Creating an Intentional Multiracial Community in Post-World War II Cincinnati: Kennedy Heights

Late in the twentieth century, Eric Foner noted that in the previous generation American historians had shattered the old historical consensus and redefined the nature of historical study by borrowing methods from other disciplines to write "new histories." Much of the revisionism was triggered by the social movements of the 1960s. As these post-World War II social movements underwent scrutiny, one influential group of social scientists distinguished between pre- and post-World War II social movements by noting a shift in activism from the workplace to communities.[1]

Writing at the high tide of grassroots neighborhood organizing, Charles Tilley asked, "Do Communities Act?" Summarizing the prevailing sociological theories about urban life, Tilley noted a scholarly consensus that the complexity of the city and the intense mobility of modern urban social life worked against sustained community solidarity and sustained activism. Tilley did, however, tentatively suggest that if neighborhood activism could succeed, it would be among homeowners in middle- and upper-class areas.[2] A few years later, Edward P. Thompson, in an early sustained critique of post-modern scholarship, *The Poverty of Theory*, emphasized the need to test theory with historical analysis rooted in empirical reality and historical materialism.[3] Jumping ahead almost thirty years, in *Bowling Alone,* Robert Putnam, after an exhaustive examination of available statistical data and social science literature of the last generation, confirmed the mid-twentieth-century sociological consensus summarized by Tilley.[4]

Urban historian Zane L. Miller, who has written extensively about Cincinnati history, comes to a somewhat similar conclusion about the fragmentation of contemporary urban life. Miller's perspective has been shaped by his reading of changing intellectual perceptions of what

a city is. Situating his analysis of community within "the context of changing ideas about the role of place in social theory and practice," Miller concludes that the meaning of community changes and is redefined by the "role of taxonomies of social reality in shaping the processes by which people define and solve problems."[5] As a result of that process, in Miller's view, the late twentieth-century metropolis became a place where concern for the larger community or social group gave way to the primacy of the individual.

The taxonomies of social reality in the area of race relations changed after World War II. During the war African Americans migrated to northern and western cities to fill industrial jobs. Civil rights organizations leveraged the wartime rhetoric against fascism to promote victory for racial equality at home as well as for victory abroad.[6] Membership in civil rights organizations soared during and after the war; and new coalitions of liberal, labor and civil rights groups emerged to battle racism and to fight the war against segregation. Racial tensions led city governments around the country to establish commissions to promote fairness in race relations and to alleviate racial tensions before they became widespread.[7]

At the federal level numerous decisions accelerated the paradigm shift away from pluralism to the recognition of individual rights. The GI Bill of Rights financed educations for black and white veterans, helping to open the professions and trades to many who were previously shut out of them. The availability of low interest and guaranteed loans provided opportunities for home ownership. Although racial zoning laws were invalidated by the courts in 1917, segregated housing patterns continued to dominate the housing market. Rising expectations led to increased political action in partisan politics as well as in the growing civil rights movement. President Harry S. Truman's Commission on Civil Rights focused national attention on racial discrimination in the workplace and in housing. The U.S. Supreme Court

reflected the new awareness when it outlawed restrictive housing covenants in *Shelley v. Kramer* (1948) and de jure educational segregation in *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954).[8]

In Cincinnati the shift was worked out in numerous ways. The city established the Mayor's Friendly Relations Committee (MFRC) to serve as a facilitator to defuse potential crises stemming from racial and cultural conflicts. In anticipation of post-war housing shortages city planners proposed new public housing and put together a regional master plan which called for increased private sector housing and industrial development beyond the periphery of the city. In housing, the planners anticipated a perpetuation of racially segregated communities. But local civil rights groups pressed for equal access to the new opportunities and worked to breakdown the barriers of segregation. Teaching staffs in the public schools were integrated. Hiring of minorities in various economic sectors gained attention after one local study demonstrated the negative effects of discrimination in the workplace.[9] Gradually, African Americans found housing in areas outside of the city's overwhelmingly black West End neighborhood. While the city reached its population apex in 1950, the metropolitan area continued to grow in the decades that followed as population and institutions spread out from the core city.[10]

The Cincinnati housing market was a segregated one. According to the Better Housing League (BHL), in 1960 African Americans lived in fourteen specific areas—nine of them in the city. "Outside of those restricted areas, Negro families effectively can neither buy nor rent a home," John Vaughan the BHL's Director concluded. In addition, a 1960 study commissioned by the Cincinnati Development Committee, a non-profit business group, reported that African Americans seeking housing found it "in areas adjacent to places already settled by non-whites." Vaughan reported that the pattern was driven by the "total housing and real estate industries, reflecting and governed by community sentiment."[11]

In the decade of the 1950s Cincinnati's black population grew by 40 percent, an increase of thirty-one thousand people. At the same time the city's urban renewal and highway construction program destroyed ten thousand housing units—almost five thousand of which were occupied by African Americans. As these displaced black residents and new families sought housing they were confronted by numerous obstacles. There were separate white and black real estate organizations. Banks redlined neighborhoods and only approved loans for blacks in predominantly black or racially changing neighborhoods. Newspaper real estate listings were segregated. Federal home loan programs contained restrictive guidelines on the basis of race. These conditions combined with the goals of the 1948 Master Plan to perpetuate existing community patterns in new areas meant that blacks seeking new housing were steered into segregated neighborhoods or those that would be changed from predominantly white to predominantly black.[12]

Kennedy Heights

As Cincinnati's African American population spread from the city core, the neighborhood of Kennedy Heights began to expand in the 1950s. Situated in the northeast quadrant of the city, about eight miles from downtown, it had a small but stable African American community. Annexed in 1914, it was the last independent village incorporated into the city. In 1950 , some 4,858 people lived there , overwhelmingly in single-family homes. Just 3 percent were African American. In 1960 as Cincinnati's demographic profile changed, 18 percent of the neighborhood's 5,603 residents were black. The new residents were part of the growing black middle class whose rising affluence allowed them to purchase a single family residences.[13]

The Kennedy Heights neighborhood had a tradition of community activism. Near the end of World War II, as Cincinnatians made plans for the post-war reconstruction, an agricultural area ripe for development between Kennedy Heights and neighboring Eastwood Circle was eyed as a potential industrial site. General Motors, with its Norwood Fisher Body plant three miles to the west, took out options on the land with plans to build a stamping facility there. Opposition rose as the surveyor's flags went up. A coalition comprised of upper middle-class homeowners from Kennedy Heights and Eastwood Circle, along with respective leaders of the Children's Home Orphanage and the private Hillsdale Girls School came together to oppose industrial use for the site. After a hard-fought political and public relations battle, General Motors withdrew and chose a site further north in Butler County near the city of Hamilton.[14]

Concerned about future industrial development in the area, Kennedy Heights and Eastwood Circle residents formed the Kennedy Heights Eastwood Development Company (KHEDC), purchased ninety-eight acres of the land, and planned to develop the area with single family homes. Among those it rejected was one from the Rainbow Housing group who wanted to build a housing co-operative for people being displaced from the city's public housing projects. Eventually, KHEDC sold the land to the Warner-Kanter Corporation of Birmingham, Alabama. Warner-Kanter built the Stratford Village complex, an FHA financed apartment village of one thousand apartment units that opened in 1951. Working with city planners and the KHEDC, Warner-Kanter succeeded in getting the Cincinnati Board of Education to build a school on the development's periphery.[15] Throughout the 1950s single family home construction was also greatly accelerated in the remaining open space in Kennedy Heights and in the unincorporated area adjacent to the community.

At the end of the 1950s housing related incidents aroused community concerns in Kennedy Heights. Both events were in the growing African American part of the neighborhood. In February 1959 a home was bombed in an apparent dispute between numbers racketeers. In response, residents in the "normally law abiding" area established an interracial civic association. Melvin Thurman, an African American policeman, and William Funck, a white businessman, became co-chairs. Thurman asserted that the aim of the group was "simply to keep people in the rackets from moving into our community." He said, "we'd like to form a covenant among property owners. . . . Our main purpose is to keep our neighborhood clean and respectable." Newspaper reporter Betty Donovan wrote that "Everyone agrees the bombing had nothing to do with any racial dispute."[16] When the newly established Kennedy Heights Civic Association failed to take root, Ann Magorian, a Kennedy Heights resident and a member of the MFRC urged staff members from the Committee to do something to help revive the organization. The 1959 bombing and the failure to establish a functioning community council contributed to the acceleration of white flight from the neighborhood.[17]

Continued real estate development kept alive efforts at community coalescenece. Real estate developers, filling the demand for housing, continued apartment construction along Montgomery Road and along Kennedy Avenue, the two main thoroughfares in the neighborhood. Additional apartment construction occurred on a small lot in the heart of the expanding black section of the neighborhood. This development triggered a response from newly arrived African-American residents in the vicinity.

Led by Cecil Wesley, Paul Henry, and George Rowe, they set up an *ad hoc* group determined to prevent further apartment development in Kennedy Heights. With them legal and political assistance of Theodore Berry, a former city councilman and prominent African

American attorney, they counted eighty vacant lots in the neighborhood and circulated a petition to upgrade all of the vacant lots outside of the business district to Residential-2—medium density single family residences. Three hundred people signed the petition enough to convince city council to upgrading their zoning.[18]

Community Councils

As Cincinnati's African American population expanded northward from the inner city to the hilltop neighborhoods, racial tensions and white flight ensued. With the Cincinnati housing market in great flux, racial integration complicated matters. In the spring of 1957 the executive director of the MFRC observed that "housing is the number one intergroup problem in Cincinnati."[19] As urban renewal and highway construction proceeded in the city's West End, the area's African American residents were relocating in the Walnut Hills, Evanston and Avondale neighborhoods. To help the process, the City Planning Department and the MFRC encouraged the development of community councils in neighborhoods experiencing a racial transition. The Avondale Community Council, established in 1957, was viewed "as a real laboratory" to end panic selling and "to promote self help," according to Reid Ross of the BHL and a member of the MFRC. Within a short period of time Avondale became an overwhelmingly African American neighborhood and became Cincinnati's second ghetto as the white population fled the area.[20] Virginia Coffey, the Assistant Director of the MFRC who had become chair of a newly established Committee on Changing Neighborhoods concluded "that a slowdown in the change rate, not permanent integration, was the best attainable goal under the present circumstances."[21]

White flight was accelerated by the real estate practice of block busting. When an African American family moved into an all white area, unscrupulous realtors pressed neighboring white home owners to sell their properties at below market prices, playing upon their fears that

property values would decline. In 1961 the North Avondale Neighborhood Association (NANA) was organized as residents in the area of largely substantial single family homes began to experience an increase in block-busting in their community. James Paradise, a North Avondale resident and the president of the Cincinnati branch of the American Civil Liberties Union, drafted an anti-blockbusting ordinance and NANA endorsed it. Councilman Willis Gradison, also a North Avondale resident, sponsored the proposed ordinance in city council. The proposal, which limited realtors' solicitations to the mailings and prohibited them from either door-to-door and by telephone , failed to win city council approval when it met stiff resistance from both the black and white real estate interests. [22]

Within a short time the blockbusting practices were expanded to different parts of the city. In April 1963, Dorothy (D. D.) Starr a white resident of Kennedy Heights decided to contact the MFRC for help to combat the growing practice and the accompanying panic selling taking place in the neighborhood. A MFRC staff member and MFRC members began working with Kennedy Heights residents in an effort to jump start creation of a community council in the neighborhood. This new MFRC role represented a departure from the policy of mediation and conciliation of the past. At nearly the same time a group of residents from the College Hill neighborhood appealed to the MFRC for assistance to deal with blockbusting. A much larger community with five churches, the College Hill residents decided to work through the churches to convince residents not to panic.[23]

The activists from Kennedy Heights opted to organize around the concept of community building through interracial cooperation. In contrast to its predecessor organization, the newly organized Kennedy Heights Community Council (KHCC) placed the race question center stage. They were determined to break out of the prevailing segregated housing patterns and to build a

new kind of community which celebrated diversity. With housing as the catalyst the new organization immediately established a real estate and housing committee but it also created additional committees which reflected community concerns. Within a few months they had an active and extensive committee structure in place.

Since the avenues for upward mobility opened up for them as homeowners, the Kennedy Heights activists in the black community were determined to protect and to enhance their new environment. The white activists were also committed to something more then their property interests. D. D. Starr, who came to Cincinnati from Birmingham, Alabama and was a social worker by profession, commented that "some of us had the feeling that we were living on the edge of history." Another founding member, Cecil Wesley, who worked at the General Electric Aerospace Company, observed that "three years ago, Kennedy Heights was two communities, white and Negro. Apartment buildings began going up indiscriminately without sufficient grounds and parking areas. The neighborhood got together" to oppose the development.[24]

At their initial meeting at the Kennedy Heights Presbyterian Church, eight individuals discussed the neighborhood and "things we as individuals were interested in." They discussed "panic" selling of homes, zoning, real estate practices, schools, recreation programs, and other concerns. Thirty-five people attended a follow-up ice cream social hosted by D. D. and Robert Starr. "After listening to each other, we found that the problem was not 'Negro' or 'white' but . . . that these were ideas of people interested in the place where they live."[25] The dialogue was well underway.

"For Sale" signs were going up all over the neighborhood, but especially on Rogers Park Place, Tyne Avenue and Kennedy Avenue—streets with or close to recent apartment construction. One new African American resident on Tyne Avenue recalled that it seemed like

all the houses in the immediate area were for sale. Each time a house was sold, the one next door was listed. More then thirty-five years later the memory still evoked pain.[26]

The community activists went door-to-door and listened to homeowners as they expressed their feelings. Working with a staff member from the MFRC and a representative from the Urban League who lived in the neighborhood, they developed a training program which brought blacks and whites together in role playing situations. They focused on leadership development and searched for new ways to look at the situation. They divided the neighborhood into sections and polled people in each section to determine overall sentiment and to find potential leaders. They convened living room meetings, led by black and white leaders, in every part of the neighborhood stressing the message of the value of raising their children in an integrated neighborhood. They found the most resistance to joining the council in the all white and all black parts of the neighborhood. They were able to convince some people to take their homes off of the real estate market and successfully recruited white families to buy homes on the desegregated streets to help abate the panic selling. The head of the Cincinnati Real Estate Board, Walter Bunker, spoke to the September 1964 community council meeting and assured residents that housing values did not drop when neighborhoods became integrated. As more individuals joined the KHCC, the active council committees increased political and social interaction. The panic selling stopped.[27]

The newly formed and energized community council confronted the real estate industry. The Ohio real estate licensing law had a mechanism for revoking the license of realtors who engaged in unethical practices. The Kennedy Heights real estate and housing committee protested the use of scare tactics and nuisance solicitations by realtors to the state board and sent copies of their complaints to the black and white Cincinnati real estate associations. The state

board took no formal action. The council appealed to various religious organizations calling upon them to emphasize moral leadership in dealing with the racial dimension of housing in Cincinnati. D. D. Starr, now a member of the new MFRC Housing Committee, pressed the MFRC to urge Mayor Walton Bacrach to issue a formal statement in support of open housing legislation. When Bacrach subsequently refused, the KHCC actively supported an Ohio open housing bill which Ohio adopted in 1965. When efforts were made to put a referendum on the ballot to repeal the new law the KHCC swiftly registered its opposition to the proposed referendum.[28]

Proactively, the council used the housing market to attract prospective residents who were committed to the ideal of integration. The housing committee published a brochure, "Looking for a Place to Live in Cincinnati," promoting housing opportunities in the neighborhood and solicited help from businesses and churches to get it distributed. One Kennedy Heights activist, Roger Engstrand, a personnel recruiter at Procter and Gamble, steered new employees to housing opportunities in the neighborhood. The council placed periodic advertisements in the *New Republic* and *Saturday Review* magazines urging people moving to Cincinnati to consider buying a home in the neighborhood. The housing committee sent brochures and showed houses to interested parties. During the summer of 1965 the council organized a dinner meeting with realtors to explain community goals and to ask for help in breaking down segregated housing patterns. For 1965 the housing committee reported that it had helped eight new families purchase homes and had shown more then thirty additional homes to potential buyers. In addition it also began helping people interested in rental property.[29]

From the beginning Kennedy Heights activists were concerned with image and media. When the bombing story broke in 1959 the residents took great pains to de-emphasize the race

issue in the newspapers.[30] Within a year after organizing the KHCC, they established a publicity committee and began publishing a monthly newsletter to squelch rumors, to inform residents about emerging developments and about community activities, and to promote the mission of the council. The housing brochure portrayed the neighborhood in its best light. The council worked with the print media to get positive stories about the Kennedy Heights experiment.[31]

Kennedy Heights civic leaders contacted local television stations to be sure that community festivals were covered in order to get images of African American and white residents interacting in a positive way. They informed local television and radio stations about what they were trying to do as a community and succeeded in getting, with the help of the MFRC, anti-blockbusting editorials on one local television and radio station.[32] The advertisements in the *New Republic* and the *Saturday Review* drew widespread attention to KHCC efforts. One television network decided to do a story about the neighborhood but unanticipated external events led to the story being shelved. As the news crew from New York made its way to Cincinnati, the 1965 Watts riot broke out in Los Angeles. When they arrived in Cincinnati, the news crew was told to go on to Los Angeles to cover the riot.[33]

Council members also worked to control coverage by the press. After the long hot summer of 1966 the chair of the publicity committee failed to interest several national news magazines in a potential article on Kennedy Heights "as an example of what is being done in the area of civil rights."[34] They also complained about local press coverage of isolated events in the neighborhood. After one such negative story the council held a special meeting on the role of the press and community relations.[35]

Education was a vital concern to the KHCC from the outset. At an early MFRC Housing Committee meeting D. D. Starr explained the difficulty Kennedy Heights activists had dealing

with individual student concerns. Yet the schools committee was among the first established and they began by developing liaisons with public and parochial schools serving Kennedy Heights children. They worked closely with school administrators and whenever questions arose concerning education the council invited principals from the schools to address KHCC meetings. The September 1966 *Kennedy Heights Community Council Newsletter* prominently featured the idea that "The world could be remade in one generation, if parents gave their best to their children and could bring them up free of their own prejudice."[36]

Limited in what it could do in the schools, the KHCC gave considerable attention to education activities outside of the schools. In conjunction with interested parents the council established a Parent Co-operative Nursery School for three and four year old children. They developed a tutorial program for junior high school students and established a Teen Council to provide enrichment programs for teenagers. The Teen Council began with an ambitious program that included music, athletics, foreign languages and various hobbies and its mission statement called for the elimination of prejudice and the promotion of racial harmony.[37]

In 1963 although Kennedy Heights had a great deal of park space, it had just one playfield adjacent to the Kennedy Heights Elementary School. Race relations on the playfield were a concern of the council and members began working with the Cincinnati Recreation Commission to develop programs at the playfield. To fill the recreation void in the neighborhood the council tapped into popular and civic cultures to bridge the racial divide. Beginning in 1965 it sponsored an annual community parade and picnic on the Fourth of July holiday. With floats and marchers the parade began at the elementary school, moved down Kennedy Avenue to Kennedy Heights Park for a picnic and entertainment. After a few years the event was moved to Memorial Day weekend. Throughout the second half of the 1960s they

organized annual community musical programs featuring a diversity of neighborhood talent. In 1966 the KHCC had a representative on a YMCA taskforce set up to find a site for a new facility in the northeast quadrant of the Cincinnati area. The representative emphasized the importance of minority access and that point of view was an important factor in the decision to locate the facility in nearby Blue Ash. The council endorsed the Living Rooms Dialogue program sponsored by several religious denominations during the early 1960s, but by the end of the decade this program had become an annual event in May at the Presbyterian Church. Kennedy Heights residents also developed, with urging of the KHCC, block clubs to promote grassroots social interaction. They functioned with varying degrees of success throughout late 1960s and the decade of the 1970s.[38]

While the Teen Council was organized to provide summer activities for young people, neighborhood parents soon realized that Kennedy Heights lacked significant outlets for athletic activities for the increased number of African American youth in the area. Many felt left out of the larger recreation program in nearby Pleasant Ridge. At the initiative of George Rowe, a group of black parents from Kennedy Heights and adjacent Silverton met during the summer of 1967 to organize the Ken-Sil Athletic Association. That fall they began a pee-wee football program which during the next few years led to a full fledged program of baseball, basketball and football for boys of all age groups.[39]

The year 1967 proved a turning point for the Kennedy Heights experiment and for Cincinnati as the city experienced the first of its two 1960s race riots. Although Kennedy Heights did not experience racial unrest during the June riots, later that summer D. D. Starr, the chair of the housing committee, reported a loss of interest in purchasing houses and that the requests they had for help was largely for rental property. The schools committee reported that

the Kennedy Elementary School had numerous windows boarded up and that many more windows were vandalized then in previous summers. Much of the activity of the Teen Council that summer focused on job placement and seventy-five teenagers were placed in jobs. The Kennedy Klefs, an interracial singing group of community women sponsored by the PTA, disbanded that fall.[40]

Searching for answers to the tensions being felt in race relations, the November council meeting focused on schools, jobs and housing—the issues they believed most pressing. Within a few weeks the council convened a special meeting under the title "Our High Schools—Police-Community Relations." When Cincinnati mayor Eugene Ruehlman came to the February 20, 1968 KHCC meeting he heard complaints from the large interracial group in attendance that apartment owners were engaging in retaliatory evictions of people who complained about the lack of code enforcement. He also heard that police and fire department personnel treated black citizens in a prejudicial manner. Residents also wanted to know what the city was doing to help people purchase homes in the city and what was the city doing to promote positive race relations.[41]

Less then a month later the *Cincinnati Enquirer* reported that about fifty black teenagers threw rocks, sticks and bottles at white motorists and at the homes of white residents. The police reported that the students were from Woodward High School and Schroder Junior High School. Both schools served the Kennedy Heights community and Schroder was in the neighborhood. After the Kerner Commission Report on the 1967 riots was issued in March of 1968, the KHCC devoted its April 1968 meeting to the report and began asking what else it should be doing to improve race relations in the neighborhood.[42]

Later that spring in the wake of Martin Luther King's assassination, Cincinnati experienced another race riot. In Kennedy Heights the housing committee began hearing renewed complaints from residents about scare tactics being used by realtors. In addition, a new zoning struggle emerged over land use of a hillside just outside the city limits but adjacent to the neighborhood. Marvin Warner, who had recently sold the Stratford Village apartment complex and his interests in the new town development of Forest Park, Ohio, began plans to build a 426 unit apartment complex on the Columbia Township hillside. Zoned single family by the Hamilton County Rural Zoning Commission, in 1969 Warner managed to get the County Commissioners to change the zoning to allow multiple unit dwellings.

Another prominent Cincinnati developer, Neal Bortz of Towne Properties, gained control of an extensive area along Woodford Road which the re-zoning project of 1961 left unchanged. The area had been envisioned as a secondary business district and new school site, but now, before the KHCC was aware of the project, Bortz began building a 120 unit apartment complex for low income residents. The community strongly protested both projects and put together an extensive coalition of twenty-seven additional groups to oppose the Warner project. In testimony before the city Planning Commission dealing with the Woodford Road project, one African American community council activist feared "the systematic violation of the community" and attacked the attitude "that wherever we are, more of us are supposed to be." They succeeded in stopping Warner's efforts but the Towne Properties project went forward.[43] The Kennedy Heights residents complained that without appropriate support services the housing project would inevitably lead to slum conditions.

The recreation program in the neighborhood also moved to a different level after the race riots. The KHCC increased the coordination of its efforts. In conjunction with the local

Presbyterian Church, the council hired a full-time recreation worker. It also succeeded in getting the Cincinnati Public Schools to initiate a lighted schools program at Schroder Junior High School. The Recreation Commission paid the rent and provided two recreation leaders for the program. The council youth worker coordinated his efforts with the lighted school program. The Recreation Commission, after being unresponsive to efforts for a recreation facility in the community, also finally agreed to develop a Kennedy Heights facility in phases.[44]

The work of the schools committee also took on a new urgency over the crowded conditions at Kennedy elementary and perceived problems at Schroder Junior High. The committee accelerated its pressure on school administrators for a new K-3 facility in the neighborhood and established a sub-committee to focus on Schroder. Concerned about the lack of books in the Kennedy school library, the members collected four thousand books suitable for an elementary school resource center. Working with school officials they arranged to house the library in a "colony" on the school grounds. The new library was eventually moved to the school music room and was staffed by neighborhood volunteers and a half-time professional librarian that the school shared on a bi-weekly basis with the Millvale Elementary School. The newly energized school committee also joined a citywide coalition working to improve the Cincinnati public schools and to promote positive stories about the schools in the media.[45]

Conclusions

In the very early days of the Kennedy Heights experiment, Dwight Hoover, an urban planner from the University of Cincinnati, told the MFRC Housing Committee that they needed to create a new myth around the desirability of interracial living.[46] However, developing a new myth and controlling media images could not halt the massive shifts taking place in Cincinnati and the nation. The post-World War II reconstruction and the 1948 Cincinnati Master Plan set in

motion large-scale demographic shifts in Cincinnati. The Master Plan anticipated that the market system would provide adequate housing and that African Americans displaced by urban renewal would seek housing in older neighborhoods near established black neighborhoods. The Plan also encouraged new private sector housing, including multiple unit dwelling units, in the undeveloped areas in and around Kennedy Heights. By the late 1950s, the process was well under way.

The 1959 bombing on Standish Avenue and the failed effort to establish a functioning community council accelerated white flight from the neighborhood. Aggressive real estate practices combined with the need for housing in Cincinnati's growing African American population further speeded up the process of demographic change in the neighborhood throughout the early 1960s.

The KHCC stabilized and briefly slowed the racial transformation in the neighborhood, but after the riots of 1967 and 1968 white flight accelerated again. The aggressive real estate practices reappeared and the large scale real estate developers revisited the neighborhood. Another factor operating in the area was the projected opening in the early 1970s of the new I-71 highway through Columbia Township to the southeast of Kennedy Heights. Parts of the area that the KHERC controlled was developed in the 1950s with upscale custom built homes purchased by middle-class whites. With the prospect of the new highway this housing rapidly turned over to predominantly minority ownership. In 1970 the census reported that Kennedy Heights was 52 percent African American and 42 percent white. By 1980 the neighborhood was three-fourths black, with 60 percent of the homes being owner-occupied. Since then, the neighborhood's population has decreased but it has maintained that basic racial balance.

One demographic analysis of the population shift of the 1960s and 1970s found that the majority of the white population in Kennedy Heights was older with children already going through school. The analysis concludes that once these children were launched into adulthood these parents found it convenient to sell their homes and leave the community. The housing market was desegregated and the willing buyers of homes in the neighborhood were predominantly African Americans.[47] The inner city turmoil of the late 1960s probably contributed to their decisions and to the decisions of potential white homeowners to seek housing in all white areas. At the same time, the ideal of creating an integrated community has continued to energize KHCC activists who worked to maintain an interracial population in their homes and schools.[48]

After the 1967 and 1968 riots the Kennedy Heights experiment continued but did so within the context of changing conditions. The agencies of government responded to the needs of the community with an increased urgency, but residential integration was not at the fore. In contrast to the self help approach of the MFRC of the 1950s, in January 1968 Barry Cholak, the Director of Cincinnati's Community Development program, told those in attendance at the Kennedy Heights Community Council meeting that the purpose of the program was to get cities to study urban needs and "to teach people to learn to live together."[49]

Notes

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[1] Eric Foner, ed. *New American History* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990), vii; Robert Fisher and Joseph Kling, "Community Organization, New Social Movement Theory and the Condition of Postmodernity," in *Integrating Knowledge and Practice*, David Tucker, Charles Garvin, and Rosemary Serri, eds. (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1997), 105-15.

[2] Charles Tilley, "Do Communities Act?" in *The Community: Approaches and Applications*, Marcia Pelly Effrat, ed. (New York: The Free Press, 1974), 209-37.

[3] Edward P. Thompson, *The Poverty of Theory* (New York: The Monthly Review Press, 1978).

[4] Robert Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2000).

[5] Zane L. Miller, *Visions of Place: the City, Neighborhoods, Suburbs and Cincinnati's Clifton, 1850-2000* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2001), 1-6; but also see Miller's *Suburb: Neighborhood and Community in Forest Park, Ohio, 1935-1976* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee, 1987).

[6] Byron R. Skinner, *The Double "V": The Impact of World War II on Black America* (Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms International, 1986).

[7] Kenneth L. Kusmer, "African Americans in the City Since World War II: From the Industrial to the Postindustrial Era," in *The New African American Urban History*, Kenneth Goings and Raymond Mohl, eds. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1996), 320-68; Janet E. Smith, *The First Five Years of the Mayor's Friendly Relations Committee, 1943-1948* (Cincinnati: City of Cincinnati, 1949).

[8] *Buchanan v. Warley*, 245 U.S. 60 (1917). Integration of suburban housing often led to violence and political conflict. Catherine Fosl, *Subversive Southerner: Anne Braden and the Struggle for Racial Justice in the Cold War* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 135-73, focuses on one incident; Andrew Wiese, *Places of Their Own: African American Suburbanization in the Twentieth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), deals with the issue in breadth and depth.

[9] Robert A. Burnham, "The Mayor's Friendly Relations Committee: Cultural Pluralism and the Struggle for Black Advancement," in *Race and the City: Work, Community and Protest in Cincinnati, 1820-1970*, Henry Louis Taylor, Jr., ed. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 258-79; Robert Fairbanks and Zane L Miller, "The Martial Metropolis: Housing, Planning and Race in Cincinnati, 1940-55," in *The Martial Metropolis: U.S. Cities in War and Peace*, Roger Lotchin, ed. (New York: Praeger, 1984), 191-232; Ann Louise Robisch, "Educational Segregation and Desegregation in Ohio, Especially in Cincinnati" (M.A. Thesis, University of Cincinnati, 1961); Alfred Kuhn, *Racial Discrimination in Employment in the Cincinnati Area* (Cincinnati: The Wilder Foundation, 1952).

[10] Fairbanks and Miller, "The Martial Metropolis," 191-221; Robert B. Fairbanks, *Making Better Citizens: Housing Reform and Community Development Strategy in Cincinnati, 1890-1960* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988), Chapter 10, explains the development of the urban renewal program and its impact on housing.

[11] John G. Vaughan, "Housing for Negroes in Cincinnati," MFRC Housing File, Box 57, Cincinnati Human Relations Commission Papers (CHRCP), University of Cincinnati Archives, Cincinnati; see Charles F. Casey-Leininger, "Giving Meaning to Democracy: The Development of the Fair Housing Movement in Cincinnati, 1945-1970" in Robert B. Fairbanks and Patricia Mooney-Melvin, eds., *Making Sense of the City: Local Government Cross-Culture and Community Life* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2001), 156-179.

[12] Minutes, MFRC Annual Meeting, Apr. 5, 1962, CHRCP. *Laufman v. Oakley Bldg. & Loan*, F. Supp. 480 (1976) explains the issues surrounding redlining. Kenneth T. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985) explains federal loan restrictions related to race.

[13] *Kennedy Heights Community Council Plan* (Cincinnati: Kennedy Heights Community Council, 1983), 12-19. The papers of the Kennedy Heights Community Council and the oral histories recorded by the author have been turned over to the University of Cincinnati Archives.

[14] Herbert F. Koch Diary, vol. 347, various entries from July 3, 1944, through Dec. 5, 1944, Cincinnati Historical Society Library, Cincinnati (hereafter CHSL). Koch's diary describes the struggle from the point of view of one of the leading opponents of the G. M. development; Koch was a Cincinnati banker and leading advocate of metropolitan planning. *Cincinnati Enquirer,* July 7, 1944, 8, Sept. 9, 1944, 1.

[15] *Cincinnati Post,* Nov. 13, 1944, 1, Nov. 20, 1944, 13. Koch Diary, Jan. 3, 17, 31, 1949, CHSL, gives an account of the proposals to create the Rainbow Co-operative; entry of Jan. 26, 1951, summarizes the sale of the property to the Warner-Kanter Corporation.

[16] *Cincinnati Post,* Mar. 6, 1959, 8; Mar. 14, 1959, 6. A number of families did enter covenant and stayed in the neighborhood long after their children were grown.

[17] Minutes, Board of Trustees of the MFRC, Oct. 29, 1959, Box 22, CHRCP.

[18] Interview with Cecil Wesley by James Cebula, Apr. 10, 1978; MFRC Housing Committee Minutes, Oct. 29, 1963, Box 57, CHRCP; *Cincinnati Enquirer,* May 16, 1965, 6a.

[19] Marshal Bragdon, "Report of the Executive Director," Annual Meeting of the MFRC, Apr. 11, 1957, Box 22, CHRCP.

[20] Ibid.; John Clayton Thomas, *Between Citizen and City* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1986), 76-77; Charles Casey-Leininger, "Making the Second Ghetto in Cincinnati," in *Race and the City*, 232-57.

[21] Annual Meeting Minutes MFRC, Apr. 11, 1957, Box 22, CHRCP.

[22] Gary P. Kocolowski, "The History of North Avondale: A Study of the Effects of Urbanization

Upon an Urban Locality" (M.A. Thesis, University of Cincinnati, 1971). Detailed accounts of the Paradise proposal can be found in the Minutes of the Board of Trustees of the MFRC for Feb. 28, Mar. 28, and Apr. 25, 1962, Box 22, and in the Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the MFRC of Apr. 5, 1962, Box 22, CHRCP.

[23] Minutes, Board of Trustees MFRC, Apr. 24, 1963, May 22, 1963, Box 22; MFRC Housing Committee Workshop, Oct. 29, 1963, Box 57; Eugene Sparrow, "Description of the MFRC's Housing Committee," Housing Committee File, Box 57, CHRCP. On June 26, 1963, the MFRC amended its rules to become more proactive; see the revised "Statement of Purpose and Program" of the newly created Housing Committee that defined its new role in ibid. Douglas S. Massey and Nancy A. Denton, *American Apartheid* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 66-67, for a description of how blockbusting, one block at a time, contributed to the spread of the ghetto in Detroit; see also Wiese, *Places of Their Own*, 243-249.

[24] *Cincinnati Enquirer,* May 16, 1965, 6a; MFRC Housing Committee Minutes, Sept. 17 and Oct. 29, 1963, Housing File, Box 57, CHRCP.

[25] *Cincinnati Enquirer*, May 16, 1965, 6a.

[26] Minutes, Kennedy Heights Community Council Steering Committee, Sept. 10, 1963, Housing File, Box 57, CHRCP; interview with Mildred Golder by Cebula, Mar. 18, 2001; interview with George Rowe by Cebula, Apr. 10, 2001.

[27] Minutes, Kennedy Heights Community Council Steering Committee, Sept. 10, 1963, Housing File, Box 57; Minutes, MFRC Housing Committee, Oct. 29, 1963; Sparrow, "Housing Committee," Housing File, Box 57; Alvin Wesley Diary, Week of Sept. 13-19, 1964, Box 20, CHRCP.

[28] Minutes, Kennedy Heights Community Council Meeting, Sept. 17, 1963, Housing File, Box

57; Minutes, MFRC Board of Trustees, Dec. 18, 1963, Jan. 22, and Feb. 27, 1964, Box 22, CHRCP. According to Robert Laufman, a prominent Cincinnati attorney who specializes in real estate law and who is an open housing activist, as of Apr. 2001 the Ohio State Real Estate Board has never revoked the license of a realtor for racial steering or for blockbusting.

[29] This information is taken from the KHCC *Newsletter* from 1965 through 1966; interview with Roger Engstrand by Cebula, Sept. 25, 2000; interview with Polly and John Reading by Cebula, Jan. 18, 2001.

[30] *Cincinnati Post,* Mar. 14, 1959, 6; Minutes, Board of Trustees MFRC, Mar. 25, 1959, Box 22, CHRCP.

[31] The original KHCC newsletter was sporadic until Oct. 1965 when volume 1, no. 1, of the current letter was issued under the editorship of John R. Queen. It has been published ten times a year, with occasional lapses, since then and it is distributed to every residence in the neighborhood as well as to various interested parties. A complete run of the newsletter is available in the Kennedy Heights Community Council material at the University of Cincinnati Archives.

[32] Minutes, MFRC Housing Committee Workshop, Aug. 10, 1963, Housing File, Box 57, CHRCP; Polly Reading and Jim Wolfe to Neighbors, Apr. 23, 1971, James E. Wolfe Collection, Kennedy Heights Community Council Papers (hereafter KHCCP); Eugene Sparrow Diary, week of Aug. 2-8, 1964, Box 20, Housing File, Box 57, CHRCP.

[33] Inteview with George Rowe by Cebula, Apr. 10, 2001.

[34] Minutes, Kennedy Heights Community Council Meeting, Oct. 1966, KHCCP.

[35] *KHCC Newsletter*, Apr. 1967; Charlotte Birdsall to William Carlson, education writer, *Cincinnati Enquirer*, Mar. 1, 1968; Walter Friedenberg, editor *Cincinnati Post* to Jim Wolfe,

May 18, 1971, James Wolfe Collection, KHCCP; interview with George Rowe by Cebula, Apr. 10, 2001.

[36] Minutes, MFRC Housing Committee, Dec. 7, 1964, Housing File, Box 57, CHRCP; *KHCC Newsletter,* Sept. 1966.

[37] *KHCC Newsletter*, June and May 1967.

[38] Minutes, KHCC Meeting, Sept. 17, 1963, Box 57, CHRCP; *KHCC Newsletter,* Jan. and May 1966, June 1967.

[39] Minutes, Executive Committee KHCC, June 27, 1967; *KHCC Newsletter,* Nov. 1967; interview with Robert Johnson by Cebula, May 1, 2001.

[40] Minutes, Executive Committee KHCC, Aug. 1967; *Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, 1967* (New York: The New York Times, 1968); *KHCC Newsletter,* Oct. 1967.

[41] *KHCC Newsletter,* Nov. and Dec. 1967; MFRC "Report on the Feb. 20, 1968, Kennedy Heights Community Council Meeting," File 1.6, Box 24, CHRCP.

[42] *Cincinnati Enquirer,* Mar. 15, 1968, 22.

[43] "Kennedy Heights Residents: Do You Wonder Who We Are? Where We Are Going? What Is Happening?" n.d., summarizes the community struggle with Marvin Warner; "Efforts to Obtain Administrative Relief," n.d., summarizes the community perspective in the conflict with Neal Bortz and Towne Properties; both in James Wolfe Collection, KHCCP. *Cincinnati Enquirer,* Mar. 31, 1971, 8, reports on the tenor community anger over the Woodford Road housing development.

[44] KHCC Newsletter, May 1970; Northeast Suburban Life, July 7, 1971, 1.

[45] Schools Committee Folder, James Wolfe Collection, KHCCP.

[46] Minutes, MFRC Housing Workshop, Aug. 10, 1963, Box 57, CHRCP.

[47] Wesley W. Thomas, "Analysis of Age Structure Change: Kennedy Heights, 1960-1970," James Wolfe Collection, KHCCP. Recent scholarship on the issue of racial integration documents the trend of the African American middle class to choose to live close to each other; see Weise, *Places of Their Own*, Ibid. David P. Varady, ed., *Desegregating the City: Ghettos, Enslaves and Inequality* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005), explores recent social science thinking about the persistence of segregated housing patterns and challenges the notion that racial segregation is always detrimental. Charles M. Lamb, *Housing Segregation in Suburban America: Presidential and Judicial Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), examines housing policy in the U.S. from 1960 through 2000 within the context of national politics. Kevin M. Kruse and Thomas J. Sugrue, eds., *The New Suburban History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), explores several of the issues raised in this paper. Orlando Patterson, "The Last Race Problem," *New York Times*, Dec. 30, 2006, A23, calls attention to perceived disadvantages of "middle class black ghettos."

[48] Mark Abrahamson, *Urban Enclaves: Identity and Place in the World* (New York: Worth Publishers, 2006), 10-11, suggests that self definition and memories are the reasons many people stay in racially changing neighborhoods, Wiese, *Places of Their Own*, 255-292 focuses on how African-American suburbanites have sought to fashion residential communities equal to those available in predominately white suburbs.

[49] Minutes, KHCC Meeting, Jan. 1968, KHCCP; see Miller, *Visions of Place*, 1-6, on the importance of changing perceptions of social reality. Charles F. Casey-Leininger, "Stable Integrated Communities," Mar. 2007, 1-3, documents how the Kennedy Heights neighborhood has maintained a stable dissimilarity index of about 50 from the year 1980 through 2000 and that

the neighborhood was one of five Cincinnati neighborhoods with stable black to white population ratios as of 2007; paper in possession of the author.