

## “But Not Next Door”: Housing Discrimination and the Emergence of the “Second Ghetto” in Newark, New Jersey, after World War II

*Yutaka SASAKI*  
*Rutgers University*

### INTRODUCTION

The race riot that broke out in the central city neighborhoods of Newark, New Jersey, in the summer of 1967 was one of the worst of the urban civil disorders that swept across American society during that “long, hot summer.” In terms of the number of casualties and extent of property damage, the Newark riot was, next to the Detroit riot, the second worst civil disorder among 75 major disturbances in 67 cities throughout the country.<sup>1</sup> In its aftermath, New Jersey Governor Richard J. Hughes appointed a Governor’s Select Commission on Civil Disorder to investigate the causes of the race riot. The Commission’s resulting *Report for Action* examined the causes and proposed remedies for the civil disorder. Significantly, according to the report, African-American residents in Newark cited “bad housing conditions” most often when they were asked to choose among 15 possible underlying causes for the riot, including unemployment, police brutality, and lack of equal job opportunities.<sup>2</sup>

The purpose of this paper is to examine the deteriorating residential conditions experienced by African Americans who lived in the central

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city neighborhoods of Newark. It should be emphasized that “bad housing conditions” in urban neighborhoods did not just signify deteriorating buildings. As one report by the New Jersey Advisory Committee to the U.S. Civil Rights Commission aptly stated in 1963:

The problem of housing involves more than mere physical shelter. Since the home is the center of family life and the neighborhood had traditionally been the center of other close associations, the kind, condition, and location of housing vitally affect social status in the larger community as well as the aspirations, expectations, and achievements of the immediate residents.<sup>3</sup>

As this statement clearly indicates, “bad housing conditions” for minority groups, especially African Americans, were symptomatic of a variety of significant social problems, including racially-segregated neighborhoods.

This paper focuses on the development of such black urban enclaves, or what some historians call the “second ghetto” in the central city neighborhoods of Newark between 1940 and 1960, a time when tremendous “ghetto” expansion took place. In particular, it analyzes the course and variety of forces behind the emergence of black residential segregation in Newark.<sup>4</sup>

#### DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE IN THE CITY OF NEWARK, 1940–1960

Analysis of the emergence of residential segregation of blacks must begin with the basic demographic trends that drastically changed the racial profile of Newark after World War II. As in other metropolitan areas, the basic trends of the change in the racial composition in Newark were brought about by the exodus of the white middle-class from the central city neighborhoods to more affluent suburbs, and by the influx of low-income minority groups, especially blacks from Southern states, into the central city neighborhoods.

The total population of Newark was 429,760 in 1940, 438,776 in 1950 and 405,220 in 1960. Thus, while the population of Newark declined slightly during the 1950s (–7.6%), the city’s total population remained rather stable between 1940 and 1960. Beneath the apparent stability, however, lay a dramatic change in the ratio of the white to nonwhite (especially African-American) population of Newark. In 1940 there was a total of 46,226 nonwhite residents, of which 45,760 were blacks (10.5% of the city’s total population). In 1950, among the total of

75,627 nonwhites, blacks numbered 74,965 (17.1%). In 1960, there were 138,009 blacks, which accounted for 34.4% of the city's total population. As the African-American population increased, the city's white population decreased, especially during the 1950s. While there were 384,000 whites (89.5% of the city's total population) in 1940, the corresponding figures are 363,149 (83.9%) in 1950, and 265,706 (65.6%) in 1960.<sup>5</sup> These figures show that like other metropolitan areas, Newark witnessed a "white exodus" between 1950 and 1960 (-31%), while the black population increased dramatically (a more than 300% increase).

Through the two decades between 1940 and 1960, Newark was divided into 98 census tracts.<sup>6</sup> A close examination of the population change for each census tract gives a more detailed picture of the nature of both "white exodus" and "black influx" phenomena during the period. According to the 1940 census there were only 5 tracts in which the percentage of black residents exceeded 50% of the local population. The number of such census tracts increased to 11 in 1950, and to 32 in 1960. Furthermore, the majority of the city's black population came to live in predominantly "black" census tracts. In 1950, 51.2% (38,721) of the city's blacks lived in the "black" census tracts as compared with 33.0% (15,080) in 1940; in 1960, the corresponding figure jumped to 73.6% (101,591). Analysis of the data obtained from the Housing and Population Censuses for the years 1940, 1950, and 1960 shows that blacks in Newark were increasingly concentrated in the limited number of "black" census tracts. Consequently, Newark had witnessed the formation of a "Black Belt" in the central city neighborhoods by 1960. Thus, it can be observed that between 1940 and 1960 Newark was undergoing a process in which blacks were becoming more isolated from the white population. In other words, residential segregation, not desegregation, was occurring during the period.

Further examination of the census report for 1960 reveals that deteriorating housing conditions were characteristic of the "black" census tracts in the central city neighborhoods. Above all, there is a clear indication that the majority of the city's blacks were increasingly taking up residence in substandard dwellings. Of the total of 44,668 housing units in the 32 "black" census tracts, less than half (20,573 units, 46.1%) were classified as "sound," while the majority were classified as either "deteriorating" or "dilapidated." The major reason for this is that the overwhelming majority of the structures that housed these

units were very old. Of the 44,668 units 91.2% (41,099) were built before 1939, i.e., more than 20 years old. In addition, approximately 18.0% (8,025) of the 44,668 housing units contained more than 1.01 persons per room, an indication of overcrowded conditions; 19.3% (8,603 units) of the total housing units had to share bathrooms or had none at all.<sup>7</sup>

#### THE NATURE OF HOUSING DISCRIMINATION AGAINST BLACKS

What factors were involved in the emergence of black residential isolation between 1940 and 1960? In an effort to answer this question, this paper will next examine the forces behind residential segregation by looking at a variety of reports published by concerned agencies.

While acknowledging a variety of causes for the emergence of racially segregated neighborhoods, these reports paid special attention to the fact that at the core of the problem was housing discrimination by reasons of color or race. As the 1961 U.S. Civil Rights Commission report stated, “[m]uch of the housing market is closed to them [blacks] for reasons unrelated to their personal worth or ability to pay. . . . a number of forces combine to prevent equality in housing,” indicating that there were a variety of cultural, social and institutional barriers that hampered blacks from entering predominantly white neighborhoods.<sup>8</sup>

One of the most widespread practices used by white residents to prevent an influx of people of color into their neighborhood was the so-called “restrictive covenant,” an agreement among residents not to rent or sell homes to blacks. Restrictive covenants were often informal, covert, and nearly impossible to challenge. White attitudes toward the restrictive covenant emerge in a 1959 survey by the Mayor’s Commission on Group Relations, titled *Newark: A City in Transition*. The report was designed to investigate the contemporary state of Newark’s inter-group relations. It found that among 5,517 white respondents (both home owners and renters) who were asked whether they felt that landlords and property owners should be allowed to get together in their neighborhood and agree not to rent apartments or sell houses to certain minority groups, a solid majority (55%) answered affirmatively (34% of the respondents replied “No” and 11% chose “No answer”). The same survey also showed that sentiment in favor of restrictive covenants was strongest (63%) in so-called “high status” white

neighborhoods, including Forest Hill, Weequahic, Vailsburg and Roseville in which the city's most well-to-do lived.<sup>9</sup>

Undoubtedly, this widespread sentiment in favor of "restrictive covenants" among white households reflected personal, culturally deep-seated prejudice against blacks. Another survey in *Newark: A City in Transition* proves this point. In response to the question whether or not respondents think that "in general, it would be a good idea to keep Negroes from moving into white neighborhoods," a clear majority (64%) of Newark's white heads of households (N=5,517) replied affirmatively. It is noteworthy that whites' sentiments in favor of neighborhood segregation was significantly higher than for other types of discriminatory practices against blacks. According to the same survey, 38% of the white respondents agreed with the notion that blacks should be prevented from gaining political power, or that they should not be allowed to hold high political offices. Only 25% agreed with the notion that employers should limit the number of blacks they hire. The survey indicated that it was in the area of housing that white residents of Newark gave the highest level of approval to discrimination against blacks.<sup>10</sup>

Another manifestation of whites' negative attitudes toward residential integration was the so-called "white flight" response, the abandonment of neighborhoods after the entrance of black families. This was especially the case in neighborhoods where racial transition was already in process. On this score, *Group Relations in Newark—1957*, a report to the Mayor's Commission on Group Relations, stated that the purchase of a home by a Negro family in an all-white section was "usually accompanied by negative responses that may range from rumblings of discontent to panic and flight." Although no details were given, the report stated that "in 1952 or 1953 there were several situations in which panic reached crisis proportions and difficulties threatened."<sup>11</sup>

In fact, during the 1950s there existed widespread concern among the city's white residents that blacks were moving into their neighborhoods. According to the 1959 survey, close to three-fifths (58%) of the whites surveyed (N=5,517) were of the opinion that blacks were "purposely" moving into their neighborhoods. To determine white attitudes toward blacks, the survey set up three criteria—"acceptance," "partial acceptance," and "rejection." Citywide, 33% of the white respondents accepted blacks as neighbors, 32% indicated partial

acceptance, and 35% rejected blacks outright.<sup>12</sup>

The survey was also broken down according to neighborhoods and socio-economic status. While it did not find much variance between neighborhoods in attitudes toward blacks, it is noteworthy that the rejection was highest in Vailsburg, where there were few, if any, black residents (according to the 1960 census, Vailsburg had the smallest proportion of black residents in Newark). Furthermore, the survey found that while nearly half of the Newark residents who were in the lowest socio-economic category said that there was little or nothing they disliked about having blacks as neighbors, only one-fourth (25%) of the white residents in the top category held that opinion. Based on this survey, the Mayor's Commission on Group Relations concluded that "[a]cceptance of Negroes as neighbors increases as socio-economic status decreases." In addition, when those white respondents who said either that there were "some" or "many" things they disliked about blacks as neighbors were also asked why they felt that way, the most frequently mentioned reasons clearly reflected cultural prejudices. The reasons given were generally to the effect that blacks were "dirty, treacherous, untrustworthy, noisy and immoral or to be mistrusted."<sup>13</sup>

Another important indication of the city's white residents' negative attitude toward residential integration was that the presence of the blacks in their neighborhoods was a major reason for a negative evaluation of their neighborhoods. A survey in *Newark: A City in Transition* showed that while citywide 63% (N=5,517) of white respondents evaluated their neighborhood as "a good neighborhood to live in," only 22% (N=131) of the white residents in central Business/South Broad and 31% of Central Ward (N=207)—both of which had large black populations—answered in the same way. In the case of white respondents in Clinton Hill and West Ward—white middle-class neighborhoods which had experienced the greatest recent influx of blacks—45% in both neighborhoods answered that their neighborhoods were "a good neighborhood in which to live," but nearly 40% expressed some reservations about their neighborhoods.<sup>14</sup>

Another survey indicated a strong correlation between whites' reservations about their neighborhoods and the presence of blacks in those neighborhoods. While the majority (74%, N=1,819) of white respondents who said there was nothing they disliked about blacks as neighbors thought that their neighborhood was "a good one to live in," the percentages were significantly lower among white residents

who partially accepted blacks as their neighbors (52%, N=1,505), or who rejected them as neighbors (58%, N=1,914). Among white respondents who did not feel that their neighborhood was "a good place to live in," 42% gave "presence of Negroes" as the reason for feeling that way, and 36% cited a "general undesirable element in the neighborhood."<sup>15</sup>

It should be noted, however, that these negative attitudes on the part of white residents toward the presence of blacks in their neighborhoods were not exclusively a manifestation of personal racial prejudice. Behind white residents' support for such discriminatory practices as the restrictive covenant was a widely held belief among white homeowners that the entry of non-whites in a neighborhood would cause property values to fall. *Newark: A City in Transition* showed the extent to which this belief had spread among white property owners. When asked "what do you think would happen to property values when blacks buy homes in a neighborhood which is mostly white?" 75% (N=1,652) of white homeowners replied that "property values fall." Predictably, the proportion of those whites who believed that property values would fall when blacks moved into their neighborhoods varied significantly between those who had an accepting attitude toward blacks as neighbors and those who partially accepted or completely rejected blacks as neighbors. While 59% (N=429) of those who accepted blacks as neighbors thought blacks' entry into their neighborhoods would cause property values to drop, 74% (N=468) of those who partially accepted blacks as neighbors and 85% (N=687) of those who completely rejected blacks as neighbors thought the same way.<sup>16</sup>

White property owners' prejudice against blacks was reflected, magnified, and sometimes induced by private institutional practices in the rental, sale, and financing of housing. In particular, black families faced difficulty in obtaining mortgages from real-estate financing agencies. Persistent stereotyping of certain minority groups as poor credit risks inhibited the flow of credit to these groups. Furthermore, the financial community acted on the premise that only homogeneous neighborhoods offered economically-sound investments.

*Group Relations in Newark—1957* explained the difficulties black families faced in getting home financing from mortgage companies. According to the report, financial institutions were reluctant to place mortgages in racially-mixed areas. When these institutions did place mort-

gages on houses in such neighborhoods, they rarely recognized the full market value to be paid by prospective black owners of the houses. Instead they assumed a lower value, "sometimes as little as 50 percent of acquisition costs." As a result, black families were required to pay a substantial cash downpayment at the time of purchase. While some African-American families managed to accumulate sufficient liquid assets to meet downpayment requirements, the report argued that "by far the larger proportion [were] compelled to resort to second and sometimes third mortgages or personal loans."<sup>17</sup>

The 1963 report of the New Jersey Advisory Committee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights also noted similar discriminatory practices by lending institutions. While noting that a lack of job security and education among nonwhites prevented them from being classified by mortgage bankers as sound risks, bankers admitted "in private" that they were afraid to lend money to nonwhites who planned to move into a previously all-white neighborhood because of a belief that the presence of nonwhites would lower property values. In addition, many mortgage-lending institutions feared that they would stir up ill will among their stockholders and in the white community in general if they helped nonwhites "invade" white neighborhoods by providing home financing to prospective black purchasers.<sup>18</sup>

Real-estate brokers were also afraid that white clients would boycott real estate agents who had introduced "undesirable" elements into a white neighborhood. Consequently, they employed a variety of tactics to prevent black purchasers from buying or renting houses and apartments in white neighborhoods. For instance, in their listings some real-estate brokers used a device known as "PATO," ("Purchaser acceptable to owner") to indicate that the seller was free to refuse any buyer who, "for one reason or another," was unacceptable to him. According to the 1963 report, "brokers frequently used this device without the sellers' knowledge" to keep certain areas free of members of minority groups, especially blacks.<sup>19</sup>

In response to such discriminatory practices against blacks, New Jersey had enacted a fair-housing law in 1961. According to the New Jersey Advisory Committee, however, two years later brokers "[had] already developed several tactics which probably violate the law, but do so in a manner which makes prosecution extremely difficult if not impossible." One of the most common practices adopted by real-estate brokers was as follows:



A nonwhite who inquires about housing in a currently white neighborhood may be told that nothing is available. If such housing has been advertised for sale, the inquiring nonwhite may be told that a deposit has just been placed on the property, or the agent may take the nonwhite to visit the property, but only after arranging that no one would be at hand to show the place. If all else fails, the agent may begin negotiations, stalling and dragging them along until a sale to another party can be regretfully announced.<sup>20</sup>

Summarizing these institutionalized practices by private institutions in the sale, rental, and financing of housing, the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights concluded that "it is the real estate brokers, builders, and mortgage finance institutions, which translate prejudice into discriminatory action."<sup>21</sup>

Not surprisingly, a majority of African Americans felt that they faced severe housing segregation. One survey in *Newark: A City in Transition* asked black residents (N=2,595) what they considered to be the major problems facing blacks. While 22% cited the scarcity of jobs and 19% cited job discrimination and unequal opportunities as primary, 39% pointed to the lack of decent housing as the major problem, and 17% complained about high rents.<sup>22</sup> These figures show that housing was the greatest focus of concern for African Americans in Newark.

Questioned as to whether "a negro can live wherever he wants in Newark or its suburbs," 32% of the black respondents replied that "they can live wherever they wanted," and 54% replied that members of their race would not be free to live where they wanted, even if they had the economic means to do so. While 55% of those blacks who said that their race was restricted in their choice of neighborhoods did not name specific places, 45% did name one or more of Newark's neighborhoods or suburbs. When asked why they could not live where they wanted, 51% (N=1,391) of black respondents replied that they were "not wanted" in white neighborhoods, and 23% said that they were not able to buy or rent there. As the Mayor's Commission on Group Relations stated, "more interesting are comments made by smaller numbers." 8% of the black respondents made specific reference to restrictive covenants, and 3% to violence or force when they entered a white area.<sup>23</sup>

### THE EFFECT OF PUBLIC INSTITUTIONAL PRACTICE IN URBAN PLANNING ON THE RESIDENTIAL PATTERN OF BLACKS

Like other American urban communities, postwar Newark witnessed an increased official concern over a variety of housing problems that led to a series of new urban redevelopment programs, or “urban renewal” in the early 1950s.

At the root of Newark’s various housing problems after World War II was a general shortage of housing. Following a building boom during the 1920s, the Depression and World War II brought housing construction in Newark to a standstill. According to *A Preliminary Report on Housing Conditions and Policy for Newark, New Jersey* (hereafter *A Preliminary Report*) prepared by the Central Planning Board of the City of Newark in 1945, a total of 25,999 new dwelling units were built in Newark from 1921 to 1928, but only 6,571 dwelling units—including 2,736 units in public housing—were constructed between 1929 and 1944. Although Newark experienced a loss in population of 12,557 between 1930 and 1940, there was a substantial increase (7,130 families or 6.8% over 1930) in the total number of families during the same period. Furthermore, returning war veterans increased the demand for new housing construction. Compounding the general housing shortage, a substantial number of the city’s residential units were aging structures. According to the 1940 census, 27.6% of all residential structures were built prior to 1900, while 41.1% were built between 1900 and 1919. By the late 1940s, a substantial part of Newark’s population occupied dwelling units that were substandard.<sup>24</sup>

Concerned officials regarded the problem of “substandard dwellings,” or “slums,” as the city’s most urgent housing problem. Of the estimated 118,550 dwelling units listed in *A Preliminary Report* in 1945, 38,423 (30.8%) were “below generally accepted minimum standards of health and decency,” meaning that either they needed major repairs or lacked private baths, private toilets, or private water supply. Of these units, 14,742 were located in obsolete areas marked for redevelopment, while 23,681 were in areas where “the great need is for a rehabilitation on a large scale.”<sup>25</sup>

Indeed, according to the Master Plan for urban redevelopment prepared by the city planning board in 1947, areas in which more than 50% of the dwellings were substandard totaled 1,209 acres, or 7.95% of the entire city area. These substandard areas contained 26,000 dwell-

ing units or 22.0% of the total number, and a population of 95,400 or 22.2% of the 1940 population.<sup>26</sup> *A Preliminary Report* further stated that 7,887 (20.5%) of these substandard accommodations were occupied by blacks, which meant that “more than one-half of all Negroes in the city live in unhealthy and unwholesome quarters.”<sup>27</sup>

In explaining the negative social costs of the slums, Newark officials emphasized the economic burden slums placed on the city budget. Since the main source of revenue for the city budget came from property taxes, the depreciation of residential real-estate values inevitably resulted in diminished income for the city. Slums had also become “an economic drain on the entire community” because they necessitated “large additional outlays for hospitalization, relief, public health, clinics, policing and fire protection.”<sup>28</sup>

The economic significance of Newark’s slum problem was more elaborately enunciated by *The Cost of Slums in Newark* (1945) prepared by Rutgers University sociologist Jay Rumney for the Newark Housing Authority. Rumney took one central-city census tract as a sample study. This area, which he called “Lower Prospect,” was an area which featured “the highest percentage of overcrowded dwellings of any census tract in the city.” 50% of its housing was built before 1900 “as compared with a little over a fourth for the [rest of the] city.” Over 90% of the units did not have central heat. Furthermore, while the slum area had shown the highest percentage of tax delinquencies, it was characterized not only by “dilapidation and obsolescence but also by the presence of high rates of disease, crime, dependency, and poverty,” which meant that the area placed a disproportionately heavy cost on tax-funded city services.<sup>29</sup>

Ordinary Newark citizens were also alarmed by the social cost of slums. The catalyst for the new public awareness of slum problems was a series of newspaper articles on general housing conditions in the *Newark Evening News* in 1950. Max Winer, the author of the articles, dramatized the shocking conditions which slum dwellers had to endure. Stories about a two-month old baby bitten in the face by a rat big enough “to fight off cats,” and the prevalence of communicable diseases among slum tenants aroused widespread concerns and demands for action.<sup>30</sup> One outcome of such public indignation was the formation of the Newark Citizens Housing Committee by a variety of concerned citizens, including clergymen, neighborhood activists, ethnic spokesmen, and civic leaders. Not surprisingly, the Citizen’s

Housing Committee echoed the prevailing official perspective on the problems of slums. Arguing that slums cost the taxpayer “unwarranted” money because the city received less tax revenue from slum areas than it spent there, the committee emphasized that the social cost of the slums “gradually undermines the good residential areas and makes it unattractive for new business and industry to come to the city.”<sup>31</sup>

Heightened public and official awareness of the slum problem contributed to the beginnings of urban redevelopment projects under the leadership of the Newark Housing Authority (hereafter the NHA), the official agency for the urban redevelopment of Newark. Urban renewal was mainly a joint federal-local project with strong emphasis on local responsibility for conceiving, planning, and carrying out renewal projects. The federal government primarily provided financial assistance and general program guidelines.

The genesis of postwar federal policy was the Housing Act of 1949, which framed the basic principle of urban redevelopment throughout the early 1950s. The act set forth a national housing priority that emphasized “a decent home and a suitable living environment for every American family.” To achieve this goal, it authorized federal assistance to local communities for slum clearance and redevelopment programs. For the first time, Congress granted local planning agencies federal financial assistance for clearing slums and preparing sites for development. Of particular importance was Title I of the 1949 Act, which allowed local redevelopment agencies to acquire properties in “blighted” areas through the power of eminent domain. The procedure also required the local and Federal governments to pay the net cost of urban redevelopment at a ratio of two to one.<sup>32</sup>

As urban historians have observed, the 1949 Housing Act was originally meant to be an extension of the 1937 Housing Act, which clearly linked slum clearance to public housing. In the 1949 Housing Act, Title II put public housing on a permanent basis, but the emphasis on public housing was modified to meet the economic interests of private developers. Although Title I required that urban redevelopment projects be “predominantly residential,” what this meant was that slum clearance and redevelopment projects had to be “predominantly residential” in character *either* before *or* after redevelopment. In this way, redevelopment projects could level “slum” areas and replace them with other more profitable forms of construction, such

as office buildings, shopping complexes, and luxury apartments—projects that were believed to raise property values, assist private investment, and increase tax revenues.<sup>33</sup>

Further legislation came in 1954, when Congress, backed by the Eisenhower administration, amended the 1949 provisions. The Housing Act of 1954 introduced a new concept of “urban renewal” in place of “urban redevelopment.” The new emphasis was on the rehabilitation of houses and the conservation of neighborhoods as alternatives to massive slum clearance. Before a city could become eligible for federal funds it had to demonstrate that it had a “workable program” of urban renewal containing a feasible plan for relocating those displaced from clearance and redevelopment sites; a strict housing code; and a program for citizen’s participation in the urban development. The most salient feature of the 1954 Housing Act, however, was that it further accelerated a shift away from the emphasis on housing as a policy priority. Where Title I of the 1949 Act had stipulated that redevelopment projects had to be “predominantly residential,” a new provision was included in the 1954 Housing Act that allocated 10% of federal fund to projects that were not “predominantly residential.” (Further Amendments in 1961 raised the proportion to 30%).<sup>34</sup>

Within this Federal legislative framework, Newark started carrying out urban renewal projects in the early 1950s. According to Harold Kaplan, who studied the political aspects of urban renewal programs carried out by the NHA during the 1950s, the NHA staff defined Newark’s most urgent housing problem as a lack of standard housing for middle-income families and the existence of a large number of substandard or slum dwellings. This meant that the purpose of the urban redevelopment program was to find the most dilapidated areas in the city, clear them, and then sell the areas to private developers who would build moderately-priced housing for middle-income families. To achieve this purpose, the NHA devoted its energy and time to proposing “acceptable” urban redevelopment programs for both private developers and concerned federal agencies.<sup>35</sup>

In conceiving its first urban redevelopment program, however, the NHA faced a formidable dilemma. While assigning top priority to the city’s worst slum areas in the central city neighborhoods, the key question was whether a private developer would accept these slum areas as economically-feasible sites on which to build middle-income housing. Because the NHA was concerned that middle-income housing probably

was not feasible in the middle of a hard-core slum, the NHA decided to focus on North Ward, located on the periphery of the hard core slum areas in the Central Ward, as the site of Newark's first urban redevelopment project. Thus, in its first urban redevelopment project announced in 1952, the NHA subordinated slum clearance to site feasibility. This does not mean, however, that the NHA abandoned its commitment to slum clearance. NHA officials had been convinced that only a full-scale demolition of slum areas would save the Central Ward. The 1954 Housing Act renewed the slum clearance provisions of the 1949 act, permitting local agencies to designate an entire neighborhood as an urban renewal area. Under the terms of federal housing policy, the NHA launched a comprehensive attack on the city's hard-core slum areas in the Central Ward.<sup>36</sup>

The NHA's original plan for slum clearance was to concentrate public housing construction in the predominantly black areas and private redevelopment in the less-dilapidated areas. The Federal Urban Redevelopment Agency, however, responded to this NHA plan by restricting the area and cutting the amount of funds available for clearance. Since it was dubious about the chances of private redevelopment in the diminished clearance area, the NHA eventually decided to build its public-housing projects on two of the cleared sites and to sell the rest to the city. According to Kaplan, these experiences forced the NHA to realize that it was operating "in a tightly confined box" created by the terms of the federal housing acts, the needs of private redevelopers, and the policies of federal housing agencies. One way out of the "box" was to modify the original emphasis on housing and to invite institutions, such as corporations, hospitals, and universities, to redevelop land to their own use, since in such institutional use the NHA did not have to worry about finding middle-income housing markets.<sup>37</sup>

Furthermore, the NHA had learned that it was more efficient to find redevelopers first, and then to negotiate for the selection of a site with them. This new thinking explained why the NHA's program moved toward development for institutional use. From the mid-1950s, the NHA followed such a policy. The result was that Newark's redevelopment projects came to involve luxurious apartments, corporation offices, and other institutional uses surrounding the central business district rather than moderately-priced housing in the city's urban core. If Newark's worst slums were to be cleared, the NHA determined that

it would have to be for high-rise, low-income public housing projects alone.<sup>38</sup>

By October 1963 there were fourteen urban renewal projects in various stages of planning and execution in Newark. The total acreage for these projects amounted to 2,309 acres and contained a population of 40,307. Of the 2,309 acres, 966.5 had been cleared or were scheduled to be cleared. A total of 8,682 dwelling units were demolished or were scheduled to be demolished. In addition to six low-income housing projects, only four projects contained plans for moderate-income housing. Of the fourteen projects only two were completed.<sup>39</sup>

The difficulties which hobbled plans for urban renewal in Newark and skewed their outcomes over the course of the 1950s and early 1960s ultimately betrayed the original goals of urban renewal: "a decent home and a suitable living environment for every American family." More significantly, housing policies came to assume a racial dimension as the programs promoted by the NHA became increasingly unpopular among African-American residents who were most directly affected by urban renewal.

Slum clearance necessarily involved the displacement of slum residents from their homes and their neighborhoods. It is true that the 1949 Housing Act required a local public agency carrying out a federally-aided development project to have a feasible method of relocating displaced families into "safe, decent, and sanitary housing." Yet, the 1949 Housing Act merely stipulated that displaced persons had to be relocated in "safe, decent, and sanitary housing," leaving the implementation of rehousing in the hands of each local community. At a time when the nation faced a critical housing shortage and lacked large-scale public housing projects, there was a good possibility that this settlement would be nominal at best.<sup>40</sup> Little had been done to anticipate the needs, expectations, or preferences of the subjects of redevelopment.

Growing criticism of relocation practices, however, soon prompted federal policy makers to pay more attention to relocation and its impact on local residents. As stated earlier, the Housing Act of 1954 required that a city adopt a "workable program" that included the development and implementation of an effective plan for helping families displaced by urban renewal projects.<sup>41</sup> Furthermore, in the Housing Act of 1956, Congress decided for the first time that those who were displaced by urban renewal projects could receive financial

help to meet the cost of moving, and local public agencies receiving federal funds were authorized to make payment to all displaced families, individuals, and businesses for "reasonable and necessary moving expenses and any actual losses of property."<sup>42</sup> In spite of these more sensitive measures for displaced families and individuals, the dimensions of the problems associated with large-scale relocation nevertheless continued to emerge during the course of the 1950s.

On the local level, the NHA sought to address such problems when it established a Relocation Division in 1951 to assist families and individuals displaced from project areas. Although no detailed data is available, the 1956 NHA report painted a rather optimistic picture of the services performed by the Relocation Division. According to the report, a total of 762 families were relocated from the sites of two public housing projects during the first half of the 1950s. The report stated that during the 18-month relocation effort, 202 (27%) families were admitted to the newly constructed housing projects, 363 (47%) found new private housing through the assistance of the Relocation division, and 197 (26%) families moved without assistance.<sup>43</sup> There is also evidence that the NHA was acutely aware of the difficulties involved in relocating such a large number of families. The NHA's 1961 report frankly admitted that "[p]erhaps the most complex of all renewal problems in Newark is the relocation of families caught up in the sweep of clearance."<sup>44</sup>

By the early 1960s the problem of providing adequate relocation services for displaced families had become a major public issue. According to the testimony of NHA executive director Louis Danzig at a hearing before the United States Commission on Civil Rights convened in Newark, as of September 1962 approximately 8,400 families had been relocated from two completed projects and twelve renewal projects in various stages of planning and execution.<sup>45</sup> The 1961 report of the City Planning Board estimated that 31,400 families (about 25% of Newark's population) were eventually to be relocated from the various project areas during the course of the 1960s.<sup>46</sup> The most conspicuous characteristics of relocation was that since the clearance projects were concentrated in the central core of the city, its residents, the overwhelming number of whom were African American, were more frequently relocated than any other community in the city.

In the same set of hearings before the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights James A. Pawley, executive director of the Urban Leagues of



Essex County, revealed the crux of the problem. Estimating that of the 31,400 families to be relocated, 22,000 were nonwhites (77,000 individuals, or 50% of the total nonwhite population), Pawley explained the difficulty African Americans would face in finding suitable new homes after they were forced to relocate:

Housing officials in the city of Newark envision only the availability of some 13,400 new dwelling units for relocated families in the next ten years. About 18,000 displaced families, housing officials assume, will find accommodations in existing housing. . . . Restrictive practices in housing against nonwhites, as evidenced by existing housing patterns, would deprive many nonwhites residents from free access to the available housing and would, therefore, tend to continue segregated housing patterns that exist today.<sup>47</sup>

Pawley's pessimistic remarks were partially verified by statistical data gathered by the NHA based on a survey of new residences of displaced families from the site of the Stella Wright House project in the central city neighborhood. The public housing project had been first announced in March 1955, and was completed in 1959. In this follow-up study, a 20% random sample of a total of 756 "predominantly Negro families" was used to determine the location of their new residences. The study found that "a substantial number of the families relocated no more than four or five blocks away." In addition, "most of the remainder moved to other structures further away but within clearance blocks in downtown Newark areas." Thus, the report concluded that "there can be no doubt that a great many families, particularly nonwhites, will seek and find private dwelling accommodations quite near the site from which they are being displaced."<sup>48</sup>

As it became clear that the burden of relocation caused by slum clearance fell disproportionately on African Americans, urban renewal became increasingly unpopular among them in the central city neighborhoods. *Four Corners*, a magazine devoted to the social conditions of Newark, stated in its May 1962 issue that since more than 22,000 of the estimated 31,400 families who were to be uprooted would be blacks, "it is quite understandable why so many Negroes in the City of Newark feel that urban renewal is almost synonymous with 'Negro Removal.'" The article further stated that the overall result was to:

[drive] dislocated families into other overcrowded areas in the community and thus contribute to further disorganization of the Negro family, and in

effect, produce those conditions that lend themselves to the heightening of crime, delinquency, and lowered moral standard.<sup>49</sup>

The 1965 special report of Newark Human Rights Commission agreed. Ralph Zinn, acting executive director and the author of the report, stated that “[u]rban renewal is universally regarded by Negroes as an instrument of the white power structure intended to drive them into self-contained areas. . . . In an effort to remove slums, the Negro becomes a ‘refugee between ghettos.’”<sup>50</sup>

### CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

It should be first noted that the emergence of the “second ghetto” was, to a significant degree, the product of residential segregation supported by housing discrimination against African Americans. In this sense, the creation of the “second ghetto” was not an historical inevitability caused by the operations of impersonal forces, but rather the product of conscious human decisions and the operations of institutionalized racism. Private institutional practices in the rental, sale and financing of housing served as the main barrier to freedom of choice in the housing market for African Americans. Undoubtedly, behind such institutional barriers lay powerful personal prejudices. A variety of surveys conducted by the Mayor’s Commission on Group Relations revealed that housing was one of the areas of greatest white resistance to integration. This was clearly indicated by the fact that even those whites who accepted blacks as coworkers, and who agreed that blacks should have access to political power, sustained reservations about having blacks as neighbors. Clearly, the pervasive fear of racial integration in housing, one of the most intimate and sensitive spheres of life, played a crucial role in the process of the creation of the “second ghetto.” Despite their conflicting positions in the marketplace, both whites and blacks assigned primary significance to housing issues.

In addition to private discrimination, it is clear that public urban planning also played a part in the formation of the “second ghetto.” Newark’s urban-renewal policies had a direct impact on the evolution of the “second ghetto” as the city’s programs renewed, reshaped and transformed its urban geography.<sup>51</sup> This conclusion is, on the surface, a contradiction since the official goal of urban redevelopment was to provide “a decent home and suitable living environment for every

American family.' Yet, it is all too clear that there was a huge gap between official goals and the actual planning and execution of urban renewal by federal and city authorities, including the NHA. Although city officials mainly concerned themselves with the possible social benefits of urban renewal, such as increasing the property tax base, they did not carefully calculate the human costs involved in achieving these benefits. Urban renewal in Newark, as in other American cities, was based almost exclusively on "the social cost approach" that viewed "slum problems" essentially as the costs imposed by the slums on society at large, rather than as the costs imposed by the slums on the people who live in them.<sup>52</sup>

Viewed historically, urban renewal is revealed as a partially thought-out strategy designed to circumvent the real issues at hand, racial discrimination and poverty in the central city neighborhoods. By the 1960s, the real project was no longer merely to clear slums or rehabilitate houses, but rather to raise the standard of living conditions of the deteriorated neighborhoods where blacks were concentrated.<sup>53</sup> Given this evolution, it is not surprising that Newark's urban renewal "failed" in light of the professed goal. This failure coincided with a failure to "revitalize" or "renew" the people who, by reason of color or race, suffered most from a variety of discriminatory practices, including segregated and substandard housing.

In the final analysis, what made housing discrimination against African Americans most troubling was the fact that personal prejudice, and private and public institutional practices all combined to form what Donald L. Foley has called a resilient "web of institutional discrimination" in which virtually no single party was obliged to accept direct responsibility for relegating people of color to the margins of the marketplace.<sup>54</sup> As Dorothy K. Newman and others have pointed out, housing discrimination was "uniquely unresponsive to protest," mainly because "the process of buying or renting a home has so many parts and so many villains along the way that they could hardly fit on a placard."<sup>55</sup> Moreover, the federal government took no active interest in fair housing legislation until 1962 and no significant anti-discrimination legislation was won in housing policy until 1968, when Congress passed a Civil Rights Act that included Title VIII on housing. Indeed, fair-housing legislation was one of the last and among the most hard-fought of the federal civil rights to be won after years of lobbying efforts by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored

People (NAACP) and the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE).<sup>56</sup> Meanwhile, the web of institutionalized racism ensnared thousands of families in Newark's "second ghetto," where the city's worst housing, schools and community institutions were contained.

The emergence of the "second ghetto" had implications that go far beyond the specific locality of central New Jersey. In fact, its emergence was a national phenomenon. The overall consequence of residential racial segregation in metropolitan America has been the creation of two separate and unequal societies within each metropolis. One is symbolized by the affluent suburbs whose residents are overwhelmingly white, the other by inner-city enclaves in which racial minority groups have been concentrated. It is easy to imagine that distressed blacks in the "second ghetto," having witnessed the enormous disparities between their own situations and the white middle-class suburbs, had a sense of alienation from the affluent mainstream society. It seems likely that a sense of psychological alienation was among the main motivating factors behind the anti-social, self-destructive behavior of the 1967 rioters.<sup>57</sup> Although America's inner cities seemed to calm down during the 1970s, this "new tranquillity" was, according to at least one urban historian, due to "black resignation rather than a larger measure of justice."<sup>58</sup> The 1980s turned out to be a decade of renewed tension and turmoil, and the inner cities continue to be seedbeds of social crisis—violence, juvenile delinquency, welfare dependency, and drug trafficking.

Recent news commentaries indicate that the problems of residential segregation by race still persist.<sup>59</sup> While upwardly mobile African Americans have moved to suburbs to make themselves secure from crime and drug problems, the black-middle class has shown a tendency to live in predominantly black neighborhoods, and the integration ideal of the the 1960s is disappearing.<sup>60</sup> Meanwhile, poor African Americans have continued to live in urban ghettos, and the influx of other minority groups, such as Hispanics, into urban neighborhoods has further compounded the issue of race relations. In any event, as long as this bifurcation of metropolitan society continues, and unless some kind of a wholesale effort is made to disperse the "second ghetto," or to make it a fully viable neighborhood, the presence of the "second ghetto" will continue to place enormous strains on American society. As the recent Los Angeles race riot demonstrated, even today the words of the 1968 *Report for Action* still ring true:

There is no question that effective, urgent action in the ghetto must be taken on the whole broad front of human and physical renewal. For without such action, we would be condemning large number of Americans to a continuation of conditions that lead people to despair.<sup>61</sup>

### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> U.S. National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, *Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1968, The New York Times Edition), p.69. The report further stated that “[m]ore than 80 percent of the deaths and more than half of the injuries occurred in Newark and Detroit,” and that “[o]f the disorders which the Commission surveyed, significant damage resulted in Detroit (\$40-45 million), Newark (\$10.2 million), and Cincinnati (more than \$1 million).” See, p. 115. On the chronology of the Newark riot, see, pp. 56-69.

<sup>2</sup> *Report for Action* stated that “54% of the Negroes asked said that housing problem had ‘a great deal to do’ with the riot, topping unemployment (53%), lack of equal job opportunities (52%), ‘broken promises by city officials’ (52%), police brutality (49%) and unresponsiveness of the City Administration to Negro wishes (46%).” Governor’s Select Commission on Civil Disorder, State of New Jersey, *Report for Action* (Trenton, N.J., 1968), p. 55.; see also *Report of the National Advisory Commission*, pp. 243-247. In this paper, I have used the term “African American” occasionally in my analysis. However, the sources during the period under investigation in this paper generally use the term “Negro” or occasionally “black.” Although this issue remains a sensitive one in the contemporary United States, I have chosen to use “black” in the major portion of the text.

<sup>3</sup> New Jersey Advisory Committee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights, *Report on New Jersey: Housing, Employment Opportunities, and Apprenticeship Training* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1963), p. 2.

<sup>4</sup> The “second ghetto” refers to the ghetto created during and after World War II, as opposed to the “first ghetto” which was created in the early twentieth century. For the recent literature on the emergence of the “second ghetto,” see Arnold R. Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto: Race and Housing in Chicago, 1940-1960* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983). This paper deals primarily with race relations in an urban community rather than the dynamics of the “second ghetto” itself.

<sup>5</sup> U.S. Bureau of the Census, *U.S. Census of Population and Housing, Census Tracts, Newark, N.J., 1940, 1950, and 1960*. (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office).

<sup>6</sup> Census tracts are small areas into which large cities and adjacent areas have been divided for statistical purposes. The average tract contains about 4,000 residents.

<sup>7</sup> U.S. Bureau of the Census, *U.S. Census of Population and Housing, Census Tracts, Newark, N.J., 1940, 1950, and 1960*.

<sup>8</sup> U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, *Housing: 1961 Commission on Civil Rights Report* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1961), pp. 1-2.

<sup>9</sup> Mayor’s Commission on Group Relations, *Newark: A City in Transition*, Vol. II: *Residents’ Views on Inter-Group Relations and Statistical Tables* (Newark, 1959), pp. 117-118, Table 204. For the changing characteristics of Newark’s various

neighborhoods, see Nathan Wright Jr., *Ready to Riot* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1968), pp. 17–55.

<sup>10</sup> *Newark: A City in Transition*, Vol. II, pp. 22–24, Table 5.

<sup>11</sup> Chester Rapkin, and Eunice and George Grier, *Group Relations in Newark-1957: Problems, Prospects, and a Program for Research* (New York, 1957), pp. 36–37.

<sup>12</sup> *Newark: A City in Transition*, Vol. II, p. 33.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 34, 38, Table 41, Table 45.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 75, Table 105.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 76, Table 111.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 109–111.

<sup>17</sup> Rapkin, Grier and Grier, *Group Relations in Newark-1957*, p. 40.

<sup>18</sup> New Jersey Advisory Committee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights, *Report on New Jersey*, p. 4.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>21</sup> U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, *Housing*, p. 3.

<sup>22</sup> *Newark: A City in Transition*, Vol. II, p. 68, Table 102.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 69, 119–120, Table 215.

<sup>24</sup> The Central Planning on Board of the City of Newark, New Jersey, *A Preliminary Report on Housing Conditions and Policy for Newark, New Jersey* (Newark, 1945), pp. 2–3.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>26</sup> The Central Planning Board of the City of Newark, *The Master Plan for the Physical Development of the City of Newark, N.J.* (Newark, 1947), p. 40.

<sup>27</sup> The Central Planning Board of the City of Newark, *A Preliminary Report*, p. 1.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>29</sup> Jay Rumney and Sara Shuman, *The Cost of Slums in Newark* (Newark, 1945), pp. 7, 15.

<sup>30</sup> *Newark Evening News*, February 19, 20, 21, 1950.

<sup>31</sup> Newark Citizens Housing Committee, *The Problem of Newark's Slums and Substandard Housing* (Newark, 1950), pp. 1, 5–7.

<sup>32</sup> Wilson L. Slayton, "The Operation and Achievements of the Urban Renewal Program," in James Q. Wilson, ed., *Urban Renewal: The Record and Controversy* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1964), p. 191.

<sup>33</sup> Howard P. Chudacoff and Judith Smith, *The Evolution of American Urban Society*. 3rd ed. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1988), p. 271.

<sup>34</sup> Jewel Bellush and Murray Hausknecht, "Urban Renewal: An Historical Overview," in Bellush and Hausknecht, eds., *Urban Renewal: People, Politics, and Planning* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1967), pp. 15–16; see also John H. Mollenkopf, *The Contested City* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), p. 117.

<sup>35</sup> Harold Kaplan, *Urban Renewal Politics: Slum Clearance in Newark* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963), pp. 10–15.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 16–18.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 19–21.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 21–25. Despite planners' original intentions, the city's public-housing projects led to the confinement of blacks in new "vertical ghettos." On this issue, see New Jersey Advisory Committee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights, *Public Housing in Newark's Central Ward*; see also Kenneth T. Jackson, *Crabgrass*

*Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), chap. 12.

<sup>39</sup> The Newark Housing Authority, *Newark Urban Renewal Areas* (Newark, 1963); *Newark's Urban Renewal Program* (Newark, 1967).

<sup>40</sup> Bellush and Murray, "Urban Renewal," p. 13.

<sup>41</sup> Slayton, "The Operation and Achievements," p. 193.

<sup>42</sup> U.S. Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relation, *Relocation: Unequal Treatment of People and Business Displaced by Governments* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1965), p. 17.; see also Chester W. Hartman, "The Housing of Relocated Families," in Wilson, ed., *Urban Renewal*, p. 321; Martin Anderson, *The Federal Bulldozer: A Critical Analysis of Urban Renewal, 1949-1962* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1964), p. 56.

<sup>43</sup> Newark Housing Authority, *Construction Report* (Newark, 1956), p. 2.

<sup>44</sup> Newark Housing Authority, *Re: New Newark: A Demonstration Grant Project* (Newark, 1961), p. 39.

<sup>45</sup> U.S. Civil Rights Commission, *Hearings before the United States Commission on Civil Rights, Newark, New Jersey September 11-12, 1962* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1963), p. 106.

<sup>46</sup> Newark Housing Authority, *Re: New Newark*, p. 39.

<sup>47</sup> U.S. Civil Rights Commission, *Hearings*, p. 101.

<sup>48</sup> Newark Housing Authority, *Re: New Newark*, p. 41.

<sup>49</sup> *Four Corners* (May 1962), pp. 10-11.

<sup>50</sup> Ralph Zinn, *Human Relations Profile: Newark, 1965, A Special Report* (Newark, 1965), p. 1.

<sup>51</sup> Hirsch suggests the same conclusion. Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto*, p. 10.

<sup>52</sup> Lawrence M. Friedman, *Government and Slum Housing: A Century of Frustration* (Chicago: Rand McNally & Company, 1968), pp. 4-16.

<sup>53</sup> Space does not allow this paper to consider the complex relationships between race, class and income as they affect housing choice. Admittedly, further research is needed to explore this point.

<sup>54</sup> Donald L. Foley, "Institutional and Contextual Factors Affecting the Housing Choices of Minority Residents" in Amos H. Hawley and Vincent P. Rock, eds., *Segregation in Residential Areas: Papers on Racial and Socioeconomic Factors in Choice of Housing* (Washington, D.C.: National Academy of Sciences, 1973), p. 85.

<sup>55</sup> Dorothy K. Newman, et al., *Protest, Politics, and Prosperity: Black Americans and White Institutions, 1940-75* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), p. 138.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 139-141, 144.

<sup>57</sup> On the psychology of the 1967 rioters, see Chudacoff and Smith, *The Evolution of American Urban Society*, p. 280.

<sup>58</sup> Richard Wade, "America's Cities Are (Mostly) Better Than Ever," in Raymond A. Mohl, ed., *The Making of Urban America* (Wilmington, Del.: A Scholarly Resources Imprint, 1984), p. 274.

<sup>59</sup> See, for example, *New York Times*, June 22, 1992, sec. A, p. 1.; see also *U.S. News & World Report*, July 22, 1991, p. 19.

<sup>60</sup> For this recent trend in middle-class black behavior, see *New York Times Magazine*, June 14, 1992, pp. 18-25.

<sup>61</sup> Governor's Select Commission on Civil Disorder, *Report for Action*, p. 64.