directors reached out to local African American business and community leaders, namely *Chicago Defender* newspaper owner John Sengstacke (who supported black public history work in the community) and Congressman Ralph Metcalfe, who by then had fallen out with the civic machine.⁵⁸³ Even John Hope Franklin, the eminent professional historian of African American and American history who became a full professor at the University of Chicago in the mid-1960s, lent his name to the campaign. The directors, who included figures closely involved with the museum's day-to-day work like Margaret Burroughs, Eugene Feldman, Eugene Ford and Jan Wittenbar, were joined by significant community leaders like Dr. E.E. Hasbrouck, Archie Listenbee, Daniel Caldwell, Wendell Smith, Fitzhugh D. Dinks, Jr. and journalist Vernon Jarrett. These figures reached out to civic officials as well as directors

⁵⁸¹ Erwin A. France to Margaret Burroughs, March 18, 1970, Box 184, Folder 5, HARSH; Daniel J. Shannon to Margaret Burroughs, April 1, 1970, Box 184, Folder 5, Abbott/Sengstacke Papers, HARSH; Erwin A. France to Daniel J. Shannon, April 2, 1970, Box 184, Folder 5, Abbott/Sengstacke Papers, HARSH; Margaret T.G. Burroughs to Daniel J. Shannon, October 5, 1970, Box 184, Folder 5, Abbott/Sengstacke Papers, HARSH.

⁵⁸² For a selection of works on histories of Black politics and their complex engagements with Chicago's Democratic civic machine over the course of the twentieth century see: William J. Grimshaw, *Bitter Fruit*; William J. Grimshaw, *Negro Politics in Chicago*; Christopher Reed, *The Chicago NAACP*; Adam Cohen and Elizabeth Taylor, *American Pharoah*, 57-61; Lizabeth Cohen, *Making a New Deal*, 251-289; Dempsey J. Travis, *An Autobiography of Black Politics*; Christopher Manning, *William L. Dawson and the Limits of Black Electoral Leadership*.

⁵⁸³ Ralph Metcalfe had risen through the ranks of the local African American Democratic sub-machine as an alderman from the late 1940s through 1971. However, he became a sign that the machine's control over African American electoral politics in the city was disintegrating when he decided to fight back against Daley after he became congressman of Illinois' 1st District in 1971. See William Grimshaw, *Bitter Fruit*, 137-150.

of other Chicago area museums like the Field Museum, the Art Institute, the Museum of Contemporary Art, and the Chicago Historical Society.⁵⁸⁴

More importantly, the prolific support of such public figures helped with a widespread petition and letter-writing campaign led by many of Margaret Burroughs's college students at Kennedy-King to create the necessary political pressure for the DuSable's expansion. In his history of the museum, research and publications director, Eugene Feldman recalled that the petition campaign received "thousands upon thousands of signatures."⁵⁸⁵ Significant letters from diverse patrons and supporters of the DuSable wrote to the City Parks Commission and echoed the proposal to underscore the museum's harmonizing role in the community. The DuSable's Ralph Turner emphasized his background as a "long-time resident... most interested in" the city's "educational and cultural growth." Ruth Allen Fouche, a long time supporter of the museum as well as an accomplished musicologist, church organist, and respectable local clubwomen wrote that the museum was one of the most "educative places in Chicago" for it contained "items" that were "most precious to students of... Black Culture." Like the other appeals to city officials, Fouche felt the Washington Park location was appropriate because of its proximity to the University of Chicago, various public schools, and was a "suitable house" for "Black Citizens" to store their "Heritage Collection." Forman Onderdonk, a white teacher from a

⁵⁸⁴ Margaret Burroughs to Ralph Metcalfe, May 11, 1970, Box 184, Folder 5, Abbott/Sengstacke Papers, HARSH; John Hope Franklin to Margaret T.G. Burroughs, October 20, 1970, Box 184, Folder 5, Abbott/Sengstacke Papers, HARSH; Margaret Burroughs to Ralph H. Metcalfe, January 18, 1971, Box 184, Folder 5, Abbott/Sengstacke Papers, HARSH; Margaret Burroughs to John Sengstacke, January 24, 1971, Box 184, Folder 5, Abbott/Sengstacke Papers, HARSH; Margaret Burroughs to John Sengstacke, March 3, 1971, Box 184, Folder 5, Abbott/Sengstacke Papers, HARSH; Margaret Burroughs to John Sengstacke, October 14, 1971, Box 184, Folder 5, Abbott/Sengstacke Papers, HARSH; Margaret Burroughs to John Sengstacke, June 28, 1972, Box 184, Folder 5, Abbott/Sengstacke Papers, HARSH.

⁵⁸⁵ Eugene Feldman, *The Birth and the Building of the DuSable Museum*, 84; Margaret Burroughs, interview with John E. Fleming, "Dr. Margaret T.G. Burroughs," 41; Carline Evone Williams Strong, "Margaret Taylor Goss Burroughs," 234.

western suburb wrote to a local CBS radio station to promote the museum's need for relocation and noted how Margaret Burroughs had visited his school district and been "warmly" received by students there.⁵⁸⁶

Part of the effort to expand, then, required that the museum's supporters make strategic appeals to city officials and the public at large. As such, the museum's relocation proposal spoke of race relations and Chicago's role as a commercial gateway in the Midwestern U.S. The proposal also subtly positioned Black Chicago's rich cultural past in the document – especially in the fields of arts and intellectual production that most concerned cultural workers like Margaret Burroughs. The proposal document foregrounded the institutions' role as a "bootstrap" project and "cultural resource." The "resource" designation came from the Chicago Board of Education and surely represented a term of endorsement that aided the museum's case for expansion. The proposal further highlighted how the museum was a model institution that promoted peaceful human relations in Chicago "and the world." On the proposal's first page, a brief biography of Jean Baptiste Point DuSable emphasized how the first settler saw the "commercial advantage of Chicago's location on the north banks" of a river that "joined Lake Michigan." In this reading, DuSable was the first to see the city "as a trade center and a crossroad." The proposal also highlighted the service that the founders of the museum had given to Chicago as "educators, artists, historians, and civic leaders who saw the need for an institution to preserve and promote the contributions of Africans and Afro-Americans to world culture" - a

⁵⁸⁶ Ralph Turner to Daniel Shannon [undated], Box 184, Folder 5, Abbott/Sengstacke Papers, HARSH; Ruther Allen Fouche to Daniel Shannon, October 20, 1970, Box 184, Folder 5, Abbott/Sengstacke Papers, HARSH; Forman Onderdonk to Lane Venardos, October 15, 1970, Box 184, Folder 5, Abbott/Sengstacke Papers, HARSH.

service that helped create interracial “goodwill” as well as black “pride.”⁵⁸⁷ Similarly, the petition that circulated for signatures and eventually was sent to City Hall emphasized how the use of the former Washington Park site would “help the cause of racial peace” and foster “much needed cultural education.”⁵⁸⁸

The proposals and correspondence directed towards city officials hardly recalled the particularities of Black Chicago’s unique relationship to Washington Park site and its neighborhood. While its location next to “to the University of Chicago and the Museum of Science and Industry” were noted, the only indication of the community’s relationship to the proposed site was that it was “surrounded by heavily populated residential” areas, areas whose “needs” could be satisfied due to their proximity. However, the proposals’ summary contained an important caveat that linked the museum’s relocation to local legacies of radical black intellectual and cultural production alongside traditions of middling racial uplift. It suggested the site might embolden a “new creativity in the inner city” of Chicago such as had not been seen since the “cultural upsurge of the 1920s” or the “cultural uplift of the 1930s.”⁵⁸⁹ As educational studies scholar Carline Williams Strong wrote in her biography of Margaret Burroughs, the museum’s main founder would “embellish” visits and negotiations with Parks District officials by strategically bringing “knowledgeable supporters” to meetings – notably a meeting on November 9, 1971 which reviewed the \$175,000 in pledges obtained through the museums relocation petition campaign. This figure alone was only halfway to a \$300,000 figure stipulated

⁵⁸⁷ “A Bootstrap Project in Heritage and History,” [undated], Box 184, Folder 5, Abbott/Sengstacke Papers, HARSH; “DuSable Museum's move fulfills founder's dream,” *Chicago Daily Tribune* (Feb 7, 1974), S3.

⁵⁸⁸ Petition to Daniel Shannon [undated], Box 184, Folder 5, Abbott/Sengstacke Papers, HARSH.

⁵⁸⁹ “A Bootstrap Project in Heritage and History,” [undated], Box 184, Folder 5, Abbott/Sengstacke Papers, HARSH; Margaret Burroughs to Ralph Metcalfe, May 11, 1970 Box 184, Folder 5, Abbott/Sengstacke Papers, HARSH.

by the city as necessary to renovate (and thereby) grant use for the Washington Park facility. Nonetheless, a decision came about shortly thereafter in the early months of 1972 and well before larger foundations offered the museum their support.⁵⁹⁰ Clearly, the strategic approach of the petitions and proposals helped move the negotiations forward. Margaret Burroughs recalled this process in succinct terms:

When I came down, I brought a stack of petitions people had signed asking for money to help renovate the building. But I made my presentation about what we were doing and how we would utilize this building and so forth. So they voted for us to be allowed to have that building. We were the first community group that the Park District had ever given any building too. And so we made it into a museum and continued our fundraising to fix it up and so forth.⁵⁹¹

These rhetorical strategies were not just another form of black capitalism (made notorious through Richard Nixon's boosterism). Nor were they the kind of cultural nationalism that became the *sine qua non* of many a Ford Foundation-funded projects, in inner cities during the Black Power era.⁵⁹² The potential for many cultural projects to emerge from the Black Power era and to follow one or both of these tendencies was very high. Recent studies duly note the related rise of a new intellectual regime by the late 1960s and intimately connected to racial projects that boosted "grassroots" organizations to solve the problems of the ghetto through decidedly top-down measures. As Karen Ferguson writes, "recent scholarship on race in the United States has demonstrated that the framework that has governed white and nonwhite Americans' understanding of the 'race problem' in the twentieth-century United States was created and

⁵⁹⁰ Carline Evone Williams Strong, "Margaret T.G. Burroughs," 233-234; "Black Museum Seeks Park Site."

⁵⁹¹ Margaret Burroughs with Ian Rocksborough-Smith, October 19, 2009.

⁵⁹² For an excellent critical case study of the Ford Foundation in Cleveland, see Karen Ferguson, "Organizing the Ghetto," 67-100.

perpetuated by an intellectual establishment dominated by the interests of elite white cosmopolitans responding to social change.”⁵⁹³

However, the Washington Park relocation by the DuSable Museum demonstrated, at least for a time, a sort of outlying case study for this otherwise well-established nation-wide pattern. The museum’s relocation in fact represented one channel through which Black Power successfully engaged white civic power structures. It is because of how and why this relocation was orchestrated that it remains important to look beyond the self-reliant language of the “bootstrap” approach outlined in the museum’s relocation proposals. The promotion of Washington Park as an expansion site for the museum, effectively re-imagined important social space for African Americans in Chicago. This representational space was evident in how the DuSable’s directors went about their efforts to relocate and their selection of social space. Over the course of this expansion process, they were able to utilize the public idea of a museum to attract political, legal and financial support to successfully “free” an African American space without compromising their status as an autonomous organization through the early 1970s (see figure 4).⁵⁹⁴

To be sure, like other “cultural institutions” of that era, the DuSable eventually sought greater sources of funding for its programs through foundations, private institutions, and government. The museum’s first grant was for \$9,000 from the Wieboldt Foundation in 1966 and was followed by a slightly larger grant for \$7,500 from the Albert Wadsworth Harris Funds three years later. However, the museum did not receive large grants until 1973 - *after* the city’s Park

⁵⁹³ Karen Ferguson, “Organizing the Ghetto,” 70-71.

⁵⁹⁴ Thanks to Ibram Rogers at the American Historical Association annual meeting in Chicago in January of 2012 for his useful comments about “free” and “freed” spaces in African American political and cultural imaginaries through the Black Power era.

District had granted the rights to relocate to Washington Park. Only then did they receive large grants, including \$100,000 from the Field Foundation (1973), \$100,000 from Woods Charitable Trust, and a major \$300,000 grant from the Chicago Community Trust. Most of these funds went towards the eventual re-development and renovation of its new Washington Park Facility. It was also during this later expansion phase that corporations like Bell Laboratories, Standard Oil, Oscar Meyer, and Sears were tapped to support extra-curricular Summer black history classes for grade school children, adult education classes, and correspondence history and creative writing courses for inmates in local prisons.⁵⁹⁵ When the museum had achieved the approvals of the city for relocation in the early months of 1973, Margaret Burroughs féted many of the civic and foundation officials who eventually supported the move. The Parks district president who had responded slowly and tersely to the museums' initial proposals only sent a representative to this event. But the heads of the Wieboldt and Chicago Community Trust came, as did local black elected officials who backed the museum's efforts, including Alderman/Congressman Ralphe Metcalfe and state representatives William Robinson, Richard Newhouse, and Corneal Davis.⁵⁹⁶

Interactions by community groups with powerful government bodies and/or foundations were surely wrought with complications and tensions. At the same time, it remains important to underscore how such relationships offered important opportunities and openings to cultural workers such as those who founded the DuSable Museum of African American history. Among the many awards, fellowships and distinctions Burroughs received over her life, she got an

⁵⁹⁵ "Wieboldt's Gives \$9,000 To African - American Museum," *The Chicago Defender* (National Edition), (December 3, 1966), 12; "Museum Receives 7.5Gs Grant," *The Chicago Defender* (Daily Edition) (Jan 8, 1969), 8; Eugene P. Feldman, *The Birth and the Building of the DuSable Museum*, 106. Sears began its program with the museum in 1963. See "Afro-American Course Has 65 Students Enrolled," *Chicago Daily Tribune* (November 24, 1968), SA10.

⁵⁹⁶ "DuSable Museum Fetes 6," *The Chicago Defender* (Big Weekend Edition) (February 3, 1973), 4; Carline Evone Williams Strong, "Margaret T.G. Burroughs," 229-230.

internship through the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) in 1968, which allowed her to intern at the Field Museum. This internship enabled her to gain professional training in museology, from “fundraising and development to curatorship and art management,” which she was able to draw on during her later field research in West Africa. Most importantly for the DuSable Museum’s longevity, Burroughs was able to learn about special laws in the state of Illinois that allowed citizens to apply for tax levies for local museum projects. A 1967 revision of an 1893 Illinois law (Chapter 105, Section 8 - page 3) allowed civic park districts to give museums money - provided the citizens groups behind them acquired the appropriate legal permissions for construction and development on “state land.”⁵⁹⁷ Though the DuSable did not receive these allocations until the late 1970s, the Washington Park relocation and the museum’s not-for-profit status later allowed it to join a city-wide consortium of museums which included the Art Institute, the Chicago Historical Society, the Field Museum and the Museum of Modern Art and to receive federal funding to subsidize visitors passes for “inner city and/or low income citizens” – a program that increased the accessibility and use of Chicago’s museum spaces by broader publics. Within a year of beginning the program, the DuSable Museum quickly became the “most popular” of all five of the museums in the program.⁵⁹⁸ Attracting this kind of support was necessary in order for the museum to simply sustain itself, let alone grow. As late as 1966, the museum operated a deficit of nearly \$3,000 – which was almost half its operating costs for

⁵⁹⁷ Margaret T.G. Burroughs, interview with John E. Fleming, 42; Margaret T.G. Burroughs, *Life With Margaret*, 155; Kim Ifird, Office of the Illinois Secretary of State email to author, November 8, 2011 (in author’s possession); Carol Kleiman, “Working Woman: Learns to Run a Museum,” *Chicago Daily Tribune* (November 15, 1967), C2.

⁵⁹⁸ N. Leland Webber to Brian O’Doherty, November 24, 1970, Box 184, Folder 5, Abbott/Sengstacke Papers, HARSH; “DuSable Ahead of Other Museums,” *The Chicago Defender* (Big Weekend Edition) (September 11, 1971), 3; “Nancy Hanks Visits Chicago Arts Centers,” *The Chicago Defender* (Daily Edition) (December 9, 1971), 18; Carline Evone Williams Strong, “Margaret T.G. Burroughs,” 240.

that year. It was also not until 1968 that the museum hired its first paid staffer. Until that moment, it had been entirely volunteer-driven.⁵⁹⁹

The DuSable Museum's directors and supporters also recognized the dangers that many community institutions faced from large white liberal funding bodies through the early 1970s. For example, a 1970 appeal for museum membership that appeared in the *Chicago Defender* noted how the DuSable had received "no large foundation grants" – this statement was true at that time since the museum did not receive its first large grant until 1973. The *Defender's* appeal spoke to an awareness early on of the dangers that large foundations posed to local organizations.⁶⁰⁰ In 1970, television personality Vernon Jarrett, who later became a key member of the Museum's relocation committee, penned an important editorial that appeared in his regular *Chicago Tribune* column. This editorial, entitled "Beware! Here Comes the Foundation Black" indicated that some African Americans had been well aware of the dangers posed by foundations for some time. Jarrett wrote about a new, younger "militant neo-[Uncle] Thomas..." who was masculine "tough" and "revolutionary." To further make his case, Jarrett wrote about Booker T. Washington as a comparable race leader from history. Washington, who was himself "allied" with "millionaire industrialists," of course helped fund the acclaimed vocational school in Tuskegee, Alabama and for Jarrett exemplified an older style that surely "flattered Mr. Charley" just as it promised peace in the black community. Still, Jarrett felt that Washington's older style was in the very least "open and above board." The new militant leader, by way of contrast, met with "white sponsors" in the Loop (Chicago's business district) and appeared "reasonable" and

⁵⁹⁹ Annual Report 1966: The Museum of African American History 3806 South Michigan Ave, Chicago 53, Illinois. Submitted by Margaret Burroughs, Director, "Museum of African American History," CHM; Eugene P. Feldman, *The Birth and the Building of the DuSable Museum*, 17, 79, 84-85.

⁶⁰⁰ "Cultural Unit Seeks Members," *The Chicago Defender* (Daily Edition) (December 21, 1970), 12.

“sweet” to his backers. Yet on the street or at a rally he sounded like a “real ‘soul brother from the ghetto’ ... ‘a real black man...’ who knows how to stop black rioters from destroying his heavy investments. The result [was] a... foundation grant to the guy who can talk the loudest and the strongest.”⁶⁰¹

Clearly, the cohort who helped support the museum’s relocation were aware of the pitfalls of accepting foundation grants and the relative danger they posed to sustaining independent and viable cultural institutions. In Margaret Burroughs, the DuSable Museum’s development was also led by an icon of Black Chicago’s creative renaissance. Her very prominence in the relocation period of the museum defied the gendered parameters for funding from white power sources on this front.

With these deep roots on the South Side, the DuSable Museum’s founders drew important ideological sustainers from community-based fundraisers that doubled as black history celebrations and educational functions. These events featured prominent keynote speakers who spanned the political spectrum but who were mainly left wing in orientation. As noted in chapter 3, the United Packinghouse Workers union hall, the Packinghouse Workers Center (PWC) at South 49th and Wabash Avenue was often used by the Museum as a site for its earliest fundraisers. Just down the street from DuSable High School, the PWC had long been an organizing center for Southside Communists and unionists since the 1930s. As James Smethurst writes, it was a “frequent site of militant black political and cultural events, embodying the intersection of black nationalists and leftists in Chicago as the Black Power and Black Arts

⁶⁰¹ Vernon Jarrett, “Beware! Here Comes the Foundation Black,” A5.

movements took shape.”⁶⁰² In 1963, Margaret Burroughs joined with the Afro-American History Association (AAHA) led by her friends, local Communist activist Ishmael Flory and Nation of Islam educator Christine Johnson, to organize a salute to W.E.B DuBois, who had recently passed away in Ghana. Another significant fundraiser called the “Jubilee Ball” took place at the Packinghouse union hall in 1966 and featured an address by the union’s District 1 leader Charles Hayes.⁶⁰³ The event was billed as a celebration of Negro History Week and combined the heroic images of figures like Abraham Lincoln, Frederick Douglass and W.E.B. DuBois. The benefit in 1966 attracted over 500 people and raised a few hundred dollars.⁶⁰⁴

The museum staged even more prolific events near the end of the 1960s, which attracted supporters from black Society. In February of 1968, it held a benefit tribute to Harlem renaissance poet Langston Hughes that attracted a “near-capacity” audience at the Dunbar Auditorium on South Parkway. The event had readings from important Chicago-based poets like Gwendolyn Brooks, Margaret Walker, and Margaret Danner among others. As James Smethurst writes, these prolific poets had distanced themselves from the “Communist Left” but “maintained close, if sometimes tempestuous, personal relationships with active leftists, such as Charles and Margaret Burroughs.”⁶⁰⁵ Other benefits that directly supported the museum’s Washington Park relocation included one in 1968 and featured Chicago Cubs star Ernie Banks and the Bears’ Gayle Sayers. Another event featured the prolific acting couple, Ossie Davis and Ruby Dee, who had each been involved in progressive arts organizations in New York City and

⁶⁰² James Smethurst, *The Black Arts Movement*, 199.

⁶⁰³ Charles Hayes represented Illinois’ first district in congress from 1983-1993.

⁶⁰⁴ Eugene P. Feldman, *The Birth and the Building of the DuSable Museum*, 62; “Memorial Program to Honor W.E.B. DuBois,” *The Chicago Defender* (National Edition) (September 21, 1963), 5; “Heroes to be Honored,” *The Chicago Defender* (Daily Edition) (February 10, 1966) 5; *Museum of African American History*.

⁶⁰⁵ James Smethurst, *The Black Arts Movement*, 193.

around the country.⁶⁰⁶ Funds from these local benefits and fundraisers hardly compared to the foundation grants and civic tax levies the museum eventually received (and needed to receive). But those who participated in sustaining the DuSable's efforts through such events represented a good cross-section of the black public sphere, especially by the late 1960s when its efforts to expand programming were well underway.

Histories of black intellectual life and engagement in Chicago civic politics work well with the longer view scholars of museum studies have taken about the question of how public history practices evolved over time. The effort to expand and relocate the DuSable Museum to Washington Park offers a good example of the "new practices" undertaken by modern museums through the mid-20th Century. The relocation moment certainly validates some of the conclusions of museum scholars who feel museum practices and functions were democratized through this period to reach and engage new publics but simultaneously risked sentimentalizing folkways and cultures to achieve this wider accessibility.

Still, the DuSable's relocation did not simply re-articulate middle class values. Rather, its directors represented their project to local elites and civic power structures in ways that simultaneously re-imagined African American social spaces in the city's South Side cultural geography but still attracted the necessary financial and political support for relocation and expansion. The museum's move also literally displaced a former site of racial surveillance to

⁶⁰⁶ Raymond S. McGann, "Hughes Memorial Tribute Benefits History Museum"; "Meet Tonight on Testimonial Dinner Benefit for Museum," *The Chicago Defender* (Daily Edition), (March 12, 1968); "Famed Actors Perform for Black Museum," *The Chicago Defender* (National Edition), March 20, 1971, 35; "Actors Offer Performance for Museum," *The Chicago Defender* (Daily Edition) (April 13, 1971), 11; "Actors to Perform for DuSable Museum," *The Chicago Defender* (Daily Edition) (May 3, 1971), 10; Earl Calloway, "Hundreds Attend DuSable Museum Luncheon," *The Chicago Defender* (Daily Edition) (March 14, 1973), 16; "DuSable Opening Eagerly Awaited," *The Chicago Defender* (Big Weekend Edition) May 5, 1973, 13; Margaret Smith, "Council Aids the DuSable Museum," *The Chicago Defender* (Big Weekend Edition) (August 4, 1973), 13; "Catalyst Sets Afro Program as a Benefit"; Ian Rocksborough-Smith, "Filling the Gap," 7-8.

take back one of Black Chicago's most significant and symbolic physical sites for community knowledge production. The broader activities which fed into the relocation effort surely also underscored the changing national and international coordinates for African American political culture during the Black Power era just as they highlighted complex ideological and tactical discussions among local activists in Chicago and surely also in other major urban centers. Such interactions were often intergenerational in nature and demonstrate how the intellectual and cultural labors of the museum's founders were at the center of the 20th Century's long black movement *durée*.

Museum projects like the DuSable also draw greater attention to the conflicted nature of top-down efforts that promoted racial diversity through the late 1960s and that sought to represent many racialized working class communities through government, business, and foundation resources. Through the strategic deployment of local racial histories and the enlistment of college students alongside significant Southside community supporters and local black elites, the DuSable Museum was able to successfully negotiate its expansion with civic officials and confront the challenges of sustaining visions for a genuinely autonomous public history institution well into the early 1970s.

Epilogue

In a recent interview, Margaret Burroughs noted how mid-20th Century civil rights movements and the work she and others did with public history were connected: “I think it’s the civil rights movement that made us realize it’s important to know about and document the history. To know where you’re going, you have to know from whence you came.”⁶⁰⁷ As Burroughs’ statement suggests, histories of 20th Century U.S. urban, intellectual, and social life work well with the longer views, directions, and cultural forms that scholars of civil rights and regionally-focused black freedom struggles and activism now turn to as areas of inquiry.⁶⁰⁸ As “Contentious Cosmopolitans” has demonstrated, important dimensions for these new directions are reached through examining repertoires of activism that connected public history, racial knowledge production, cultural activism, and civil rights. Indeed, the number of times historians come across an event called “Negro History Week” or a later “Black History” event in literatures on 20th Century black freedom struggles suggests these very phenomenon need to be taken seriously as scholars of black expositions, emancipation celebrations and Juneteenth recognitions during the mid-late 19th Century now treat earlier and similar cultural phenomena.⁶⁰⁹ With longer views at the outset, the very practitioners of these repertoires collectively witnessed, analyzed, and helped shape the ways we can understand and learn about mid-20th Century U.S. urban life as cities changed dramatically and diverse southerners and newcomers moved *en masse* to cities in the North and the West.

⁶⁰⁷ Margaret T.G Burroughs, interview with Ian Rocksborough-Smith, October 19, 2009.

⁶⁰⁸ Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, “The Long Civil Rights Movement and Political Uses of the Past”; Thomas Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty*; Van Gosse, *Rethinking the New Left*; Daniel Widener, *Black Arts West*.

⁶⁰⁹ Nathan Cardon, “A Dream of the Future: Race, Empire, and Modernity at the Atlanta and Nashville Expositions, 1895-1897,” (PhD Dissertation, University of Toronto, 2014); Kathleen Clark, *Defining Moments: African American Commemoration and Political Culture in the South, 1863-1913* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2006); William H. Wiggins, Jr., *O Freedom!*.

The decades long efforts to establish, build, and relocate the DuSable Museum from South Michigan Avenue to Washington Park fits nicely into this new paradigm of scholarship. As do the embattled campaigns to reform Chicago public school curriculums through the mid-20th Century. While they surely add dimension to the better-known school boycotts and racial desegregation battles over this same period, curriculum reformers were also at the forefront of discussions about revisions to U.S racial history, particularly the legacies of racial slavery being rewritten prolifically by more acclaimed scholars and thinkers through the mid-20th Century. Connected to these same energies for knowledge reform were the exploits of cultural workers involved in the expansion and leadership of packinghouse unionism in what has traditionally been the country's most important site for working class radicalism, industrial experimentation, and capitalist exposition.

Collectively, these endeavors presented excellent examples of the “new practices” and forms of public history examined by museum scholars such as Ivan Karp, Gustavo Buntinx, Jennifer Barrett, Robert Rydell, and Tony Bennett. These scholars of public history have shown how museum-making labors took on more democratic forms and strategically engaged with local regions and communities throughout the mid-20th Century.⁶¹⁰ As such, the DuSable Museum's directors tactfully represented their museum project as one that ultimately attracted the necessary support from civic power structures in ways that simultaneously and powerfully re-imagined African American social spaces in the city's Southside cultural geographies. As discussed throughout this dissertation, such projects fit neatly into the mid-20th Century history of the city's black cultural renaissance and drew on both the tensions and collaborations within the

⁶¹⁰ Gustavo Buntinx and Ivan Karp, “Tactical Museologies,” 219; Jennifer Barrett, *Museums and the Public Sphere*, 3; Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum*, 83, 109-110; Robert Rydell, *All the World's a Fair*, 7.

Southside's vibrant black civic culture right through the 1950s just as it did with younger generations of artists and activists involved in the city's prolific Black Arts and Black Power Movements which produced such figures like Panther leader Fred Hampton and the Organization of Black American Culture. Indeed, women like teachers Margaret Burroughs and Madeline Stratton and clubwoman Irene McCoy Gaines, while of each of differing political persuasions, were at the forefront of activities that unanimously supported the circulation of black history throughout the public sphere in some form or another. Moreover, packinghouse worker-led anti-discrimination campaigns continued from their inception during the 1930s and built on the UPWA's democratic traditions to reach rank-and-file union members with the circulation of unique histories about Mexican and African Americans in the labor movement and the promotion of famously black-listed films like *Salt of the Earth* which were well ahead of their times.

Still, conflicts about who would lead and represent black public history emerged as well. Both ideological and intellectual in nature, these conflicts underscored both the salience of racial knowledge production in the public sphere and ongoing intra-racial class tensions in the black community especially. In particular, the failed attempts to charter a local Association for the Study of Negro Life and History (ASNLH) chapter during the mid-1950s demonstrated the deeply felt sense of urgency and tension that surrounded the establishment of such organizations and racial projects in the age of civil rights and their connectedness to the politics of the Cold War. This sense of urgency was reflected in the ultimately failed though emulated efforts of Southside teachers like Madeline Stratton (Morgan) to advance the city's earliest attempts at curriculum reforms for civics classes through World War II. This earnestness carried into the work of cultural workers like Richard Durham, Oscar Brown, Jr., Marion Simmons, and Addie Wyatt who led the United Packinghouse Workers anti-discrimination campaigns through the late

1940s and into the mid-1950s. It was also mirrored in the correspondence of Afro-American Heritage Association (AAHA) founder Ishmael Flory had with W.E.B. DuBois about the merits of local racial knowledge production over the top-down *foci* of the American Society for African Culture (AMSAC) – an organization that while surely progressive in outlook, was eventually revealed to be an appendage of the Central Intelligence Agency and thus an extension of the U.S. government’s Cold War battleground.

Black public history projects also fit into broader national and the cosmopolitan coordinates for black political cultures during the Cold War, civil rights, and Black Power eras – which in a city like Chicago, came increasingly to include other peoples of color who migrated to the region in greater numbers by the late 1960s, especially Mexican Americans and Latinos.⁶¹¹ The sort of black public history and civil rights-related endeavors that emerged through the mid-20th Century in Chicago no doubt became part of the important multiracial coalitions that coalesced in the groundswell for Harold Washington’s mayoralty in the 1980s and the Chicago-based presidential campaigns of Jesse Jackson, Jr. Moreover, these racial knowledge projects were mirrored to a degree in other black metropolis’ and major urban centers around the U.S. throughout the same period – notably in New York, Atlanta, and Los Angeles.⁶¹² In a city like Chicago, multiracial civic coalitions came increasingly to include other peoples of color who had moved to the region in greater numbers through the late 1960s, especially Mexican Americans and Latinos.

⁶¹¹ Lilia Fernandez, *Brown in the Windy City: Mexicans and Puerto Ricans in Postwar Chicago* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2012); Michael Innis-Jimenez, *Steel Barrio: The Great Migration to South Chicago, 1915-1940* (New York: New York University Press, 2013).

⁶¹² James Smethurst, “Retraining the Heartworks: Women in Atlanta’s Black Arts Movement”; Daniel Widener, *Black Arts West*; Brian Purnell, *Fighting Jim Crow in the County of Kings: The Congress of Racial Equality in Brooklyn* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2013); Rebecca E. Welch, “Black Art and Activism in Postwar New York, 1950-1965.”

In her subsequent position as a Parks Board Commissioner during the 1980s and 1990s, Margaret Burroughs consulted with Mexican Americans who sought similar forms of funding as the DuSable Museum had for what would become the National Museum of Mexican Art built in the Pilsen neighborhood. Working under Mayor Washington, Burroughs advised the Pilsen group to strategically call their project a “museum” so that they received similar tax levies to the ones that the DuSable had benefited from.⁶¹³

These strategies for museum-making point to the democratic possibilities offered by such community knowledge-producing endeavors and how they were sustained through complex engagements with civic power and political structures well past the DuSable Museum’s relocation moment in the early 1970s. In our current era of increasing, devastating cutbacks to public education (to say nothing of the mixed results of charter, parochial, and private schools), these alternative pedagogical projects deserve to be both encouraged and better understood historically.⁶¹⁴ Moreover, they further underline the ever-present challenges faced by racialized populations and communities across North America in the building of viable, independent knowledge-producing institutions.

⁶¹³ Margaret T.G. Burroughs, interview with John E. Fleming, 43.

⁶¹⁴ Noreen S. Ahmed-Ullah, “CPS Approves largest school closure in Chicago’s History,” *The Chicago Tribune* (May 23, 2013); Diane Ravitch, “The Myth of Charter Schools,” *The New York Review of Books* (November 11, 2010).

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