7-10-2006

Silent No Longer: Voices of the 1967 Newark Race Riots

Kimberly Siegal
kbsiegel@sas.upenn.edu

Follow this and additional works at: http://repository.upenn.edu/curej

Part of the Oral History Commons

Recommended Citation

Thesis Awards: Sadie Tanner Alexander Award in Africana Studies Jeanette Nichols Prize in American History for the best cultural and or women's history thesis

This paper is posted at ScholarlyCommons. http://repository.upenn.edu/curej/31
For more information, please contact libraryrepository@pobox.upenn.edu.
Silent No Longer: Voices of the 1967 Newark Race Riots

Abstract
From 12 to 18 July 1967, Newark, New Jersey, erupted in one of the most devastating riots in U.S. history. Twenty-six people were killed, but thousands were forever affected by the violence. The U.S. and New Jersey governments did extensive research on these riots, but the real stories of the common citizen in Newark were never documented. My thesis, an oral history, fills in this missing piece of knowledge by providing an in-depth look at the lives of ten individuals who have been shaped by the riots. Using their stories, along with primary and secondary research, I discuss major themes impacting Newark’s black residents – healthcare, education, police brutality, unemployment, and public housing – to illustrate that freedom was not always guaranteed to all Americans.

Keywords
Newark, riot, police brutality, media coverage, public housing, health insurance, New Jersey, race/racism, freedom, African American, Jewish merchants, Kathleen Brown, Kathleen Brown, History

Disciplines
Oral History

Comments
Thesis Awards: Sadie Tanner Alexander Award in Africana Studies Jeanette Nichols Prize in American History for the best cultural and or women's history thesis

This article is available at ScholarlyCommons: http://repository.upenn.edu/curej/31
Silent No Longer:
Voices of the 1967 Newark Race Riots

By

Kimberly B. Siegal

A Senior Thesis
Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
Honors in American History
University of Pennsylvania
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
March 2006

Advisor: Barbara D. Savage

Reader: Lee V. Cassanelli

Honors Director: Kathleen M. Brown
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

The Newark New Jersey Race Riots, Timeline of Events ................................. 3

List of Deaths, July 14th to 18th, 1967 ................................................................. 5

Acknowledgements: ......................................................................................... 6

Introduction: And When Newark Goes, It’s Going to Really Go ....................... 7

Chapter One: Bluecoat Brutality, Broke down Buildings, And the Blacks left to Battle it Out on their Own .............................................................. 20

Chapter Two: The Newspaper Print Isn’t So Black and White After All, A Newark Outsider Covers the Riots ................................................................. 52

Chapter Three: In Defense of a City, Police Detectives Defend their Past ........ 87

Chapter Four: Self Serving Shoppers, Jewish Merchants, and the Victim Known as Springfield Avenue ................................................................. 124

Conclusion: The Violence Ended, the Memory Remained ................................ 162

Notes on Sources & Methods: From Idea to Reality, the Making of an Oral History ...... 173

Bibliography .................................................................................................. 179
THE NEWARK, NEW JERSEY RACE RIOTS
TIMELINE OF EVENTS

WEDNESDAY JULY 12, 1967

9:40 PM: Cab driver John Smith is arrested by officers Pontrelli and DeSimone.
10:00 PM: Rumors begin to spread throughout the Central Ward that Smith was killed by two Newark police men.

THURSDAY JULY 13, 1967

12:30 AM: Siege of the Fourth Precinct begins. Gathering protestors throw bottles, rocks, and Molotov cocktails at the station. By 1 AM the first gun shots are heard.
2:00 AM: Mayor Addonizio is awakened from his slumber by a newsman informing the mayor that his city has erupted in flames.
7:00 AM: The Newark Evening News hits the stands bearing the headline: “Trouble in Central Ward Called Isolated Incident.”

Early Morning: Robert Curvin of the Congress of Racial Equality, former Essex County official Earl Harris, schoolteacher Harry Wheeler, and United Community Corporation board member Duke Moore meet with Mayor Addonizio at City Hall.
Early Afternoon: The Newark Community Union Project hands out flyers for tonight’s police brutality protest. Police Director Spina calls in an extra 500 men to be on patrol that night. Local vigilante and head of the North Ward Citizen’s Council, Anthony Imperiale, establishes his own area of containment in the North Ward.

6:00 PM: A large group of people gather in front of the Fourth Precinct to protest police brutality. Human Rights Commissioner James Threatt tries to calm the crowds by promising that Lieutenant Eddie Williams, an African American, will be made a captain. Intense rioting follows and the first area of containment is established by the Newark Police Force.

7:00 PM: Cab driver John Smith is paroled and placed in the custody of his lawyer John Love of Newark. By this time 300 people have gathered at the police brutality protest in front of the Fourth Precinct.

8:30 PM: Police are officially sent out into the city of Newark dressed in full riot gear.

9:00 PM: First area of containment is established from Springfield Avenue to High Street and South 10th. The ransacking of stores has begun in full force.

FRIDAY JULY 14, 1967

2:20 AM: Mayor Addonizio telephones Governor Hughes requesting the help of the New Jersey State Troopers. Nine minutes later, 300 state troopers enter the city.

2:39 AM: State police are activated in Newark.

2:45 AM: The National Guard is officially called into action. A total of 3,464 Guardsmen are brought into the city.

4:30 AM: Teodock Bell, age 28, is shot when police misinterpret him as robbing a tavern, which was actually his place of employment.

7:30 PM: Detective Frederick Toto is shot while patrolling the streets of Newark. Intense shooting by Newark officers and National Guardsmen ensues.

Late Evening: Fireman Fred Keller dies in his home after a sudden heart attack.

SATURDAY JULY 15, 1967

2:55 AM: William Furr, 24 years old, dies when he is shot while escaping from the police. Twelve year old Joe Bass is struck in the neck and the thigh by the same bullet that killed Furr.

Late Afternoon: Troops seal off a riot area of fourteen square miles around the city of Newark. A 10 PM curfew is strictly enforced.

SUNDAY JULY 16, 1967
5:15 PM: James Rutledge, 19 years old, is shot inside Joe Rae Tavern on Bergen and Custer Streets. James had forty-two bullet holes in his body by the time the officers cease fire.

Early Evening: Eloise Spellman, 41 year old mother of eleven children, is shot when she goes to her apartment window in Hayes Homes to see what type of commotion is going on outside her building. Her death inspires the articles of many journalists around the country.

MONDAY JULY 17, 1967

3:00 PM: Governor Hughes lifts all emergency restrictions. Restaurants, banks, and public utilities reopen. Liquor store owners are instructed to keep their stores closed until further notice.

TUESDAY JULY 18, 1967

1:00 AM: Raymond Gilmer, 20 years old, becomes the last victim of the Newark race riots. He is shot in the head outside of 744 Bergen Street.

Early Morning: Businesses and schools reopen. The riots are declared over.

LIST OF DEATHS JULY 14-18TH 1967
### EXHIBIT C-117. HOMICIDES —

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Rose Abraham</td>
<td>42 Blum St., Newark</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Brought to hospital by husband</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Elizabeth Artis</td>
<td>58 Prince St., Newark</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>At home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Tedock Bell</td>
<td>411 Bergen St., Newark</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Brought to hospital by friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Leroy Boyd</td>
<td>322 Belmont Ave., Newark</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>On sidewalk, Belmont &amp; Avon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Rebecca Brown</td>
<td>293 Bergen St., Newark</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>At home—in apt. window</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Mary Helen Campbell</td>
<td>580 Hawthorne Ave., Newark</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>In a car at High &amp; Spruce Sts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Isaac Harrison</td>
<td>176 Howard St., Newark</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>In the street at Springfield &amp; Broome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Hattie Gainer</td>
<td>302 Hunterdon St., Newark</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>In her apt., 302 Hunterdon St.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Raymond Gilmer</td>
<td>555 Ferry St., Newark</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>In the street at 744 Bergen St.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Rufus Hawk</td>
<td>103 Spruce St., Newark</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>At or near 949 Frelinghuysen Ave.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>Oscar Hill</td>
<td>497 Belmont St., Newark</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>N</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>Robert Martin</td>
<td>24 W. Market St., Newark</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>On the street at Broome &amp; Mercer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>Albert Menser</td>
<td>117 Oliver St., Newark</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>On the sidewalk at 568 Mulberry St.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>Eddie Moss</td>
<td>240 Livingston St., Newark</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Passenger in car at Hawthorne near Belmont</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>Cornelius Murray</td>
<td>16 Wainwright St., Newark</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>On the sidewalk, Jones near Springfield</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>Victor Louis Smith</td>
<td>32 Barclay St., Newark</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>In a hallway at 26 Edmond Place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>Michael Pugh</td>
<td>340—15th Ave., Newark</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>On the sidewalk in front of his home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.</td>
<td>James Rutledge</td>
<td>171 Lehigh Ave., Newark</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Inside of Jo-Rae Tavern, Bergen &amp; Custer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.</td>
<td>Eloise Spellman</td>
<td>322 Hunterdon St., Newark</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Inside her apartment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23.</td>
<td>James Sanders</td>
<td>52 Beacon St., Newark</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>At or near Sampson’s Liquor Store, Springfield &amp; Jones</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24.</td>
<td>Richard Tatiaferro</td>
<td>124 No. 7th St., 100—11th Ave., Newark</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Leaving a store at So. 8th St. &amp; 11th Ave.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26.</td>
<td>Capt. Michael Moran</td>
<td>66 Eastern Pkwy., Newark</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>At scene of a fire, Central &amp; So. 7th St.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The process of writing a senior history thesis is incomparable to any other paper I have written during my four-years at Penn. With that said the amount of people I want to thank for helping me through the process is quite extensive. I would first like to thank all ten of the people I interviewed for my thesis, especially Mr. Clement Moorman. Mr. Moorman has known me since I was seven years old, and he always encouraged me that I would be successful. I will never meet a kinder, more youthful ninety-year old man in all my life. I dedicate this thesis to Clement Moorman.

In addition to my interview subjects, I’d like to thank all of the archivists and historians who assisted me in my project: Ed Brody of the Springfield Avenue Merchants Association, Jennifer McGillan of the Jewish Historical Society of the Metrowest, Bette M. Epstein Supervisor of Reference Services at the New Jersey State Archives, Dr. Max Herman Assistant Professor of Sociology and Anthropology at Rutgers University, Dr. Thomas Sugrue the Edmund J. and Louise W. Kahn Professor of History and Sociology at Penn, and members of the New Jersey Information Center at the Newark Public Library.

I also received extensive help from my wonderful history professors. My honors thesis director Kathleen Brown truly showed a vested interest in my work. I’d like to thank her for the many hours she spent with me discussing the ins and outs of my thesis, as well as all the kindness and encouragement she has provided me along the way. My advisor Barbara Savage was more than supportive throughout the process of writing my thesis, and her knowledge of
African American history has truly been an inspiration to my work. Last but not least my reader Lee Cassanelli. Professor Cassanelli’s expertise in oral history tradition and his enthusiasm in reading my work have made a great difference in the final production of my thesis. After my first advising meeting with Professor Cassanelli, I felt truly inspired to write.

On a more personal note, I’d like to thank my parents Bonnie and John Siegal for all of their encouragement along the way. My parents were there for all the ups and downs of my thesis, for the times when I thought I lost entire chapters worth of writing or when I simply had writer’s block. I’d like to express my gratitude especially to my father who took the time to read each and every chapter I wrote along the way. Wherever I end up in life, I know I can rely on my parents for guidance, support, and love.

Last but not least, I’d like to thank my boyfriend Jeremy Esterkin. Jeremy spent his summer following me around on a crazy journey throughout the state of New Jersey, guiding me through the streets of Newark, taking long train rides to Trenton, and lending a helping hand even in the late hours of the night. Without his help, my thesis would not be complete.

INTRODUCTION:

And When Newark Goes…It’s Going to Really Go

“To those who are tempted by violence, I would say this: Think again. Who is really the loser when violence comes? Whose neighborhood is made a shambles? Whose life is threatened the most? If you choose to tear down what others have built – you will not succeed.”

---

It was a hot summer night in July 1967, and steam was rising off of the streets of the Central Ward. Newark residents, black and white, stood on the sidewalks in front of their homes looking for relief from the heat. The only solace from the weather was the shelter of one’s car where the breeze could flow gently through the open windows as one drove down the street. On this particular evening, Wednesday July 12th, John Smith spent his time riding around in his yellow taxi cab, which he rented for $16.50 a day. Smith – a Georgia native – had only been driving a cab for a little over three years. He was originally a trumpet player living in the South until he damaged his two front teeth playing at a gig. He needed to find a job to pay for his dental work, so he decided to move north. Smith found a position with a local taxi company, immediately jumped on the opportunity, and rented himself a one-bedroom apartment in Newark’s Ironbound District.

As a cabdriver, the Newark Police Department found John Smith “to be a hazard.” He had been in eight accidents the week of July 10th alone, and recently had his license revoked; however, Smith was extremely low on funds and continued to transport passengers despite losing his driving privileges. Tonight the taxi business was especially slow. No one was flagging down Smith’s cab, so he circled the Central Ward hoping to find a passenger. At about 9:15 PM Smith spotted a middle-aged woman looking for a cab and he eagerly stopped to offer her a ride. Then after only a few minutes of driving his passenger, Smith came across a parked police car at the

---

4 *ibid*, 33.
intersection of Seventh Street and Fifteenth Avenue. He pondered whether to pass the car. He recalls the situation:

I can still remember very clearly what happened that night. I had a lady passenger and came up behind this police interceptor which was double-parked at this intersection. I blinked my lights from low to high beam and cut around like I always do. Well, they signaled me to stop by tapping their horn. They said I had popped the intersection, that I had run through without having the right of way.

Officers Pontrelli and DeSimone, who pulled Smith over, immediately discovered that the cabdriver had a revoked license. They place Smith under arrest, beating him in the process.

Men like Smith were arrested every day in Newark, so what made this man’s arrest any different from all the other African Americans brought to the Fourth Precinct? The answer to this question is that as the officers dragged the bloody, beaten body of John Smith up the precinct stairs, hundreds of Hayes Homes residents – located directly across the street from the precinct – saw his body carried into the building. Not only was “Smith’s arrival at the station house…seen by scores of Negro residents of the red brick Hayes homes… [but] by cab drivers as well. Out over the cabbies’ cracking VHP radio band went the rumor that white cops had killed a Negro driver.” Rumors of Smith’s death immediately spread throughout the city. Shortly after, fifteen cab drivers formed a line in front of the Fourth Precinct shouting out protests of police brutality.

---

8 “Sparks & Tinder,” 1, emphasis added.
Over the next six days, the city of Newark endured one of the most violent race riots in United States history, joining the 329 rebellions that already took place in 257 different cities around the country. African American residents had suffered enough. Their public housing residences were falling apart. Their healthcare system was obsolete. Their educational facilities were inadequate, and most of all, their civil rights, their protection under the United States Constitution, was nowhere to be found. It was time for a race riot in Newark; the city just needed Smith’s arrest to push the citizens all the way. From July 14th, when Newark’s governor first called in the National Guard, until July 17th, the night before the riots ended, police recorded a total of 152 sniping incidents. And by July 18th when the riots were over, twenty-six people were dead, 1,055 businesses had suffered, twenty-nine residences were destroyed, and monetary

10 John Cunningham. “The worst city in America.” Newark. (New York: New Jersey Historical Society, 2002) 329. This picture displays just how devastated Newark’s Springfield Avenue was after only two days of rioting.
13 A more detailed layout of riot events can be found in the timeline found at the beginning of this thesis.
damages totaled as high as $10,434,425.09. Still, Smith believes he “didn’t start a riot.” He says, “I was just victim of circumstances. It could have happened to anybody.”

The events that followed Smith’s arrest remain up for debate. Smith believed that he had made a normal pass, so he was shocked when he was pulled over by the police. He explains that the two officers in the vehicle – Pontrelli and DeSimone – told his female passenger to exit the car and then forced him into the back seat of their patrol vehicle. From there, Smith says, one “officer first hit me with his fists, and then with a billy club, finally striking me in the groin which temporarily paralyzed me. By this time we had arrived at the police station, and they dragged me out of the car, and beat me again and again.”

Officers Pontrelli and DeSimone describe the events of the night of July 12th quite differently. Vito Pontrelli explained to the New Jersey Governor’s office that he and his partner pulled Smith’s cab over at the corner of Fifteenth Avenue and South Ninth Street. The officers asked Smith for his license and registration, but Pontrelli says, Smith “seemed kind of disturbed that we stopped him, [and] used some obscene language…[Then,] Smith opened up his cab door striking my partner in the chest, came out and punched him in the face.” Pontrelli explained that he and DeSimone were able to place Smith into handcuffs and put him into the back of their

---

14 United States. Report For Action: Governor’s Select Commission on Civil Disorder the State of New Jersey. (Newark, 1968) Box 11: 257-258.
15 Porambo, 101.
17 Pontrelli, 65-66.
patrol car. Afterwards, the officers drove to the Fourth Precinct, during which time Pontrelli says Smith struck him in the back of the head even though Smith was handcuffed.

Author Ron Porambo, who interviewed Smith several years after his arrest, highly doubts the police version of this story. Porambo criticizes Pontrelli’s argument: “Smith weighed 150 pounds and was unarmed. Pontrelli weighed 200 pounds, DeSimone near 160 pounds, and both were armed with guns and nightsticks. Smith then supposedly battled both officers, who had difficulty getting him into the back of their patrol car…This seems highly unlikely.”18 So, what really happened that night? One story of Smith’s arrest is a clear-cut example of police brutality. The other is a tale of the dangers of being a Newark policeman. Was there a middle ground? The answer to this question may be found in the oral history testimony of those who lived through the Newark riots.

The Importance of an Oral History of the Newark Race Riots

“Oral history certainly can be a means for transforming both the content and the purpose of history. It can be used to change the focus of history itself, and open up new areas of inquiry.”19

The study of history relies on textual documentation, since this field of inquiry often deals with individuals who are no longer alive to tell their stories. When it comes to more recent history like the Newark race riots, however, many people are still living and eager to share their

---

18 Porambo, 108.
experiences. Nevertheless, over the past thirty-nine years most of the research done on the
Newark race riots has relied on government documentation, newspaper articles, and court
testimony, not on individuals’ stories. A few oral history interviews have been recorded by
members of the Jewish Historical Society of Metrowest New Jersey, and a recent project at
Rutgers University is underway to delve into the Newark and Detroit race riots. But, there are no
compilations of oral histories to date that include the stories of the common citizens in Newark –
from the militaristic black teenager to the struggling Jewish shop owner – whose lives were
forever changed by the events of 1967.

This thesis is the first oral history of its kind devoted to the Newark race riots. The text
features information from a series of ten interviews of people whose lives were somehow
affected by the riots, but whose stories have never been told. These stories humanize the Newark
riots, and teach people that they must “see [history] from multiple perspectives,” before they can
truly understand the past.20 This is not to say that the ten people discussed in this thesis are
representative of the entire group of people living and working in Newark during the riots. As
Historian Robert Grele explains, “when historians claim that oral history interviewees are not
statistically representative of the population at large or any particular segment of it, they raise a
false issue…Interviewees are selected, not because they represent some abstract statistical norm,
but because they typify historical processes.”21 Thus, each of the individuals interviewed for this

20 Gyanedra, Pandey. Remembering Partition: Violence, Nationalism, and History in India. (New York: Cambridge
21 The Oral History Reader. 41.
thesis have been chosen because they represent some core feature of Newark life in the 1960s and because their stories do “typify historical processes” of history and memory. This thesis demonstrates that because of the work of an oral historian, “the confines of the scholar’s world are no longer [the] well thumbed volumes of the old catalogue;” the scholar’s world is expanded to include the memories of individuals eternally changed by the Newark riots.22

Writing an oral history presents the historian with many challenges beyond who to include in the study. A second problem, how to accurately portray people’s lives, is probably the most challenging. The accurate portrayal of life stories depends on the connection between historical fact and memory. Understanding this connection requires a brief look at the scientific explanation of memory and memory loss. Memory, in scientific terms, is defined as “the ability of the brain to store, retain, and subsequently recall information.”23 Since thirty-nine years have passed since the Newark riots, people’s memories have naturally faded over time. There are three reasons for this loss of memory including: “trace decay over time, interference (overlaying new information over the old), [and a] lack of retrieval cues.”24 Considering these three explanations in context with the interviews conducted for this thesis, it is possible to conclude that 1) the subjects interviewed for this thesis have all experienced natural memory decay over time, 2) people’s memories of the race riots have been affected by their intervening life since the time of the event as well as changing racial attitudes in the United States over the past four

22 ibid, 24.
23 “Memory.” www.wikipedia.com
24 ibid
decades, and 3) since the riots took place long ago, the interview subjects lack the retrieval cues (events, names, and places) to recall portions of the riots. Therefore, when relying so heavily upon the knowledge and reflections of each of these individuals, the oral historian must be mindful of the fact that memories change over time, and so what people remember about the Newark riots is not necessarily exactly what happened. Nevertheless, those events, places, or people that the interviewees do recall have definitely made a mark on their psyche and so are important to the understanding of the race riots both in their historical context and today.

Many of the subjects in this thesis, recognizing their own failing memories, tended to feel the need to justify what they said in their interviews. Former Newark police detective Edward Alfano ended his interview with the following statement: “Everything I said was really fair and exactly the way I could recall it.” On the other hand, former Newark shop owner Jack Oelbaum noted, “I’m 97 years old, how can I remember,” yet continued to speak as if the riots happened yesterday. The ten stories presented in this thesis, therefore, may not include perfectly accurate memories; however, the overall value each of these stories adds to Newark history is incomparable. Each contributes to the “development of an understanding of what people really did in the past.” The first-person testimony of this thesis hopes to provide as diverse an understanding of the riots as possible. The quotes used in the text have not been altered and have been taken directly from each of the ten interview transcripts.

26 Oelbaum, Jack. Telephone interview by author. 27 August 2005.
27 The Oral History Reader, 49, emphasis added.
The interviews featured in this thesis add to the volumes of information on the Newark riots; however, conducting these oral histories and unearthing the diverse perspectives of those affected by the Newark race riot tends to destabilize our inclination to classify such incidents as objective historical events. The recording of firsthand experiences, in contrast to the study of official documents, further destabilizes the events in Newark by revealing just how close to home the riots came to be for some participant-observers. When classifying a riot, we tend to equate it with chaos; thus, we minimize the context from which the actual event has arisen. But, riots do emerge from a specific context. By using an oral history methodology to fill the gaps in experiences of those present during the riots, it becomes possible to extend the official narrative of the crisis and place a new subjective stability and order upon the events of July 1967. This form of historical research finally exposes the personal impact and political context of Newark’s deteriorating community relations. Recounting these personal experiences ultimately reveals that the decline of public housing, health, education, politics, and especially law enforcement procedures to be the root of Newark’s societal ills in the late 1960s. Thus, the Newark riots turn out to be an inevitable explosion of violence, a response to decades of mistreatment of Newark’s African American residents.

What is the definition of a riot?

*An Explanation of the Terminology Used in this Thesis*
“I do not believe now – that it is in the best interest of any city for a Mayor to report he believes his city is about to plunge into full-scale riot.”

The events described – including the arrest of Smith and the proceeding violence – are categorized by people in a variety of ways. While many viewed the arrest of John Smith as the beginning of a riot, others describe this same event as the start of an open rebellion, the creation of a war zone, the commencement of a criminal insurrection, or even an act of terrorism. As one prominent Newark historian, Clement Price, explains, “One of the first things we have to deal with is the nomenclature. Was that a riot, was it a rebellion, was it a disorder, was it a pogrom. I tend to think of it as a riot, but I respect those who see it as a rebellion.”

Despite the numerous ways people have described the six days of chaos in Newark, most historical literature uses the term riot. Newspaper articles, government documents, Senate testimony, and magazine features all refer to the violence as a race riot. Moreover, the ten subjects in this thesis have also each classified the events as a riot during their interviews.

The legal field defines a riot as “a violent disturbance of the public peace by three or more persons assembled for a common purpose.” Using such terminology presents several problems for a historian. First, by calling the events in Newark a riot, one concurs with a view that 1) the violence is unjustified and 2) that the African Americans who contributed to the disturbance are criminals. Second, by calling the chaos in Newark a riot, one depicts the events

as completely spontaneous and not the result of decades of mistreatment. This thesis hopes to disprove these assumptions by explaining just how this term fits the events of July 1967. In keeping with the literature, the following four chapters of this thesis also refer to the events in Newark as a race riot.

This thesis will not, however, refer to individuals who stole from stores as looters, even though the government and the media all referred to these individuals as such. The use of the word looter goes back as early as the seventeenth century, but it wasn’t until the beginning of the nineteenth century that “loot” was referred to in a more modern version of the word. In 1858, loot was defined as “something taken by force or with violence.”31 It follows from this definition that a looter is a person who uses violence to steal items and destroy property. By the mid-1900s the term looter was popularly used by the media to describe international rioters and survivors of natural disaster. On February 12, 1950, The New York Times reports that in Calcutta, India the police “have not hesitated to shoot looters” involved in a riot that broke out due to Hindu-Moslem troubles.32 In 1962 in Algeria, the newspapers reported that the Algerian Liberation Front will give the death sentence to any person caught in the act of looting.33 Looters were definitely portrayed in a negative light. It wasn’t until 1965, however, that The New York Times and other domestic papers began to use the word looter in a racial context to describe African Americans during a riot situation. In Chicago during the summer of 1965, for example, a race

riot broke out in the heart of the city where a “civil rights rally swelled into a looting.”\footnote{“Police in Chicago Battle Rioters.” \textit{The New York Times}. 14 August 1965: 1.} The Chicago riots were accompanied by the Watts Riots in Los Angeles the same day, where reporters also noted the presence of looters on the scene.\footnote{“Outbursts Spread to New Areas – Disaster Zone is Proclaimed.” \textit{The New York Times}. 15 August 1965:1.} By 1967 when racial unrest was occurring throughout the country, reports used the word looter as nonchalantly as they used the word police.

Given these few pieces of newspaper evidence, to label the individuals in this thesis as looters, would imply that these individuals were violent, reckless people who destroyed their city for no apparent reason. It is true that some rioters aimlessly and violently stole televisions, clothing, and food for selfish reasons; however, the findings of this thesis prove that many individuals consciously chose what stores to steal from and stole because they were hungry or because they had no clothing for their children, not because they wanted to hurt local merchants. These people were not criminals in the natural sense of the word; sure they were committing an illegal act by taking what was not rightfully theirs’, but they were helpless, struggling, and hoping to make a point by selectively robbing stores. This thesis will therefore not use the common terminology of looters to refer to such individuals.

With that said, how does one go about defining the term riot in more specific terms than that of the legal definition for the word? A short perusal of civil rights literature will show that many different definitions of the word riot exist, so many in fact that it seems as if the explanation of this word is as confusing as the events of a riot itself. For some, the word riot can
only be understood in a racial context. Sociologist Albert Bergesen describes a riot as “black Americans economically deprived and excluded from political participation react[ing] against these conditions in the inner city with protest and violence.” Bergesen’s definition, although fitting of the events in Newark, is quite narrow since it limits riots to an African American form of expression. Dr. Spiegel, Director of the Lemberg Center for the Study of Violence at Brandeis University, broadens Bergesen’s definition and describes a riot as a situation pertaining to all people who feel as if they’ve been disregarded by the government. A riot, he explains, is “the product mainly of people who feel neglected by those in power...It is an attempt to get a message through those in power, to convince them the problem is serious.” Finally, the Kerner Commission – President Johnson’s task force to investigate the riots throughout the United States during the summer of 1967 – expands the definition of a riot even further by describing the term as simply “a cumulative process of mounting tension that spilled over into violence.” Each of these three definitions interpret “riot” differently; however, they all agree that a riot is not a spontaneous occurrence, but is in fact the result of months, years, or even decades of injustice. In Newark, this injustice was directed toward African American residents living in the poverty-stricken Central Ward.

Formulating a definition for the word riot by examining the works of historians and sociologists, leaves out the emotions and individual perspectives of those people whose lives

38 Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, 68.
were forever transformed by the events of July 1967. Asking individuals who were present in Newark during the riots to define this word opens up the discussion. Stanley Terrell, an African American who has lived in Newark his whole life, describes a riot as “an explosion of frustration; it’s something that comes about after a long period of time.”

Fellow Newarker, Clement Moorman adds to Terrell’s explanation and describes a riot as “a festering of emotions, the denial of people’s privilege to live, and people didn’t have anywhere to vent but bingo!”

Considering these two definitions in conjunction with one another, both Terrell and Moorman believe that riots are the result of building tensions over time, not just violent individuals spontaneously deciding to wreak havoc and destroy a city. Both men see purpose in a rioter’s actions; the rioter has suffered far too long under a system of subordination and seeks a way to remedy his problems.

White individuals who were in Newark during the riots tend to define the chaos differently than African Americans. They often describe the word riot in a much more negative fashion. Instead of seeing the riot as a mode of expression for an oppressed group of individuals, they view a riot as a devastating event in which people destroy a city with total disregard for the safety of others. For example, former Newark police detective, Charles Lorenzo believes a riot is nothing more than “plain, simple disobedience.”

Newark shop owner Morris Spielberg describes a riot as “people running out of control, tearing down infrastructures in your own

---

neighborhood without direction.” Thus it can be said that many African Americans’ definition for the word riot tend to derive from individuals who participated in the actual events or who were victims of racial oppression, while many white citizens’ descriptions of a riot develop from those who witnessed the violence without truly understanding what lay behind it. With so many ways to define the word riot, there must be an infinite number of descriptions with which to explain the events in Newark. Thus, the real story of the Newark riots is not necessarily what the Kerner Commission says is true; rather, it’s embedded in what the people who lived through the violence describe as having happened in their city. In other words, there are multiple truths that describe the race riots, and an oral history methodology makes it possible to discover this array of realities.

CHAPTER ONE:
Bluecoat Brutality, Broke-down Buildings, and the Blacks Left to Battle It Out On Their Own

“Ah they say this is a big rich town/But I live in the poorest part/I know I’m on a dead-end street/In a city without a heart.” “Dead-End Street Monologue,” Lou Rawls, 1967.

What began as an ordinary summer night on July 12, 1967 transformed into one of the most devastating events in Newark history. Angry, sweaty crowds of African Americans gathered in the heart of the Central Ward eager to hear news about John Smith’s arrest. Had he actually been beaten to death, or was he still alive? Voices shouting “We shall not be moved,”

filled the air in front of the Fourth Precinct, while Molotov cocktails set fire to abandoned cars lining the streets.\textsuperscript{43} Newark, which had remained peaceful for weeks, failed to escape the violence that plagued hundreds of other cities around the country. For many Newark residents in the mid to late-1960s, the riots were only steps away since Newark was “a city without a heart” years before July 1967.\textsuperscript{44}

Following Smith’s arrest a crowd of nearly 250 protesters formed outside the Fourth Precinct. One by one Civil Rights leaders joined the scene. Robert Curvin of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) was one of the first activists to arrive at the precinct. In Curvin’s opinion, Newark’s police department had finally overstepped its authority. Curvin burst into the precinct and announced to the officers on duty that “the crowd wasn’t prepared to go home and that there needed to be more concern about…allow[ing] them [the crowds] to express dissatisfaction with what happened.”\textsuperscript{45}

\footnotesize
\textsuperscript{44} Lou Rawls. “Dead-End Street Monologue.” \textit{Too Much}: Capitol Records: 1967.
\textsuperscript{45} \textit{Report For Action}, 108.
Inspector Melchoir, who was on duty that night, attended to Curvin’s request. He said that the police were not yet prepared to hear the complaints of the crowds protesting outside the precinct, but he would give Curvin the chance to visit Smith in his cell. When Curvin reached John Smith’s cell, he found the cab driver curled up in a fetal-like position, eyes closed, and body badly bruised. There was no time; Smith needed immediate hospitalization.

---

46 Thomas Hayden. “Map of Newark and Fourth Precinct.” Rebellion in Newark, (New York: Random House, 1967) 11. This diagram was drawn by Thomas Hayden while residing in the city of Newark during the riots. Hayden shows here a crude outline of the layout of Newark during 1967 with particular emphasis given to the Fourth Precinct where the rioting begun. He identifies where the fire bombs (Molotov Cocktails) were thrown, as well as where the housing project – Hayes Homes – was located.
Smith was rushed to Beth Israel Hospital where he was diagnosed with a “hematoma on L-accipital-parietal region skull and a fracture of the right ninth rib in the axillary line with slight displacement at the fracture sight.” In other words, he was bleeding from the brain and had several broken ribs on his right side. According to Smith, the reason he was so badly injured was because when he entered the Fourth Precinct “six or seven other officers along with the two who arrested [him] kicked and stomped [him] in the ribs and back. Then they took [him] to a cell and put [his] head over the toilet bowl… [and struck] the back of [his] head with a revolver.” John Smith had experienced the epitome of police brutality, and Newark’s black residents would no longer stand for such treatment.

After ensuring Smith was brought to the hospital, Curvin stood on top of a police car and called for his fellow African Americans to join him in a protest because he believed that “the police were conducting a war against the black community.” What began as a direct protest against the beating of Smith had evolved into an all-out riot against decades of horrendous public housing and deteriorating police-community relations in Newark. As one African American woman stated, “We don’t want to talk about Smith; we want to talk about what we see here happening every day, time and time again.” Smith’s arrest served as a conduit through which African Americans could finally voice their dissatisfaction with the city. For Newark’s black residents the events on the night of July 12, 1967 helped to redefine the common conception of

---

47 Report For Action, 108.
48 Hayden, 10.
49 ibid, 13.
50 Report For Action, 108.
the term riot. Instead of defining the riot as a regression from order to chaos, these residents saw the Newark race riots as a much needed strike against entrenched injustice or an attempt to restore the city and its heart.

Still, there was a time in the late nineteenth century when the city of Newark did have a heart. Signs of this heart can be found by looking at the tops of the buildings in the city today, which reveal the remnants of beautiful architecture of years past, a time when Newark was a thriving urban center. The city at this time was especially popular amongst African Americans migrating from the South. With such an appealing job market in Newark between 1890 and 1920, the city’s population increased during these years by nearly 128 percent. This rise in population was good for the developing city’s economy, but it resulted in an extreme shortage of space to house its working-class citizens.\(^\text{51}\) Newark thus transformed into a “working-class, gritty city,” with a poor housing stock.\(^\text{52}\) Ultimately by the time World War I arrived, housing shortages reached such critical levels that the city’s commission had no choice but to allot funds to build tent colonies for those who simply had no place to live.

The underlying reasons for Newark’s housing problems can be traced back to the fact that for centuries the United States housed immigrants, people of color, and the poor in substandard housing conditions. Many cities throughout the country also lacked a public welfare system, adding to the growing troubles of the United States’ disgruntled citizens. Newark, in


particular, did not develop public health and welfare programs until the 1920s.\(^{53}\) Not surprisingly, it was at this point in the early 1920s that the “first calls for public housing” were made.\(^{54}\) The initial idea for public housing seemed to many Newark officials an ingenious solution to a lack of residences. Historian Robert Fairbanks explained that not only would public housing solve population increases, but it would also “make better citizens” by helping to overcome the hostility that arose when blacks and whites competed for private sector housing.\(^{55}\) In addition, sociologists believed that high-rises would provide Newark an architectural advantage. By “piling housing units atop one another,” many sociologists argued, “they would create open, park-like inner courtyards for resident enjoyment.”\(^{56}\) By 1937 Newark representatives campaigned for and received $325 million in Federal public housing aid.\(^{57}\) This large sum of money was the result of President Roosevelt’s passage of the Wagner-Steagall Housing Act, which provided for the construction of public housing under the influence of the United States Housing Authority.\(^{58}\) Having received this money, the Newark Housing Commission (NHC) chose to build multi-level buildings instead of condominium-type residences to compensate for the lack of available land in Newark – the city was only twenty-three square miles.

\(^{53}\) ibid

\(^{54}\) Price, A New Jersey Anthology, 438.


\(^{57}\) Report For Action, 55.

\(^{58}\) Sugrue, 60.
Thirty years later in 1967, Newark housing officials began to reconsider whether public housing was actually a panacea for the city’s population increase. From the time the high-rises were built in the late-1930s to the outbreak of the Newark race riots, these buildings slowly transformed into sites of disease, violence, and crime. Resident enjoyment did not result from living in these high-rises buildings, as predicted by sociologists, because Newark “housing experts and planners tend[ed] to focus on dwelling units and tracts of land rather than [the] people,” who would be living in the complexes.\(^{59}\) Newark eventually became the birthplace of “the highest percentage of substandard housing of any city in the country.”\(^{60}\) Projects like Hayes Homes – the building in front of which the riots started – were not blessed with wide park-like courtyards, but were rather cursed with narrow corridors, broken elevators, damaged lighting fixtures, and faulty plumbing and heating units that barely passed inspection.

\(^{59}\) Report for Action, 55.
Moreover, the poor, who were supposed to be the beneficiaries of the newly constructed high-rises, were actually passed over in the process and much of the benefit was reaped by those with middle-class incomes. In his 1971 book *No Cause for Indictment*, author Ron Porambo criticizes the way in which Newark’s black residents lived prior to the race riots. He describes that blacks “live with gaping holes, cracks, and peeling paint. The gaping holes provide refuge to rats that scar children; the paint provides lead poisoning which kills them…Here, women cook on coal and wood-burning iron stoves, relics of a past age, and families eat with a can of ‘No Roach’ within reach.” Moreover, in comparison to the dogs and cats living in the private homes of Newark’s white residents, living conditions in public housing were absolutely atrocious. In

---

61 “Newark Man and Stove.” *Report For Action*, 85. This picture is an example of the pre-World War II heating systems present in many of Newark’s public housing buildings.

62 Porambo, 4.

63 *ibid*
fact, the County Bar Association declared that whites are “kinder to their pets” when it comes to providing a proper home.  

By February of 1968, the New Jersey Governor’s Commission released statistics about the underlying causes of the Newark race riots. The survey found that fifty-four percent of “Negroes said that housing problems had a great deal to do with the riot.” Yet despite this obvious sense of disillusionment and despair regarding Newark public housing, few if any efforts were made by the local government to improve housing conditions prior to the riots. For example, George Cannon, former Manager of Hayes Homes Housing Project, often received little help from the NHC. He describes the lack of effort displayed by commission inspectors:

I find a lot of [housing] officers being human and not being immediately supervised during their tour of duty will spend most of their time in, say, the maintenance room, lolligagging. And, as far as the intended purposes, they’re not doing it.  

Hayes Homes was just one of many public facilities built in Newark’s Central Ward, an area only a mile and a half in radius. Crowding so many buildings and nearly 18,000 residents into such a small space, added to the brewing tensions in the city. Although local government officials publicly declared “the high-rise [was] probably the worst housing that you can build for

---

65 *Report For Action*, 55.
67 *Report For Action*, 56.
large families,” they did little to improve the welfare of its citizens.\textsuperscript{68} Why, if Newark’s housing was labeled intolerable as early as the 1920s, just like housing in many of the cities throughout the country, did the local government continue to fund these tenements which only added to the destruction of the city of Newark?

Although blacks in Newark faced poor living conditions in the 1960s, they were still the beneficiaries of a revolutionary political and sociological development in the United States: the “entrance of the Negro into civil society.”\textsuperscript{69} This shift in African American status resulted from the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which finally put an end to segregation in the South. Although de facto laws still existed to hold African Americans in subordinate positions, a longstanding American concept of race had been overturned. With the entrance of blacks into civil society, African Americans were “now legitimate claimants to protection by the police,” thus transforming the nature of civilian-police relations in the United States, especially in densely urban areas like Newark.\textsuperscript{70} Many police, however, were not ready to adjust to this major change in the legal standing of race relations. Consequently, some officers “continued to perform traditional status rituals – breaking up fights, turning off fire hydrants, etc…that no longer validated the status relations of blacks and whites.”\textsuperscript{71} For many African Americans in the 1960s,

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item [\textsuperscript{68}] \textit{ibid}\textsuperscript{,}\textsuperscript{68}\
\item [\textsuperscript{70}] \textit{ibid}\textsuperscript{,}\textsuperscript{70}\
\item [\textsuperscript{71}] Albert Bergesen. “Official Violence during the Watts, Newark, and Detroit Race Riots of the 1960s.” \textit{A Political Analysis of Deviance} (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1980) 167.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
therefore, although the letter of the law declared them equal citizens, the acts of government and law enforcement officials did not confirm their equality.

Although city government officials appeared unresponsive to repairing community associations, local politicians were definitely aware of the city’s deteriorating police-civilian relations prior to the summer of 1967. As early as March 1966, Newark established a Community Relations Bureau at Police Headquarters with lieutenant representatives at each of the city’s police precincts. Even so, Police Director Dominick Spina never submitted a community relations budget request to put this program into gear “because he assumed it would not be approved.”72 This lack of official effort to revamp police behavior led to a greater brewing of tensions within the Central Ward. Newark’s police were seen as being able to “get away with anything,” especially when it came to the treatment of black citizens.73 Single African American women struggling to work three jobs to support their families were treated like common prostitutes.74 The treatment of African American men was no better. Their calls for police help fell on deaf ears. Life-long Newark resident Stanley Terrell recounts his childhood experiences with the police: “You know we had to give [the police] grudging respect because they could lock you up and they could beat you. But when they came it was like, oh boy. They never came when you needed something.”75 Terrell’s observation is consistent with other Newark residents. The Governor’s Commission found that nearly seventy percent of African Americans believed “their

72 Report For Action, 31.
73 ibid, 35.
74 ibid
complaints to the police did not receive the same attention as complaints from the whites.”  

The Governor’s Commission also documented that forty-nine percent of blacks believed failing community relations and police brutality contributed to the outbreak of the race riots.  

These aforementioned statistics reflect a national consensus among African Americans. In a 1965 nationwide Gallup Poll thirty-five percent of black men surveyed believed that police brutality was present in their areas. The following year after the Watts riots, these percentages increased significantly; a survey at the University of California found that seventy-four percent of black males believed police used unnecessary force. By 1967 an Urban League Study in Detroit noted that eighty-two percent of blacks in Detroit believed there was some form of police brutality in their city.  

Newark’s concerns about failing police relations were therefore part of a countrywide trend of distrust in law enforcement. Yet despite these clear-cut percentages, many Newark officials argued that complaints of police brutality were just an excuse used by blacks to cover up the growing deviance amongst the city’s African American population. For example, Police Director Spina told the Governor’s Commission that the issue of police brutality was “exaggerated” and that “civilian brutality in the form of attacks on policemen…is much more significant than police brutality.” This disconcerting declaration leaves one to ask who was supposed to maintain order in society when the law enforcement claimed brutality charges were

---

76 Report for Action, 35.
77 ibid
78 Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, 158.
79 Report For Action, 35.
fabricated, and the black residents claimed the police were the “single continuously lawless element operating in the community”.

Sociologist David Bordua has studied in-depth the concept of police-community relations. He concludes in his research that “the American police have traditionally been used to perform tasks too disgusting for the rest of the populace,” such as using lead-filled clubs to beat criminals. Consequently, Bordua believes, when law enforcement officials are so closely tied to certain community actions, it becomes impossible to separate the identity of police from that of violence and brutality. In Newark specifically, “the ordinary citizen’s reaction to the Police Department is twofold: he accuses the police of brutality while he complains of inadequate police protection and service.” Blacks in Newark wanted to be protected by the police, but they did not want to be beaten in the process. Thus, it was Newark’s law enforcement’s notorious attachment to the white community’s goal for black suppression that left local residents with no choice but to fear police brutality and to turn to the police as their last, not their first, resort for safety.

The survey data of poor public housing and police-community relations only taps upon the surface of what actually took place in Newark. The real stories and rich details come from the lives of African Americans who lived in Newark during the riots. Two such residents were Clement Moorman and Stanley Terrell. Moorman is ninety years old but has the visage and

---

80 ibid, 32.
81 Bordua, 62.
82 Report For Action, 35.
awareness of a much younger man. He lives in Passaic, New Jersey with his wife Kris and has dedicated his life to playing and teaching others the nuances of the piano. Terrell is fifty-seven years old. He’s lived in Newark all his life and never plans on leaving. He currently writes a column for the New Jersey Star Ledger entitled “Newark This Week,” a weekly piece that continues to battle city issues present since the days of the riot. Both Moorman and Terrell’s stories provide a unique perspective of the race riots unattainable in any textbook or newspaper article. Their tales “add new characters” to the story of Newark, while simultaneously calling into question the meaning of the term “riot.”

---

**Clement Moorman**

“History’s nothing but up and down, you know. Through all times [do] you learn anything about a period in history when there wasn’t turmoil? I doubt if there ever will be.”

---

85 Clement Moorman, picture taken by author
On March 20, 1916, Clement became the youngest of thirteen children born to Louise and Oscar Moorman. The Moormans were not affluent by any means, but they lived the best life they could. They called home a one-floor apartment at 180 Charlton Street, right in the heart of the Central Ward. Remembering his childhood days in this apartment building, Moorman explains that his home was called “a railroad flat because the rooms ran straight across. We had a kitchen, two bedrooms, and a living room or a parlor they used to call it.”

Over the years the Moorman children had come and gone through the small rooms of this ranch-style residence. Moorman and his older brother Mixie were the only two children left living at Charlton Street by the time Clem was born. Although the Charlton Street area was not a wealthy community, Louise and Oscar did their best to provide for their children. Oscar worked for a large paint and varnish company called Gillespie in Jersey City, while Louise cleaned local office buildings to earn extra cash. All the Moormans wanted was for their children to live “better [than them] and to have an education.”

In his early years, Moorman received a fine education at Charlton Street Grammar School. During this time, Newark’s public school system was “considered the most progressive in New Jersey and [even] among the leading educational systems in the nation.” Charlton Street School expanded Moorman’s academic knowledge; however, it also broadened his grasp of reality by teaching him to face the truth about racism. Moorman’s first encounters with racism

---

were triggered by his Jewish classmates’ use of the term shvartser, a derogatory Yiddish word for black people. “The white guys [at school] used to say shvartser,” Moorman remembers, “and shvartser only means black, it doesn’t necessarily mean your person, but the minute anyone said shvartser there was a fight.” Of all the fights at Charlton Street, one incident in particular remains with Moorman, a confrontation with a tall Polish boy who repeatedly teased him. After months of harassment by this Polish boy, Moorman took the situation into his own hands. “I waited one day. I knew I couldn’t accost him because he was too big. So when he came up the top of the steps, I stepped out and gave him one shot and he stepped back. Would you believe from that day on we became friends.”

Evidence of Newark’s downfall could be found just four to five blocks away from the Moormans’ residence. Here prostitutes lined the streets awaiting their next customer, and illegal gamblers hid in the back rooms of local bars betting large sums of cash. Moorman’s parents kept him away from this corrupt world located in the crevices of the Central Ward. “They said don’t you dare go near there, you know, because they knew what was up.” In an attempt to steer their son in the right direction, the Moormans decided to have their daughter Hazel teach Clement how to play the piano. Oscar had bought the family an upright-piano years before Clement was born, and the piano came with a set of free lessons. Hazel, the second to oldest daughter, proved to be the most talented musician amongst the Moorman children and she was assigned by her

90 ibid
father to teach the rest of her siblings when they were old enough to play. Clement was next in line, so each week he would walk to Lincoln Park where his sister Hazel lived and take piano lessons.

In the beginning, Moorman had little desire to play the piano.

I did not want to play but my mother says go, and when my mother says go she meant it. So I remember walking down with my book and sitting with my sister and she’d teach me for about an hour. And when I got home my mother, she didn’t understand music, but she’d make me sit down and play what my sister had taught me.  

After only a few lessons, Moorman’s older brother Mixie began to drag him to neighborhood homes to entertain party-goers. “The first one was at the Jacksons, our neighbors across the street,” Moorman describes. “I think I knew three songs…so I had to play them the whole night…. I got about a dollar fifty for the job, and I think Mixie must have palmed some of it.”

Moorman’s big musical break, however, was at Thirteenth Avenue Presbyterian Church when the pianist was sick one Sunday morning. The choir director kindly asked Louise if her son could play for services and without a second thought Louise said yes. That Sunday Moorman made his first public debut and Louise stood close by her son to provide moral support. “The church had big doors, and a piano right near the doors; my mom pulled the doors back and looked back at me to give me confidence.”

---

92 *ibid*


Although Moorman was not initially interested in playing piano, his sister Hazel had instilled in him the desire to become a musician. By 1940 when Moorman was twenty-four years old, he collaborated with two other musicians and a vocalist to form the well-known Newark band the Piccadilly Pipers. “The reason we got the [name the] Piccadilly Pipers,” Moorman notes, “was because we were playing at the Piccadilly Club and Ernie Ransome thought of the Pied Pipers of Hamlin so he put it together, and that’s how we got the group.” The Pipers included Moorman on piano, Al Henderson on bass, Ernie Ransome on guitar, and Bonnie Davis on vocals. Within a few weeks, Moorman became fully engrossed with the band’s activities and its members. After sharing many vocal parts with Bonnie Davis, Clement and Bonnie were married within a few short years. Together they moved to a new home on Custer Avenue, just two blocks from the Central Ward, and started a family.

While courting Bonnie, Moorman worked hard to promote his band’s music. After receiving a tip from another musician about a local record producer, Moorman innocently agreed to have Herman Lubinsky record the Pipers’ first hit single “Don’t Stop Now.” Unbeknownst to Clem, Lubinsky was one of the most notorious record producers of Newark’s music scene in the 1930s and 1940s. Lubinsky founded the independent label Savoy Records and recorded anybody he could get his hands on, including Moorman. Upon learning of the talented Piccadilly Pipers, Lubinsky promised Moorman and the other band members ten cents per single sold. The single ended up selling eighty thousand records, but rather than paying the Pipers their promised

---

96 Kukla, Swing City, 153.
$8,000 Lubinsky gave the band $75 to divide amongst them. Moorman finally realized that Lubinsky was “a shrewd man, a crook, I hate to say that about the man, because he’s passed on, but a crook, is a crook.” Lubinsky’s actions represented one of many incidents where white businessmen tried to exploit working-class blacks. Moorman needed to support his new family, however, so when he was given the chance to make some money he jumped at the opportunity to record with Savoy Records even if it left him with few expendable funds.

Moorman’s experience with racism and exploitation as a result of his contract with Savoy Records, led him to become increasingly aware of the need to remedy race relations in America. He believed that African Americans had “to find a better way, education, or friendship, or dialogue” to overcome inequality. In an effort to promote change, he began to attend meetings at Grace Fenderson’s home on Walnut Street where he and other local Newark residents would discuss ways in which to improve the community. He also attended Christian Endeavors every Sunday at the Queens of Angels Church where “all kinds of things were discussed [including:] what can you do to make your community better? How can you help your family? [And] how could you help your church?”

Yet, in spite of Moorman’s attempts to become an active Civil Rights proponent, nothing he could have done over the next twenty years would have prepared him for the outbreak of the Newark riots. On the night of July 12, 1967 Clement and Bonnie Moorman were driving home

---

97 Kukla, Swing City, 156.
100 ibid
from a gig at the Governor Morris Hotel in Morristown, New Jersey. The couple had since broken away from the Pipers and started their own musical duo. As they approached their house that July evening, Moorman was surprised to find the entrance to Newark barricaded. “As we came home,” he recollects, “we had to come through Irvington. The National Guard was there on the streets and they had their machine guns and everything. You had to show identification, and you had to reach very carefully because they were trained to shoot.” Moorman was able to enter Newark that night because he had the proper papers to prove that he was indeed a Newark resident. However over the next couple of days, the rioting got so out of hand that he and Bonnie were unable to return to work at the hotel.

As his city erupted in flames, the Civil Rights issues Moorman had once discussed on Sunday mornings became vivid in his mind once again. He began to reconsider his place in society as an African American, as well as to contemplate the issues plaguing the black citizens of Newark. One issue in particular that struck Moorman was public housing. As a child in the 1920s, Moorman had been fortunate to live in a well-furnished, properly heated home. Now looking at the projects surrounding his home on Custer Avenue, Moorman realized that nice apartments were no longer available. “When [the buildings] first went up we were all so proud,” Moorman boasts. “They were beautiful, beautiful buildings.” Within just a few years, however, these architectural wonders were nothing more than containers of violence and disease.

Moorman evokes the horrible sights of a visit to his friends and family in the projects: “kids

---

102 ibid
would urinate on the walls, people would get raped there, [and] the elevators were just terrible and ruined from people moving in. The whole concept didn’t work out at all; it was a waste of money.”

After having been personally invested in Newark’s glory days, the decline of public housing was so much more distressing for Moorman than for younger generations of Newark residents. In addition, being so close to the issue at hand made it more difficult for Moorman to distance himself from Newark in order to provide an objective understanding of why public housing had gone awry.

The roots of the problems with Newark’s housing date to 1937. That year, the NHC received a sizeable Federal grant for urban renewal. With this grant a total of thirty-seven high-rises were built. Even with so many new residences, 4,400 families were still waiting for housing as of 1968. With such a long waiting list for public housing and such a limited amount of space available, the NHC decided to continue to promote the building of projects despite their obvious deficiencies. Moorman’s older sister Thelma, who lived alone in a project on Bergen Avenue, personally experienced the problems of Newark’s housing. After violence erupted in the city, Thelma struggled to stay alive when bullets pierced the foundation of her building. Moorman felt helpless; as a lifelong resident of Newark and genuine contributor to the city’s economy, he could do nothing to protect his sister from the chaos. “She would hear bullets flying,” Moorman describes in a distressed tone, “and she would get back from the window. She

---

104 Report For Action, 56.
knew to stay away from the windows.” While staying away from the windows may have been Thelma’s method of defense, other African Americans decided to take a more proactive stance and refused to pay their rent until repairs were made to their buildings. George Cannon, Manager of Hayes Homes, explained “I have had many people say to me I’m not going to pay rent unless those curtain hooks are put up,” the heating is fixed, or the rodent problem is properly resolved. Unsurprisingly by July 1967, “the major areas of rioting were those with the worst living conditions.” It can be concluded, then, that the deprived living situations of many of Newark’s African Americans helped to trigger the race riots.

Despite Mayor Hugh Addonizio’s awareness of civilian discontent, little if any action was taken by the government to improve local living conditions. In Moorman’s opinion: “Honestly I don’t think these people were trying. You know, these conditions were evident if you just open your eyes.” The reason government officials chose to be selectively blind when it came to housing atrocities is not easy to pinpoint. Part of being a historian, however, is reconstructing the past to provide a deeper understanding of events. The “façade factor” can be considered one of many possible explanations for the lack of housing improvement in Newark. According to the “façade factor,” on the surface, high-rises in Newark were constructed to solve the city’s housing shortage; in reality, the high-rises were a means to achieve segregation. The residents who populated these dilapidated edifices represented the poorest sector of the city’s

106 Cannon, 87.
107 Porambo, 6.
economy and consequently had no choice but to live in these apartments. Newark officials were aware of these civilians’ economic status and so by constructing public housing, officials maintained a form of de facto segregation. From a historian’s point of view, if Addonizio and the NHC did improve public residences, working-class whites may have chosen to move into these affordable buildings. If so, this might have destroyed the informal racial divisions of the city. Furthermore, by not spending the money to improve lodging, the Newark government could redirect its funds to downtown construction. Fifty million dollars went to creating a ten-story motel, a shopping plaza, and an underground parking facility. Another eighty million went toward privately-sponsored office construction. Instead of filling the gaping holes in apartment walls or providing freezing residents a source of heat during the brutal New Jersey winters, Addonizio sponsored $130 million worth of downtown cosmetic surgery.

Eventually after five days of ghastly rioting, Moorman’s city was completely destroyed; “It looked terrible. It would make you cry.” Today Moorman’s memory is still plagued by the Newark riots. He questions what he could have done to prevent the city’s destruction and downfall of housing, but finds himself at a loss for words. He wonders if he had he stood up for his rights like he once did as a child taunted by a bully, then he might have helped prevent the violence; yet, he knows this wouldn’t have been possible. Instead of dwelling upon feelings of disappointment, Moorman has spent his life trying to better himself and the black community

109 Porambo, 7.
through the power of music. On weekends he performs at a restaurant in Secaucus, New Jersey, and in his spare time he does spots in television commercials. Nothing has and will ever stop Moorman from living his life to the fullest, and it is the city of Newark that remains a vital part of his existence. He says he takes pride in the belief that “Newark is really coming along. It’s amazing the houses, the houses they’re building,” he exclaims. “There’s no gigantic projects anymore. [Luckily,] it’s all one and two family houses.”

Stanley Terrell

“I won’t exaggerate; 7 out of 10 times you walk away with a bad taste in your mouth after you have a confrontation with the police. It didn’t have to be you confronting them, you just had to be in their presence and watching them conduct themselves as related to your community and it was always negative.”

111 ibid
113 Stanley Terrell, picture taken by author
Down-neck from Newark’s towering high-rises stood rows of tiny brick buildings only three to four stories high. Those who inhabited these buildings developed a slightly different perspective of the city of Newark than those who lived in the heart of the Central Ward. It is this difference in neighborhoods that would later shape residents’ reactions to and involvement with the Newark race riots, adding to the complexity of racial unrest in the city. Although these apartments were not located in the Central Ward, they were still enveloped by a growing industrialized city. Valentine Brewery was just down the block and Briar’s Ice Cream Factory hugged the opposite street corner. As the number of area industries multiplied, so too did the mixture of ethnicities and races of people who lived in these three to four-story complexes. “The surrounding neighborhood was a little bit of everything. It was a multi-ethnic community, but more like a stew than a puree. You could go two blocks and there’d be a whole neighborhood of mostly or all Irish people. Then you’d go around the corner and it would be all Italians.”114 And like other sections of Newark, you could go one more block and there were many African Americans living in these short bricks structures.

Stanley Terrell was one of many blacks who were raised in these three-story buildings. His family, like the Moormans, were not wealthy individuals but fared well compared to other public housing residents. “We were poor,” Terrell remembers, “but the housing was adequate. It wasn’t run down; it wasn’t like the images you have of public housing.”115 Terrell was the

115 ibid
second of four children; he had an older sister, as well as a younger sister and brother. Having been born in a Northern state, the Terrell children were more fortunate than their Southern-born parents and definitely had more opportunities for success. Terrell’s parents were born in Alabama, the core of racial unrest in the American South and the birthplace of the “New Negro – militant…and ready to use his collective strength to achieve his ends.”

Terrell’s father had chosen not to join this militant movement and moved North in hopes of finding a better place to live and raise a family. Upon coming North, Mr. Terrell worked as a civilian employee and Mrs. Terrell worked in domestic work and factory jobs, just like Louise Moorman. By working these jobs the Terrells tried to live the best life they could live. Mr. Terrell’s goal to achieve success in the North was not reached until he became the president of the Ironbound District’s Tenants’ Association. As president of the Tenants’ Association, Mr. Terrell made “sure certain things were being taken care of” for his family and black Newark residents by developing a good rapport with local politicians and policemen.

Although Mr. Terrell tried his best to secure a better life for his son, racial animosity toward African Americans was ever present in New Jersey when Stanley was born. As president, therefore, Mr. Terrell decided to help form one of the first Police Community Review Boards in the city. The board was founded around certain key issues such as reducing the use of violent force by local officers, improving communication between the police and black community.

---

116 Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, 106.
117 Stanley Terrell’s father will be referred to as Mr. Terrell throughout this chapter.
leaders, and ensuring black officers would be assigned to ghetto areas in addition to white policemen. “They would meet sometimes with the brass of the police department at that precinct to try to smooth things out,” Terrell reminisces. “Those that were young [and a part of the review board,] especially if they weren’t in school and weren’t working, had a very negative opinion of the police. [The police] seemed like they would hassle you for no reason, and they did it in a very nasty and condescending manner.”

This growing public recognition of police-community tension in New Jersey dates back just one year prior to Terrell’s birth. On January 27, 1948 six African American men in Trenton, New Jersey were accused of murdering Fred Horner, a seventy-two year old white junk dealer who was found clubbed to death in the backroom of his Trenton store. The accused became popularly known as the Trenton Six, and the “case raised doubts about the fair treatment of black suspects in police custody.” These six men were held under arrest, declined legal counsel, and then drugged and interrogated for an extended period of time without sleep until each was pressured into signing a confession. Civil unrest spread throughout New Jersey cities such as Jersey City, Elizabeth, and Patterson. Knowledge of these disturbances did reach Newark, but the city failed to erupt into racial terror like its urban neighbors. In fact, Newark, where one of the “most serious of civil disorders of 1967 occurred,” was actually at the center of Civil Rights activities in New Jersey in 1948. Around the same time period in Illinois, the Chicago Defender

120 Price, Freedom Not Far From Distant, 251.
121 ibid, 278.
began to document a rising number of cases of police maltreatment. Examples of such violent behavior by Chicago law enforcement included “abusive language, arbitrary arrests, search without provocation [and] torturing of arrestees.”¹²² These law enforcement officials denied brutality charges even when the obvious bruises and scars on black people’s skins revealed the extent of violence in city ghettos. Whether each of the 1967 rioters was aware of the story of the Trenton Six or the brutality stories from the Chicago Defender is not important. What is crucial is that by the time the riots erupted, Newark’s African Americans were cognizant of the fact that for decades throughout the country blacks experienced police brutality. Thus, the existence of such an atrocity was unquestionable by July 1967.

It was in this midst of confusion about whether the police were there to protect or to harm the African American population of Newark that Terrell began to mature into young adulthood. He attended Arts High School, a small, specialized private school where only the most talented students could gain access to such a prestigious education in the fine and performing arts. Arts High was not only unique in its academic curriculum, but also its student body makeup. “Arts High was like a United Nations…you had people from all over the city and from every different background.”¹²³ Here Terrell majored in fine arts and was given instruction in just about every art style. Yet as he was learning about the arts, the brush strokes he painted each day seemed petty compared to the racial issues that surrounded him. He began “noticing some discrepancies,

some biased slants here and there and some prejudice.” His father began to expose Terrell to the reality of racial issues. Unlike children who attended public schools, such as Moorman, Terrell’s private academic environment had not directly exposed him to racism. Instead, he saw an eclectic mix of students share creative ideas freely with one another without the stigmas of race or ethnicity. Mr. Terrell burst this utopian bubble and shared with his son his own knowledge of Civil Rights.

My father was very much into Martin Luther King so he always brought us in line with that. He also, as I got older, was the one who introduced me to Malcolm X even though he said I don’t particularly agree with him but I think you ought to hear another side. He would expose me to a lot of different books. He got me into Langston Hughes and County Cullen and Jay A Rogers, and people like that. I was always aware of the racial dynamic going on in the country.¹²⁴

The lessons Terrell was taught by his father, in combination with the array of opinions he was exposed to at Arts High, can be seen as shaping the way in which Terrell now remembers the Newark race riots. His memories were not necessarily his own, but a combination of his father’s and his classmates’ recollections of Newark and Civil Rights in general.

Despite Terrell’s awareness of the racial tensions in America and in Newark, he was not prepared to experience it himself. One day when Terrell was in his early teens, he visited his friend’s home on Hunterdon Street right around the corner from Hayes Homes. When he entered

his friend’s house, he noticed the place had been burglarized. After a bit of hesitation, Terrell’s friend called the police for help. When the cops pulled up to the house they “started to imply that it was an inside job that we were the ones who committed this robbery and we’re just trying to cover up…It wasn’t until [my friend’s] father came home from work [that] he told them they all could leave because they were accusing his son and his friends.”\textsuperscript{125} The police, in Terrell’s opinion, once again proved unhelpful to Newark’s African Americans. From that incident on, Terrell was more cognizant of the existence of police brutality and soon everyone he knew, with very rare exceptions, had some type of negative run-in with the local law enforcement. “If you just spit on the sidewalk they would take that as some kind of disrespect, and grab you and bang you against the wall,” he explains.\textsuperscript{126} Even Terrell’s own neighborhood, which was not in the heart of the tension in the Central Ward, became know as the “banging head district because it seemed like it didn’t take anything for [the police] to rouse somebody up.”\textsuperscript{127} Officers often used rubber hoses to beat African Americans because hoses didn’t leave bruises or welts on the skin for extended periods of time, making it virtually impossible to claim brutality charges. In addition, when police arrested an individual and brought him to the precinct, they often ignored the rules regarding civilized treatment of prisoners.

Men were being brought in, many of them handcuffed behind their backs, being carried like a sack of meal, and the fifth policeman would be hammering their face and their body with a billy stick. This went on time after time.

\textsuperscript{125} Terrell, Stanley. Interview by author. Newark, NJ: 8 July 2005.
\textsuperscript{126} \textit{ibid}
\textsuperscript{127} \textit{ibid}
Many times you would see a man being brought into the Police Station without a mark on his face and when he was taken out he was brutally beaten up.\textsuperscript{128}

It was incidents like this that later led Newarkers at the outbreak of the riots to chant, “Beat drums, not heads!”\textsuperscript{129}

While the ugly reality of police brutality and racism did not discourage Terrell from attempting to become a successful member of society, for one of his friends the reality of life was all too disheartening.

One of my very good friends at the time had always wanted to be a cop. That was his dream from seven years old. But the older he got… he went in the opposite direction … He wants to be a police officer and then suddenly it’s the furthest thing from his mind because at that time there weren’t that many black cops in Newark [less than 10 percent of the force] and … they weren’t making that much of a difference.\textsuperscript{130, 131}

Case studies similar to Terrell’s friend prompted investigations by the Federal Crime Commission Police Task Force (FCCPTF) following the Newark riots. The FCCPTF studied the stories of young African American men who no longer wanted to join the Newark police force for a multitude of reasons, and these stories prompted the task force to look further into the racial makeup of the city’s police force. The task force found that “for police in a Negro community to be predominantly white can serve as a dangerous irritant; a feeling may develop that the

\textsuperscript{128} Albert Black. “Testimony before the New Jersey Governor’s Commission.” Box 5B: 20 November 1967. (Newark, 1967) 37.

\textsuperscript{129} “Sparks & Tinder” \textit{Time Magazine Archive}. 21 July 1967. Volume 90, No. 3:1.

\textsuperscript{130} Terrell, Stanley. Interview by author. Newark, NJ: 8 July 2005.

\textsuperscript{131} \textit{Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders}, 169.
community is not being policed to maintain civil peace but to maintain status quo.”\textsuperscript{132} Sociologist David Bordua in studying incidents of failing police-community relations like those in Newark found that when a ghetto population such as Terrell’s neighborhood is seen as crimogenic “arrests records for minor offenses become so high, young males see themselves as licked before they start.”\textsuperscript{133} Terrell’s friend is one of those young males who saw no future in becoming a policeman after being told time after time that the black man cannot succeed in a white-dominated society. Historian Komozi Woodard would have sympathized with this teenage boy. “Once they were told they couldn’t enter this world because they were not educated; so they continued their schooling,” Woodard explains. “Now that they were educated, they had to face the ugly fact that exclusive white groups would use their political and bureaucratic power to monopolize those positions.”\textsuperscript{134}

Terrell’s experiences provide an exception to Bordua and Woodard’s conclusions. He graduated from Arts High in 1966 and ventured off to Hampton Institute in Virginia to earn a college degree. Ironically during his first year of study, Terrell found Hampton although located in the South less racially tense than his hometown. “For the most part Virginia wasn’t that bad. I kind of thought it was going to be a lot more difficult whenever I ventured off campus, but surprisingly it wasn’t. In fact there were some parts of Newark that I found more frightening than Virginia.”\textsuperscript{135} Even in the Midwest City of Chicago black-white relations were considerably

\textsuperscript{132} \textit{ibid}, 165.
\textsuperscript{133} Bordua, 62.
\textsuperscript{134} Theoharis and Woodard, \textit{Freedom North}, 293.
\textsuperscript{135} Terrell, Stanley. Interview by author. Newark, NJ: 8 July 2005.
more destructive than in Virginia. That summer just before Terrell left for Hampton and exactly one year before the Newark race riots, on July 12, 1966, several Chicago teens opened a fire hydrant for relief from the intense heat, since the city pools were only open to whites. The police when seeing this water-world spectacle clubbed five youths until they were bloody and lectured them about their behavior. A small riot erupted and the National Guard was called in to restore the peace. Once the city was calm, the same officers that initiated the incident returned to the scene and shot up several homes. “We could have stopped the rioting the first day by laying two of those guys with our guns,” one of the policemen said.\textsuperscript{136} It was incidents such as this in Chicago that changed Terrell’s attitude towards the end of his freshman year at Hampton. He says he became angrier and began to outwardly protest injustices. His protest toward the prejudices of white society may have been seen by poverty-stricken blacks as the protest of a privileged African American, but for Terrell his change in demeanor, whether privileged or not, was essential to the progression of the black race toward equality. He explains:

> I think I started to get a little more militant. One reason was because Stokeley Carmichael came to my campus, a historically black college [and] exposed us to a lot of different people. And then when talking with people from all over the country I started getting a little more militant. So I went through a phase where I was probably saying let’s just start a revolution, you know get this thing over with. And the riots kind of helped push me more in that direction.\textsuperscript{137}

\textsuperscript{136} Theoharis and Woodard, Freedom North, 47.
\textsuperscript{137} Terrell, Stanley. Interview by author. Newark, NJ: 8 July 2005.
When returning home from college after freshman year, Terrell did not feel as if he was entering the same city he had left just one year before. People he used to interact with on a daily basis, from the bus driver to the store cashier, who treated him kindly for the most part, looked at him differently than before. For example, Terrell notes that often the abrupt ending of a conversation was just enough to show that blacks were no longer greeted with a welcoming smile. “You would hear people talking if you were in a building in an elevator,” Terrell recalls, “and then suddenly they’d shut up if you got on; so, either you’re hearing something or you know something got said because it got shut down.”\textsuperscript{138} Even recognition that the local government was in shambles was discussed more prominently in public circles. Mayor Addonizio’s attitude “that if nobody has done anything for you and I just do a teeny-weeny bit then you should be happy,” no longer applied. The country was saying “that gradualism is not going to cut it any more. It became freedom now. So for an elected official who came in with the promise I’m going to change the way we do business here, and then said what are you complaining about … it didn’t rub right.”\textsuperscript{139}

As he watched his city’s housing, police relations, and government structure crumble before his eyes Terrell attempted to make some money before Newark erupted in violence. He was picked up by a \textit{Collier’s Encyclopedia} representative just one week after he returned home and the representative trained him to sell World Books door to door. The job lasted only a few

\textsuperscript{138} \textit{ibid}
\textsuperscript{139} \textit{ibid}
weeks; the pressure of a commission-based salary was too much. In addition, Terrell was tired of facing the wrath of the police.

[Collier’s would] drop you off in the middle of some suburb all by yourself. Some people would be nice and let you in, but invariably some people would call the cops… the cops would say what are you doing here; do you have a solicitor’s permit? [Then] the cops would tell you gotta go or they’d take you down to the station and you’d have to wait for the guys to pick you up…they’d never respond to the police.\textsuperscript{140}

With not a cent more of profit and several trips to police precincts in the bag, Terrell decided he would resign from Collier’s. But, right before he could resign, Newark erupted in racial terror. On the night of July 12, 1967 Terrell was at home watching television when a breaking news report flashed on the screen; residents of the Central Ward had begun to riot. His father immediately called a meeting of the Tenants’ Association to ensure residents would be safe if the rioting spread Down Neck. While his father held the fort at home, Terrell tried to help out a friend who lived in the Central Ward. He attempted to drive home a friend who lived in Hayes Homes and faced not only the sight of tanks, but also the butt of a National Guardsman’s rifle. The Guardsman, Terrell recalls was his own age, “but he’s telling me I can’t go down the street and if I take another move he’s going to shoot me.”\textsuperscript{141} For Terrell, the only thing that scared him more than the sight of army tanks taking over his city were “the pimple-faced nineteen year old

\textsuperscript{140} Terrell, Stanley. Interview by author. Newark, NJ: 8 July 2005.
\textsuperscript{141} ibid
kids sitting there with their big guns scared to death thinking that everybody is a threat.”\textsuperscript{142} Just like Moorman’s closeness to the issue of public housing, police-community relations hit home for Terrell, and continue to haunt him nearly forty years later.

Fortunately that night Terrell made it home safely. He had to drive through nine blocks before he could find a street that was not barricaded. After a few days of rioting, Terrell was frightened to hear that two men, similar to his age and who grew up close his neighborhood, were killed in the chaos. Terrell says he thought to himself that it could have been him killed in the riots. The first of these brutal homicides took place on July 15\textsuperscript{th}. William Furr, age 24, was “stranded in Newark. He came to the city to pick up a $50 unemployment check and look for a job to replace the one he lost at a bakery when it went out of business. When the buses back to Montclair…were stopped by the riot, Billy stayed on in Newark with friends.”\textsuperscript{143} While in Newark, Billy and his friends traveled down Avon Avenue to Mack Liquors, which had already been ransacked, and loaded up on cases of beer. Suddenly police cruisers pulled up in front of the store. Billy, afraid of being arrested, fled from the scene holding a six-pack of beer in his trembling hands. Within an instant, a police officer shot him in the back and two of the pellets ricocheted striking twelve-year old Joe Bass in the neck and thigh. Joe was rushed to the hospital, but Billy was left dying on Avon Avenue. Police had to pry Billy’s girlfriend off his cold corpse while she screamed uncontrollably “God, don’t let him die.”\textsuperscript{144}

\textsuperscript{142} Terrell, Stanley. Interview by author. Newark, NJ: 8 July 2005.
\textsuperscript{144} \textit{ibid}, 22.
murder freelance photographer Bud Lee and Life reporter Dale Wittner were in Newark interviewing riot participants. Lee and Wittner stood in shock as Billy lay dying on the sidewalk.

Lee recalls the event several years later:

The whole time we were in Newark we never saw what you would call a violent black man...The only people I saw who were violent were the police. When we were out there on Avon Avenue with Billy, no one was scared...We were all drinking beer and talking...When the police came Billy panicked and ran...I was standing right over him when he died...I remember we asked if they were going to do anything for him and a cop mumbled 'the guy’s better off dead.'

Terrell believed that police killing Furr simply for taking six beers was absolutely absurd. Did African American lives mean nothing to white Newark law enforcement, he wondered?

The second man killed was nineteen year old James Rutledge, who the same age as Terrell at the time. On Sunday afternoon July 16th, Rutledge and some of his friends were in a boarded up tavern in the Central Ward district. Shortly after five PM an entourage of city and state police cars arrived at this tavern after receiving a report that there had been an incident of breaking and entering. The four officers dispatched to the scene entered the tavern and walked toward the back annex. They thought they saw a man holding a knife – it was James shaking in fear with no weapon of any sort – and simultaneously opened fire. The ballistic report for James’ body found that “at least two revolvers and one or more shotguns had been fired, but none of the

145 Porambo, 223-224.
spent bullets or slugs could be traced to any particular gun.”

James had been shot a total of thirty-nine times and had forty-two holes in his body before the officers ceased fire. His body had been completely mutilated, yet the officers involved were not reprimanded. Incredibly, Rutledge after being shot seventeen times, was documented as having “had time to wipe his fingerprints off” the knife found next to his body. The evidence against the police was there if the jury could just open their eyes. Soon inflammatory leaflets were distributed around Newark showing Rutledge’s lifeless body, and instilling anger in Newark’s African American residents. Black Power activist LeRoi Jones testified before the New Jersey Governor’s Commission in regards to the slaughter of James Rutledge. He noted: “If you shoot a man just once through his skull, he will stop bothering you even if he doesn’t die. There is absolutely no understanding in the black community nor in sophisticated portions of the white community that would justify shooting this man thirty-nine times.” Jones added that he now realizes that “in white communities in Newark, New Jersey, this act is celebrated and celebrated as an act of keeping ‘niggers’ in their place.”

Of the twenty-six people killed during the riots, more than a third were Terrell’s age or three to five years older/younger than him and twenty-two out of the twenty-six riot victims were African American. Reading about young men, like himself, dying in a split-second, led Terrell to reconsider his life and responsibility as a black man. It was not enough to have militant beliefs

---

146 ibid, 242.
147 ibid
and call for a more violent approach to Civil Rights; Terrell himself had to take action against the forces holding the African American race in a subordinate position. By the time the brutal summer of ’67 was over, Terrell decided he would only spend one more year at Hampton Institute. “In ’68 I had another focus,” he explains. “I started reading a lot and getting involved in the community, which gave me the opportunity to write. Although I never consciously said I’m going to be a writer.”149 Shortly after the riots, Terrell landed a job as one of the first black reporters for the *Newark Star Ledger*. Although the emotional scars Terrell faced as a result of the race riots will never be erased, he says he will always take pride in his city of Newark. He remarks, Newark “is home. I’ve been here all my life and don’t see myself going anywhere.”150

---

**A Final Thought**

Moorman and Terrell were from two different generations of Newark residents.

Moorman was born in Newark when city life was thriving, new buildings were sprouting every day, and public education was at its peak. Terrell, on the other hand, was born into a city of growing poverty, deteriorating housing, and extreme racial divisions. While these two men started their lives in Newark at very different points in time, both were present during the race riots. During that July 1967, the color of their skin united them in ways they could never have imagined. It was thus the race riots that brought Newark’s African Americans together in a

---

massive effort to restore their Constitutional rights. The riots, as previously argued, were consequently seen by many blacks as a movement away from chaos and a progression toward ending the injustice and subjection of the black race. This does not mean that all of Newark’s African American residents in the 1960s supported violence and destruction as a means of achieving their goals. Rather they saw the race riots as a chance for their voices to finally be heard. For example, Moorman believes riots worsen the situation at hand, but are still “understandable.” Terrell also “wouldn’t say a riot is justified,” but would classify such an event as “understandable and explainable.” Newark’s race riots were not as a surprising occurrence. The city had been preparing itself for an outbreak of chaos since the early 1920s. Yet, it took the Civil Rights activists of the 1960s like Robert Curvin, Tom Hayden, and LeRoi Jones, for the public to finally acknowledge the numerous problems festering in the city. The race riots can thus be looked at from a very different lens, as an almost positive, proactive lens that pushed city officials towards recognizing the rights of all its citizens for the very first time in Newark history.

CHAPTER TWO:
The Newspaper Print Isn’t So Black and White After All:
A Newark Outsider Covers the Riots

“Another job that I just can’t get/A nice apartment, the landlord just won’t rent/I go to bed, but my sleep just won’t come/My belly’s empty and my brain is numb. Nobody saw me walking/And

no body heard me talking/Seems like I gotta do wrong /Before they notice me,” “Seems Like I Gotta Do Wrong” The Whispers, 1969.

The sound of printing press machines was all that could be heard in the early hours of July 13, 1967 at the headquarters of the Newark Evening News. The presses drowned out the voices of police and law enforcement officials all attempting to clear the streets of the Central Ward after last night’s disturbance in front of the fourth precinct. The routine procedure of printing and gathering news for the daily paper had been completely overturned just a few hours before when the city erupted in violence. Reporters were called in early by their assignment editors, and instructed to investigative the tension along Livingston Street and gain as many leads as possible. One Newark Evening News reporter boldly approached the circumstances at hand and awoke Mayor Addonizio from his slumber at two o’clock that morning. He asked the mayor the following question: “I understand Newark is in flames. What can you tell me about that?”153 It was thus the media that first informed the Mayor that his own city was on the brink of a riot. With that initial move, reporters began to quickly gather information from local law enforcement officials. By the time the paper hit the stands, the front page bore the memorable headline “Trouble in Central Ward Called Isolated Incident.”154 Mayor Addonizio, despite a warning by the media, still declared that, “there was no riot alert.”155 Addonizio was holding on

153 United States, Report For Action: Governor’s Select Commission on Civil Disorder the State of New Jersey. (Newark, 1968) Box 11: 221.
155 Berliner, 1.
to a statement he made just one year before, that “although we [Newark] have a large Negro population, we haven’t had any racial conflict.”\footnote{Peter Millones. “Newark A City Founded by Puritans.” \textit{New York Times}: 14 July 1967: 11.}

Another reporter James Cusick collected just enough information to fill two columns on page four of the paper. Cusick’s article revealed an enlightening fact; that the riot’s “trouble centered on [a] man \textit{few knew}.”\footnote{James Cusick. “Trouble Centered on Man Few Knew.” \textit{Newark Evening News}: 13 July 1967: 4, emphasis added.} This infamous figure is the previously mentioned John Smith, a local cabdriver virtually unknown until the night of July 12\textsuperscript{th} when he was arrested for tailgating a police car and driving with a revoked license. Smith had no wife, no children, and no close friends in Newark. Everything about him – including his name – epitomized obscurity. Yet this name would soon grace the pages of newspapers and magazines around the country. Smith had to do something “wrong,” as The Whispers once sang, to be noticed by residents and the press. Then as soon as he was acknowledged, Smith transformed into the quintessential figure of the Newark riots, “a man whose face had been on the cover of \textit{Time Magazine} and yet remained anonymous as ever.”\footnote{Ron Porambo. \textit{No Cause For Indictment: An Autopsy of Newark} (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971) 103.}
The articles written by Newark Evening News reporters, including those about Smith, became a crucial piece of historical documentation. These reporters acted like make-shift historians not only recording the events of July 1967, but also shaping how people all over the country would remember and understand the Newark riots. The job of capturing riot discontent on paper was considered at times more complicated and nerve-racking than the job of government officials. Donald Malafronte the Administrative Assistant to Mayor Addonizio was quoted the day after the riots erupted as saying, “well of course it was a tense day, but the tensest people around were the newspapermen and the television men.” The intensity of this particular job derives from the fact that not only did Newark Evening News reporters cover the situation in Newark, but they also were given the task of writing about the rise of racial unrest throughout the country. With such responsibility dedicated to the mission of newsgathering during the summer of 1967, three concerns arose: 1) Did the media adequately cover the issues at hand, 2)
Were reporters representative of local Newark residents, and 3) Did covering violence contribute to an increase in racial unrest within the city.

For some, like Newark Police Director Dominic Spina, the media was not an informative source, but was rather an institution that promoted and intensified riot conditions. Spina testified in front of the New Jersey Governor’s Commission in 1968 that he blamed the media “a great deal for some of the things that happened.” ¹⁶¹ Several pieces of research following the riots challenged Spina’s opinion. Studies conducted by President Johnson’s administration in 1968, for example, showed that “after the first day [of a riot] there was…a very sharp decline in the amount of television time devoted to the disturbance…These findings controvert the impression that the riot intensifies television coverage, thus in turn intensifying the riot.” ¹⁶² In addition, during the Detroit riots the news media conducted a voluntary black-out of coverage for part of the first day of the riot to determine whether covering violence increased pandemonium. Detroit media members found that this suppression “of news of violence [did] not necessarily diffuse a riot situation.” ¹⁶³ Further research on this topic was not only concerned about whether the media could intensify a riot situation, but was also mindful of the fact that “the over-reporting of degrading matters” may cause people to gain a false sense of security that something is being done to suppress societal turmoil. Social scientists Paul Lazarsfeld and Robert Merton call this

¹⁶¹ ibid, 226.
¹⁶³ ibid, 210.
the “narcotizing dysfunction” in which people, “mistakenly convince themselves they have actually done something about social ills simply because they’ve read so much about them.”

In approaching media coverage concerns one can go back almost seventy years before the Newark riots erupted to the early 1900s. In the early 1900s in New Jersey, “white newspapers seldom carried news concerning the general black population,” and any time a black person “made headlines it was usually in reference to an alleged crime.” Other times when African Americans made their way into print they were portrayed through the use of racial stereotyping. For example in a 1916 issue of *The Newarker*, a paper dedicated to local civic life, blacks were depicted in an article about the 250th anniversary of the city in terms “based on the old happy-slave stereotypes.” While the city did have a “number of worthy colored folk,” the article explained these blacks were seen as merely “jubilee singers from the pine-tangled South” rather than valuable participants in the city’s celebration. This excerpt from a relatively small publication is an example of the pervasive belief that African Americans were not an integral part of the city, and were only in Newark to serve or entertain the white population.

Over the decades, media outlets throughout the country maintained this negative belief about blacks. They did this by employing certain reporters whose controversial ethical standards helped promote the idea that blacks are criminals. It is these few reporters that harmed the reputation of all the dedicated, highly trained journalists around the country. What these few

---

media members may have failed to realize was that of all the deaths in the Watts, the Detroit, and the Newark riots, only 4.4 percent of the homicides were initiated by black civilians.\textsuperscript{167} African Americans were not always the criminals; white people, including the police, also killed, plundered, and rioted. Unaware of this vital fact, some reporters fed into American stereotypes of violence and spread rumors throughout the country and in Newark. In Detroit, a radio broadcaster without any factual basis for his claim announced that “Negroes planned to invade suburbia.”\textsuperscript{168} In Newark, newspaper articles spread the rumor that “the cabbie [John Smith] was dead,” that he was “gone brother.”\textsuperscript{169} Reporters covering the Newark riots were also caught staging news events to uphold the stereotype of the black beast. For instance, one reporter lacking a good visual for his package on the riots “convinced a Negro boy to throw a rock for the camera.”\textsuperscript{170} Actions like these along with scare-tactic headlines such as “For Guardsmen Its Sudden War,”\textsuperscript{171} may have added to the increasing atmosphere of tension in the city. One newspaper editor following the riots did apologize for these sensational headlines and said that his paper “used things in [their] leads and headlines…that [he] wished [he] could have back now, because they were wrong and they were bad mistakes.”\textsuperscript{172}

\textsuperscript{167} Albert Bergesen. “Official Violence during the Watts, Newark, and Detroit Race Riots of the 1960s.” \textit{A Political Analysis of Deviance} (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1980) 142.
\textsuperscript{168} Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, 206.
\textsuperscript{169} Cusick, 4.
\textsuperscript{170} Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, 208.
\textsuperscript{172} Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, 205.
Although the previous examples display a lack of journalistic restraint, they are still common features of a riot situation. It may be unfair to hold reporters to such rigid rules when riots themselves “do not offer ideal conditions for establishing fact. The event itself is hardly without sensation.” The stories of the Newark riots whether gathered in newspapers, by word of mouth, or in government documents are all subject to sensationalism, and their inaccuracies may be considered an unavoidable consequence of a riot.

Despite decades of evidence displaying the neglect by media to adequately cover and include African Americans in their reports, it was not until months after the Newark riots that President Johnson’s Kerner Commission finally realized the extent to which the country’s media was dominated by white males. The Commission concluded that “far too often, the press acts and talks about Negroes as if Negroes do not read newspapers or watch television, give birth, marry, die, and go to PTA meetings.” President Johnson thus asked his commission to answer the question: “what effect do the mass media have on the riots?” To solve this question, representatives from the Commission performed a quantitative analysis of newspaper and television reporting in fifteen different cities where racial insurrections occurred during the summer of 1967. The results of the study were revealed in early November 1967 at a conference in Poughkeepsie, New York. Much to the Commission’s surprise the content of television newscasts and newspaper articles was found to be actually “more calm, factual, and restrained

175 *ibid*, 201.
than outwardly emotional.” The Commission also discovered that the entire news industry was controlled by white people, with black people comprising fewer than five percent of those employed in editorial positions. Just as white people controlled Newark politics and the police, they also commanded the media. Thus the media coverage of the Newark riots was highly limited in scope; it reflected the views of a white hierarchical structure and fed the spread of rumors and violence throughout the war-torn city.

African Americans’ struggle for a presence in the media was indicative of a larger movement towards equality in general employment. At the end of the riots, the New Jersey Governor’s Commission surveyed Newark’s black residents and found that seventy-seven percent believed they had fewer job opportunities and were given fewer promotions than whites. In fact, African Americans ranked unemployment and a lack of job opportunities just below “bad housing” and right above “police brutality” on the list of top ten causes for the Newark riots. Although these findings were not published until the late 1960s, New Jersey government officials demonstrated they were aware of African American unemployment problems as far back as the 1940s. In 1947 the State Division of Civil Rights attempted to encourage employers to hire blacks by prohibiting discrimination in employment. At the same time this law was passed, the New Jersey Constitution was amended to include: “no person shall be denied the enjoyment of any civil or military right…nor be segregated in militia or in public

---

176 Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, 205.
177 ibid, 211.
178 Report For Action, 67.
179 ibid, 3.
schools because of religious principles, color, ancestry or national origin.”

New Jersey was the first state to forbid segregation in the military, education, and employment. This admission of blacks into the military led to rising expectations amongst Newark’s African Americans. Yet, the enforcement of both this law and the constitutional amendment was “predicated upon individual complaints [so they were] bound to be weak and ineffective.”

Rising expectations for black equality were thus met with subsequent growing frustrations.

The rise in unemployment in New Jersey was just one of the many topics that made it into the headlines of newspapers on a daily basis. Poor public housing and deficient healthcare systems were also common story topics. To understand these articles’ content, one must go back in time to the early 20th century in Newark. In 1904 the Bureau of Statistics of Labor and Industries of New Jersey released its 26th annual report. The study analyzed 398 manufacturing companies in the state and found that blacks were only employed in eighty-three. Also discovered by this report was that there was “a noticeable absence of negroes in the trades requiring skill.” To understand why this was the case, the Bureau of Statistics interviewed several company owners regarding their opinions of black laborers. One firm of skylight manufacturers said, “We don’t care for them [blacks], because they are not reliable.” A producer of hats noted, “We do not employ Negroes in the hat manufacturing business; [we] do not believe they could be trained to do the work.” Finally, a Wet Leather Tackers’ Union explained

---

181 Report For Action, 73.
182 Price, Freedom Not Far From Distant, 204.
that “Negroes [are] not admitted. If one were to apply he would be blackballed.”183 By the time the 1947 law against job discrimination was passed, blacks in Newark had already experienced unemployment problems for over four decades. As of 1960, African Americans all over the country were experiencing similar unemployment issues. For example, in the industrial city of Detroit, most African Americans could “relate a story of a relative, friend, or neighbor who had been denied or lost a job because he was black.”184 In Newark, the resident labor force had no other choice but to find jobs elsewhere. Each day blacks would leave their homes for jobs outside the city “where they could not afford to live, while 200,000 white-collar workers commuted to corporate jobs in Newark.”185

Newark’s high black unemployment resulted in an extremely poor population of residents who had no option but to live in overcrowded public housing projects. These cramped living quarters created severe health concerns. In the 1940s, for example, just after the public high rise building craze began and black residents started to live in crowded infrastructures, the death rate of blacks in Newark from tuberculosis (TB) was five times higher than whites; this mortality rate was one of the highest in the entire country. The reasoning for these high levels of TB is that tuberculosis results from “high population density” and the blacks infected with this disease in Newark were living in crowded housing conditions.186 Twenty-six years later in 1966,

183 Price, Freedom Not Far From Distant, 207-209.
186 Price, Freedom Not Far From Distant, 221.
Newark’s Model Cities Program found that the city still had the highest rate of TB cases in the United States, as well as the highest maternal mortality rates, the highest infant mortality rates, and the highest venereal disease rates in the entire country.\textsuperscript{187} These problems were further complicated by a lack of medical resources. Martland Medical Center, Newark’s hospital for the poor, was considered to be “a major cause of tension in the city.” The hospital had staff shortages and inadequate equipment; the patient rooms were unsanitary with roaches scurrying on the floors and bats and birds hovering on the ceilings.\textsuperscript{188}

Part of the reason blacks were awarded so few job opportunities and forced to live in deprived health conditions was because Newark’s youth received little, if any, education. As a result they were not provided with the skills to acquire jobs whose salary would allow them to escape these low-income areas. As of 1967, 65.1 percent of men in Newark above age twenty-five did not have a high school degree, so “in seeking jobs the Negro [carried] with him a severe educational disadvantage.”\textsuperscript{189} These high school dropouts comprised a significant proportion of the rioters in the summer of 1967.”\textsuperscript{190} Cramped public housing mimicked the overcrowding in Newark’s public schools. In September 1966, 55,292 students were enrolled in Newark’s elementary schools, but there was only room for a little over 49,000 children.\textsuperscript{191} Newark’s public educational system and healthcare facilities were in need of a complete revamping.

\textsuperscript{187} Report For Action, 97.  
\textsuperscript{188} Report For Action, 97.  
\textsuperscript{189} ibid, 67.  
\textsuperscript{190} Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, 237.  
\textsuperscript{191} Report For Action, 75.
This need to improve healthcare and education was especially made evident by two specific events preceding the Newark race riots. First in 1966, the city’s government designated 150 acres of land near Martland Medical Center to build a medical school later known as the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey (UMDNJ). It was hoped that the school would take over the failing hospital and provide more medical staff – there was only one doctor for every 757 Newark residents at this time.\textsuperscript{192} The problem, however, was that in order to build this medical center hundreds of black residents would have to be uprooted from the Central Ward. Second, just prior to the riots, the State Board of Education had an opening for a new board secretary. The two candidates for the position were Councilman Callaghan, a white labor official who never went to college and Wilbur Parker, the first black man to become a Certified Public Accountant in New Jersey. Rather than make Parker the new secretary, Arnold Hess, the current Board of Education Secretary, was asked to remain in his position for another year. The black community erupted in “turmoil over this injustice,” further pushing Newark’s residents toward a riot.\textsuperscript{193} The extensive struggle by African Americans in the early 20\textsuperscript{th} century to join the New Jersey labor force along with the low level of black education in Newark provided a foundation for the outbreak of the riots.

The stories about the Newark riots that journalists wrote for the \textit{Newark Evening News} and other newspapers around the country can be better understood by tracing the roots of Newark’s problems. To comprehend these problems, one may turn to the stories of two

\textsuperscript{192} \textit{Report For Action}, 99.  
\textsuperscript{193} \textit{Report For Action}, 15.
individuals who were highly engrossed in the story of the Newark riots – Professor Clement Price and Barbara Kukla. Clement Price is a Professor at Rutgers University. He grew up in Washington, D.C. and moved to Newark in the late 1960s to pursue a teaching career. He teaches African American studies as well as classes about New Jersey history and race relations. He is noted for founding Rutgers’s Institute on Ethnicity, Culture, and the Modern Experience. Barbara Kukla is a life-long journalist. She’s always lived in New Jersey, but has never resided in Newark. Throughout her career she reported for many local papers such as the Star Ledger, as well published numerous books on African American life in Newark. Since both Price and Kukla did not live in Newark during the riots neither had direct experience with the conditions leading up to the riots, or the actual violence in the city. Nevertheless, both of their lives were forever changed by the riots. For Professor Price, the riots completely shifted his career path from wanting to work in the U.S. Foreign Service, to deciding to dedicate his life to studying the history of Newark and the issues leading up to riot. For Kukla, the riots shifted her journalism career from focusing on women’s issues to concentrating her writing on the grievances of African American residents and the riots themselves. The topics she once reported on for the New Jersey Herald and the Star Ledger were the same issues Price studied in his beginning years as a professor in the New Jersey collegiate system. Although Professor Price was not directly involved with the media, he and Kukla were in a way ‘reporting’ on the issues of a racially divided city.
“So we went in and I saw the cell where John Smith was allegedly beaten. It was like oh my god, a very powerful moment. I’ve been trying to get a plaque put on that precinct to commemorate it as the place the riots started. All the high rises have been brought down, there’s a new community of town houses, the streets are clean as a whistle, they’re safe and they’re sound and the riot is now history. You would never think that this community is the community that blew up.”

It’s 1913 and Southern Congress members in fear of the actions of the newly formed National Association for the Advancement of Colored People decide to “introduce bills to federalize the Southern segregation policy. They [wish] to ban interracial marriages in the District of Columbia, segregate white and Negro federal employees, and introduce Jim Crow laws in the public carriers of the district.” Despite strong initiatives, none of these bills pass. Instead, segregation is extended into other areas of life including “Federal offices, shops, restrooms, and lunchrooms. The Nation’s capital became as segregated as…the former

---

Confederate States.” Washington, D.C., the quintessential center of democracy, was actually one of the United States’ most segregated cities. This city, like many other areas of the South, was a battlefield of intense racial divisions. As more blacks moved into the area, these divisions unofficially reinforced themselves in the form of racial enclaves throughout the city.

As of the mid-1940s, much of D.C.’s African American population resided in Northeast Washington. The Price family was one of several hundred black families living in this area. Mr. and Mrs. Price lived in the South all their lives; Mr. Price was raised in Jackson, Georgia and his wife grew up in Columbia, South Carolina. Upon moving to Washington, D.C. Mr. Price had a college degree and two years of law school under his belt; he was a highly educated black man, an anomaly for the time. Despite barriers to black employment, Mr. Price landed a job as a Federal employee within the Office of the Treasury. He made a modest salary which helped him to support his three children – two boys and a girl.

In 1945, Mrs. Price gave birth to her youngest son Clement. Clement was raised in a small apartment on Benning Road in Northeast Washington. By 1952, when he was seven years old, Price’s family moved out of the predominantly black Benning Road community to a row house in the Brentwood Village section of the city. This move not only symbolized Mr. Price’s financial success, but also represented a break in racial barriers. Professor Price explains: “We moved from that small apartment to a then small, but I thought it was huge [from my]

---

197 Clement Price will be referred to throughout this chapter as Professor Price, the Professor, or simply Price. His father will be called Mr. Price.
child’s eyes, row house in Northeast Washington…we were the second black family to move onto that street.”\textsuperscript{198} The Price’s presence in Brentwood soon attracted other black families to the area. Within ten years “most if not all of the whites had left,” and Brentwood became an African American community. Similar shifts in population were also occurring all over the United States’ urban ghettos, including Newark. “From roughly 1945, [Newark] was clearly becoming a different kind of city; a predominantly black city, and a poor city.”\textsuperscript{199} In 1959, Newark officials conducted a survey of residents in response to the city’s change in racial composition. The study concluded that in a year’s time two-thirds of blacks said they would relocate within Newark, and half of the whites said they planned to leave Newark.\textsuperscript{200} The influx of blacks into predominantly white cities across the country was scaring whites into the suburbs, and by 1966 Washington, D.C. was over 66 percent black.\textsuperscript{201} “We stepped across the racial line,” Professor Price notes, “and the racial line reasserted itself because all the whites moved.”\textsuperscript{202}

As D.C.’s racial makeup changed, “the suburbs’…prosperity regularly rub[bed] salt in [the] city’s wounds.”\textsuperscript{203} Washington, although increasing in black population, was still a racially segregated city, plagued by issues suburban residents never had to encounter. As a result of Washington’s racial divisions, Professor Price attended all-black schools.

\textsuperscript{198} Price, Clement. Interview by author. Newark, New Jersey: 8 July 2005. \\
\textsuperscript{199} Price, Clement. Interview by author. Newark, New Jersey: 8 July 2005. \\
\textsuperscript{200} Cohen, 214. \\
\textsuperscript{201} Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, 216. \\
\textsuperscript{202} Price, Clement. Interview by author. Newark, New Jersey: 8 July 2005. \\
\textsuperscript{203} Cohen, 225.
Washington schools were not desegregated until 1955 after Brown [v. the Board of Education], so in elementary school I was going to a racially segregated school. When I was in junior high, I don’t remember white kids; I do remember white teachers. When I went to high school there was a sprinkling of white kids. There certainly was a white principal and white teachers.\footnote{Price, Clement. Interview by author. Newark, New Jersey: 8 July 2005.}

Mr. Price continuously encouraged his son to take advantage of any educational opportunities available. “I came from a family,” Price discusses, “that believed that education was a path that would lead to individual progress, and [also] believed that [education] was a path that black people should be on.”\footnote{ibid} The Professor’s father always reminded his son that there was a time not too long ago, when very few, if any, black children were provided with an education. Mr. Price believed his son had to take advantage of the opportunities available to him. Fortunately for Professor Price, when he first began his education young blacks in Washington were the beneficiaries “of what was then a really good public school system.”\footnote{Price, Clement. Interview by author. Newark, New Jersey: 8 July 2005.}

As a young student, Price not only learned the basics of reading, writing, and arithmetic, but he also learned about the Civil Rights movement. Mr. and Mrs. Price tried to reinforce what their son learned in school about Civil Rights, but they did not openly refer to the country’s racial issues until the death of Emmett Till. On August 28, 1955 Professor Price returned home after playing at a friend’s house. He entered the kitchen of his home in search of a drink, and found his mother bent over the kitchen counter crying.
In those days when a woman is weeping in the kitchen it’s because someone near and dear had died. Emmett Till, he was not near, but he was dear because he was a kid. And he was murdered in Mississippi and my parents both had to explain why this kid was killed, and I guess that was the beginning of a lifelong discussion about race.\textsuperscript{207}

Living in the nation’s capital, racial issues were always at the forefront of the Professor’s daily life. Everywhere he turned, black adults were talking about ‘the movement.’ His parents taught him to praise and respect the efforts of Dr. King, while his older brother shared stories about the importance of protesting injustice. Price remembers his brother’s efforts: “He participated in Civil Rights demonstrations in South Carolina where he went to school, and it was through my brother’s activities that I began to see the virtue, the value, [and] the heroism of the Civil Rights movement.”\textsuperscript{208}

In 1962, the summer before Professor Price left for college, he decided to join his father on Capital Hill in hopes of learning more about the political system. He and his brother worked as busboys in the House of Representatives dining room. During the last week of his job on August 28, 1962 – exactly eight years after the murder of Emmett Till – one of the most memorable events of the Civil Rights movement took place: the March on Washington. Price’s brother called in sick to work that morning and went to the march. Price, on the other hand, reported to the dining room at 8 AM. Professor Price says not attending this march is one of the biggest regrets of his life.

\textsuperscript{207} ibid
\textsuperscript{208} ibid
I remember being on Capital Hill and no one was there. The entire dining hall was empty with the exception of the Speaker of the House of Representatives from Massachusetts. He called me over and gave me a silver dollar… [He] said this is a great day for your people. And I remember that as if it was yesterday. That march, and all that led up to that march, and all that would come after that march, was a phenomenon that would encircle my life. 209

In fact, the March on Washington affected leaders all over the country. Dr. Joachim Prinz, a rabbi from Newark known for his sensitivity to the African American cause, traveled to the nation’s capital to serve as one of the ten leaders of the March on Washington. While Professor Price served breakfast to the Massachusetts Speaker of the House, his brother watched Rabbi Prinz declare that “bigotry and hatred are not the most urgent problem. The most urgent, the most shameful, and the most tragic problem, is silence.” 210 Historians originally studying the March on Washington appear to have failed to take heed of Rabbi Prinz’s words. Their research drew “overwhelmingly from presidential archives, judicial opinions, and legislative records,” rather than from the voices of the 250,000 marchers. It was not until twenty years after the march, that historians, including Price, began to explore “human agency, moving beyond the charisma of a single personality to discover unheralded, previously unknown men and women in a spectrum of leadership roles.” 211 By using an oral history methodology to interview the people

---

211 Theoharis and Woodard. Freedom North, VIII-IX.
on the ground instead of the leaders on the platforms, the silence of American racial unrest was
finally broken.

Following the March on Washington, Price packed his bags and headed to Connecticut
where he began his college studies at the University of Bridgeport. Here he took a more active
stance in the Civil Rights movement. He explains: “I appreciated the other youth Civil Rights
activists, and I considered myself amongst those activists. [So,] when I went to the University of
Bridgeport, my first political act was in a black community trying to get blacks to register to
vote.”212 While engaging himself in local Civil Rights rallies and activities, Professor Price
simultaneously filled his mind with historical research. He studied urban studies under Professor
Bruce Stave a “very distinguished urban historian.”213 In 1966 during Price’s senior year at
Bridgeport, Professor Stave called him into his office to reveal what he believed would be the
next trend in historical research. “He told me that the next big field in American history would
be black history, and it was from that conversation that I became more and more interested in
African American history.”214 Thus, in his last year of undergraduate education, Price began to
delve into black history topics. His discussion with Professor Stave not only encouraged him to
dive into a new field of research, but it also pushed him to change his career path. “Up until that
collection with Professor Stave I thought about going into the U.S. Foreign Service, but when

213 ibid
214 ibid
he told me becoming a professor of African American history might be a trajectory I should be on, I took his advice. That’s why I’m a professor today.”

After finishing his four years at Bridgeport, Professor Price decided to stay in Connecticut and earn his masters degree. On the morning of July 13, 1967 he sat in his Bridgeport apartment working on his master’s thesis about 20th century urban violence. He took a break to look at the morning paper finding out that Newark had finally erupted in a riot. Price was not shocked, in fact he believed, “it [was] surprising Newark didn’t have a riot earlier.”

Although a native of D.C., Price’s own experiences with racial inequality led him to feel indebted to Newark’s black residents. The image of Robert Curvin – the leader of the Congress of Racial Equality – standing on top of a police car the night the riots erupted, continually played in Price’s mind. “That’s my favorite scene,” he says, “because that’s the last photograph before all hell broke lose.”

Although seventy miles away from Newark, images of Bob Curvin as well as other African American leaders and rioters flooded Bridgeport papers. Reporters filled columns with stories about Newark’s failing healthcare systems, educational inefficiencies, and unemployment crises. After reading these stories and receiving strong encouragement from Professor Stave, Price decided that he needed to find an answer to Newark’s problems. So upon earning his graduate degree, Professor Price packed his bags and moved to New Jersey. He was

---

216 ibid
217 ibid
hired as a professor at Essex Country College (ECC) where he developed one of the first African American studies programs in the country.

Entering Newark following the riots caused Professor Price to feel a burden to play catch up on decades of information regarding racial discontent in the city. He could never understand what it felt to be in Newark during the actual violence, but he could provide his students with an educated opinion of the events based on historical context. One of the first areas Price chose to research was that of black unemployment. His studies led him to a simple conclusion that “as in other American cities, blacks were generally the first to experience unemployment and the last to find work.”

Price found that beginning in the 1930s hundreds of blacks came up North and settled in the industrial city of Newark, known as the “City of Opportunity.” The existence of opportunity in Newark, however, was only an illusion since the job market was quickly shrinking. In 1930, for example, of the “300 and some thousand [New Jersey] employees, only 3 ½ % were black workers in any capacity.” The influx of African Americans to Newark, coupled with the arrival of hundreds of European immigrants, provided extreme competition for jobs. The Professor explains: blacks “were competing with a huge Italian labor market [and a] huge Jewish labor market. The European immigrants coming into Newark didn’t want to work around blacks. Their first step in becoming Americans [was to] discriminate against blacks.”

Consequently, by the time of the Newark riots 37.8 percent of the city’s black residents ages

---

218 Price, A New Jersey Anthology. 448.
219 *ibid*, 436.
220 *ibid*, 449.
sixteen to nineteen – representing the largest proportion of the population at the time – were unemployed. The typical rioter during the summer of 1967 was an unmarried male between the ages of 15 and 24; “he was not working full time and his employment was frequently interrupted by periods of unemployment….He feels strongly he deserves a better job and that he is barred from achieving it…because of discrimination by employers.”

Newark’s unemployed black residents were therefore prime examples of the prototypical rioter. In fact, the Kerner Commission found that among the self-reported rioters in Newark, 29.7% were unemployed. Was Newark’s history of discriminatory job policies training blacks to become future rioters?

Price tried to answer this question by looking into the history of education in Newark. In the early 1900s when Clement Moorman attended Newark’s public schools, the city had some of the finest learning institutions in the country. Yet, by the time Professor Price came to the city, “Newark’s public school system [was in] an advanced state of decay.”

Many black children in their most impressionable years of schooling, grades one to four, attended part-time classes. The schools were too overcrowded and under-funded to provide full-day schooling. Consequently, by the time these children reached grade three they were two grades below the national reading level and scored substantially lower on IQ tests than the average third grader. In fact only six out of every 100 Newark school children read above the national norm. As a professor at a public college, Price realized that not only did black children in Newark receive a poor education, but

---

222 Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, 73.
223 Report for Action, 75.
224 ibid, 77.
that the educational system was plagued by a lack of teachers who were representative of the racial background of their students. In December 1967, Franklin Titus, Superintendent of Newark’s Public Schools, admitted to the Governor’s Commission that he agreed with the assertion that “you have to know the right people to get hired as a teacher.” Even though Newark had a high staff shortage, the Board of Education still selected teachers through processes of patronage. As a result, the majority of Newark teachers were white, adding to the already high level of black unemployment.

To become a teacher in Newark one must pass a qualifying test as well as an oral examination provided by the Board of Education. Blacks applying for teaching positions did as well as whites on the written qualifying test, but failed the oral examinations. Superintendent Titus is even noting as saying the oral exams were “culturally biased.” Price had been fortunate to receive a teaching position at ECC without an extensive struggle. Nevertheless, his teaching predecessors, like Dr. Alma Flagg, had not been so lucky. Dr. Flagg “had a doctorate from Columbia, [but] she was stuck teaching third grade because of the standardized test for teachers… She [was] told that she was very good for her race, she was very good at what she did, [but] that it was inconceivable” she’d ever advance to a higher teaching position.

By the time Professor Price came to Newark, Dr. Flagg was appointed the first black principal in the city. The appointment of one black educator to a high position did not encourage

---

the Board of Education to hire other African Americans for prominent rankings. In fact, the Board refused to select an African American man, Wilbur Parker, over a highly unqualified white man James Callaghan, for secretary of the board. White Newark officials seemed to be teasing blacks by putting them in token educational positions, and then refusing to make Mr. Parker secretary. As a result, tensions amongst Newark’s blacks boiled so high that a riot was inevitable. “I can’t imagine now a riot starting because a black man wasn’t hired for a job,” Price expresses. However, “in context of the 1960s when symbolism was very, very important for the black community, I can imagine why things became so animated.”

In the 1960s not only did African Americans living in Newark’s Central Ward struggle to join the labor force and receive a proper education, they were also told they’d have to give up their homes. In 1964, three years before the race riots, Mayor Addonizio tried to solve Newark’s health crisis by attempting to attract the Seton Hall College of Medicine and Dentistry (later called UMDNJ) to his city. Addonizio’s pleas failed and the school announced its decision to move to Madison, New Jersey instead. In 1966 in fear of losing his chances of improving Newark’s healthcare system, Addonizio offered the board of UMDNJ 150 acres in the Central Ward. School officials agreed to this offer, and Central Ward residents rose in outrage. Black activist LeRoi Jones responded to Addonizio’s efforts, “The fact that 23,000 people can be taken

---

from an area...for the erection of a little white city,” is atrocious and “will not benefit” blacks at all. In studying the medical school debate, Professor Price came to the following conclusions:

At that long historical moment when decisions were being made, [the medical school debate] deepened racial animus and suspicions within the black community that there was this plot to take over their land. There’s always this feeling that someone’s going to be exploited.

This building debate in combination with the Parker-Callaghan dispute pushed Newark’s black residents too far. They had been denied jobs, denied education, and now were being denied a place to live.

Studying the history of Newark’s healthcare, education, and employment problems made Professor Price wonder why the Newark government had been so oblivious to these issues prior to the riots. As an outsider, he was especially confused by the lack of official efforts to improve the city as a whole. Price, like LeRoi Jones, wanted government officials to realize that blacks “in no way benefit [from] the unemployment rate, the dropout rate, the nature and quality of education – you understand we in no way benefit by being a majority in this city.” Yet, he realizes he entered Newark too late and there was nothing he could have done to prevent the riots. The city was in shambles and Price’s mission to repair the image of his fellow African Americans was now more difficult than ever. As Price attempted to pick up the pieces of a shattered city, he turned to his students to help him spread a long-lost piece of American history.

---

the history of blacks. He realized, this mission would not be achieved over night, but may take an entire lifetime. He explains, “I don’t know of another American city with the exception of Detroit that has been so adversely affected by a riot. The riot in Newark casts this long shadow.”

---

**Barbara Kukla**

“You write from your background basically, so if the reporters are white they’re going to write from a white background. They’re not going to understand black culture unless they’re a member. My life is different, my life is very different. My world is much more black than it is white. That’s not the norm; it’s an aberration.”

---

North Arlington, New Jersey has always been a working-class town. Here, residents commute to industrial jobs in the surrounding cities of Kearny and Newark each and every day. During the work week, white people switch places with black urban residents, who travel to the

---

233 Barbara Kukla and her dog Coco, picture taken by author
suburbs where they could never afford to live, just to work a minimum wage job. Barbara Kukla was one of these North Arlington residents. As a young child she never saw a black face. Not a single resident in her area was African American, although she was only six miles away from the predominantly black city of Newark. Until her graduation from North Arlington High School, the confines of Kukla’s town sheltered her from the state’s African American population. Then, upon graduation she decided to attend Trenton State College because her father recently passed away and her mother could not afford to send her to a private university. Upon arriving at Trenton State’s campus Kukla was in shock. Trenton was a city with five times the population of her small Bergen County town and where more than half of the residents were African American. As a newly independent college student, Kukla would first dip her feet into black culture.

After three years at Trenton State dabbling in different education, law, and political courses, one of Kukla’s family members became extremely ill. Kukla rushed home and debated continuing her education. She believed at that time it might not be worth getting a college degree because “there weren’t many opportunities for women. A girl from North Arlington was expected to marry her high school boyfriend. Other options were to become a nurse, a teacher, or a secretary and beyond that all the boys got the scholarships.”\textsuperscript{234} After spending several months at home helping her family, Kukla’s friend, an attorney, finally convinced her to continue her education. She completed her last year of undergraduate learning at Bloomfield College where

\textsuperscript{234} Kukla, Barbara. Interview by author. West Orange, New Jersey: 10 June 2005.
she entirely shifted her focus of study. “When I made this change in colleges,” she explains, “I decided to try journalism for a year. Forty-three years later I’m retired.” Journalism was always a part of Kukla’s life, but she never envisioned it as being anything more than a hobby. At North Arlington High she was the editor of her school newspaper and decided upon entering college that she would try “to get away from [journalism] for a little bit.” But, there was no escaping her passion. At Trenton State and then at Rutgers University, where she earned her masters in education, Kukla was an editor of each of her college papers. She had found her niche.

After graduating college, Kukla landed her first reporting job at the *Bloomfield Independent Press* (BIP). Her salary was a whopping $60 a week. “I was offered $40 a week,” Kukla says while reminiscing about her meager income. “I took sixty; I bargained to sixty.” Kukla’s first assignment at the BIP was a simple one: to interview a Bloomfield fireman who was about to retire. She recalls this initial interview: “He [the fireman] was more nervous that I was. We sat on the running board of the fire truck. I tried to calm him and when I calmed him I lost my nervousness.” Although Kukla successfully completed her first task, she was still a novice reporter. On top of that, she was also a female journalist amongst a sea of white male reporters. Consequently, she was assigned to what were considered at the time female-related news topics, including feature stories in a section “called ‘the face is familiar’ about somebody

---

236 *ibid*
237 *ibid*
238 *ibid*
around town,” as well as stories about schools and churches.239 Even after working as an education and religion editor at the BIP for several years, by the time Kukla transferred to a bigger paper, the New Jersey Herald, she was still assigned to the women’s news department. Kukla attempted to make the best out of this situation, adding her own flair to each woman’s news story. She jokes that during these initial stages of her career, her very own mother doubted her capabilities as a newspaper woman. She explains, “My mother used to say I don’t believe everything that’s in the paper because I know you’re writing it!”240

As Kukla struggled with the glass ceiling of the newspaper world, she began to compare her own struggle as a female reporter with the African American struggle for Civil Rights. She recognized that not only were there few women reporters working for New Jersey papers, but there were also only token African American journalists throughout the state. “At the Herald there was one [black reporter] that got to do the TV listings; that was it, forever,” Kukla says. Also “I could remember Ernie Johnson; he was the only black reporter on the Star Ledger.”241 By the time the Newark riots took place in 1967, less than one percent of blacks were employed as editors or supervisors at newspapers around the country, and “most of them worked for Negro-owned organizations.”242 Reporters, in Newark especially, were not representative of their readership. Following the riots, a federal government survey concluded that not only were media outlets lacking African American journalists but that the “intelligent black person [was]

239 ibid
241 ibid, emphasis added.
242 Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, 211.
resentful at what he considers to be a totally false portrayal [by media] of what goes on in the
ghetto,” because of the country’s unrepresentative journalism staff.243

Noting the lack of black journalists employed at local papers, Kukla decided to test out
whether her own struggle for gender equality could allow her to associate herself with the
struggle for racial equality. To do this, she attempted to make friends with the people – mostly
African Americans – she interviewed, an atypical action at the time for any reporter black or
white. “I met all kinds of interesting people, when reporting,” Kukla explains, “and also [went]
to people’s homes. This [was] very unusual because most reporters go on their assignments and
then go home.” Kukla’s mission to break the gender and racial barriers in reporting was
especially inspired by her African American friend Connie Woodruff. Woodruff, like Kukla, was
an aspiring female journalist. She was the editor of an independent black newspaper in New
Jersey. Kukla remembers that “Connie would come to the Star Ledger and apply [for a reporting
position] every so often, once a year, one every six months, apply, apply, apply. She didn’t
expect to get a job but she knew some day some black kid would.”

Woodruff’s actions taught Kukla a powerful lesson: to strive for what you want no matter
how many times you fail to succeed. With that lesson in mind, Kukla spent hours each day
slaving away in the world of news reporting. She’d write whatever articles were assigned to her,
no matter how trivial the subject and then go beyond her job by befriending her sources. She

243 ibid, 206.
244 Kukla, Barbara. Interview by author. West Orange, New Jersey: 10 June 2005.
245 ibid
decided if a black reporter was not going to be hired to express the concerns of his own race, then she would reveal these difficulties for him. By writing stories about Newark’s housing, healthcare, and education, Kukla was performing the first step in Clement Price’s research. She was recording the events that Professor Price would later study in more detail. Kukla’s stories attempted to illustrate the reality of the struggle for equality, because she believes, “people are entitled to a fair vision of what Newark is like.” Ultimately as a young reporter, Kukla’s interactions with African Americans led her to come to a crucial conclusion, one which the United States government did not publicly recognize until after an entire summer of racial unrest:

It was white men controlling the papers, so their view of black America, or their view of inner city America, or urban America was very limited. Even though they were [working in these areas everyday] they would go home every night. So there were false pictures of the city, you know. People were painted with one brush; this is Newark; people are poor, almost everybody’s black and almost everybody’s going to riot.

Although obviously highly aware of the racial struggle in Newark, Kukla’s efforts to help alleviate the tension were limited because, she says, she was a woman in a male-dominated society. She realized that simply trying to change the world one newspaper article at a time – especially as an outsider to the city of Newark – was not sufficient because “the idea of inferiority and enslavement [had been] ensconced in the brains of everybody.” A more

246 *ibid*

widespread effort was needed by the white citizens of America, Kukla believed, to realize that
“no kid from Newark comes out of the womb toting a gun.” Within days of Kukla coming to
these conclusions, Newark erupted in racial violence, forever ingraining in the minds of whites
an image of violent black rioters. As a journalist and proponent of Civil Rights Kukla asked how
she could prevent such images from proliferating throughout the media. Almost forty years later,
she still struggles to find the answer to this question.

On the night of July 12, 1967 Kukla was at home in her house in Rutherford, New Jersey.
She sat in her living room watching television when suddenly a stream of red and blue lights
flooded through her windows. She looked out one window and saw police cars driving down her
street forming a blockade at the entrance of her town. She rushed outside to ask the officers why
there were so many police in the area. One cop finally answered her question. He yelled over the
crowds that “there was a riot in Newark and you couldn’t go near Newark because all the
highways, everything was blocked off.” He and the other officers had come to Kukla’s town,
which was almost ten miles away from Newark, because “there was a generalized fear on the
part of people in the suburbs that this was going to spread out and even come as far as
Rutherford.” When hearing this news of the Newark riot, Kukla knew her job as a Herald
reporter would change. She would no longer be writing about women’s news, but would be
called upon to help cover the violence in Newark.

248 ibid
249 Kukla, Barbara. Interview by author. West Orange, New Jersey: 10 June 2005.
Kukla soon found out that her job, like the jobs of many other riot reporters, would increase in danger. She came to this conclusion the first night of the riots when one of her friends, a *Star Ledger* reporter, called to inform her that he was stranded in Newark. Kukla explains that her friend and his fellow reporters “hid under their desks for fear of being shot. They were living at the paper wearing dirty underwear and running around for two days,” before the Newark police would let them leave the city.²⁵⁰ Kukla realized, however, after hearing several horror stories of brutalized reporters, that the real danger in reporting was not just being in a riot situation, but being one of the few African American journalists in Newark at the time. For example, David Crooms, a black photographer, was sent to Newark the night of July 12th. He got mixed up in the riots he was supposed to be photographing. He explains his experience:

> Myself and the other newsmen, four of them, ran along behind the charging police. We followed them out to the court in the middle of Hayes Homes. On the way, they caught one black newsman off to the side and beat him… Next thing I knew, one [cop] yelled, ‘get that black motherfucker.’…They hit me on the top of the head, and I went out for maybe five seconds.²⁵¹

By the time Crooms regained consciousness and walked himself to the Fourth Precinct covered in blood, all that the police captain could say was that “he was sorry.”²⁵²

Despite the dangers associated with riot reporting, Kukla continued to believe that it was “important for the media to cover everything the people should know. In such a thing like riots,”

²⁵² Kukla, Barbara. Interview by author. West Orange, New Jersey: 10 June 2005.
she stresses, “you have to report on them.” Newspaper reporters, including Kukla, made efforts to extensively cover the riots. Issues discussed in articles included everything from the pending property battle over UMDNJ to Newark’s failing housing system. All of the topics written about in the paper or talked about on TV were exactly the issues Professor Price studied after the riots. Yet of all the problems discussed by the media, an issue that especially attracted journalists’ attention was snipers.

One sniper account that particularly hit home for Kukla was the killing of Eloise Spellman. Kukla was friends with Mrs. Spellman’s daughter Crystal and felt as if she had lost a loved one when Eloise died. At the time of her death, Mrs. Spellman was a forty-one year old widow living with her eleven children on the tenth floor of Hayes Homes. In 1957 her husband died and she became a welfare recipient. With few expendable funds, Spellman had no choice but to raise her eleven children in a cramped public housing apartment. On the night of July 15th, Mrs. Spellman heard a sound outside her apartment and rushed to the window to see what was happening. As she approached the window, bullets riddled the apartment wall sending her flying backwards in a pool of her own blood. Her son Richard remembers the event: “When we heard the shots she screamed and said ‘Oh God’ and then she fell to the floor on the couch and there was a lot of blood around her and on her neck.” According to her thirteen year old daughter, Mrs. Spellman began convulsing on the floor and “started talking baby talk.” Following the

\[253\text{ ibid, emphasis added.}\]
\[255\text{ Porambo, 20.}\]
shooting, Richard ran into the hallway screaming for an ambulance. State troopers immediately came rushing up the building’s stairs. They told Richard “they would have a hard time getting an ambulance,” so instead they put a white sheet out the 10th floor apartment window in hopes that the shooting would stop. 256 An ambulance finally arrived to take Spellman to Martland Medical Center; however, one of the flying bullets had pierced her neck, fatally wounding her before she arrived at the hospital. Her children each received a mere $289 for the loss of their mother, and on top of that, they were not given any condolences by the policemen on the scene that night. The only thing one city policeman said to Richard Spellman and his orphaned siblings was “damned you niggers don’t need to be in this hallway anyway.” 257

“Of all the riot deaths,” author Ron Porambo explains, “none received more publicity than Mrs. Spellman’s because of her eleven children.” 258 Newspapers like The New York Times, for example, printed pity headlines in response to the Spellman shooting such as “Family of 11 Children Left Without Parents or Food.” 259 Yet what separated Mrs. Spellman from other riot victims, Kukla believes, is not just her eleven children but was that she “wasn’t some drunk[ard] wondering Springfield Avenue, who was shot and whose life wasn’t considered of value.”

Rather Spellman’s story, Kukla explains, has:

   Human interest stuff in it…If you lined people up and said what’s the most interesting story, the mother of all these

---

257 ibid, 5.
258 Porambo, 20.
kids leaving all these children behind? I don’t want to call it a natural but I can’t think of too many people who when writing wouldn’t come up with Mrs. Spellman.  

Although newspapers and magazines around the country were fascinated with sniper shootings and ran article after article about sniper-attributed deaths, the existence of snipers was still debated. Readers began to ask themselves whether snipers actually existed, or if journalists were simply spreading rumors throughout the city. Kukla wondered this herself because she believed at the time of the riots there was “a tendency [by reporters] to editorialize more and more on stories.”  

Stanley Terrell – who later worked with Kukla at the Star Ledger – also questioned the reality of snipers. Unlike Kukla, Terrell lived in Newark and had a more direct experience with the so-called snipers. He explains that he and his friends “used to have this running joke we had all these snipers, but none of them could shoot. They must have been shooting themselves. You hear we have police firing because we have snipers, but who are the snipers shooting at? Obviously [it was not at] the cops or the National Guard, because none of them got killed.”  

Black Power Activist LeRoi Jones expressed similar concerns when he asked the Governor’s Commission in November 1967, “Where are the snipers? Has anybody caught a sniper? Has anybody brought any snipers to light?”

The Governor’s Commission, like the writers who covered the snipers, was unsure of the answers to these questions. Several pieces of evidence, however, did point to the possibility that

261 ibid
there were in fact no snipers. First, snipers were never featured in local paper photographs; “instead, newspaper photographs pictured buildings riddled with holes describing a past or absent danger – and authorities reacting to an invisible threat.” Second, it was not until July 14th when Mayor Addonizio requested National Guardsmen backup, that the first riot death was reported. Noting this fact, one must consider if the nervous, poorly trained National Guardsmen were actually the snipers. Police Director Spina was quoted shortly after the guardsmen were brought into the city. He explained that following their entrance into Newark, “young and inexperienced guardsmen began seeing snipers everywhere. I think a lot of the reports of snipers was due to the, I hate to use the word, trigger-happy guardsmen, who were firing at noises and firing indiscriminately at times.”

Even the National Guardsmen Commander General James Cantwell believed that there was “too much firing” by his men. In one instance, Spina says he came across 200 guardsmen crowded behind Columbus Homes housing project in fear of sniper fire that had just rung out. One guardsman later admitted that he, not a sniper, fired the bullet. “Well a man was close to the window,” the guardsman said, “and I shouted for him to duck back and he didn’t so I fired a shot across the window to frighten him back inside.” Guardsmen statements like this convinced author Ron Porambo that “the policy of the National Guard was to use the snipers…as an excuse to put down what they understood to be a very popular rebellion

---

265 Cunningham, 320.
266 ibid
and as a result they felt that anybody in the neighborhood was fair game.”268 How were Mayor Addonizio, Governor Hughes, and Police Director Spina supposed to control the rioters when they couldn’t even control their own men? Even Governor Hughes admitted that “nobody can control the snipers.”269

Controlling rioters was beyond the media’s scope, yet managing the content of reports and articles was certainly something they could handle; at least, that’s what the Federal government believed. Following the riots, President Johnson established the Institute for Urban Communications (IUC) to promote “fair and courageous journalism.”270 The IUC, which was a non-profit organization without any ties to government authority, would educate journalists on urban affairs as well as train and place blacks in journalism-related jobs. “If the media are to report with understanding, wisdom and sympathy on the problems of the cities,” the Kerner Commission instructed, “they must employ, promote, and listen to Negro journalists.”271 This call for more black journalists in urban media markets was more than just a cry for racial and employment equality in the United States. Hiring more African American reporters may have also been an indirect way of saying that, for newspapers and television to properly cover the area in which they are located, they must employ people who both live and work in the area. Having a strong grasp of urban issues comes with living in the city itself. Fully understanding the Newark race riots, therefore, does not come only from reading government documents or articles written

268 Porambo, 22.
269 Dockray, 35.
270 Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, 213.
271 ibid, 212.
by outsiders, but rather from reading the accounts of participants and victims. Kukla was an outsider in this case. She never lived in the city of Newark. Nonetheless, the majority of her reporting days were spent socializing in the city scene, forming friendships with African Americans, and fully engrossing herself with all that Newark had to offer. She was not the typical “outsider.”

Kukla’s story is just one of the many tales of white journalists who fought their whole reporting careers to become fully engrained in black culture. If Kukla was not at the Herald or the Star Ledger – where she was hired in 1968 as one of three female reporters – she was visiting her friends’ homes in Newark learning how to raise her adopted African American daughter. As she learned more about Newark and the struggle of its black residents, she realized that President Johnson’s question about the effect media has on the riots, was not what was important.

“Poverty, poor healthcare, [and] educational discrimination,” in Newark is what she believes should have been the real concern of government.²⁷² Today, when Kukla walks along Springfield Avenue, she realizes that Newark officials still have not fully addressed these issues. She wonders what will it take for Newark to realize a “generalized treatment that if you’re in a black skin you gotta be different and a crook,” is no longer a valid conclusion.²⁷³ Although she is uncertain when the solution to this question will be found, Kukla expresses hope that one day future media moguls will find the answer.

²⁷² Kukla, Barbara. Interview by author. West Orange, New Jersey: 10 June 2005.
²⁷³ ibid
A Final Thought

Based on the interpretations of the events in Newark thus far, one realizes that the race riots were not just a fight of black versus white, but were a battle to completely revamp an urban way of life. The issues at stake – public housing, police brutality, health, education, and unemployment – were more complicated than any textbook, government document, or newspaper article could ever portray. While it is impossible to develop a single conclusion that encompasses the meaning of the entire race riots, it is feasible to develop an understanding of specific issues – police brutality, poor housing, failing education, and insufficient healthcare systems – impacting Newark. The stories of people whose lives have been forever changed by the events of July 1967 – like those of Price and Kukla – help to provide such conclusions. Price and Kukla’s stories offer quite a different perspective of the Newark riots than the stories of those who lived in the city at the time of the violence. Their distance from Newark, however, does not make their narratives any less worthy than the tales of those people who lived in the city during the riots. The real value of oral history comes from a combination of insider and outsider stories. Joining such stories enables one to gain a fuller understanding of the riots, and to ultimately develop a greater appreciation for the African Americans who fought and died for their freedom.

CHAPTER THREE:
In Defense of a City: Police Detectives Defend Their Past

“The deputy sheriffs, the soldiers, the governors get paid/And the marshals and cops get the same/But the poor white man's used in the hands of them all like a tool.

He’s taught in his school/From the start by the rule/That the laws are with him/To protect his white skin.” “Only a Pawn in their Game,” Bob Dylan, 1964.

It was the afternoon following the famous Newark Evening News headline, “Trouble in Central Ward Called Isolated Incident.” Despite the previous night’s chaos, Mayor Addonizio acted as if he was not concerned about future violence in Newark. His words “isolated incident” rang hollow in the ears of Civil Rights leaders, especially Robert Curvin of CORE, who met with Addonizio that Thursday afternoon. Curvin stated, “To say it was an isolated incident, I think, was the most tragic mistake that was made following Wednesday night. In fact, one of the reasons that I felt so terribly frustrated on Thursday afternoon when I went to that meeting was to hear the mayor speak as though it was all over.”

Curvin, like several other black leaders, believed that the arrest of John Smith was just the beginning of terror in Newark. Consequently, Curvin as well as former Essex County official Earl Harris, schoolteacher Harry Wheeler, and United Community Corporation (UCC) board member Duke Moore, met with Addonizio at City Hall to make three demands. These demands included: 1) that officers DeSimone and Pontrelli, who arrested Smith, be suspended from the force; 2) that an investigation be conducted of the events that took place on the evening of July 12th; and 3) that Lieutenant Eddie Williams, the


only “black ranking officer on the force…be promoted to captain.”

Addonizio responded that he needed forty-eight hours to consider these demands, but as the Mayor exited the meeting and entered the city’s Central Ward, he realized he would have to consider these issues more quickly than he had expected.

As the City Hall meeting came to a close, members of the Newark Community Union Project (NCUP) – a branch of the Students for a Democratic Society – began to distribute leaflets in the area. The small, handwritten flyers read the following:

![Flyer Image]

After obtaining a copy of this flyer, city officials, including Addonizio, initially reacted in “shock, fear, and concern.”

Governor Hughes and Mayor Addonizio decided to safeguard the

276 ibid
city from another potential riot by assigning James Threatt, the Executive Director of the Newark Human Rights Commission (NHRC), to attend the rally to “monitor it.” Police Director Spina also called in 500 policemen to be available for the night-shift, if necessary. Furthermore, Anthony Imperiale, a local vigilante and organizer of the North Ward Citizens’ Committee, prepared residents in case the rally spread to their section of Newark. Imperiale’s motivation to protect the North Ward came from his belief that “this jazz about police brutality [was] nonsense,” and that the NCUP was “a bunch of commie animals” for organizing such an event.  

As the hours passed, over 1500 flyers were distributed to civilians or posted on telephone polls. To ensure local support, James Kennedy of the UCC “announced on live television that there would be a rally at 7:30 p.m. in front of Precinct #4.” At 6:30 PM a mere ten picketers formed a line in front of police headquarters. By 7:30, 300 angry black residents began to march in front of Hayes Homes – a project directly across the street from the Fourth Precinct – with homemade protest signs gripped tightly in their hands. Curvin and the other black officials who met with Addonizio that afternoon, warned rally attendees that any offers made by the Mayor that night would only be nominal political gestures. Even Newark Deputy Police Chief Redden agreed and said, “I believe that assignments [of officers] are made on the basis of politics.”

279 ibid  
280 Porambo, 185.  
281 Riots, Civil, and Criminal Disorders, 1612.  
282 Report For Action, 29.
Soon the crowds thickened but not a single police officer was stationed in front of the precinct. Threatt decided to take matters into his own hands. He exited the station and stood on top of the staircase leading to the building. As he looked down upon the mass of almost four hundred black faces, Threatt announced to the crowds that Addonizio had decided to promote African American Lieutenant Eddie Williams to captain. Threatt believed this announcement would quell the demonstration, because “the most frequent recommendation of Negro community people [at that time] for improving police-community relations [was] to increase the number of Negro policemen.”

Threatt failed to mention, however, that Addonizio also planned to promote four white lieutenants ahead of Williams on the civil service list. Having been previously warned about Addonizio’s duplicity, within a few minutes of Threatt’s public statement, the Central Ward residents erupted in mayhem. Picket signs were thrown in the air and people ran in every direction, storming the precinct. “A heavy barrage of rocks, stones, bottles, and pieces of wood and metal” were pelted at Threatt, smashing the station’s windows. In addition, crowds across the street at Hayes Homes threw makeshift-missiles at the Human Rights director.

Only seconds later, “forty club-wielding police in riot helmets charged out of the station house,” ready to force rioters to surrender. The order of the violence soon followed the typical riot pattern of “civilian initiated and accidental [violence] to officially instigated deaths.”

---

283 Report For Action, 35.
284 Porambo, 115.
though the pattern of violence was typical for a riot, Spina’s men were ill-prepared to defend the city, especially against people robbing stores. Youths who had originally stationed themselves in front of Hayes Homes began “ripping stores to pieces as many community people moved in to pick [the shops] clean.”\footnote{Porambo, 115.} In response to the rise in vandalism and theft, Newark police were instructed by Spina to establish their first “area of containment” from Springfield Avenue to High Street and South 10th.

\footnote{Thomas Hayden. “City of Newark and Riot Zone.” \textit{Rebellion in Newark} (New York: Random House, 1967) 25. Hayden depicts in this diagram the area of containment established within the city of Newark once Mayor Addonizio and Governor Hughes declared that the city was actually experiencing a full-fledged riot. The area highlighted represents the above mentioned section of Newark that spans from Springfield Avenue to High Street and South 10th.}
By midnight, the once thriving shopping district along Springfield Avenue looked like a junkyard of smashed-up stores, ragging fires, and unmanageable hydrants flooding the streets. A half hour later, police believed they finally had the rally under control until a sudden burst of violence spread throughout the city beyond the containment area. The New Jersey State Police log for that night shows just how ill-prepared the Fourth Precinct officers were for the chaos.

The log contained the following entry: “there is still NO organization within the Newark police department… the Fourth Precinct appears to be running its own show.”

What type of show was the Fourth Precinct running? What type of act were Newark’s black residents performing? James Kennedy who helped lead the police brutality rally, later explained to the United States Senate exactly what type of performance Newark residents tried to conduct. He said, “The purpose of the flier and the rally was to quell any further disturbance such as we had witnessed the night before.” This purpose, however, was not achieved.

By 2:30 AM on Friday July 14th, after almost seven hours of rioting, Addonizio finally conceded that the events in Newark were out of control. He phoned Governor Hughes in a panic and requested the National Guard be called into action. Forces were activated a mere nine minutes later and 3,464 National Guardsmen were brought into the city. Six-hundred State Police were also called in to support the local law enforcement. Just who were these officers?

---

288 Report For Action, 114, emphasis added.
289 Riots, Civil, and Criminal Disorders, 1736.
290 Report For Action, 115.
Charles Lorenzo, a former Newark detective says that in order to understand the makeup of Newark’s police force, “you have to know the history of Newark.” He explains that “there was a time when Italian policemen were rare. It was predominantly Irish police. And then Italians started to move in and we had to slowly move up the ladder. And then blacks moved in. So it was a steady progression.” ²⁹¹ The large numbers of ethnic police in Newark in the 1950s and 1960s were due to “public employment [being] a major channel for the Italian, the Irish, and the Jews, each of whom by successfully taking over whole sectors of public services, gave various municipal agencies their distinctive ethnic colorations.” ²⁹² At this time in New Jersey, there were a total of 17,529 National Guardsmen, most of whom were white-ethnics; less than two percent were African American. ²⁹³ Among the Newark local police, there were only 145 blacks on a force of 1,512 men in a city that was more than fifty percent African American. All but nine of these officers held lowest-rank patrol positions. Police force ratios around the country also provide evidence of a lack of black law enforcement. According to national statistics taken in the early 1960s:

One in twenty-six blacks in the United States during the 1960s were sergeants, but for whites it was one in twelve; one in 114 blacks were lieutenants, while for whites it was one in twenty-six; finally, one in 235 blacks were captains, as compared to one in fifty-three for whites. ²⁹⁴

²⁹² Bergesen, 161.
²⁹³ Price, Freedom Not Far From a Distant, 256.
²⁹⁴ Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, 166.
Lorenzo was right; there was definitely a slow progression of ethnicities and races within the Newark police department. Due to this glacial speed of change, black officers and National Guardsmen were few and far between. Yet, even when there were black officers on the force, these officers were often “kept out of the area where the actual fighting was going on. Black policemen were used largely to guard burning buildings [and] to direct traffic.”

This dearth of African American officers can be attributed to both discriminatory hiring practices as well as the belief amongst “large numbers of Newark’s nonwhites [that police are] a hostile and oppressive force.” This negative view of law enforcement discouraged many African Americans from wanting to join the academy (see Chapter One page 43). Ultimately, with so few African American policemen employed in the force at the time of the Newark race riots, many blacks concluded that “the average [white] police officer [had] little knowledge or understanding of the underlying tensions and grievances that exist[ed] in the ghetto.” In addition, when questioned by the New Jersey Governor’s Commission following the riots, many of Newark’s African American residents stated that not only were police unaware of ghettos tensions, but they were also the driving cause of the “breakdown in community relations” in Newark. As discussed in Chapter One, in March of 1966 government officials attempted to remedy police-community interactions by establishing a community relations bureau, but these

296 Report For Action, 27.
297 Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, 172.
298 Report For Action, 21.
efforts were squashed when Police Director Spina never submitted the appropriate budget forms for this program. For many of Newark’s African American residents, Spina’s actions reinforced the belief that the legal system was in place to protect whites, not blacks. As Bob Dylan once sang, “The laws are with him, to protect his white skin.”

While complaints against police brutality and the lack of black law enforcement officials spread throughout Newark, several counterarguments that tried to preserve the image of the white policeman simultaneously developed. In an editorial published by the Newark Evening News entitled “Repairing the Damage,” a reporter made the following comment: “While charges of police brutality fill the air, Newark might remember that it was these same police, along with the National Guardsmen, who risked their lives for the public’s protection.” What type of risks were these? The Kerner Commission conducted an investigation of the risks incurred by police while on the job. The report found that many risks resulted from a lack of protective gear. Armor against “bottles, rocks, and missiles thrown by rioters” was not available to police around the country in case of a rebellion. The report also noted that a policeman has to “deal daily with a range of problems and people that test his patience … [and so] without positive leadership, goals, operational guidance, and public support, the individual policeman can only feel victimized.”

This debate over who were being victimized – black residents or white cops – lends itself to a discussion of the “two Newarks theory.” This theory states that “there were, in effect, two

301 Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, 271.
Newarks. One consisting of white ethnic groups, long resident in the city, who exercised some control over political affairs; the other, predominantly black…with considerably less political influence, and looked upon as a burden to the city.

The white policemen in Newark were characteristic of the “first Newark,” or the established ethnic groups. These ethnic groups formed their own residential enclaves in the North and South Wards and considered themselves as much concerned with city affairs as African American residents, since they resided in Newark long before blacks migrated from the South. With that in mind, one may reconsider the argument that the average officer had little or no knowledge of the tensions in the ghetto. In some cases, this statement was an accurate portrayal of law enforcement officials; in other circumstances it was far from the truth. Many white Newark policemen, having lived in the city their entire lives, were highly cognizant of the underlying frictions that produced sparks of anger in the Central Ward. Thus, Newark’s working-class ethnic residents, especially the police, were not “simply spectators or consumers, mimicking the ideals around them or being swept up in the fervor of the times,” but were instead people who spent their time “analyzing the social and economic forces” of the city in which they lived. Sociologist Albert Bergesen argues that not only was Newark’s law enforcement aware of society pressures, but they were also “susceptible to the very same sociological processes that generate collective violence in civilians.”

White police officers were in effect grappling with their own position in society, just like Newark’s black residents.

---

303 Price, Freedom Not Far From a Distant, 255.
305 Bergesen, 139.
Whether or not a prospective officer was aware of the struggles in the Central Ward, he still had to undergo a rigorous recruitment processes before becoming part of the force. To become a Newark police officer, one must take a Civil Service exam. Those that pass the exam are subject to investigation by force detectives who conduct interviews with the candidate’s “former employers, friends, and neighbors [as well as perform] checks of [the applicant’s] military, academic and credit records." Those selected enroll in a thirteen-week training program followed by a three month probationary period. Despite the many stages before becoming an officer, Newark’s police recruitment procedures paled in comparison to other New Jersey police departments in the 1960s. Although seventy-five percent of New Jersey precincts recruited officers using the Civil Service procedure, many did not rely solely on these exams, but opted also to conduct rigorous written tests, oral interviews, and psychological examinations of all their applicants. Those selected endured a one-year probationary period rather than only a three-month trial. While there is neither direct evidence nor statistical studies that compare performance levels of police to recruitment procedures, one may be inclined to believe that Newark’s comparatively lower standards for recruiting police led to a force of men who in some cases had weaker skills and were less prepared for a possible riot than other police forces in the state and around the country.

306 Report For Action, 23.
307 ibid, 24.
Beginning in the fall of 1965, the Federal Bureau of Investigation made riot training available to local law enforcement agencies throughout the United States. As displayed in the following testimony, Newark precincts did not take advantage of this offer. On May 22, 1968 Newark Deputy Chief Redden testified in front of the United States Senate. Jerome Alderman, general counsel to the Senate, asked Redden the following question: “Had police been trained to handle the riots before that time?” Redden hesitantly gave his response: “No, we hadn’t been [given] any special training in the use of weapons or tactics.” In fact, not only were Newark’s police not trained in riot tactics, they also had only sixty hours of field training out of a total of 563 officer training hours. By bringing in the State Police and the National Guard, Spina along with Hughes and Addonizio hoped to overcome these deficiencies in local police training. Yet, while State Police and National Guardsmen may have received more extensive field instruction, “standard police training operations differ radically from training needed to control riots.” For example, it was common procedure in the 1960s for officers to be trained to work as individuals, but when attending to riot chaos it is essential that police work in teams. During the Newark riots, the different divisions of officers from local to National did not cooperate with one another since they were trained to work independently. Consequently, “Guardsmen were firing upon police and police were firing back at them.” Detective Lorenzo remembers just how uncooperative the different defense units were during the riots. He says the National Guard was

308 Riots, Civil, and Criminal Disorders, 1658.
309 ibid, 1645.
310 Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, 174.
311 ibid, 66.
distant and uncooperative. “I saw them on the street but didn’t have any conversations with them.” The lack of communication between local and national forces in Newark was often the result of the fact that the city, state, and National Guardsmen operated on different radio frequencies, and were unable to send or receive messages from one another in case of an emergency. Consequently, the streets of Newark from July 12 to 18, 1967 were not only teeming with angry black residents, but were also occupied by ill-trained police and guardsmen who often fired in response to any unfamiliar noise or sight.

By the time the riot was declared over on July 18, 1967, twenty-six people were killed, the majority of whom were reported victims of “homicide by shooting.” Only through the blood that stained the war-torn streets of Newark could the government finally pinpoint that local, state, and national law enforcement officials had few, if any, riot training that would have allowed them to properly respond to such a catastrophe. In a speech to the nation on July 27, 1967 President Lyndon Johnson proclaimed, “It would compound the tragedy [of the summer of 1967]…if we would settle for order that is imposed by the muzzle of a gun.” Yet, for many cops around the nation, the control of a riot by gunshots were all they had been taught. Who, then, was responsible for those killed in the Newark riot? Was it the government for not mandating sufficient riot training procedures for the police? Was it Spina for not submitting a community relations budget? Or was it the policemen, as many African Americans suspected,

313 Report For Action, Box 11, 237.
314 Report For Action, 139.
315 Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, 297.
for their inability to control personal rage and racist viewpoints? The answers to these questions are subjective, just as one’s experience of the Newark race riots depends upon his proximity and involvement with the events themselves. There is not one single truth that fully describes the race riots; rather many truths can be extracted from the events of July 1967.

Amongst the thousands of law officers in Newark during the riots, two white detectives in particular have continued to feel the impact of the violence. Their stories naturally differ from that of their fellow officers and others present in Newark at the time; yet, the issues and concerns their stories help to discuss – police training, weapon uses, and internal dynamics between black and white officers – are topics that concerned the general public. The first of these officers, who has previously been mentioned, is retired detective Charles Lorenzo. Mr. Lorenzo is eighty-one years old and lives with his wife in Manchester, New Jersey. He served in the Newark police force for thirty-one years and retired in 1984 as a detective sergeant. Upon entering the force, he says he liked to think that the police acted as the community’s “protectors; their first line of defense against lawlessness;” but after the riots began, he seriously reconsidered this image.\footnote{Lorenzo, Charles. Interview by author. Union, New Jersey: 7 June 2005.}

The second officer is retired detective Edward Alfano, a seventy-eight year old man who lives with his wife in Clark, New Jersey. Mr. Alfano joined the Newark police academy at the age of seventeen and became a detective eleven years later. As a detective in the 1960s, Mr. Alfano patrolled the city in car number forty-three, considered “the most dangerous car in the country.”

This patrol car “witnessed more murders [and] more holdups,” than any other detective vehicle
in the United States. Analyzing Lorenzo and Alfano’s stories adds another outlook to the history of the Newark riots, and provides a vastly different interpretation of the events than those offered by African Americans Clement Moorman and Stanley Terrell.

Charles Lorenzo

“Well, let me put it this way, we tried, but a lot of our efforts fell on deaf ears. If you want my hang up about the whole thing, was that we had black leaders that abandoned the black people and instead of educating them, they just held them down so that they could get theirs and get out.”

It was 1941 and Charles Lorenzo was living with his family in Newark’s First Ward, a predominantly Italian area. Lorenzo was educated in the Newark public school system until he turned seventeen and entered the workforce to supplement his parents’ income. With little job

---

319 Charles Lorenzo, picture taken by author
experience, Lorenzo landed an entry-level position at Westinghouse Electric Company. Although he made decent money, he says the job provided him with no financial security for the future. He wanted more than a job; he wanted a career.

Lorenzo continued to work at Westinghouse for several more years, hoping that some day a better job opportunity would come his way. Then one morning in 1952 while skimming the *Newark Evening News*, he came across an advertisement for the Newark police force. The academy, the ad said, was looking for bright young men to try out for patrol positions. Lorenzo explains, “They were having an exam for police, and I realized it was a civil service function and there’s more security in a civil service function. Even though I was making a little more money [at Westinghouse], I took a downgrade by taking the exam.”

Newark definitely needed more men like Lorenzo to join the force. As the academy’s recruitment rate declined, its resignation rate increased rapidly. From 1945 to 1955, there was an average of ten police resignations per year. Police Director Spina explained, “We have had constant problems…trying to recruit and we tried everything. You name the scheme or the idea and we have tried it.” Fortunately in this case, the advertisement worked, and within a few days of taking the test Lorenzo was notified that he passed the Civil Service examination. Upon receiving the good news, Lorenzo quit his job at Westinghouse and immediately began police training. He worked longer hours for less

---

money, but loved his new job. “Once I started doing it,” he explains, “I enjoyed it. It was a great job.”

By January 1953, Charles Lorenzo was a full-time patrolman for the Second Precinct. As a new recruit, Lorenzo was assigned to the night-shift. He walked the streets of the First Ward from nine at night until five in the morning looking for potential criminals. After doing a superior job as patrolman, Lorenzo was promoted to a higher position at the Fifth Precinct. At this new precinct, Lorenzo says, “I was first assigned to the Auto Squad and then I was assigned to the third detective squad which encompassed the whole east district of Newark.” This promotion from patrolman to detective was considered quite an honor, and it included a salary increase of $300 a year. With a larger paycheck and a more prestigious position, Lorenzo was proud he had joined the Newark police department.

The east district of Newark where Detective Lorenzo first began his career was originally a Jewish stronghold, but as the year passed by the city slowly transformed.

When I first became a patrolman [the east district] was nice. It was predominantly a Jewish area. It was kept well. Then it started to go to pots. There were a lot of black people, African Americans, coming there and they scared the Jewish people. The Jewish people just got up and got out of there. And after a while it became predominantly all Negroes, African. You have to understand Newark. Newark is like a cauldron that’s always burning, ready to overflow with violence.

---

323 ibid
324 Report For Action, 28.
This shift in population from a predominantly white, ethnic area to a largely African American community brought with it a huge increase in Newark’s violence. The growing tension between black and white residents of Newark caused local law enforcement to develop new procedures for reducing this violence. For example, when Lorenzo became a sergeant after a few years of detective work, his “first job was ‘Safe Streets,’ which was a certain amount of patrolmen assigned to certain areas to keep the streets safe.”\textsuperscript{326} In addition to starting the Safe Streets Program, Newark’s police precincts also sent officers to two-week programs at Rutgers University. These programs drilled officers in techniques on how to better cope with the increased level of violence in Newark, as well as how to improve police-community relations.\textsuperscript{327}

While patrolling one night for the Safe Streets Program, Lorenzo came across a woman lying helpless on the sidewalk. Just a few minutes before Lorenzo arrived, this woman had been sitting in her car waiting to pick up her son from Essex Catholic High School. While waiting for her son “a black fellow [forcibly] entered her car and raped her.”\textsuperscript{328} Charles Lorenzo discovered this woman right after the rape. While he had handled many rape cases before, this particular case continues to stick out in his mind. He says, “She was the best witness I ever had because her memory was flawless of what happened and how it happened. She remembered the ring he had on his finger, the kind of design, she drew the design for me, and she was really phenomenal. I

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{326} \textit{ibid}
\textsuperscript{327} \textit{Report For Action}, 31.
\textsuperscript{328} Lorenzo, Charles. Interview by author. Union, New Jersey: 7 June 2005.
\end{flushleft}
ended up discovering who it was and I made the arrest.” It was cases like these, when Lorenzo found the criminal and locked him up, that made him believe that the dangerous job of an officer was worth the daily risks. However, when Detective Lorenzo had to defend his image as a protector of the peace, his job as a Newark policeman became much more difficult.

You see the favored cry in those days was that sometimes when we went to arrest a person they wouldn’t want to be arrested. And sometimes we had to use force. And the first cry out of them would be police brutality, police brutality. And so there was no way of getting around it. I won’t deny that some men in uniform didn’t handle themselves properly. But neither were they [the African Americans] any angels. Sometimes we had to defend ourselves.330

Lorenzo does remember witnessing and hearing stories of fellow officers who committed brutality against local Newark residents, but for “every cry of police brutality there [was] a counter cry from the white person in charge of police brutality that it doesn’t exist.”331

Sociologist David Bordua attributes the actions of these particularly vicious officers to old-school beliefs regarding how to maintain the approval of a white ethnic city. He writes, “In most American cities until recently one way for the police to improve their relations with the community was to be rough on Negroes. Indeed in many cities, especially, though by no means exclusively Southern cities, a fundamental mission of the police was Negro control.”332

330 ibid
Nevertheless, such a belief was not accepted in Newark by the time Lorenzo was patrolling the streets. The demographics of Newark had shifted from a white ethnic city to a black urban ghetto, and so “Negro control” was no longer tolerable when more than fifty percent of residents were African American. The unregulated actions of police quickly prompted African Americans to call for a police review board, but as previously mentioned Spina never appropriated the funds to put this board into action. Moreover, Mayor Addonizio decided to transfer the control and investigation of police brutality out of the realm of the police and the public, appropriating such charges to the Federal Bureau of Investigation. While it would appear on the surface that putting the FBI in charge would ensure that more brutality cases would be brought to trial, “the FBI could only act if there had been a violation of a person’s federal civil rights. [Consequently,] no complaint was ever heard of again.”  

Addonizio and Spina’s actions made it easier for officers to deny a person’s Civil Rights, while simultaneously making it harder, Lorenzo believes, for respectable officers to protect their image. Findings from the 1967 Presidential Task Force on Law Enforcement support these concerns about officer image: as police-community relations continue to disintegrate, “the status accorded to police is far lower than that of other professions.”

Detective Lorenzo was quite certain that although charges of police brutality paved the way for the Newark riots, such complaints were only the surface of the city’s troubles. The real issues, Lorenzo believes, were a lack of family structure and educational values. He explains,

334 Report For Action, 25.
“The whole thing is education and the education begins in the home. When they’re this little you can teach them. When they’re this big you can’t. That’s where I come to where the black leaders should have been, after the parents and so forth and start teaching them let’s lead a nice, normal, decent life.” New York’s children in the 1960s lived in poverty conditions with no running water or electricity, so their parents did not have time to teach them proper morals. Detective Edward Alfano also recognizes the dilemma posed by trying to teach values to children living in the ghetto. He notes: “the biggest problem is that they’re not educated. What this country needs is a way to make these people more responsive. Today the black people achieved a whole lot, got an education, going to college, and moving into better neighborhoods. When you live in the slums they have no effort to go out and better themselves.” Living in destitute conditions was only the beginning of these children’s problems: “the abandonment of the home by many Negro males [affected] a great many children growing up in the racial ghetto.” With the father absent, the mother was often forced to work several low paying jobs to support her family. Children were left home alone where they spent “the bulk of their time on the streets – the streets of a crime-ridden, violence-prone, and poverty-stricken world.” After studying the dynamics of African American families in the 1960s, Lorenzo understands there was “nobody responsible for these young people to get a decent education.”

---

337 Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, 129.
338 ibid
in Newark should have taken the initiative to help these children before it was too late. Mr. Wilkins, a NAACP leader from Minnesota, would have agreed with Mr. Lorenzo. He explained to President Johnson’s Kerner Commission that “where you lack fathers in a family, somebody has to step in there – the minister or somebody.”

According to black leaders in Newark, it was impossible to select a representative for all African Americans who could lead the way to a better educated, happier group of youths. One black leader later told The New York Times:

> There was only one man who could have walked on Springfield Avenue and said, ‘Brothers cool it.’ That was Malcolm X. We have no such leaders now. Whitey doesn’t understand this. Some little Negro pork chop preacher who is hustling pot and girls in a storefront church goes to city hall and gets all sort of promises. That’s not grass-roots leadership.

African Americans lacked the strong leadership necessary to combat conditions of poverty, police brutality, poor education, and failing public housing. Once Lorenzo discovered this lack of black leadership and realized the consequences of such a condition, he spent his time as officer waiting for the moment when patrolling the streets would mean arresting rioters.

This moment came on the night of July 13, 1967 around 10 PM. Detective Lorenzo was at home with his family when he received a call from Police Chief Spina telling him to report for duty immediately. Spina’s mission that night, Lorenzo explains, “Was to deploy as many patrolmen, as many policemen as they could into the real troubled areas.”

---

340 Kerner Commission Papers, Reel 2, 687.
telephone, Lorenzo kissed his wife good-bye, quickly put on his uniform, and drove to the Fourth Precinct. As he pulled up to the precinct his eyes widened when he witnessed the chaos that had broken out during the police brutality protest. He entered the Fourth Precinct and was instructed to join his fellow patrolmen along Springfield Avenue where rioters had begun to ransack stores. The patrolmen were not given any advice except for a few remarks from Deputy Chief of Police Redden. Chief Redden instructed his men to “use any action to stop the looters and to protect yourselves.”

Lorenzo believed the reason his supervisors provided little support and advice before sending him out into the riot was because “you were already an experienced police officer, so you knew what to do.” Yet, many officers did not know what to do in such frenzied circumstances. Some were young and inexperienced, having little riot training or, for that matter, field training in the past. Nonetheless from Spina’s point of view, Newark was up in flames and he needed all the manpower he could get.

Spina kept his men on twelve-hour shifts and some for even longer. “I was working eighteen hour days,” Lorenzo remembers. “And not only that, prior to the riot I had worked two full weekends and two full weeks without any time off.” Lorenzo worked day and night trying to quell the disorder. He handcuffed one rioter after the next, arresting approximately 300 people by the time the violence subsided. After making an arrest, Lorenzo brought the detainee to the State Armory because the Newark prisons were already filled to capacity. Although rioters

---

345 ibid
brought to the armory were not fortunate to have been arrested, they were lucky not to have been placed in one of Newark’s prisons which had “been condemned by the State Department of Institutions and Agencies” for terribly inadequate facilities.\textsuperscript{346} Many African Americans in Newark wondered why police kept arresting people if there was no jail space available. Detective Lorenzo explains: “The more you could keep them off the streets, the better off you were. One of the things [people of Newark] pay taxes for is so that their property and their lives could be protected. And now wouldn’t it be a little senseless of us to release people that were trying to take lives and destroy property?”\textsuperscript{347} Ultimately because of the lack of space to house arrestees, many of the men Lorenzo detained were verbally reprimanded and then sent home to their families.

The main dilemma in Lorenzo’s opinion was not finding places to house prisoners, but having enough law enforcement officials to patrol the city. Lorenzo strongly states, “There just wasn’t enough of us to quell what was happening.”\textsuperscript{348} North Ward vigilante Anthony Imperiale agreed with Lorenzo concerning the lack of law enforcement. Imperiale organized the North Ward Citizens’ Committee comprised of 200 due-paying members who served as makeshift officers protecting the white citizens of the North Ward. Imperiale was only concerned with the white residents of Newark, however, and he was definitely not a supporter of Civil Rights. Prior to the riots, Imperiale was inducted into the New Jersey Klu Klux Klan, and publicly “denounced

\textsuperscript{346} Report For Action, 39.
\textsuperscript{347} Lorenzo, Charles. Interview by author. Union, New Jersey: 7 June 2005.
\textsuperscript{348} Lorenzo, Charles. Interview by author. Union, New Jersey: 7 June 2005.
Martin Luther King” during King’s visit to Newark in March 1967. Imperiale is also quoted in *The New York Times* as expressing that segregationist George Wallace “is the answer to a lot of problems,” facing the country today. The night after the riots began Imperiale’s men formed a blockade at the entrance to the North Ward in hopes that as the violence throughout the city the North Ward residents would remain unharmed. Lorenzo remembers Imperiale’s actions: He “thought he was a general. He thought he did really good and he put up a wall and they didn’t get through it.” Although Imperiale was able to spare the North Ward, his law enforcing efforts were minimal and his committee’s appeal was based on nothing more than “misinformation [and] fear.” Nevertheless, while there were many complaints against the North Ward Citizens’ Committee, Newark’s own officers did not have enough “gas masks, radio frequencies, or barrier equipment to contain crowds” by themselves. With such little equipment and manpower available, Lorenzo, like many other officers, was forced to work three days straight without a moment’s rest. On the third day of riot work, the fatigue caught up with him.

I was doing some running and all of a sudden I dropped, I dropped from exhaustion. They claimed that I had a heart attack. They took me to St. Michael’s hospital which was right in the middle of everything that was happening. I wasn’t going to have my family come down and visit me in that particular hospital. I just denied that I had a heart attack, and I walked out. I obviously didn’t have a heart

349 Porambo, 183.
352 Porambo, 183.
353 *Report For Action,* 127.
attack because I was able to go back to work [with] no problems.\textsuperscript{354}

Heart attacks were common amongst Newark’s law enforcement. Lorenzo was lucky to have survived; fellow detective Fred Keller, however, was not that fortunate. Keller, fifty-five years old at the time of the riots, “died at his home late Friday [July 14\textsuperscript{th}] after suffering a heart attack that may have been induced by exhaustion from riot duty.”\textsuperscript{355} While some officers sought treatment for exhaustion, others were brought to the city morgue.

The death of one officer in particular, Detective Frederick Toto, continues to stick out in Charles Lorenzo’s mind as the most memorable event of the riots. Detective Toto was one of Lorenzo’s associates during the race riots. After twenty-four hours of nonstop work, Detective Toto, thirty-four years old, walked the streets of Newark in a daze. At five PM on the evening of Friday July 14\textsuperscript{th}, two nights after the riots began, Toto and fellow Patrolman Buttross were walking the streets of the Central Ward when alleged sniper bullets were shot from the top of a high rise building. Toto was shot and rushed to St. Michael’s Hospital, where a surgical team “headed by Drs. Leon Smith and John McGuire, both of Newark, conducted open heart surgery in a vain attempt to save the detective’s life. Hospital officials said the bullet, believed to have come from a rifle, entered Det. Toto’s chest, hit the spinal column and was deflected downward


into the aorta.” Toto became the first police fatality of the riots. As soon as officers heard about Toto’s injury:

More than 200 National Guardsmen, city and state police opened fire on the building where the sniper [who supposedly shot Toto] was believed hiding. The police then rushed the building and seized 25 persons…Within a very short time, Rufus Council was shot as he stepped from dinner in a steakhouse, seventy-four year old Isaac Harrison was dead as he came to visit his son, and Robert Lee Martin was killed on the street – all in the immediate geographic vicinity of Toto’s slaying… Friday, was to be the bloodiest of the riot.

That night Detective Lorenzo watched hundreds of National Guardsmen riddle an abandoned building with bullets until all that was left was a few blood splattered hallways. Lorenzo did not fire back. He explains that for him to fire back, he would have needed to know exactly who he was aiming for, unlike his fellow officers who just shot blindly. “I never had the opportunity to fire back because I never knew where I was being shot at from,” or who was shooting at me, he explains.

Lorenzo did not shoot his gun that night, but plenty of other officers did. Toto’s death sparked several other homicides and injuries that Friday. A little girl living in the building in which the sniper was suspected to be hiding, for instance, lost an eye when police opened fire in

357 Hayden, 85.
retaliation. Other blacks reported “having been beaten by police shouting ‘T-O-T-O.’” Yet of all the deaths that bloody Friday night, it was only Toto’s that sparked national attention and his white skin that placed him on the front page of the Newark Evening News. In fact, the only newspaper picture of a person killed during the Newark riots was that of “a white police detective named Fred Toto.” While it is difficult for a police officer’s morale to remain intact after watching a fellow detective gunned down in the streets, one must still question why none of the hundreds of African Americans injured or killed in Newark had their pictures on the front page of local newspapers? Author Ron Porambo writes in his 1971 book No Cause for Indictment a very interesting conclusion regarding sniper existence. Porambo notes that Police Director Spina generally downplayed the existence of snipers as evidenced by the Spina’s claims that “there [wasn’t] as much sniping as we thought,” and “I think a lot of the reports of snipers were due to…guardsmen.” Still, despite Spina’s comments, when Toto was shot “the police director was less candid when it came to the behavior of his own men.” Spina blamed Detective Toto’s murder directly on snipers even though it was concluded that “the majority of bullets in the air were fired by troops during the entire period in which Toto was killed.” Thus, the news media and local law enforcement in Newark reinforced the belief that African American snipers shot Fred Toto, making Newark’s African American citizens’ path to equality

359 Porambo, 133.
360 Hayden, 84.
361 Dockray, 12.
362 Porambo, 132.
363 ibid
364 Hayden, 85.
all the more arduous.

By the following Tuesday July 18, 1967, Governor Hughes finally announced an end to violence in Newark. At this point in time, Lorenzo had worked five days of non-stop service and taken one trip to the hospital. Still, he decided to remain in the detective line for another twenty-five years. The sights Lorenzo saw and the sounds he heard during the week of rioting would never leave his memory. Lorenzo served in World War II just a few years before the race riots, and for him the streets of Newark were a constant reminder of war-torn Germany. One reporter for the Newark Evening News described the city in just this way: “Several of the buildings along Springfield and South Orange avenues looked as though they had been hit with an aerial bomb… Others looked as though their fronts had been blasted out by TNT.”

The city Lorenzo had desired to protect was completely destroyed. His mission following the riots, he says, was to find a way to revive what was once a thriving industrial city. This goal would not be reached right away; it would take years to accomplish. Detective Lorenzo explains, “When they [the rioters] were done with it, it looked like, well as I said I just came out of the war, so I left places in Germany looking like that. It was demolished, demolished. And if you were to ride in that area today there are still parts of it that haven’t been recovered and it’s thirty-eight years later.”

---

“My god you’re dealing with thousands of people and what we have in the police department is maybe 1300 cops. We were overwhelmed; we had to have help.”\textsuperscript{367}

Edward Alfano

In the early 1940s, the United States began to draft men to serve in World War II. Those drafted were young, scared, and generally inexperienced with warfare. Edward Alfano was seventeen years old at the time. He had spent his whole life in the all-white Italian sections of Newark, New Jersey. Immediately following his graduation from Newark’s Central High School, Alfano was drafted and shipped off to Germany where he served his country, earning

\textsuperscript{367} Alfano, Edward. Telephone interview by author. 27 August 2005.
\textsuperscript{368} Edward Alfano. Picture care of son Edward Alfano, Jr.
veteran status. While Alfano did gain the skills necessary to defend and protect others, he had only a limited education under his belt when he returned home from the war. He explains, “I got my education in the streets; I learned a whole lot. Everything is hard but if you got the proper drive, you will achieve. Nothing is impossible.” Alfano’s positive attitude landed him a job in a factory when he returned from Germany. He explains that he was “working for a good company but the jobs weren’t that secure because they would take up and move to another location, or you may get a layoff and the benefits weren’t that great.” Alfano, like Lorenzo, was looking for a more stable job and it is this desire for occupational stability that also led Alfano to the Newark Police Academy.

Alfano took the Civil Service Exam for the police force in his early twenties and by the age of twenty-eight he was a full-time detective. His reasons for joining the force were much like Lorenzo’s, good benefits despite a small salary. “On the police force,” Alfano notes, “the pay was less but the benefits were all there, which was really beautiful. I got good pension, I got good medical and hospitalization, everything. Ordinary companies couldn’t supply you with this.” The minimal pay, however, posed a challenge for Alfano who wanted to maintain his position as the sole breadwinner of his family. When Alfano first joined the force it was illegal for policemen to hold a second job. As of January 1966, “Mr. Spina lifted the ban on moonlighting and now a policeman can engage in another occupation – other than bartending –

369 Alfano, Edward. Telephone interview by author. 27 August 2005.
370 Alfano, Edward. Telephone interview by author. 27 August 2005.
371 ibid
with the permission of the director.” Fortunately for Alfano the ban on moonlighting was lifted. Alfano kept himself very busy, often working seven days a week so that his family could move out of Newark and into the suburbs. To compensate for his low wages, Alfano worked overtime at the academy on top of serving multiple weekend security shifts at Newark International Airport. He remarks, “I didn’t just live on my police pay; I wasn’t lazy. I always told my wife I worked eight days a week.” Alfano’s concerns about low policemen salaries were a common complaint amongst many of Newark’s prospective officers and full-time policemen in the 1950s and 1960s. According to the New Jersey Governor’s Commission:

> The biggest problem in recruiting [officers] is the salary level. As of January 1, 1968, a patrolman’s beginning salary was $6,951. The maximum, after five years, was $8,002…The Policemen’s Benevolent Association, which represents the majority of Newark policemen, is asking $10,000 after five years. The salary level has prompted many policemen to take second jobs.

Alfano’s salary as a detective, although slightly higher than that of a patrolman, was still low compared to other Civil Service employees. He was just one of many officers who worked a second job.

During the mid-1950s when Detective Alfano first began to work as a patrolman, Newark’s racial makeup was quickly transforming from a predominantly white ethnic enclave to a large black urban ghetto. Alfano was troubled with this demographic change and wanted to

---

372 Report For Action, 25.
373 ibid
374 Alfano, Edward. Telephone interview by author. 27 August 2005.
ensure his sons would grow up in a neighborhood similar to his own as a child – an all-white Italian community. He explains, “The black people were buying houses all around me and I had to move out. It’s not that I want to get away from them, but it’s just that I have a beautiful wife, lovely children and I was a good father; what I’m trying to say is these people don’t live that way.” Alfano was genuinely concerned for the well-being of his family; however, his decision to leave Newark made it easier for blacks to criticize white officers for knowing little, if anything, about the ghetto they were patrolling simply because these officers did not live in the city itself.

Although many African Americans in Newark believed that the police were unaware of the dangers of the ghetto, Alfano was aware of the risks. He was assigned to patrol car number forty-three, the most dangerous detective car in the country. Remembering his days in car forty-three, Alfano says, “Boy we were busy in that car. We made the most arrests for murder, for breaking in and entering. It was the Central Ward. It was worse than any city, any area in New York, in Harlem, anywhere, Newark was tops.” Police motorization – like Alfano’s time spent in car forty-three – was a common 1960s practice in urban areas throughout the country. President Johnson’s Kerner Commission found that while many law enforcement academies promoted the use of motorization, such a practice may have deepened police-community tensions. As a result of motorization:

375 ibid
376 Alfano, Edward. Telephone interview by author. 27 August 2005.
The patrolman comes to see the city through a windshield and hear about it over a police radio. To him, the area increasingly comes to consist only of lawbreakers. To the ghetto resident, the policeman comes increasingly to be only an enforcer.\(^{377}\)

The physical boundaries of a patrol car separated Newark’s law officers from the residents, increasing the segregation between blacks and whites in the city. Yet for Alfano, being a motorized cop brought him in closer contact with the dangers of the Central Ward. For example, one night just prior to the riots, Alfano was driving around the Central Ward when he came across a group of men fighting on a street corner. He pulled over his car in hopes of breaking up the fight. In “separating the fight somebody ripped the gun out of my holster,” Alfano remembers remorsefully. “He had the gun on me for about five minutes. And I told him watch what you’re doing. One of my police officers responded to the scene and grabbed him from behind and took the gun. So I was threatened there. I really felt like that guy could have killed me.”\(^{378}\) Alfano’s near-death experience serves to remind Newark residents that it was not only their lives at risk in the Central Ward; it was also the lives of Newark’s law enforcement, a group of men who were threatened almost everyday on the job.

While patrolling in car forty-three, Detective Alfano had multiple partners including one black officer. “I can’t even think of his name right now, but I worked many months with him and it was a good association,” he recalls.\(^{379}\) Alfano explains that he and his African American

\(^{377}\) Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, 160.
\(^{378}\) Alfano, Edward. Telephone interview by author. 27 August 2005.
\(^{379}\) Alfano, Edward. Telephone interview by author. 27 August 2005. Interestingly, Alfano was able to remember his white partners’ names during the interview.
partner got along very well and there was no tension between them despite their racial differences. “We acted the way we had to act. He had the initiative to arrest a white person that did something wrong. That wouldn’t bother me. I would arrest a black person who did something wrong. He was right there next to me helping me hold him down and put the handcuffs on him and whatnot.” Fortunately Alfano was able to get along with his African American associate. The detective even goes as far as saying that “we were all brothers on the force, believe me, black and white.” Yet, Alfano’s experience with black officers was an exception to the rule. Most blacks on the force were treated as subordinates and some were even brutalized just because of their skin color. For example on July 13th, hundreds of off-duty officers were being called to report for duty. Often these officers were not given enough time to put on their uniforms prior to entering the precinct. A white police officer entering the Fourth Precinct in plain clothing would not be a problem, but for an African American officer entering the station sans uniform that was a different story. That Thursday Newark Human Rights Commission Chairman Al Black reported “a Negro policeman in civilian clothes was beaten by white policemen when he entered the Fourth Precinct to report for duty.” This officer was only following instructions, but because of his skin pigment he was brutally beaten when reporting for duty. Many black policemen, according to the Governor’s Commission, believed that “the department is not eager to have them and once they are appointed does not make them

380 ibid
381 ibid
382 Hayden, 19.
feel secure. These feelings are bound to affect the morale of Negro members of the department, and the Negro community’s attitudes toward the police. The morale of African American officers was definitely affected by the fear tactics employed by white officers. On the night playwright LeRoi Jones was arrested, for example, one black officer who witnessed the beating of Jones made the following comment: “I started to get over and butt in, but I knew they were beating him and I figured they’d just kill me too. Man I was crying. That was all I could do without committing suicide.” How was Spina supposed to successfully recruit African American officers when those already on the force had such a negative experience? Despite findings by the Kerner Commission that a higher level of blacks on the force led to better performance in riot conditions, Newark still selected very few blacks to serve in the academy.

On the night of July 12, 1967 Alfano, like many of the other Newark officers, was at home with his family finishing up dinner. He received a call to come into the precinct; the riots had broken out and the night force was severely understaffed. When he reached the Fourth Precinct Alfano began his first twelve-hour shift, an exhausting, treacherous task. “As a police officer it was a dangerous situation,” Alfano explains. “We were working no days off, twelve-hour shifts and my god it was more than twelve hours because when you came in [you still had to make] all the [arrest] reports.” Alfano’s cordial relations with black policemen and residents

---

385 Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, 165.
386 Alfano, Edward. Telephone interview by author. 27 August 2005.
in Newark allowed him to successfully control African American rioters without much restraint. When arresting rioters Alfano says he “made friends with these people. Some might have been tough and bad, but I was always courteous with them. [Still,] there were some cops with short tempers and whatnot, and I know they did abuse some people. It’s fact.” Poorly trained officers given little guidance once the riots broke out often became angry with the conditions in Newark and were known to abuse rioters when making arrests. Alfano, on the other hand, said he “never abused any person no matter how bad they were. I shackled them, I had to use force; you had to meet force with force. [But,] you only use force when you have to.”

Even though officers and National Guardsmen knew how to shoot a weapon, they did not know when it was proper to fire. In a 1956 Supreme Court case *Davis v. Hellwig*, the court concluded a police officer is not justified to shoot at every escaping criminal to prevent an escape. The “law values human life too highly to allow an officer to shoot an escaped offender who has committed only a misdemeanor or lesser offense.” Yet, Newark’s policemen were not trained in the legal proceedings that guided officer actions; they knew only how to load a rifle and shoot. In some cases, Newark policemen used personal weapons. With the unregulated use of weapons and ammunition, “the amount of ammunition expended by the police [could not] be determined,” nor could Police Director Spina and Deputy Chief Redden keep track of who shot whom once bedlam broke lose.

---

387 Alfano, Edward. Telephone interview by author. 27 August 2005.
388 *ibid*
389 Porambo, 246.
390 *Report For Action*, 135.
The pressure for officers and guardsmen to arrest rioters, combined “with a lack of familiarity with the neighborhood and its people,” may have led to a widespread use of aggressive patrol techniques. The techniques involved frequent “police-citizen contacts initiated by police rather than in response to a call for help or service.” Police action of this type led the Kerner Commission to call for “a research program that seeks to develop a new type of ammunition for use in civil disorders. It should be capable of striking with deterrent but not lethal force.” Alfano’s mode of operation during the riots was not to use weapons, but rather to “have [the rioters] by the belt in one hand and the gun in the other hand. You would walk them right out in the street and you would call for the police patrol wagon and they’d put them in there. We just locked them up, put them in the patrol wagon, and go lock up some more.” Alfano’s tactic was to get the rioters off the streets in hopes of calming the situation. He says that harming rioters was never his intention.

The lack of officer weapon training may have contributed to aggressive tactics. Poor preparation might have also influenced whether or not an officer decided to shoot a suspected criminal. Professors at the Universities of Colorado and Chicago recruited forty college students to participate in a psychology experiment entitled “The Police Officer’s Dilemma: Using Ethnicity to Disambiguate Potentially Threatening Individuals.” These professors also enlisted the help of twenty men – ten black and ten white – to volunteer to be weapon targets for the

391 Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, 159.
392 Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, 277.
393 Alfano, Edward. Telephone interview by author. 27 August 2005.
394 ibid
experiment demonstration. The student participants had to decide whether the target shown on a video screen was holding a gun or one of four non-gun objects including a cell phone, a silver can, a wallet, and a camera. After running the experiment through several trials, each time shortening the decision making time of the participants, the professors concluded that:

The decision to shoot may be influenced by a target person’s ethnicity…participants showed a bias to shoot African American targets more rapidly and/or more frequently than White targets. The implications of this bias are clear and disturbing. Even more worrisome is the suggestion that the mere knowledge of the cultural stereotype, which depicts African Americans as violent, may produce Shooter Bias and that even African Americans demonstrate the bias.\textsuperscript{395}

Newark policemen and National Guardsmen may have shot more African Americans than there were actually rioters simply because of Shooter Bias. The concept of Shooter Bias, which stereotypes blacks as criminals, dates back to early nineteenth century literature in which the “Negro was [portrayed as] imperfectly developed in mind and body, that he developed to a lower order of man,” and that he was a violent, animalistic creature.\textsuperscript{396} By the time the Newark riots occurred in 1967, black stereotypes were commonly instilled in the minds of whites, including the police defending the city of Newark. This revealing experiment performed more than thirty years after the riots suggests that “police training may actually reduce Shooter Bias by rendering the gun/no-gun decision more automatic for officers.”\textsuperscript{397} If Newark’s officers had been bettered

\textsuperscript{396} Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, 97.
\textsuperscript{397} Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 1328.
trained and prepared for the riots, the decision of when to use physical force and shoot at an
African American roaming the streets may have been better informed. The riots might not have resulted in twenty-six homicides in a six day period if the officers knew how to discriminate between an innocent bystander and a vicious criminal. Yet the only advice provided to Detectives Lorenzo, Alfano, and the rest of Newark police force was to take “drastic action to quell the mobs,” even if that meant shooting just because someone was African American.398

By the time the riots were over, Alfano looked at his city in despair. He was never brought up on charges of police brutality, but he felt as if he had not completed his job sufficiently. Too many people had died or were injured. Too many shops were destroyed, and too many of Newark’s residents had lost hope in the police force. No matter how much riot training the Newark police force was given, Alfano does not believe the riot “could have been prevented. To tell you the truth, that incident with the arrest of the cabdriver, if that didn’t happen, they would have rioted anyway. They were ready for a riot.”399 Even if the riot was unavoidable, the Newark police academy could have still trained its officers much more extensively prior to the violence. Shooter Bias might have been prevented, lives could have been saved, and respect for the police may have been regained. For many of Newark’s police officers, the end of the riot meant an end to their job, since the experience had been too traumatic. In fact, shortly after the riots, sixty-five officers left the force – twenty-five by resignation.400 Alfano, on

398 Dockray, 11.
399 Alfano, Edward. Telephone interview by author. 27 August 2005.
400 Report For Action, 24,
the other hand, felt as if he was strengthened by the riot experience and wanted to find a way to revamp the city he had lived in most of his life. His thirty year career as a detective was just beginning. He explains, “I never ever thought of leaving the force. I was a good cop. I knew what I had to do. I was an honest cop and never was I ever in trouble.”

---

**A Final Thought**

The Newark race riots awakened local government officials to the lack of police training in the event of a riot. It was only through the death of twenty-six people that there were any considerations by the government to improve Newark police training. The majorities of riot deaths reported had either no ballistic report – a study of the specific actions of a firearm – or produced findings that were inconclusive for the identification of the weapon owner. Consequently, almost all officers – local, state, and national – escaped reprimanding. None were charged with manslaughter. Who, then, is responsible for the deaths in Newark? There is no single answer to this question. Hundreds of different scenarios may explain these deaths, just as hundreds of different stories can describe the Newark race riots. Charles Lorenzo and Edward Alfano tell stories of a Newark where the officers were well-trained and properly outfitted for the violence. Yet, newspaper articles relay quite a different version of the events illustrating tales of ill-prepared National Guardsmen and police detectives. For example, in an article titled “Young Guardsmen Patrol Police HQ,” the reporter tells two stories. One story is about an

---

401 Alfano, Edward. Telephone interview by author. 27 August 2005.
untrained National Guardsman who, when asked about his feelings on handling the riots, said “we’re scared.” The other story is a description of an Essex County detective who, when called into service, “had no blue official uniform so he used a blue work shirt with the name ‘Dave’ sewed along the pocket.”

Newark’s police department was not properly prepared for the riots, despite what Lorenzo and Alfano personally believed. The heads of the force had denied FBI training for their officers, rejected funding for a police review board, and even allowed officers to use their own personal weapons to control the violence. While a riot is never something a city wants, Newark needed this riot to awaken the public to the lack of expertise possessed by the city’s law enforcement. Whether it’s as simple as how to load a rifle or as complex as raiding an after-hours bar filled with drunken, angry men, Newark’s officers needed more training. Still, police actions during the riot provide an even more important lesson than that of a need for improved training, a lesson essential for the entire country, not just Newark. This lesson is best stated by Governor Hughes as quoted in the *Newark Evening News*. Hughes explained that “the lesson to be learned from this disturbance is that we must remember we live in America under a God who created us equal. Some people have forgotten that.”

### CHAPTER FOUR:
**Self-Serving Shoppers, Jewish Merchants, & The Victim Known as Springfield Avenue**

---

“What’s that I smell in the air?/The American dream/Sweet as a new millionaire/The American dream/Pre-packed ready-to-wear/The American dream...Luck - by the tail/How can you fail?/And best of all, it's for sale/The American dream.”


On the night of July 13, 1967 the protest rally against police brutality in Newark had gotten completely out of hand, and heavy raiding along Springfield Avenue began in full force. In response, Mayor Addonizio called in over three thousand National Guardsmen to defend the city. These young, inexperienced officers stood nervously, rifles in hand, waiting for the signal to shoot. Then, suddenly a loud, angry voice sounded over a police radio, “It’s about time, give them hell.” Newark’s police and National Guardsmen had just received word to open fire in the Central Ward, and “murdering looters was now possible.”

Liquor stores became the first targets. Rioters initially went “for the imported Scotch... then for the bourbons and gins, next for vodka and champagne, and – when everything else ran out – for cheap muscatels and cordials.”

Tedock Bell, a twenty-eight year old African American, exited his Bergen Street home after hearing the first gun shots directed toward rioters. He worked at a bar in the Central Ward and decided to find out what damage, if any, had been suffered by his place of employment. As he approached the bar, police followed right behind. Tedock’s wife immediately ran in fear. Tedock, however, convinced his sister-in-law to stay by his side for just a moment longer but she, too, ran as the police drew near. All alone, Tedock walked in pride, believing that he did not do anything wrong to warrant police retaliation. A

405 ibid
moment later, at nearly four in the morning, Tedock Bell became the first victim of the riots, suffering a bullet wound to the chest.\footnote{Thomas Hayden. Rebellion in Newark. (New York: Random House, 1967) 35. There is some discrepancy on whether or not Tedock Bell was in fact the first victim of the riots. Hayden and Porambo both mention Tedock as being the first killed, but several government documents including the Report For Action name James Sanders as the first recorded victim at 4:10 AM.}

News of Tedock’s death did not stop rioters from ransacking stores. “What they couldn’t carry away [from the shops] was hauled out in wagons, baby carriages, cars, and trucks. For the first time in their lives, there was no restriction on selection and everything was within their price range.”\footnote{Ron Porambo. No Cause For Indictment: An Autopsy of Newark (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971) 115.} One woman is even quoted in newspapers as saying that she was waiting for the rioting to spread to “fancier sections so she could get expensive furs.”\footnote{Hayden, 31.} Nearly every store along Springfield Avenue was plundered that Thursday night. Only those few shops bearing the words “Soul Brother,” indicating that they were owned by African Americans, were spared. By the morning of Friday July 14\textsuperscript{th}, over two hundred people were treated at City Hospital and St. Michael’s hospital for riot-related injuries. The real victims, however, were not the looters wounded in pursuit of televisions, jewelry, and clothing, but the store owners whose American dream of success had been destroyed in one unforgettable night.
Prior to the race riots, Newark was one of the leading shopping districts in the state.\textsuperscript{411} Springfield Avenue – in the heart of the Central Ward – was the place to go for all shopping needs, be it clothing, linens, food, furniture, or liquor. The majority of these shops were owned by Jewish merchants who lived in the Clinton Hill and Weequahic sections of the city. Until the 1960s, Newark was “the center of Jewish culture in America, a community that contained between 80,000 and 100,000 Jews, nearly one of every four residents in the city, the oldest, biggest, richest, most influential gathering of Jews in New Jersey.”\textsuperscript{412} There is no documentation on exactly how long the Jews resided in the city of Newark by the time the riots took place; however, the first documentation of a Jewish settler in the city, Louis Trier, goes back to 1844. Trier came to Newark from Alsace-Lorraine and established the first synagogue in New Jersey called B’nai Jeshurun. By 1900, Trier was just one of 50,000 Jews living in Newark.\textsuperscript{413} Many of these Jews became merchants who started out selling items from small pushcarts and eventually

\textsuperscript{410} Springfield Avenue, picture taken by author


\textsuperscript{413} ibid, 88.
opened their own shops along Springfield Avenue and Prince Street. Together they formed the Springfield Avenue Merchants Association (SAMA) to protect their rights and property as business entrepreneurs. All in all, these merchants were achieving the American dream, starting from scratch to become one of the wealthiest ethnic groups in the country.

This Jewish domination did not last. Just before the riots, Newark’s Jews began to leave the city in massive waves, making mad dashes for the suburbs. Their neighborhoods which were once homogeneous complexes “of religion, commerce, and family,” were slowly transforming into African American strongholds. Clinton Hill, which was 93 percent white in 1950, was 57 percent black a mere ten years later when 20,000 white residents, mostly Jews, opted to leave the city. It became apparent that the Jewish people did not want to live near “Negroes or… minorities.” Those few Jews who stayed in Newark left right after the riots. Their stores had been completely destroyed and the government was offering little, if any, insurance to cover the damages. The only hope these merchants had was the SAMA, which helped fight the government to establish an emergency insurance plan.

The mass exodus of the Jewish population from Newark in the 1950s and 1960s prompts the question: what type of relationship did the Jews have with the black residents prior to leaving the city? The Jews were said to have been the first group to attract African Americans to Newark. Newark’s first and only Jewish Mayor, Meyer Ellenstein, placed advertisements in Southern newspapers in the early twentieth century that boasted the availability of work in

414 DePalma, 89.
415 ibid, 86.
Newark and encouraged blacks to migrate north.\footnote{William Helmreich. \textit{The Jews of Newark: Metrowest: The Enduring Community}, (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1999) 39.} Once blacks migrated to the city, their relationships with Jews became economically based: Jews owned the shops and blacks were their customers; Jews owned the buildings and blacks were their tenants. The dependency blacks had on Jews in Newark may lead one to conclude that “black-Jewish relations were poor.” Further studies, however, reveal that “in reality, Newark was seen as a relatively peaceful city” when it came to Jewish-African American relations.\footnote{Helmreich, 39.} In fact, several institutions were formed in the city to “foster racial harmony.” The Y in the Weequahic section of Newark, for example, sponsored interracial sports events.\footnote{ibid, 40.}

By the 1950s, more and more African Americans moved into the city at rates many Jews were not ready to accept. The belief by blacks “that Jews are traditionally liberal made them feel more comfortable about moving into predominantly Jewish neighborhoods.”\footnote{ibid, 37.} Yet when push came to shove Jews did not want blacks living in their communities. In 1963, Montez and John Mooney became the first black family to live on Lehigh Avenue, a largely Jewish area. News of the Mooneys’ presence spread throughout the neighborhood and even onto the front page of the \textit{Newark Evening News}. The newspaper reported that Mayor Addonizio gave the Mooneys a plaque for “beautifying their home.” As a result of this article, “for sale signs [on Lehigh Avenue] sprouted overnight.”\footnote{DePalma, 91.} Even though many of Newark’s Jews supported Civil Rights
and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., they did not want to “live next door to a black radiologist or [have] their children play with black children from down the block.” From these examples, it is evident that African Americans were not welcome in Jewish communities.

Many blacks ultimately resented the Jews of Newark, causing a growing tension within the city. Evidence of what may have led to this frustration can be found in a study of disadvantaged neighborhoods in Newark. This report found that nonwhites renting from white landlords, including many Jewish landlords, paid “8.1 percent to 16.8 percent higher” rents than whites. The analysis also notes that “nonwhites were paying a definite ‘color tax’ of apparently well over 10 percent on housing.” The exploitation of black consumers by Jewish shopkeepers was another major complaint. Black residents, for example, “frequently [acknowledged] that they [paid] higher prices for food in local markets than wealthier white suburbanites and receive inferior quality meat and produce.” These sorts of complaints were common throughout the country. In a Kerner Commission study of twenty cities that experienced a riot during the summer of 1967, eleven of those cities’ residents complained about unfair commercial practices. Then, when it came to the Newark race riots, “rioters focused on stores operated by white merchants who, they apparently believed, had been charging exorbitant prices or selling inferior goods.”

---

421 ibid, 93.
423 ibid, 140.
424 ibid
425 ibid, 139.
By the time July 12, 1967 arrived, tensions between Newark’s Jewish shop owners and black consumers had reached an all-time high. The unregulated pricing of goods and services by local Jewish store owners had finally rusted what was left of the chain of trust between merchants and black residents. These pricing procedures led rioters to rob and destroy Jewish-owned stores, putting an end to the Jewish economic stronghold in Newark. Springfield Avenue became a wasteland, a graveyard for the American dream. As African Americans fought for their freedom, Jews watched their freedom, their city, taken away. By the end of the riots, damages were estimated to be well over ten million dollars.\footnote{Congress did pass a Federal Disaster Act in 1950 which would have been helpful in restoring victims’ property, except that this piece of legislation applied only to natural disasters, not to riots.\footnote{Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, 197.}} Therefore, many of Newark’s merchants did not have the insurance to cover the costs of repairing their stores; most had no choice but to close up shop and leave the city. Who, then, was supposed to cover the damages? What actions had to be taken to improve insurance coverage? Finally, how was the SAMA – whose membership was declining daily – supposed to improve the city of Newark and maintain the morale of its members now that the chaos was over?

The tales of four Jewish shop owners who worked in Newark during the riots may provide answers to these questions. Maurice Cohen, who now owns a men’s clothing store in Livingston, New Jersey, was seventeen at the time of the riots. His father Louis Cohen owned Hyman, Cohen, and Sons, a shop on Prince Street which sold ladies and menswear to Newark.
residents and custom peddlers. Cohen worked at the store as a teenager, helping his father stock inventory after school and on the weekends. His family lived and breathed the store sometimes even sleeping in the backroom. Unfortunately, on the first night of the riots, Hyman, Cohen and Sons was completely destroyed. A block away on Springfield Avenue Jack Oelbaum owned a five and ten store called D.W. Ward, and another on Fairmont Avenue called Delta Variety. Oelbaum, now ninety-seven years old, still vividly remembers the night that his store on Fairmont Avenue was also fully damaged. The only thing the rioters left in the shop, Oelbaum explains, was an old sofa in the back corner of the store. Down the street from Oelbaum’s store on Branford Place stands Hobby’s Delicatessen and Restaurant. Hobby’s, which remains the last Jewish deli in Newark, was relatively unscathed by the riot. The deli’s owner, Samuel Brummer, was and still is well respected by the black population in Newark. When the riots hit, only one window was cracked in the violence. Now, at the age of eighty-two, Brummer has placed the ownership of Hobby’s into the hands of his two sons, but he still comes to help at the deli everyday. The final storeowner is Morris Spielberg, an eighty-one year old man still highly active in the furniture business. Spielberg owned Almor Furniture on Springfield Avenue as well as rented out the apartments above his shop. Just prior to the riots, Spielberg was elected president of the SAMA. The night the riots broke out, he was in his store when a garbage can was thrown through the shop’s front window. He believed that his store was going to be completely destroyed when he left Newark that night. The morning after, however, when he returned to work, Spielberg found several members of the community sitting on the stoop in
front of his store forming a blockade against rioters. His store was spared from destruction.

Analyzing these four stories provides a final glimpse into the Newark race riots. Cohen, Oelbaum, Brummer, and Spielberg may not be representative of the entire merchant community in Newark in 1967, but the themes and issues that present themselves in their stories provide an essential look at the economic downfall of Newark as a result of the riots. In addition, the ethnic aspect of their tales provides a new look at Newark not yet discussed in this thesis.

---

**STORES DESTROYED**

*Maurice Cohen*

“My father and mother lived and died by the store. At one point they had an oven, a range, and a sink where my mother used to make the food and they used to eat right there. This was it; this was the only thing they had.”

---

Hyman, Cohen, and Sons was once a staple in Newark, located one block away from Springfield Avenue at the intersection of Prince and Court Streets. The store attracted locals, mostly African Americans, looking to buy well-priced men’s and women’s clothing from a friendly man named Louis Cohen. Custom peddlers would also travel to the store to buy clothing from Louis at discounted rates, and then sell the clothes to customers who had no credit or who were unable to drive to the store. This successful retail/quasi-wholesale business originally started in the early twentieth century, when Louis’ father traveled from Europe to the United States hoping to make it rich. Arriving in Newark for the first time, Louis’ father bought himself a pushcart and began to sell clothing to local residents along Springfield Avenue. In the meantime, Cohen married and had three sons, one of whom was Louis. The pushcart business was expanding, and Louis’ father decided to rent a store to start selling his clothing on a larger scale. He brought his sons into the business and they opened their first store on Prince Street.

429 Maurice Cohen and wife Amy, picture taken by author
Eventually, the elder Cohen bought the entire building and built his store into Hyman, Cohen, and Sons. He left the ownership of the store to his sons when he passed away.

Louis was quite honored to take over the ownership of his father’s store. He spent day and night working, sometimes even sleeping in the backroom. His son, Maurice, spent his childhood in the shop.\footnote{Maurice will be referred to as Cohen for the remainder of the chapter.} Cohen explains, “As far back as I could remember, we used to go down [to the store,] because my parents didn’t have babysitters. I would play in the store with my cousins and some of the kids on the street.”\footnote{Cohen, Maurice. Interview by author. Short Hills, New Jersey: 9 July 2005.} According to Cohen, Hyman, Cohen, and Sons provided a fun atmosphere for a child. The store was surrounded by Jewish delis, candy shops, bakeries, and more. Especially appealing to Cohen was the Reliable Quilt Company, located just down the street. “They had something, which you don’t see anymore,” he explains with a childlike smile on his face. “They had bins of down, because you could buy the down that they put in pillows. And we used to go over there and jump in it, and it was really kind of cool.”\footnote{ibid}

Cohen’s days of running down the street to Wiggler’s Bakery or jumping into the down bins at Reliable Quilt would later be replaced by folding clothing and stocking shelves at his father’s store. “I was there whenever. I had to work, helping out with whatever I could do.”\footnote{ibid} In addition to his son, Louis hired a few other people to help out. He hired a black woman and man to attend to customers, hoping to ease any racial tensions that arose between African American shoppers and Louis, a white shop owner. Though Cohen “didn’t really have a love affair with the
locals,” he was impressed by the way his father successfully ran a business amidst the growing racial tensions of the city. He explains, “I saw my father making a nice living, a comfortable living and [he] did not have to answer to anybody else. You know, he really was the king of the roost.”

Louis would not remain the “king of the roost” for long. His store was in a perfect location for shoppers, but it was also in the direct line of raiders the night the race riots began. On the night of July 13, 1967, the Cohens were at home in Maplewood watching the evening news. All of a sudden the reporter on camera jumped to a breaking story. The cab driver incident of the previous night had finally provoked Newarkers into an all-out riot. Cohen explains that when his mother heard this news, she begged his father not to go down to the store. Mrs. Cohen was not shocked by the news of the riot, she just feared for her husband’s life. Cohen describes his parents’ opinion on the situation. “My parents pretty much knew the riots were coming. I believe there were riots before Newark, either in Chicago or Detroit, so they figured if they rioted there, they would riot in Newark. So it was not a question of if, it was a question of when.” Ultimately, the Cohens stayed in Maplewood that night. Newark’s police department had blocked off all the main roads leading into the city, and no one was able to get in or out of the area.

---

435 ibid
The following morning Cohen and his brother drove with their father to the shop only to find out “that was it. There was nothing left.”436 “I had just got my permit,” Cohen describes, “and my brother and I had tried to drive down Central Avenue the next day and they wouldn’t let us get past East Orange; it was blocked off.”437 Nevertheless, Louis would not leave Newark without seeing what type of damage was done to his shop. He begged the National Guardsmen to let his son drive their car down Springfield Avenue to see what remained of Hyman, Cohen and Sons. The troopers, noticing the sadness in Louis’ eyes, agreed to let Maurice drive down the street to their store. Several guardsmen escorted the Cohen men to their shop, leading them through the decimated streets. Some of the local police, on the other hand, were spotted actually joining in the ransacking of stores rather than protecting the shops. “The police were as bad as the rioters,” Cohen believes.438 Although Cohen distrusted the local Newark law enforcement and believes that police also participated in stealing store merchandise, he received protection from the law as a privilege of his race. The National Guardsmen assisted Louis Cohen in entering his store. Cohen illustrates the urgency of his father’s mission. “Now the reason my father wanted to go down there, besides seeing what was left, was that in the safe were all the paperwork for the custom peddlers that owed my father money. My father figured that he was going to lose all of the inventory, so we went down during the day to get the safe out.”439 Two rioters were still in the store when Louis and his sons arrived. The store looked like a war-zone.

436 ibid
438 ibid
439 ibid
Rioters had “attached chains to the gates, because the store had gates, and they pulled the gates down, which takes a little bit of doing. They took everything out of the store and then they burnt down whatever was left.”  The National Guardsmen hauled the final two men in the store away through nearly three feet of debris that covered the shop’s floor.

As he entered his decimated store, Louis stood with his head in the palm of his hands; he was in shock. What had he done to deserve this? “I couldn’t believe the feeling of walking into the store and seeing nothing,” Cohen recalls. “How big that store was without the merchandise and how much higher I was standing on top of the debris. [All that was left was] one ladder, a box of pajamas, and a box of pencils.” Fortunately, the rioters did not break into the safe and all the documents from the custom peddlers were left untouched. After one night of chaos, Louis

\[\text{\textsuperscript{440} ibid}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{441} Jean Paradise, ed. “Picture of Hyman, Cohen, and Sons.” Collier’s Yearbook 1968. (Washington, D.C.: Cromwell-Collier Educational Corporation, 1968) 385. The two men with their hands against the police car in this picture were the two men still in the store when Louis and his sons arrived at the scene. The National Guardsmen in this photo, Maurice explains, were the men who assisted him and his father the morning they returned to Newark to get the custom peddler receipts from the store safe.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{442} Cohen, Maurice. Interview by author. Short Hills, New Jersey: 9 July 2005.}\]
had lost ninety percent of what he owned. These papers were the only source of livelihood he had left.

For black merchants on Springfield Avenue the National Guardsmen were not as helpful.

Alfred Henderson owned a photography studio in the Central Ward. The night Hyman, Cohen, and Sons was destroyed, so too was Henderson’s studio. Henderson was in his apartment above the photography studio the night the riots began. All of a sudden a man in an unmarked car drove by the studio and shot at his business:

So I saw this caravan coming up the street…They were shooting up the stores two blocks away [when] I heard them coming closer, the same caravan. Then I saw first it was a black unmarked car with detectives in shirt sleeves. There were at least four men in the car…The State Troopers was behind them…And if these men were people that were from out of the neighborhood that was coming in shooting up the place…I know that these law enforcers that were right behind them would stop them from doing what they were doing.\textsuperscript{443}

Mr. Henderson’s store was not attacked by the rioters. Instead, his studio was barraged with bullets from the guns of Newark detectives. Cohen was right in this case; these particular police were as bad as the rioters. Did Alfred’s black skin seal his studio’s fate?

In the days that followed, the Cohen family acted as if they were sitting Shiva for a deceased relative. Neighbors brought all sorts of food platters to their home in Maplewood, hoping to assist the Cohens in their time of need. Since the destruction of his store, Louis’

friends gave him the nickname “blood and guts” for having successfully handled the devastation he and his family experienced.\textsuperscript{444} Cohen remembers his father at this point in his life: “My father was a levelheaded guy and made good business decisions and didn’t exert himself in any way to put too much pressure on himself.”\textsuperscript{445} Louis had to be levelheaded to handle the fact that he only had enough insurance to partly cover the damages to his store. Hyman, Cohen, and Sons was not the only business without property insurance. According to the Kerner Commission, residents and businessmen in urban ghettos throughout the United States in the 1960s had difficulty purchasing the necessary insurance. In fact, “over 40 percent of businessmen and close to 30 percent of homeowners had serious property insurance problems… [And] nearly 50 percent of the businessmen surveyed had no burglary and theft insurance.” Ultimately, with the spate of riots around the country in the 1960s, insurance availability has dropped even further.\textsuperscript{446}

With nothing left but custom peddlers’ receipts, Louis Cohen had to find a job for the first time in his life. He found a position at the Montgomery Water Company and a nice salary that kept his son in college. Still, Louis’ new earnings were vastly inferior to those from Hyman, Cohen and Sons. He was a retail shop owner at heart and so while working for Montgomery Water, Louis continued to search for a new building outside of Newark where he could reopen his store. Ten minutes from his home in Livingston, New Jersey, Louis and his brother found a

\textsuperscript{445} \textit{ibid}
\textsuperscript{446} Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, 306.
store named Sam’s up for sale. The owner was extremely ill and his store had gone to shambles.

Cohen remembers walking through Sam’s for the first time:

They had crap and debris and dirt, and it was just a mess. Someone once wrote the best of times and the worst of times. I think the worst of times was the riots in Newark and to me the best of times was the riots in Newark, because it forced my family to move out to Livingston, which was probably the single best thing that my father and uncle did. It took a riot to get them out of there, but once they got out of there they made the right decision.447

Louis and his brother leveraged everything they had, including their suburban homes, to purchase Sam’s in 1969. They left their jobs at Montgomery Water and finally got back into the retail business where, Cohen says, his father belonged.

Looking back on his father’s business in Newark, Cohen believes that Louis never took advantage of the local residents. He explains: “A store like my father’s could have taken advantage of people, but I don’t think he did. Remember that this is the United States, a free enterprise system. If a merchant wanted to charge an exorbitant amount of money he could. He’s not stiff-arming the customer into paying. The customer can choose either to buy it or not buy it.”448 It was not so much the merchants charging high prices, in Cohen’s opinion, but Newark residents desiring something for nothing that caused tensions in the Central Ward. “They had the opportunity to basically liberate the merchandise from all the stores,” Cohen describes, “and it was a free for all. And you know what, if you can get away with it, why not? They’re poor

people. They wanted to have the TV’s and the clothes and the air conditioners like everybody else had, and they didn’t want to work for it.” Louis Cohen, however, worked very hard for each and every item he owns. His family’s livelihood was his biggest concern. Fortunately for Louis’ sake, Sam’s still stands to this day, and his son Maurice has taken over the family business.

---------------

**Jack Oelbaum**

“I made a living, a pretty fair living. For me it wasn’t a problem because I was called a white nigger, in other words I befriended the Negro population.”

Jack Oelbaum was a New York man at heart. He was raised in the Bronx and received his bachelor’s degree from New York University. After graduating college, Oelbaum was quickly married and moved closer to his wife’s family in Newark, New Jersey. Despite his impressive education, Oelbaum was unemployed when he married, and so his wealthy mother-in-law made a suggestion. She gave him some money and told him to use these funds to purchase two shops in Newark, one on Fairmont Avenue and the other on Springfield Avenue. Oelbaum eagerly accepted the money and became one of Newark’s many Jewish merchants.

With the help of several partners, Oelbaum created two five and ten stores. One was named D.W. Ward and the other Delta Variety Store. These shops carried “everything from

---

449 ibid
450 Picture unavailable
cosmetics to jewelry, to sanitary goods to gloves, everything you could think of.”⁴⁵² Oelbaum’s customers started off as mostly low-end and middle class whites from Newark. Just prior to the riots, as more African Americans moved into the city, Oelbaum began to see more black customers enter his store. Although Oelbaum attracted many customers, the merchant business was difficult in the beginning. He worked six days a week, nearly twenty-four hours a day and could hardly manage to pay his employees. “We paid our employees very little money,” he recalls, “and the competition was very fierce. I had a five and ten just a block a way from me.”⁴⁵³ To keep up with the local competition, Oelbaum made sure his prices were as good, if not better, than the other five and ten stores in the area.

Within a short time of opening his shops in Newark, Oelbaum was elected President of the SAMA. As President, he tried to improve relations between Newark’s Jewish shop owners and black residents. He and his wife hosted field trips for young black children, and even offered tutoring help. Oelbaum explains: “My wife and I tried to give [Newark’s African American children] after school lessons. I [also] took a group of kids from the black community to a museum.”⁴⁵⁴ Oelbaum wanted to show these children that the Jews did not want to take advantage or harm Newark’s black residents.⁴⁵⁵ Oelbaum’s wife also started a children’s game

---

⁴⁵² Oelbaum, Jack. Telephone interview by author. 27 August 2005.
⁴⁵³ ibid
⁴⁵⁴ ibid
⁴⁵⁵ Although there is no reason not to believe Oelbaum, no documentation exists to prove that he and his wife did in fact host field trips and study sessions for African American kids.
business to try to encourage better race relations in Newark. She sold these games at both of her husband’s stores, and Oelbaum still owns the rights to each of these games.

One [of my wife’s games] was called ‘Kids’ Choices.’ This presented problems that teenagers and young people met. [For example,] what would happen when you went out for a play and you thought you were very good, and they gave the part to a black girl who was better than you? Would you say they did it because she was black, or would you acknowledge that she was better than you?  

‘Kids’ Choices’ as well as another game called ‘Creation, You Can Beat the Bible,’ proved to be quite popular amongst Newark’s children, and so Oelbaum truly believed that his and his wife’s actions were helping to ease tension in the city. As SAMA President, Oelbaum knew that efforts beyond teaching African American and white children to cooperate were needed to improve racial relations in Newark. The crucial issue at hand was finding a way to instruct local merchants on how to properly treat their customers. Oelbaum had many friends who he says, “took advantage one way or another [of Newark’s black residents]. I had one friend in particular, he was an acquaintance. He charged higher and extra for everything.” This friend, for example, took a $100 order for a black customer who decided she did not want the item in the long run. Oelbaum describes the situation:

On a Monday or Tuesday morning [a customer] came in [to this merchant’s store] and said my husband said I can’t have it, can I have my money back? He said no, you can’t,

---

456 Oelbaum, Jack. Telephone interview by author. 27 August 2005.
457 ibid
they’re making the order. And I and some other people in the town persuaded this Jewish storekeeper to give her money back. It happened among people who were in the so-called installment business.⁴⁵⁸

Installment buying was a popular practice amongst merchants throughout the country’s poor urban areas in the 1960s. Poor families living in ghettos wanted to purchase luxury goods just like everyone else, but because of “bad previous credit records [and] unstable sources of income,” they were unable to purchase products from large chain stores. These individuals had no choice but to buy items from local merchants. These merchants, knowing that their average customer had poor credit, tended to “sell goods on terms [installments] designed to cover the cost of doing business in ghetto neighborhoods.”⁴⁵⁹ Customers, like the one described by Oelbaum, were therefore forced into huge amounts of debt by shopkeepers who charged exorbitant prices on everything from deli sandwiches to television sets. Still, Oelbaum notes that one must remember it was not always the merchant’s fault; sometimes it was the customer’s fault. For instance, “people would come [into stores] and say I’ll pay you when I get my welfare check,” but these customers never returned with the money.⁴⁶⁰ As President, Oelbaum tried to mitigate discrepancies regarding installment payments. His efforts, however, were limited and only addressed a small part of the city’s racial problems. By the summer of 1967, Newark could not escape the chaos that was spreading throughout the country.

⁴⁵⁸ Oelbaum, Jack. Telephone interview by author. 27 August 2005.
⁴⁵⁹ Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders. 140.
⁴⁶⁰ Oelbaum, Jack. Telephone interview by author. 27 August 2005.
Just a few hours before John Smith’s arrest, Oelbaum was in one of his stores closing up for the night. A local minister of the Dutch Reform Church in Newark, Levin West, entered Oelbaum’s store. Reverend West waited for Oelbaum to finish closing the register and then the two men walked down Springfield Avenue together. “I was walking with one of the so-called leaders of the black community,” Oelbaum recalls, “and I was told there would be a riot, but my store wouldn’t be hurt because I was a white nigger.” Oelbaum was apparently warned that a riot was going to take place even before the violence was unleashed. This warning of violence was just one of the many reasons Mayor Addonizio and Governor Hughes believed the riots may have been premeditated. The New Jersey Governor’s Commission tackled this conspiracy dilemma by questioning members of the Newark police force. For example, when the Commission asked Police Superintendent Kelly whether he had any information that “the Newark…riots were organized with help from the outside,” Kelly answered in the affirmative. Police Director Spina also believed there was some type of planning for the Newark riots. He said to the Governor’s Commission, “We could tell from the pattern of the looting and the pattern of the sniping,” that rioters must have planned their actions prior to the riot. He added that the police department “had evidence to substantiate that [the Newark riots] constituted a conspiracy, stronger than just a belief.”

461 Oelbaum, Jack. Telephone interview by author. 27 August 2005.
On the opposite side of the spectrum, Civil Rights leaders argued against the belief that the riot was planned. For example, Robert Curvin of CORE who tried to prevent the riots from escalating had “very strong beliefs,” that the sniping and the riots were not planned. Debates over the issue of conspiracy still exist today.

Despite possible police knowledge of an upcoming riot and the warnings from Levin West, Oelbaum could not prevent one of his stores from being completely destroyed by the riots. The morning after the riots began Oelbaum and one of his fellow merchants drove to Newark to see what was left of their stores. Oelbaum remembers that dismal morning. “When I rode down to Newark in my friend’s car the police stopped us. You couldn’t get down to Eighth Street where my store was, but we went through anyway.” Oelbaum finally arrived at his store on Fairmont Avenue, his heart racing, only to find the shop completely decimated. Even the ceiling light fixtures were taken. Oelbaum could not stand to see the sight of his store, so he walked around the corner to his other five and ten on Springfield Avenue. Much to his surprise, this store remained intact. According to Oelbaum, a young black man who worked for him “stood in front of [his] store and said you [rioters] can’t come in; it’s owned by my father. They wouldn’t go in there because [Oelbaum] would be a soul person.” Levin West was right; Oelbaum’s store was not harmed. Nevertheless, it was not as a result of West’s protection, it was due to Oelbaum’s good rapport with his African American employees. The historian must rely on

463 ibid, 142.
465 ibid
Oelbaum’s memory in this case as no actual documentation exists to justify his claims that a black employee did indeed stand in front of his store. Nevertheless, many of Newark’s Jewish merchants who had a good rapport with the local black community also claim that their own black employees protected their stores during the riots.

With one store left, Oelbaum kept his hopes up and continued to run his business in Newark. Shortly afterAddonizio declared an end to Newark’s explosion, Oelbaum hired one of his friends, an aspiring artist, to paint a mural on the outside of his Springfield Avenue store. He hoped that this portrait would ease the tensions between Jewish merchants and black residents following the riots. “Right after the riots,” Oelbaum says, “I decided to placate the Negro population. I had my friend paint a Negro scene from Africa on my building. It showed a tent, and Negro people in front of the tent.” Photographs were taken of this mural and distributed throughout the SAMA. Oelbaum believed that he was indeed helping to ease racial tensions, but the subject matter of this particular painting seems more patronizing than harmonizing. The native African scene may have tried to honor newfound black interests in African heritages, but how could a painting possibly help rebuild race relations? Oelbaum had good intentions when he designed this mural and so he probably did not intend this type of negative reaction to the painting when he had it painted on his store.

---

466 Oelbaum, Jack. Telephone interview by author. 27 August 2005.
In addition to having this scene painted, Oelbaum changed his business practices. For example, he notes that if “a person came in for a refund, I didn’t argue with them.” Oelbaum remained on Springfield Avenue for another five years, trying to make up for the loss of his store on Fairmont while still earning enough money to support his family. When the five years were up, he packed up his bags and left the city of Newark. Even though he lost a major portion of his livelihood and was eventually forced out of Newark because of the riots, Oelbaum still believes in the right of people to fight for their beliefs. “Without any riots or insurrections,” he says, “people wouldn’t get what they deserve.”

STORES SAVED

Samuel Brummer

“You ask anybody not just in Newark but in suburban areas about not just Hobby’s, but me and my family and they’ll tell you we live and let live.”

---

467 ibid
468 ibid
In 1939, three months before World War II began, sixteen year old Samuel Brummer left behind thirty-five members of his family in Poland and took a boat to the United States. By the time Brummer arrived in New York, Hitler had rounded up the Jews in his former Polish village and no one escaped alive. His uncle was all he had left, and America was now his home. Unable to speak a word of English, Brummer managed to find his uncle in the Bronx. “I was saved from Europe, my whole family was gone,” Brummer laments. But on the bright side, “I came to this country so I could do some good. And if I can’t do anything good, I certainly won’t do anything bad.” Brummer’s uncle immediately took him in, and he lived with his uncle in the Bronx for a year. Then, the two men moved to Newark, New Jersey so Brummer could receive a proper Jewish high school education. Hitler had slaughtered millions of Jews in Europe, but Brummer was not going to let his religion hamper his success in this new country of religious freedom.

Brummer studied the English language day and night and did very well in his writing classes. His uncle, however, could not afford to support the two of them on his own, so Brummer

got a job at a local grocery store. Here he made only a small salary delivering groceries for seven
dollars a week. Over time, this was not enough money for Brummer, so he scouted out other
employment options. A friend of his mentioned a job opening at a factory that made salami and
bologna, so he immediately jumped at the opportunity. Within days Brummer switched from
delivering groceries to working on an assembly line. This job also would not last. Brummer
explains:

My boss walked in one time and saw me. He says ‘what’s a
teen kid like you doing in a factory?’ I said this is the job I
got. I’m still going to school. And he says ‘how would you
like to be a cashier?’ I said sure but I’ve never took cash.
He said ‘we’ll teach you.’ So he took me up front and
showed me. I was a quick learner and I helped work behind
the counter in a deli. We were selling corn beef sandwiches
for twelve cents and five cent sodas. Seventeen cents they
had lunch. 472

Brummer was making nearly $50 a week working behind the deli counter. He started to get the
feeling his grandfather had once told him about, the feeling of making it, the feeling of the
American dream. Brummer decided that when he graduated high school he would enter the
restaurant business. His dream would have to be postponed, however, because in 1944, only five
years after he came to America, he was drafted into the war. “They shipped me overseas,”
Brummer recalls, “and I joined the National Guard outfit, the 29th Infantry Division. They were
training in England to invade France. We trained for one year and wound up landing on Omaha

Beach in France and fought until the war was over.” As a Jewish soldier, the defeat of enemy forces on D-Day, June 6, 1944, was a life changing experience for Brummer. He knew that when he returned from Europe, his mission to prove himself as a successful Jew would now be even more important.

Brummer returned to Newark after a few months in service and once again found himself looking for a job. The owner of Hobby’s Deli, who worked as a cashier with Brummer at his former job, found out that Brummer was back in town. He visited Brummer at his home and said, “I need help, come and help me. One of my men is sick; you gotta come in and give me a hand. But I just came home, give me a few days, [I said]. He said but I need you tomorrow, and so I said ok. I went in and helped him for a couple weeks.” After a couple of weeks, Brummer became part-owner of Hobby’s deli, fully taking over the business in 1962. The deli by this time was rundown, and fewer and fewer customers were coming into the store. Brummer revamped the business and turned the deli into one of Newark’s most popular restaurants. Day and night local residents enjoyed the delicacies served at Hobby’s and according to Brummer, “the most popular sandwich [was and still] is number five: corn beef, pastrami, coleslaw [on rye] with Russian dressing.”

Although Brummer experienced the traditional hardships of starting a new business, he absolutely loved working at Hobby’s. “I enjoy it because I like to help people,” he says. “People

---

[474] ibid
[475] ibid
come in, they’re not just customers, they’re friends. I greet them; I talk to them.” Brummer is especially proud of the fact that his deli had “a good following amongst black people. They pay the price, nobody gives us any trouble.” In fact, Black Power activist LeRoi Jones was and still is one of Hobby’s most loyal customers. Brummer remembers one New Year’s Eve prior to the summer of 1967 when Jones stopped by the deli to pick up some sandwiches for dinner. Jones had been repeatedly accused of being anti-Semitic, but Brummer found him to be very accepting of the fact that he was Jewish.

[LeRoi Jones] is a Muslim and doesn’t drink, but he came in one New Year’s and we were closing the store. I said I know you don’t drink but how about having a drink with me for New Year’s. He said Sam it would be my pleasure to have a drink with you on New Year’s, and we had a drink together.

LeRoi Jones, Robert Curvin, and other Civil Rights leaders frequented Hobby’s Deli. The real problem, however, was that even though African Americans liked Hobby’s, many of Brummer’s fellow merchants took advantage of their own black customers. Newark could not escape violence if only a few select store owners treated their customers properly.

If you talk to anybody about Hobby’s they’ll tell you we’re fair people and we tried to do the right thing. Unfortunately some people take advantage. I don’t think this will ever stop. It’s just like war; you’ll always have wars no matter what. They’ll charge higher prices to whites too if they could get away with it. They see a dummy who walks in

---

476 ibid
478 ibid
and will be willing to pay anything and they’ll give him a different price. It’s a vicious cycle.\textsuperscript{479}

The SAMA was also aware of this “vicious cycle.” In a letter sent out by the association to its members, standing president, Morris Spielberg, stated that “no matter what you believe the underlying causes of the riots to have been, no one can deny that the practices of some merchants in this area might have been at least a contributing factor to the unhappiness and discontent of area residents...People don’t buy from merchants they don’t trust.”\textsuperscript{480} The real test of local support for Sam’s restaurant, therefore, would be the Newark riots.

Just a few hours before John Smith was arrested, Brummer and several of his deli workers were finishing preparing a catering order for the following morning. By 9:30 PM, Brummer was putting the finishing touches on a platter when a Newark police officer entered the store and said Sam had to pack up and get out of his shop immediately; Newark had erupted in violence outside the Fourth Precinct. With hundreds of dollars of cold-cuts about to go to waste, Brummer made a quick decision:

\begin{quote}
It was a terrible feeling because first of all we had a lot of stuff made up. I don’t remember how much help we had, but we had quite a few help, and a lot of orders were made and everybody closed. We had everything made up, you know a few thousand dollars. We couldn’t keep the food; all the sandwiches were made so we gave them to the police. And we were closed for three days. You were told
\end{quote}

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{479} \textit{ibid}
\end{flushleft}
Samuel Brummer returned home that night after taking several detours through the city. Cops had already begun to block off the streets leading to the Central Ward. He was worried his store would be harmed in the riots since he did not have any gates protecting his store like some of the other merchants on the street. Still, when Brummer arrived home and the fate of his store was out of his hands, he continued to believe that “it takes people with some guts to say hey it’s time to stand up and give us some freedom.”

With a wife and two young children to support, Brummer rushed down to Newark three days later in hopes that his deli was still standing. If he survived the Holocaust, he believed, he could survive the race riots. He drove slowly up to his store taking in the sights of Springfield Avenue as he rode down the street. Hobby’s had already been closed for three days, and Brummer hoped it would not be closed any longer. He had experienced a miracle; his deli had survived the riots. Brummer recalls the day he made this discovery:

There was a group of rioters marching down the street and literally breaking windows and looting, [but] when they got in front of Hobby’s a couple of the leaders said ‘this is Hobby’s don’t touch them, they’re friends.’ I didn’t know who it was, but somehow they knew not to touch Hobby’s because they were being treated fairly. There was something to it. All the windows around Hobby’s were broken, but we didn’t get a scratch. We were very, very fortunate.

---

482 ibid
Hobby’s Deli was spared, but Brummer would have to revise his business operations: “We used to be open weekdays to ten o’clock at night and weekends to one o’clock in the morning. We couldn’t stay there at night [now]. It was frightening. We had to close at five o’clock. We lost a lot of business.” Compared to other local stores, though, Hobby’s Deli had been extremely fortunate. Practically all of the local supermarkets and delis had been destroyed, so beginning on the third day of the riots, the City Housing Authority, along with Civil Rights and anti-poverty groups helped distribute food to local residents. Thousands “stood in line for as long as four hours to receive a quart of milk, half a cabbage, some vegetables, and a small portion of salami or bologna.” As one volunteer explained, “These people are starting to starve. They have no money, no food and no stores. They are not looters, not criminals, not rioters. These are just people – people who need help.” Brummer was aware of the need to help local residents. As soon as the police allowed him into the area, he called in his employees to open up the deli once again. People needed to eat, and Hobby’s was going to supply the food. Brummer was scared, he says, but there was no way he was leaving Newark. The riots could not stop him from continuing to achieve the American dream of a self-made man. As he explains, “You get trapped in sometimes. I bought the building and paid a lot of money. It was a bargain for those days, so I got locked in. We were

---

484 ibid
making a living so we stayed. I had many opportunities to move to the suburbs, but I wasn’t suburban."\footnote{Brummer, Samuel. Telephone interview by author. 24 June 2005.}

---------------------

**Morris Spielberg**

“The night of the riots I call up [Police Director] Spina and say what’s happening? And he says don’t worry we got it all under control. I was in the store and Spina is telling me everything is cool, but then I was [one of] the first hit.”\footnote{Spielberg, Morris. Interview by author. Verona, New Jersey: 28 August 2005.}

Not of all Newark’s Jewish children were fortunate enough to live in a home with two loving, capable parents. Some ended up in a local orphanage hoping to one day find a man or woman willing to take them into their care and provide them with a home and a family. Morris Spielberg was one of these children. His parents emigrated from Russia in the early 1900s and had three children at a very young age. Unfortunately, neither was psychologically ready to raise

\footnote{Morris Spielberg, picture taken by author}
their two daughters and a son, so they placed Spielberg and his sisters into a Jewish orphanage. Spielberg spent his entire childhood and teenage years at this home. “I’m in this orphanage and I’m eight years old,” Spielberg describes. “I got no friends. Can you imagine an eight year old with no mother and father thrown into this strange mix? And then you have ill-trained social workers that feed on your weaknesses. It was horrible.” As a result of his troubling childhood, Spielberg learned an important lesson at a young age: how to survive as a Jew in a largely anti-Semitic world.

At the age of fourteen, Spielberg experienced his first bouts of anti-Semitism. He explains his feelings at the time: “When you [were] about fourteen you got to run errands in the city. I don’t know if you felt discrimination, [but] you felt inferior as a Jew.” Spielberg knew that his parents had escaped Russia so that he and his sisters could live a better life in a land of religious freedom. These feelings of inferiority, he says, were not going to stop him from leading the life his parents had envisioned him one day living. Spielberg made great strides to prove himself as a successful Jew. He received superior grades at South Side High School – where Clement Moorman also once attended – although he says he once cheated off Wilbur Parker, a man who later became a key figure in the Newark race riots. In addition, when Spielberg was fifteen he trained to become an amateur boxer hoping to show that Jews could be athletes just like anyone else. Spielberg’s interest in boxing was sparked when he read an article about a famed Jewish boxer named Barney Ross. “Two of his brothers and sisters were in a home similar

---

490 ibid
to ours because his father was killed in a robbery,” Spielberg explains. “So I’m hanging onto this
guy. Later on he became a war hero and got a silver star, so this was my guy. I wanted to
emulate him and that’s how I got started with boxing.” Boxing was actually a very common
sport amongst Jews, so Spielberg says there were many Jewish boxers in addition to Ross for
him to admire. For example, Newark’s only Jewish mayor, Meyer Ellenstein, was also an
amateur boxer at age fifteen. Ellenstein debuted in 1907 as a young fighter in Newark and did
fairly well in the novice circle. When he got older, however, Ellenstein decided “he would rather
fix teeth than knock them out,” so he went to dental school and opened his own practice in
Newark in 1914. When World War II began, Spielberg also gave up his hopes of becoming a
pro boxer. Instead he turned his interests towards defending his country.

I volunteered for aerial combat because there was always
this stigma, oh Jews didn’t go into combat. If a Jew was
accused of something I was trying to right it. It seared my
body thinking about all this; Jew this, Jew that. I flew
thirty-five missions over Germany, got shot down, and
came back and finished the tour. Later on I found out there
were more Jews in combat percentage wise and more Jews
killed. If I knew that, I would have never volunteered for
combat.

There was no stopping Spielberg from proving to the world that Jews were just like any other
human beings – black or white, Catholic or Protestant. If it meant risking his life in Germany,
then that’s what Spielberg was going to do.

The war had been a life changing experience for Spielberg, but when he returned home from the war he had no college education and was in desperate need of a job. Some of his uncles living in Newark were in the furniture installment business making fairly decent money, so he decided to join them until he could find a better job. While working for his uncles selling furniture door to door, Spielberg earned just enough money to open his own shop at 377 Springfield Avenue. At thirty-five years of age, Spielberg was the rightful owner of Almor Furniture selling household goods, appliances, and furniture to the Newark community.

As Almor Furniture became more successful, Spielberg decided to buy the apartments located above his store. He did not buy these apartments solely to make additional income; instead, he says he wanted to prove to the world that not every Jew was a slum landlord. “I got this running through my mind,” Spielberg explains “of being Jewish and a slum landlord even though I wasn’t one. [So I made sure] I had an exterminator there every week. I had an electrician there every week.”494 The historian may question whether or not Spielberg was as attentive a landlord as he says; however, Spielberg promises that all of his former tenants will vouch that he cared for them and listened to their problems as if they were his own family.

Spielberg made sure his tenants lived properly and he updated all the pre-World War II wiring in his building; however, many Newark landlords became “cynical…after a few experiences with newly painted walls that have been defaced or new windows that have been repeatedly broken. They calculate that the declining neighborhood is not worth the investment.”495

495 Report For Action, 59.
eighty percent of Newark housing was not revamped and was left in its original 1929 conditions.

Yet, Newark was not alone in its housing inadequacies.

Thousands of landlords in disadvantaged neighborhoods [around the country] openly violate building codes with impunity, thereby providing a constant demonstration of flagrant discrimination by legal authorities. A high proportion of residential and other structures contain numerous violations of building and housing codes…Yet in most cities, few building code violations in these areas are ever corrected, even when tenants complain directly to municipal building departments.

As a result of the growing prevalence of slumlords in Newark, Spielberg had a lot of work to do before he could revive the image of the Jewish landlord, but when it came to Almor Furniture he had easily established himself as a friend of the community. “We had black and white employees [and] in all my years, I never ran into any prejudice from my customers. [In fact,] I could count on my hands anytime anti-Semitic remarks were made to me.”

Several months before the Newark race riots, Spielberg’s good reputation amongst his customers and fellow merchants earned him the position of President of the SAMA. As President, Spielberg set out on a mission to make sure Newark’s local government was responsive to the needs of the merchants. He says he was sick and tired of Addonizio neglecting his job as mayor.

Addonizio admonished us Jewish merchants and basically said kiss my ass, because there were riots all over the

---

496 Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, 259.
country and look how well you were doing and it didn’t happen to you. We started a campaign against him a few months later bringing out all the problems we were having in the city of Newark, especially the Central Ward. I wanted to turn him around and stop his bullshit.\textsuperscript{498}

Despite Spielberg’s efforts, Addonizio remained unresponsive. Morris Spielberg watched the tension in Newark smolder before his eyes. He attempted to ease the hostility by organizing a march down Springfield Avenue where local merchants paraded the streets trying to employ young African Americans. Yet he says he was no Martin Luther King, Jr. His march only led Newark closer to a riot.

On the night of July 12, 1967, after Spielberg finished counting the money in his register, he called Police Director Spina. Spina promised Spielberg that everything was under control. The rioting in front of the Fourth Precinct, Spina said, was just a temporary event, and Spielberg should just go home to his wife and kids. Shortly after Spielberg hung up the phone, an industrial size trash can came flying through the store’s front window. Two Newark policemen immediately rushed into Almor demanding that Spielberg leave Newark right away. The rioters, the police explained, were taking over the city. After one officer promised to stand guard in front his store, Spielberg escaped Newark. He explains his rush out of the city: “I left the area in the backseat on the floor of this automobile driven by my African American employee, and that’s how I got back [home]. I called my store at about 12 o’clock and Bill one of my employees says everything is cool. I called about one o’clock and nobody answered, so I figured they bombed

\textsuperscript{498} ibid
the store.”\textsuperscript{499} Fortunately for Spielberg’s sake, his store was still standing the following day.

Early the next morning, he drove back into the city to find the same policeman still standing guard at his store. Bill, his employee, along with several other African American community members were also standing outside the store. “People from the community were sitting on the ledge in the front of the store. Meanwhile the riot is still going on and the state police are chasing the civilians down the street. But, nobody wants to come in my store because all the people from the community are sitting on the front. And they didn’t get anything from that store.”\textsuperscript{500}

Spielberg had been lucky, but as President of the SAMA it was his duty to help all the merchants who were devastated by the riots. His first action as President following the outbreak of the chaos was to enlist the help of the media.

I did get on television and I did defend merchants. I said you know the problem wasn’t with us; it was with the city administration. I kept saying we made the mistakes, let’s see if we can figure it out. But, I pleaded with the media, don’t show the pictures, don’t show the riot pictures. That’s what inflamed the public more. You can report the damn thing, report it, half the people don’t read it anyway. But when you show it on television, some of these militants who were looking for a shtick say hey that’s great.\textsuperscript{501}

As Spielberg attracted media attention, he simultaneously worked to establish a community complaint bureau across the street from Almor Furniture. He believed that when community members had complaints about local merchants, there was no one for them to turn to, especially


\textsuperscript{501} ibid
because the local government was so unresponsive. Therefore, he started a Springfield Avenue Complaint Bureau (SACB) where merchants, landlords, customers, and tenants could all go to voice their grievances. As the riots continued to fester, Spielberg and the SAMA set up shop right in the midst of the chaos and allowed Newark residents to have their voices heard for the very first time. As bureau chairman Bill Smith noted in a letter addressed to members of the SACB, “I am sure that all of you will agree that the Complaint Bureau is a much needed service in the community…The responsibilities of running an organization like the Complaint Bureau must be shared by all concerned, every Board member” and every Newark citizen.\footnote{Bill Smith, letter to the Springfield Avenue Complaint Bureau, July 1969.}

In Spielberg’s opinion, more important than establishing a complaint bureau was finding a way to get insurance for merchants whose stores were destroyed by the riots. As President Johnson’s Kerner Commission declared, “Society cannot erase the suffering of the innocent victims of fire, windstorm, theft, or riot. But it can at least provide the opportunity to obtain insurance to safeguard their capital.”\footnote{Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, 305.} Men like Louis Cohen and Jack Oelbaum were in serious need of help when it came to fixing the damage done to their stores. Cohen, as mentioned, gave up on finding enough insurance to cover the damages done to Hyman, Cohen. Oelbaum, however, a faithful board member and former President of the SAMA, turned to Spielberg for his expert advice and help. Spielberg decided that his best plan of action was to appeal directly to the United States Congress, so he solicited the help of Senator Joseph Minish of New Jersey’s eleventh district. The SAMA drafted five specific recommendations for Congress. Some

\footnotetext[1]{Bill Smith, letter to the Springfield Avenue Complaint Bureau, July 1969.}  
\footnotetext[2]{Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, 305.}
suggestions included that the insurance industry adopt plans to give fair access to all property owners, no matter what neighborhood they live in and that the Federal Government establish a National Insurance Development Corporation.\textsuperscript{504} It took several months to receive a response from Senator Minish. In a letter dated March 14, 1968, Senator Minish made the following promise, “Insurance protection is a basic necessity for residents of cities and the local businessmen who serve them, and it is essential that Congress act promptly and favorably…I assure you of my wholehearted efforts in the issue.”\textsuperscript{505}

The following month as Congress debated insurance policy options to cover the damages caused by the Newark race riots and other riots that took place around the country, Spielberg made one last attempt to improve the relations between African Americans and Jewish shopkeepers in Newark. He acted on a recommendation of Rutgers University Vice President Malcolm Talbott who advised the New Jersey Governor’s Commission the following: “I can tell you this, and that is that there has to be some way of increasing communication between the people who live in the city who believe they have differences.”\textsuperscript{506} Spielberg reverted back to his childhood years and decided that one way of increasing communication between people in Newark was through boxing. He explains:

\begin{quote}
There was a kid by the name of Lloyd Marshall who’s a contender and can’t get himself arrested. He wanted to get arrested so he could go into jail and have something to eat.
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{504} Morris Spielberg, letter to Springfield Avenue Merchants’ Association members, 12 Feb. 1968.
\textsuperscript{505} Joseph Minish, letter to Almor Furnish, 14 March 1968.
He was fighting for scraps, for nothing, but he was an idol for Newark. So I said after the riots, these black kids got to know we’re not just merchants. We speak the same language. So I convinced the merchants that we should have a boxing match with Lloyd to get the kids to understand we’re with them.\textsuperscript{507}

With the help of Jack Oelbaum and several other Springfield Avenue merchants, Spielberg took out a $10,000 loan from the First National State Bank in Newark. Using this money, Spielberg, Oelbaum, and others organized a huge boxing match at the end of April 1968. Ticket sales were in excess of $17,000, more than enough to pay back the loan. Former boxers, famous movie stars, and political officials all attended the event and according to Spielberg, Lloyd Marshall put on a grand spectacle. As fans cheered, black and white voices blended together in harmony. Then at the end of the match, Spielberg explains, the referee “introduced the merchants into the ring and [the blacks] cheered us. He introduced Addonizio and they booed him. So that’s the reason we had the fight. We were vindicated to some extent.”\textsuperscript{508}

Spielberg’s boxing match was a success. He had proved in this one instance that Jews and blacks could cooperate. Still, the good relations between blacks and Jews in Newark did not last, and many Jews ultimately decided to leave the city. Spielberg on the other hand stayed put in this devastated ghetto. He explains his decision: “My main reason for staying was because the Jews were accused of being slum landlords, were accused of charging usury prices, and [were

accused of] taking advantage of shoppers and not employing blacks. I decided to stay and try to
right it. I stayed because I wanted to change. 509

A Final Thought

Newark’s African Americans had made a statement at the expense of the city’s Jewish
population. The unregulated pricing procedures for consumer goods and housing rents drew
Newark’s Jewish and black residents farther apart, while simultaneously encouraging a stronger
unity amongst black citizens. As one African American explained to a reporter following the
riot, “The blacks realize that the only way they’re going to get ahead is to stick together. And if
the city administration will not let them fight one way, they’ll do it in another.”510 This “other
way” was none other than stealing from one store after the next, stocking up on luxuries they had
previously been unable to afford. As one self-proclaimed “looter” explained, “While the police
are busy tearing buildings apart looking to kill snipers, our people are getting color television
sets, refrigerators, clothes; whatever they couldn’t afford, they got it.”511 African Americans
were reclaiming the city, while Jewish merchants made an exodus into the suburbs. Thus,
Newark’s government ultimately received a wake-up call. The only way to keep merchants in the
city and maintain Newark’s economic stability was to provide storekeepers with enough
insurance to cover the destruction done to their shops. The movement toward a national

509 ibid
511 Sackett, 28,
insurance policy for business owners, however, came too late. By the time Congress recognized
the need to provide Newark’s merchants with more coverage, many Jews had already left the area.

The shift from a largely Jewish city to a predominantly black ghetto raises the following question: did Newark’s black population acquire the city by default, or through the struggle and victory of a riot? Author William Helmreich argues that African Americans came into control of Newark by default. If Jews continued to live in the city, he argues, blacks would not have been able to achieve the power they eventually gained over local institutions and communities following the riots.\(^{512}\) It is hard to make such a blanket statement about the shifting racial dynamic of Newark. In some areas, like the Weequahic section, blacks did indeed gain control through default. As more African Americans moved in, a proportionate number of whites moved out. Yet in other circumstances, blacks had boldly proven their place in society. They showed they could be successful shop owners, teachers, police, and politicians. They used the riots as their method for proving their abilities, and thus gained control not by default, but through struggle and victory.

Regardless of whether African Americans gained control of Newark by victory or default, one must still wonder why the Jews left Newark and allowed a new group to gain control of the city they had called home for decades. Some Jews were said to have been lured away from

the city by the notion of a suburban “three bedroom ranch with a driveway and a cedar fence.”513 Others were said to have left because they had no choice: they no longer owned a functional business and would have to find residence and employment elsewhere. Still, amongst the massive waves of Jews leaving Newark, there remained a few who stayed. Jack Oelbaum, Samuel Brummer, and Morris Spielberg all remained in the city hoping to prove that the riots would not mark the end of their businesses. These merchants’ decision to stay would have been supported by Rabbi Marton Guttman who continued to run a synagogue in Newark following the race riots. Guttman believed that “the solution [to Newark’s racial tensions was] not to run away but to stay. Turning from the city was the worst thing the Jews could do.”514 Guttman’s statement is rather powerful, and may have offended men like Louis Cohen who felt he had no other option but to leave post-riot. Still, Rabbi Guttman’s words remind others that Newark was once the ethnic stronghold of New Jersey’s Jewish population, and no matter how far the Jews moved away from the city, the remnants of their apartments, houses, and shops would always find a place in the history of Newark.

CONCLUSION: The Violence Ended, the Memory Remained

“My fellow Americans: We have endured a week such as no Nation should live through: a time of violence and tragedy...The only genuine, long-range solution for what has happened lies in an attack – mounted at every level – upon the conditions that breed despair and violence. All of us know what those conditions are: ignorance, discrimination, slums, poverty, disease, not

513 DePalma, 91.
514 ibid, 97.
enough jobs. We should attack these conditions – not because we are frightened by conflict, but because we are fired by conscience. We should attack them because there is simply no other way to achieve a decent and orderly society in America.”

On Tuesday July 18, 1967, Governor Hughes addressed the city of Newark and declared “the rioting and looting are over. The restoration of order is accomplished.” With that said, Hughes called for the withdrawal of 3,000 National Guardsmen and 375 State policemen from Newark, keeping only a small number of officers in the city to help direct traffic and distribute emergency food supplies. Then without much thought, the governor packed his bags and left the city for his seashore home on Island Beach. Were the race riots really over? Could one simply pack up his bags, as Hughes did, and forget about all the people who had been killed or all the stores that had been destroyed?

The violence of the riots may have been winding down, but the rehabilitation efforts were just beginning. While Governor Hughes enjoyed the relaxation of the Jersey shore, Newark’s residents, black and white, were left to wander the streets of a devastated ghetto. Recognizing the need to improve both the country’s urban areas and the citizens’ morale, the United States government decided to unveil a country-wide investigation of the riots of the summer of 1967. On July 28, 1967, President Johnson issued Executive Order 11365 in response to the end of the Newark and the Detroit race riots. This order called for the formation of the Kerner Commission, a group of twelve individuals under the guidance of Chairman Otto Kerner – former governor of

517 ibid, 22.
Illinois – who were given the task of answering three basic questions: “What happened? Why did it happen? [And] what can be done to prevent it from happening again?” A week later, Governor Hughes followed President Johnson’s lead and called for the formation of a local New Jersey Commission to investigate the Newark, Plainfield, and Englewood riots.

Both the New Jersey Governor’s Commission and the United States Kerner Commission composed extensive documents on the 1967 riots for public inspection. The Governor’s Commission compiled its findings in a book entitled Report For Action. In this book, the members of the committee concluded that “although the extent of excesses [of violence] cannot be determined by the Commission, they have left a legacy of bitterness, disenchantment, and frustration within the Negro community; and they have demonstrated a lack of respect for the rights of Negro citizens.” These findings were mostly expected by the people of Newark who were now well aware of the degree of dissatisfaction and anger felt by the city’s black population. Those who read the Kerner Commission reports, however, were hit with a more shocking, blatant conclusion. The Kerner Commission determined that, “Our nation is moving toward two societies, one black, one white – separate and unequal.” This statement certainly did not come out of the blue, but with all the Civil Rights legislation passed just prior to the Newark riots, many Americans failed to realize just how segregated the country continued to be.

The Newark riots forced white Americans to wake up, showing them that the country’s black

518 Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, 1.
520 ibid
citizens were still receiving inferior treatment. Blacks demonstrated through the riots that it was about time the United States government did something to improve the life of African Americans. Whether such an improvement has occurred is still debatable.

Post-Riot Newark

“A history is required which leads to action, not to confirm, but to change the world.”

On April 1, 1968, almost one year after the end of the race riots, the infamous Newark cabdriver John Smith was found guilty in the New Jersey Supreme Court on charges of assaulting two officers, resisting arrest, and using obscene language. Smith was sentenced to two to three years in prison. The cabby’s lawyers were outraged by this court decision, as it had been settled by an all-white jury. Smith’s attorneys appealed to the United States Supreme Court, and after four years of fighting, on July 21, 1972 Judge Max Rosen of the United States Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that John Smith’s jury did not meet “constitutional standards because it excluded a proportionate number of blacks and working class people.” Smith’s case was the first decision of its kind to be overturned in the northern states.

Although Smith won his case, his mind was not at ease. “Since the trouble,” Smith explains, “I’ve found that privacy is something you can’t control. You have to make certain adjustments in relation to your privacy because you know life is an open book and almost

---

522 Cunningham, 326.
523 *ibid*, 327.
everything you do doesn’t belong to you alone anymore once you step into the limelight.”

Smith had unintentionally stepped into the limelight the night of July 12th. His decision to pass a parked police vehicle not only led to his arrest, but also changed the course of Newark’s history. John Smith was not proud of what he had done, nor did he think of himself as a champion of Civil Rights; however, for many young African Americans in Newark Smith – the unintentional actor of a historical drama – was a hero. His arrest led to a much anticipated riot that would finally show Newark’s white citizens that there was a dire need to revamp the city’s race relations.

While John Smith was exonerated by the justice system, Newark’s Central Ward residents broke down housing barriers. African Americans who were forced to relocate during the construction of the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey were finally given new homes under the Newark Agreements. The Newark Agreements cut the amount of land offered to the university from 167 to 57.9 acres, allowing blacks to maintain most of their housing facilities. When these housing arrangements were made, “tears were seen on faces” of the people attending the settlement and “blacks and whites throughout the room embraced… [making this] a night to be remembered in the history of Newark.”

By 1972 John Smith had redeemed the notion of justice being provided by a jury of one’s peers and Newark’s African Americans now had hope of proper public housing facilities. Yet,

---

525 Cunningham, 334.
blacks were not the only victims of the riots. What about the city’s Jewish merchants? Morris Spielberg, former owner of Almor Furniture, was President of the Springfield Avenue Merchants Association (SAMA) after the riots. As President of SAMA, Spielberg realized that the major issue concerning the city’s merchants was property insurance. Immediately after the riots, Spielberg championed to get insurance policies for many of the store owners devastated by the violence. Then once the insurance issue was raised, he asked what could be done with all the abandoned buildings lining Springfield Avenue. The buildings numbered 384, 385, and 386 Springfield Avenue were particularly troublesome for the few merchants still operating in Newark. These three buildings were centrally located and each was ruined during the chaos. As a result, the remains of these smoldering structures placed neighboring stores at risk for smoke damage and falling debris. Spielberg solicited Mayor Addonizio’s help time and again concerning these three buildings, but the Mayor did not respond. Consequently on May 15, 1968 Spielberg wrote a letter to Addonizio stating the following:

On a number of occasions we have brought to the attention of your office the dangerous conditions which exist in the vacant buildings starting at 384 Springfield Avenue to the corner of Fairmount Avenue. The same conditions still exist which cause the residents and merchants to constantly be in fear of a serious fire.  

Shortly after he sent this letter, Spielberg’s worst nightmare came true. Flames from an abandoned building next door to Almor Furniture spread to his store, damaging the walls and

---

merchandise. Spielberg explains how he felt after this incident: “I had enough. They would not listen to anybody. I’m going to them and saying you tear [the buildings] down you schmuck. This is the way you got to talk to these people. So, I sued them.” As soon as Addonizio found out he was being sued by the SAMA, he immediately sent Newark’s Building Department Director, Mr. Kirch, to meet with Spielberg to discuss the demolition of the contested buildings. By 1978, Spielberg and SAMA members legally forced the government to tear down a total of 170 abandoned buildings in the city of Newark. The vacant land was used to build parks and playgrounds for Newark’s children.

The local government was willing to make strides to revitalize the city of Newark; it just needed a little threatening. Yet, wasn’t this the case with all the issues debated during the Newark riots? Blacks in Newark needed better housing, better healthcare, more educational opportunities, and more protection from police brutality. The riots were African Americans’ way of threatening the local government into making these changes. In fact, Mayor Addonizio only responded to his troubled citizens when violence was involved. What kind of democracy was that? Fortunately for their sake, Newark residents got their revenge on Mayor Addonizio. For years, the government in Newark was known to be corrupt. In fact, according to Rutgers University Professor Clement Price “it’s long been argued that corruption in American cities is a part of the culture of the cities.”

---

most corrupt city governments during the 1960s and 1970s. One former city official even goes as far as saying that “there [was] a price on everything in City Hall.”\textsuperscript{531} Consequently, it was not surprising that on April 21, 1970 Mayor Addonizio and fourteen co-defendants were charged “with operating a pay-off system that had extorted” approximately one million dollars from a local engineering firm called Constrad Incorporated. Addonizio had been involved in a ring of corruption since he entered the office of mayor, but it took the riots to publicly reveal the backwardness and scandalous nature of Newark’s government. Ultimately, on September 22, 1970 Addonizio was found guilty of extortion and sentenced to ten years in the Atlanta Federal Penitentiary.\textsuperscript{532}

\textbf{The Newark Riots: A Turning Point}

\textit{Oral history “thrusts life into history itself and widens its scope.”}\textsuperscript{533}

Mayor Addonizio was behind bars, Springfield Avenue was in the midst of reconstruction, and Newark residents were finally moving back into the many housing projects that dotted the streets of the Central Ward. Although the race riots brought devastation to an entire city, the Newark riots, along with the Detroit riots, served as an important turning point in race relations in the United States.

\textsuperscript{531} Porambo, 28.
\textsuperscript{532} Cunningham, 336.
\textsuperscript{533} The Oral History Reader, 28.
Piecing together evidence of the Newark riots, from photographs to Senate proceedings, is a daunting task. Yet, an even more complicated undertaking is finding a way to connect each of the individual stories of people who were in the city at the time of the violence. How can one link the tale of an African American teenager fighting for equality to the story of a seasoned shop owner struggling to revamp Springfield Avenue? What about showing the relation between a white police detective and an African American professor? Despite differences in occupation, race, ethnicity, education, or income, the lives of each of the ten people presented in this oral history have been forever changed by the Newark race riots.

Since the riots, Clement Moorman has relocated to Passaic, New Jersey. His time in Newark is over, just like many others who lived in the city prior to the riots. Nevertheless, Moorman has not lost his ties to the city and he continues to go to Newark on a monthly basis. His son Gerard lives on Custer Avenue in the same house he grew up in as a child. Each time he visits Gerard, Moorman says he revisits the dreadful past of the city only to gladly realize that “Newark now is much different. Everybody’s got a little better chance.”

Stanley Terrell, on the other hand, has continued to live in Newark. Following the riots he made a pact with himself never to leave his home city. He jokes, “My ex-wife when we first decided to get married, she said ‘where are we going to live?’ ‘We’re going to live in Newark; this is home.’” In the early 1970s, Terrell was hired as of one of the first black reporters at the Newark Star Ledger. Within his first week of writing for the paper, Terrell says he made many efforts to change the way in

---

which the editorial staff regarded the paper’s black readership. He explains, “I pushed them to stop using Negro. How come every other newspaper is saying black and The Star Ledger is still saying Negro? So I would type black in my stories.” Now over thirty years later, Terrell is still typing away at the Ledger. His column “Newark This Week” battles city issues from education to healthcare that have been present since the days of the riot.

Moorman and Terrell, having lived in Newark during the riots, were able to gain direct experience with the city’s racial unrest during the 1960s. On the other hand, neither Professor Clement Price nor Barbara Kukla lived in Newark at the time, but rather entered the city after the violence subsided. Now residing and teaching in Newark, Professor Price has dedicated his life to educating others about the race riots. Kukla has also spent her life teaching others about Newark’s past, just not in a classroom setting. For years, she wrote articles about local politics for the Star Ledger just like Terrell, and now she authors non-fiction books on African American women and musicians from Newark.

Two other individuals who maintained pride in the city of Newark following the riots are former detectives, Charles Lorenzo and Edward Alfano. Both of these men say they experienced the ultimate horror of being an officer during the terror in Newark, but never thought twice about leaving the force. Now retired, Lorenzo still takes trips to Newark where his son serves on the police force. Alfano’s son also patrols the streets of Newark. Describing his son, Alfano says

\[\text{ibid}\]
proudly, “My son is the most vicious cop in Newark, but he’s pleasant.”

Neither Lorenzo nor Alfano work in Newark today, but the tradition of protecting this city has remained in their families.

While Lorenzo and Alfano protected the city, Maurice Cohen, Jack Oelbaum, Samuel Brummer, and Morris Spielberg served Newark’s economy. Cohen was only seventeen years old in 1967 and did not own a store at the time of the riots, but, if it wasn’t for the race riots, Cohen says, he would not be the proud owner of Sam’s in Livingston, New Jersey. He explains that his father’s triumph in overcoming the destruction of Hyman, Cohen, and Sons continually inspires him and reminds him just how hard his family worked so that he could live that way he does today. Unlike Cohen, Oelbaum no longer works in the retail business, but at the age of ninety-seven he is still very active in voicing his opinions about the Jewish population and their struggle as he once did as President of the SAMA. Oelbaum also writes a monthly column for the Jewish Community Center in West Orange, New Jersey in which he discusses themes of struggle and survival, lessons he takes with him from the riots.

The third shop owner, Samuel Brummer, still goes into the city of Newark each day. Although he has transferred the ownership of Hobby’s Delicatessen to his sons Mark and Michael, he reports to work each day to assist in everything from waiting tables to making

537 Alfano, Edward. Telephone interview by author. 27 August 2005. This quote portrays the concept of a cop being vicious and producing fear in criminals. Although race relations have progressed since the time of the riots, it is apparent that Alfano still believes policemen are supposed to instill fear in the public in order to successfully protect society. One must wonder, then, if the law enforcement procedures of racial scare tactics are still widely used today.

sandwiches. The Newark race riots completely transformed the way Brummer does business – Hobby’s is no longer open until one AM – but even with the changes in hours this Jewish deli remains a landmark in Newark.

Like the Brummer family, the Spielbergs have left a lasting impression in Newark. Now in his eighties, Morris Spielberg continues to lecture about the riots and assist historians in their research on Newark. Since the riots, Spielberg has served as Vice President of the New Ark School helping to promote education amongst the city’s African American children, and he still runs a furniture business in the area. After all these accomplishments, the walls of Spielberg’s home are covered with framed plaques, newspaper articles, and photographs commemorating his efforts in the race riots. One plaque Spielberg especially takes pride in is a framed speech written by African American activist Jake Griffith, which reads:

As I became involved in the many Springfield Avenue Merchants Association meetings…I, like many others, questioned [Spielberg’s] sanity. Here’s this white man in this ghetto situation, fearlessly screaming on everybody. As time went on, I observed that his tactics remained consistent whether it involved Blacks, Whites, city employees, government officials, community leaders, or other business people…His objective was always to point out the case and effect of inherent injustices we each face in the Central Ward of Newark.  

539 Jake Griffith. “Speech honoring Morris Spielberg,” from the personal collection of Spielberg.
Tracing the history of the 1967 Newark race riots is not a simple task. Since there is no objective way to describe the past, examining each of these people’s stories may fragment the narrative and further complicate the story of riots. Yet, when is history objective? It is the historian’s place to acknowledge his or her own bias when recounting the past, to interpret events in a new light and inspire further discussion. The Newark riots may have ended on July 18, 1967, but the memories are alive and well. These memories remind people that “that history should not merely comfort; it should provide a challenge and understanding which helps towards change.”

“So now we see the light, what you gonna do?/We gonna stand up for our rights!”

---

540 The Oral History Reader, 27.
542 Driving Along Springfield Avenue, picture taken by author.
NOTES ON SOURCES AND METHODS

From Idea to Reality:
The Making of an Oral History

The events of the Newark, New Jersey race riots are well known to civil rights historians, but the average resident living in New Jersey may have never heard of such an event. Short Hills, New Jersey, the town I have lived in my whole life is just twenty minutes away from Newark, but up until two years ago I was unaware this city had a riot. In the past, my only experiences with Newark were on those rare occasions when my parents took me to dinner at Don Pepé’s Restaurant. During those few trips to Newark, I remember my father locking the doors of the car as soon as we exited the Garden State Parkway and entered the heart of the city. This simple action always reminded me that Newark was considered a dangerous city.

As I got older I began to take the train into New York City. The final stop before reaching New York is always Newark Broad Street Station. Broad Street is located in a rundown section of the city where buildings covered with graffiti and broken glass windows are a common sight. Each time the train made this stop in Newark I wondered how this city so close to my sheltered hometown could be so devastated.

Although I pondered this question sporadically throughout my childhood and teenage years, it wasn’t until my second year of college that I truly gained an interest in the city of Newark. During my sophomore year at Penn I took a history of the 1960s class taught by Professor Thomas Sugrue. For the final class project Professor Sugrue asked the class to:
Conduct an oral history with a person or persons who lived through the 1960s – broadly defined... You may choose to interview someone you know or a stranger, someone ordinary, or someone well known... Remember that your subject will interpret the 1960s through the imperfect lens of memory.543

I chose to write my paper about my former piano teacher Clement Moorman. Mr. Moorman taught me how to play the piano when I was seven years old. I enjoyed his company during lessons, but refused to practice once he left for the day. Although my piano lessons came to an end, I stayed in touch with Mr. Moorman via pen pal letters. We wrote each other once a month and by my sophomore year of college I had received hundreds of letters from him. When I was given this particular history assignment, I decided that although I had all these letters from Mr. Moorman, I knew very little about his personal life. I therefore decided Clement Moorman was the perfect person to interview for my paper.

After interviewing Mr. Moorman, I discovered that he lived in Newark, New Jersey during the 1967 race riots. I had never heard of the Newark race riots, so I decided to do some general research on the subject. By the time I was done researching, I had written a fifteen-page oral history paper focused around the events of the riots. When I completed this paper, I realized there was so much more to learn about Newark’s history. What about all the other people in Newark during the riots? Had the violence impacted their lives, as it had Mr. Moorman’s? I decided that I wanted to write my senior history thesis on the Newark race riots.

By my junior year of college I was accepted into the history honors program and began to do preliminary research on Newark. Although I had a novel idea for my thesis, I only had one person to interview, Mr. Moorman. Consequently, I spend the first semester in the thesis program conducting extensive primary and secondary research on the riots in order to make more informed decisions about who to interview for my thesis. I eventually used this background information to help interpret the impact the riots had on each of the people I interviewed.

That semester, I spent hours at Penn’s Van Pelt Library searching through microfilm of President Johnson’s Kerner Commission reports, reading volumes of the New Jersey Governor Commission’s writings, and finding magazine and newspaper articles about the riots. I also started reading secondary literature on Civil Rights and Newark such as Thomas Sugrue’s *The Origins of Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Post-War Detroit*, Komozi Woodard and Jean Theoharis’ *Groundwork: Local Black Freedom Movements in America*, and Tom Hayden’s *Rebellion in Newark*.

After conducting this initial research, I recognized that the vast amount of information I would need for my thesis could be found in the New Jersey State Archives and the New Jersey Information Center at the Newark Public Library. So during the summer after my junior year, I made trips to both of these archives spending hours photocopying anything I thought might be of help in my research. At the State Archives I sifted through the testimony of the New Jersey Governor’s Select Commission on Civil Disorder, a fifteen box compilation of legal proceedings.
on the race riots. At the Newark Public Library, I delved into the microfilm collection of the

*Newark Evening News*, the leading publication at the time of the riots.

Using the information I gathered from these two archives as well as from the books I had read thus far, I started to notice some trends. First, much of the testimony available was that of political figures, law enforcement, or Civil Rights leaders. The stories of the common citizens, like Clement Moorman, were missing from the archives. Second, the same issues kept coming up in all the documents: police brutality, poor housing conditions, failing healthcare systems, educational inequities, black/white relations, and media coverage. I chose to base my thesis on these exact issues. Now, I just needed to find people to interview.

Initially, I asked Mr. Moorman if he knew of anyone who I could interview for my research. He immediately suggested his friend Barbara Kukla. Kukla, a former newspaper reporter, worked in New Jersey during the riots and was eventually hired as one of the first female journalists at *The Star Ledger*, currently the leader newspaper in New Jersey. I called Kukla on a whim, told her I was a friend of Clement Moorman, and asked if I could interview her for my thesis. She agreed without a second thought.

I then searched for other journalists who might have been reporting during the summer of 1967. I wrote a letter to Mark Di Ionno, the Assistant Managing Editor at *The Star Ledger*, and he put me in touch with an African American reporter named Stanley Terrell. I found out that during the riots Mr. Terrell was a teenager living in Newark’s Ironbound District. He also agreed to speak with me for my thesis.
Now with three people to interview, my next step was to find some former police
detectives who worked in Newark during the riots. There are several pieces of police testimony
available on the Newark riots, such as those of former Police Director Dominic Spina, former
Deputy Chief John Redden, and former Police Inspector Kenneth Melchoir. Nevertheless, the
stories of common policemen whose lives were put at risk during the riots are not available in
archive collections, so I would add to this testimony. My father, a doctor, mentioned to me that
two patients of his were once New Jersey policemen and might be willing to be interviewed. I
called both of these men – Edward Alfano and Charles Lorenzo – who turned out to be former
Newark police detectives. Mr. Alfano and Mr. Lorenzo both agreed to help me with my project.

I had five people to interview so far – two reporters, one musician, and two police
detectives – but I was not yet satisfied. Having done some research on Newark’s economy, it
dawned on me that the next set of people I should interview were former Newark merchants
whose stores had been damaged in the riots. Through some preliminary research, I found that the
majority of Newark’s shop owners in the 60s were Jewish, so I contacted the Jewish Historical
Society in Whippany, New Jersey to see if they could help. During my visit to the Jewish
Historical Society I read through the records of former Newark rabbis, I browsed articles from
New Jersey Monthly and the Metrowest Jewish News, and I looked through cryptic oral histories
of former Jewish storeowners transcribed by members of the Jewish community.

I took extensive notes on all of these documents, and Ms. McGillan, head archivist, put
me in touch with a man named Ed Brody who owned a shop in Newark during the riots and was
once part of the former Springfield Avenue Merchants Association. I eagerly called Mr. Brody, and we spoke on the telephone several times. Each time we talked, Mr. Brody shared with me the name of another former Newark merchant to interview. He even sent me a twenty-five page paper he wrote on his own experiences with the riots. By later October, several months after I originally contacted Mr. Brody, I had a list of twenty-five former Newark store owners to call. Some of these store owners were no longer living in New Jersey; others were very old and not up to talking. I ultimately ended up speaking to two former merchants who lived close to my home – Jack Oelbaum and Morris Spielberg.

Following my discussions with Mr. Brody, I ventured on my own to find some more merchants to interview. In doing so, I found an ad in the Yellow Pages about a Jewish deli in Newark called Hobby’s Delicatessen. I called Hobby’s one day and talked to one of the deli’s owners, Mark Brummer. Mark said his father Samuel Brummer ran Hobby’s during the riots and would be happy to speak with me. Mark also suggested I contact Rutgers University Professor Clement Price for additional help.

I sent Professor Price a letter asking if he’d be interested in being interviewed for my thesis. It turns out that Professor Price is in charge of the Institute on Ethnicity, Culture, and the Modern Experience at Rutgers University and specializes in the history of Newark. He was more than willing to speak with me. I now had nine people to interview for my thesis.

The final person I found to interview is a man named Maurice Cohen, who owns Sam’s clothing store in Livingston, New Jersey. Mr. Cohen is friendly with my family, and my
grandmother often frequents his store. One day when my grandmother was at Sam’s buying a
gift, she told Maurice about my thesis. Maurice told my grandmother he’d be happy to
participate, so I called him that day. I found out that Mr. Cohen lived in Short Hills and that his
father owned the shop Hyman, Cohen, and Sons in Newark during the riots.

Other oral interviews of the riots have been conducted, but this thesis is the first to use
the stories of relatively unknown individuals to add to the historical documentation of Newark.
Carrying out this research was complicated, since it was hard to be an unbiased historian while
establishing human contact with the subjects of my work.

Having dedicated the past two years of my life to studying Newark, New Jersey, I finally
understand why this city looks the way it does today. I realize why Newark, only twenty minutes
away from my home in Short Hills, feels as if it is located on the other side of the globe. The
experience of interviewing participant-observers of the race riots has forever changed the way I
view the city of Newark. I hope that these ten stories not only add to the literature of the Newark
riots, but also illustrate to the reader the importance of oral history documentation.

------------------------
The Skyline of Newark, New Jersey

BIBLIOGRAPHY

PRIMARY SOURCES:

Interviews

Alfano, Edward. Telephone interview by author. 27 August 2005.


Cohen, Maurice. Interview by author. Short Hills, New Jersey: 9 July 2005


Oelbaum, Jack. Telephone interview by author. 27 August 2005.


Articles and Letters


Books & Reports


**Government Testimony**

Black, Albert. “Testimony before the New Jersey Governor’s Commission.” *New Jersey Governor’s Select Commission on Civil Disorder*. Newark: 20 November 1967, Box 5B.


DeSimone, John. “Testimony before the New Jersey Governor’s Commission.” *New Jersey Governor’s Select Commission on Civil Disorder*. Newark: 3 November 1967, Box 7.

Henderson, Alfred. “Testimony before the NJ Governor’s Commission.” *New Jersey Governor’s Select Commission on Civil Disorder*. Newark: 7 December 1967, Box 5B.

Jones, LeRoi. “Testimony before the New Jersey Governor’s Commission.” *New Jersey Governor’s Select Commission on Civil Disorder*. Newark: 27 November 1967, Box 5B.


Spellman, Richard. “Testimony before the NJ Governor’s Commission.” *New Jersey Governor’s Select Commission on Civil Disorder*. Newark: 20 November 1967, Box 5B.

Talbott, Malcolm. “Testimony before the New Jersey Governor’s Commission.” *New Jersey Governor’s Select Commission on Civil Disorder*. Newark: 7 December 1967, Box 5B.

Titus, Franklin. “Testimony before the NJ Governor’s Commission.” *New Jersey Governor’s Select Commission on Civil Disorder*. Newark: 7 December 1967, Box 5B.

---

**Pictures, Diagrams, and Maps**
Barbara Kukla. Personal photograph by author. 10 June 2005.

Charles Lorenzo. Personal photograph by author. 7 June 2005.

Clement Moorman. Personal photograph by author. 4 June 2005.


Maurice and Amy Cohen. Personal photograph by author. 9 July 2005.


Spohn, Julie. *Samuel Brummer – Owner of Hobby’s Deli*. November 2003: 

“Springfield Avenue.” Personal Photograph by author. 17 June 2005.

Stanley Terrell. Personal photograph by author. 8 July 2005.


---

**Song Lyrics**

Dylan, Bob. “Only a Pawn in Their Game.” *The Times They Are A-Changin’*: Columbia 


1989.

Whispers. “Seems Like I Gotta Do Something Wrong.” *Planet of Life*. Chess/Janus 

---

**SECONDARY SOURCES**

Bergesen, Albert. “Official Violence during the Watts, Newark, and Detroit Race Riots of 
the 1960s.” *A Political Analysis of Deviance*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota 


