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Historical Causes and Consequences of the 1967 Civil Disorder

White Racism, Black Rebellion, and Changing Race Relations in the Post-Civil Disorder Era

IN JULY 1967, DETROIT EXPERIENCED THE BLOODIEST URBAN DISORDER AND THE costliest property damage in U.S. history. When it finally ended, forty-three people had been killed—thirty-three blacks and ten whites—over one thousand injured, and 3,800 arrested (Fine, 1989: 299). Close to 5,000 people were left homeless, most of them black. More than 1,000 buildings had been burned to the ground. When the total damage was tallied, it soared to \$50 million. During the riot, or “rebellion,” as most black radicals called it, several white police officers deliberately shot three unarmed black men to death in the Algiers Motel. Two of the men were shot while lying or kneeling (Widick, 1972; Hersey, 1968). Race relations would never be the same. This chapter will explore the historical causes and consequences of this tragic event, and how segments of the black and white communities reacted to it.

More than forty years after the 1967 civil disorder in Detroit, people are still talking and writing about it. It remains a major historical and racial event in the collective memory of a generation of black and white metro Detroiters who either experienced the event or heard about it from older relatives and friends who lived in Detroit or the suburbs at the time. This event, more than any other in the period after World War II, left an indelible imprint on both that generation and the generations that followed. Many black and white people in metro Detroit, and particularly those whites who left because of the riot, still define the stages of their lives by the event. A white former Detroiters who was a young woman at the time recalls:

I was 18, just graduated from high school and working at Macabee Life Insurance in Southfield. In the middle of the day I was paged to the front office and saw my dad standing there. He had come to take me home. I remembered worrying about where the rioters were in relation to my home (Six Mile/Lahser/Evergreen area) and Dad reassuring me they were far away. However, the next day I recall my Dad coming home and telling my Mom he was going to stay home for the duration. That frightened me, my Dad worked 12–14 hours a day and for him to take off work was a major event. . . . I don't recall any looter damage as far as we were but I do recall soldiers on

the streets. . . . By January my folk had sold their house and moved to South Lyon. Even though I was moving on in my life I hated leaving that fabulous neighborhood. I can't imagine growing up anywhere else. (Discuss Detroit Forums, October 27, 2006)

From this "white" perspective, the "riot" disrupted a comfortable lifestyle, forcing her family to become refugees from their "fabulous neighborhood." Even at this distance of four decades, there is little sense from this observer of what might have caused the "riot" that led to her family's "exodus" from the city to distant South Lyons.

A black teenage male had a different experience of the same event. His narrative reveals the fear of the average black family caught between the rioters and the white police and National Guard, operating at times like a hostile "occupying army."

There was a little party store right across the street on the other side of 12th, and Mom sent me out to the store to get some milk. . . . I ran out of the house and got into the middle of the street when the National Guard hollered, "Stop!" I literally froze in the middle of the street. They called me over and asked where was I going, what was I doing; and I told them . . . I live right here and my mom was just sending me to the store. They made me go back in the house, made my mom and dad come out and explain to them where I was going, and what I was going for, and then stood there and watched as I went across the street to the store and came back.

Then one night, my younger sister was just an infant at the time, and they had pinned a sniper down on the roof of the building across the street on 12th. My mom got up about eleven-thirty or twelve. The police had turned off all of the street lights up and down 12th Street, so it was pitch black. My mom got up to go downstairs to get my sister a bottle. When she turned on the light in the living room . . . the light hit like a floodlight; and she got about two steps when the National Guard and the police said over a megaphone she had about two second to turn off that light or it would be blown out because it was giving their position away and illuminating them to the sniper. She turned the lights out, and I remember how she crawled back up the steps. She was so scared. She made us sleep under our beds that night because of the gunfire. The next morning I got up, went out in the backyard, and saw spent shells. And our garage on the alley side was just riddled with bullets

At first the riots were a matter of just looting stores and people roaming. Then it got ugly. I mean, it turned more violent, where there were snipers and gunfire, and we were literally under martial law. If there was a group of four or five blacks walking down the street together they were broken up. The police would stop them, break them up, and make them go a different way. It was really scary. I remember how firemen stopped coming into the neighborhood because they were being shot at. (Moon, 1994: 373-74)

A generation of blacks and whites experienced the riot in dramatically different ways, creating sometimes historically conflicting narratives. The black narrative, which was confirmed by the Kerner Commission Report, placed the blame squarely on institutionalized racism that crippled the lives of so many blacks during the years leading up to the riot: "What white Americans have never fully understood—but what the Negro can never forget—is that white society is deeply implicated in the ghetto. White institutions created it, white institutions maintain it, and white society condones it" (National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, 1968: 2). George Romney, who was governor of Michigan during the riot, agreed with the report, saying, "What triggered the riot in my opinion, to a considerable extent,

that between urban renewal and expressways, poor black people were bulldozed out of their homes. They had no place to go in the suburbs because of suburban restriction. They settled along 12th Street. The concentration of people on 12th Street was too great. So when that incident occurred, it was a spark that ignited the whole area" (Moon, 1994: 396). In short, white institutional racism in the form of urban renewal, expressways, and white suburban resistance were the major causes of the civil disorder, or rebellion, of 1967. But, as to be expected, black and white collective memories of the event differ.

Historian Sidney Fine, in his study of the riot, wrote, "Whites and blacks just after the riot viewed what had happened and its consequences in very different ways. As two University of Michigan political scientists put it, 'for the most part it was as if two different events had taken place in the same city, one a calculated act of criminal anarchy, the other a spontaneous protest against mistreatment and injustice' (1989: 369). According to one community survey, when blacks and whites were asked which of three possible interpretations came closest to explaining why the riot had occurred, 69 percent of the blacks, but only 28 percent of the whites, thought it was because people were "being treated badly." Furthermore, 31 percent of whites blamed the riot on "criminals" and 37 percent believed that the riot occurred because "people wanted to take things." As for blacks, 11 percent believed the former and 18 percent the latter (Fine, 1989: 369).

There were still other sharp differences in black/white views of the social impact of the riots. In one of the above surveys, 31 percent of blacks believed the riot would "help" black-white relations, compared to only 4 percent of whites. "Three-quarters of the whites, as compared to 38 percent of the blacks, expected that race relations in Detroit would be impaired. Those who believed race relations had been helped thought that the riot has made whites understand that blacks had to be 'taken seriously' and had also led to a quest for solutions to the city's racial problems." However, "those who thought race relations had suffered stressed 'white fear, distrust, dislike, anger toward blacks'" (Fine, 1989: 369).

Four months after this survey, another one revealed that "a smaller percentage of blacks (27 percent) and a larger percentage of whites (13 percent) believed that the riot had helped black-white relations. Almost 70 percent of the white respondents now thought that blacks were pushing 'too fast' for what they wanted, and just over 67 percent believed that blacks in the central city had only themselves to blame for the fact that they had 'worse jobs, education, and housing than white people'" (Fine, 1989: 369).

This "blame the victim" view held by many Detroit whites was a classic example of how white collective memory distorted history, and was often deliberately blank, or at least benignly ignorant, of the city's racist history prior to the 1967 riots, when blacks in Detroit routinely experienced discrimination in jobs, housing, public accommodation, and education (Stolberg, 1998; Sugrue, 1996; Thomas, 1992). And, of course, most whites knew or cared little about the brutal police treatment of blacks in the city during these years that triggered the 1967 riot.

To many whites, the riot spontaneously flared up from the unruly black masses of the ghetto, whom they saw as too lazy to work and too willing to commit crimes, and much too prone to violence. There was no reason for such behavior. The riot, they felt and firmly believed, was simply a breakdown of law and order.

While a police raid on a "blind pig" (an after-hours drinking establishment) triggered the disorder, according to some observers, the black "rebellion" itself "developed out of an increasingly disturbed social atmosphere, in which typically a series of tension-heightening

incidents over a period of weeks or months became linked in the minds of many in the Negro community with a shared network of underlying grievances" (National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, 1968: 111).

Ten years prior to the riot the housing market was so racially restricted that although blacks represented 20 percent of the population in Detroit they were living in less than 1 percent of the new houses built. This meant that those blacks who could afford to buy new houses were denied the opportunity. Thus, black ghettos became more crowded. In short, blacks were forced to live in "essentially the same places that their predecessors lived during the 1930s—the only difference [was] that due to increasing numbers, they occup[ied] more space centered around their traditional quarters" (Hoult and Mayer, 1962).

One could reasonably argue that the black anger and frustration in the 1960s that finally erupted in 1967 stemmed in no small way from the countless expressions of white hostility directed toward blacks throughout the 1950s. In 1950 Detroit veered dangerously close to another riot—the most recent one had occurred in 1943—when the Detroit Common Council held a public meeting to discuss a proposal for a cooperative housing project to be built in northwest Detroit, a stronghold of white resistance. Whites in the area wanted no part of the proposed project in their community, because three of the project's fifty-four families would be black. White leaders supporting the project made no headway at the meeting. Blacks became angry, and the mayor fired an important black leader for criticizing what he had called "the vacillating policy" of the Detroit Housing Commission. The crisis eventually led to the resignation of the director of the city's Interracial Committee (Darden et al., 1987a).

Between 1954 and 1956 there was an increase of white resistance to blacks moving into "their neighborhoods." These whites were determined to keep blacks out. In at least five separate instances large groups of whites demonstrated in front of black homes, triggering serious racial incidents. Some blacks, unable or unwilling to stay in the face of such hostility, decided to leave. In January 1956, a black man who had recently moved into a predominantly white neighborhood in northeast Detroit was informed by white neighbors that he was not welcome. Soon after, someone burned down his garage, and a few months later he found one side of his house soaked in fuel and a fire burning nearby (Darden et al., 1987).

The most hard-core resistance to the "Negro tide" was centered in the far northwest section of the city. In 1956 this bulwark of white racism contained fifty neighborhood improvement associations that blocked sales of houses to blacks, organized demonstrations in front of black homes, persuaded white brokers not to sell to blacks, and protested against public housing projects (Darden et al., 1987).

This section of Detroit was the site of one of the largest racial demonstrations over housing in the 1950s and, according to the city's Commission on Community Relations, "drew nation-wide attention." In February 1957, a white mob of about 300 people gathered in front of the home of Mrs. Ethel Watkins, a black divorcee. They objected to the presence of a black person in their all-white neighborhood. As the mob increased, police were forced to seal off the area to passing cars and pedestrians. Except for a stone thrown through one of the windows of the house one day and a snowball thrown through the front door glass another day, the mass demonstration was nonviolent but nonetheless racist. For example, a black reporter on the scene was told by a young member of the mob to take a picture of the "monkey in the cage" (City of Detroit Commission on Community Relations, 1957; *Michigan Chronicle*, February 16, 1957). Understandably, Mrs. Watkins was hysterical and felt that she could not stand much more of the mob demonstration. Under police protection she left the house and

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spent the night at the home of a relative, with the intention of giving up the house rather than facing hostile neighbors (*Michigan Chronicle*, February 16, 1957).

The large demonstration surprised the police and other city agencies. The mayor's Commission on Community Relations had made contact with ministers in the neighborhood, and one of them had even visited Mrs. Watkins in her home to welcome her into the community. Unfortunately, other white ministers and neighbors did not share his outlook. The white woman who sold the house to the black woman was so upset over the reaction that she offered to purchase the house back "to end all this which has affected her much as it has Mrs. Watkins" (*Michigan Chronicle*, February 16, 1957).

After talks with the black realtor who had arranged the sale and representatives of various concerned city agencies, Mrs. Watkins mustered the courage and returned to her home. However, her white neighbors persisted in their efforts to dislodge her from the neighborhood. They went so far as to send a delegation to the black realtor to buy back Mrs. Watkins's house for \$1,400 more than she had paid for it. The realtor refused their offer. Seven hundred residents of the neighborhood held an emergency meeting at a local church, where with outside assistance, they formed a so-called "improvement association" and discussed techniques and methods for getting rid of Mrs. Watkins and preventing blacks from entering the neighborhood in the future (*Michigan Chronicle*, February 23, 1957).

The effects of this organized white resistance and "racial terrorism" on many black families prevented them from moving into white neighborhoods for fear of having their property destroyed or worse, their lives threatened. Instead, many black families probably decided to stay put, remaining in overcrowded, poor ghettos, which became breeding grounds for angry black youth waiting for an opportunity to explode. A generation of whites would soon forget this period of racial terrorism and see no connection between it and the resentment and anger of another generation of blacks toward "the white Establishment."

The growing black population in Detroit during the 1950s had few outlets to ease the pressure. They were squeezed in on all sides by resistance from hostile white neighborhoods on the borders of black ghettos and equally hostile suburbs; and policed by what many blacks considered to be "a white occupying army." While black housing problems were compounded by urban removal policies that uprooted the African American community of Paradise Valley and forced much of the poor black population to move to the 12th Street area, which became the epicenter of the 1967 riot or rebellion, white racial privilege paved the way for white Detroiters to move to the growing suburban communities to realize their version of the "American Dream." Once there, they quickly established a new wall of resistance against those blacks also seeking to relocate to better themselves.

Most white popular narratives of the many causes of the 1967 riots do not mention the connection between white escape to the suburbs and the walls they erected to prevent blacks from sharing the same suburban dream. These walls kept blacks locked into a declining central city, barred from decent jobs and housing, and forced them to raise their children on low wages and send them, often hungry, to shabby, run-down schools.

This suburban ring of racism was constructed and maintained by suburban officials such as the late Orville L. Hubbard of Dearborn, Michigan, a favorite of suburban racists who promised to keep blacks out of white suburbs. To many whites in Dearborn and other suburbs and white neighborhoods in Detroit, Mayor Hubbard seemed invincible in his resistance to racial integration, blacks, and the federal government. During the 1960s Mayor Hubbard's Dearborn emerged as "a symbol of the deep-rooted racism of the north," and the

mayor himself was said to be one who "speaks his city's mind on the subject and the mind of many northern white suburbs as well" (Serrin, 1969: 26; *Detroit Free Press*, December 17 and 19, 1982).

While many whites in Dearborn did not share Mayor Hubbard's antiblack mania, it is interesting to note that during his tenure, no viable movement of white citizens arose in the city to effectively challenge his racist views. Perhaps the good liberal whites of Dearborn realized that although the mayor's racism was an embarrassment, it could be endured, because at least it protected their white-skin privileges. In spite of the racism, some might have argued, Dearborn was a great place to live. Few cities of comparable size delivered such benefits to its citizens: low taxes (in 1967 Ford paid 52 percent of all Dearborn's city taxes), clean streets, a free shoppers' babysitting service, fast snow removal, one of the best-endowed recreation programs in the metropolitan area, a summer camp, a police escort service for New Year's celebrants too drunk to drive, and a senior citizen high-rise located in Florida (*Detroit Free Press*, December 19, 1982).

Mayor Hubbard created a white working-class utopia that many white liberals also found satisfying. Therefore, Mayor Hubbard remained in office as an avowed, unabashed racist; because he protected white suburban privilege, he satisfied the needs of most of the white community in Dearborn. The historical cost of maintaining this racist white working-class utopia has been long-term mutual racial antagonism between many Dearborn whites and Detroit blacks and a racially segregated metropolitan community.

Dearborn was not the only suburb that created walls to maintain racial segregation. In the summer of 1967, soon after a black man and his white wife moved into their new home in Warren, angry whites gathered around the house and, for two nights, threw stones and broke windows. Someone threw a smoke bomb into the house. The Warren police hesitated to arrest members of the mob, but finally convinced them to go home (*Michigan Chronicle*, June 24, 1967; *Detroit Free Press*, June 13 and 16, 1967).

Detroit's ghettos were forced to accommodate an increasingly poor and marginalized black population. The black population density resulted in decreasing amounts of land available for public recreation; and since the black population was younger than the white, more recreation areas were needed for black children. As the Detroit Urban League reported in 1967, this lack of recreation space meant black "children and youth were growing up in areas in which the conditions were unfavorable for their development as individuals" (Detroit Urban League, 1967: 8).

Lacking the space for fruitful recreation, many black youth took to the streets and were lured into crime. More than likely, many of these youth, caught up in the cycle of poverty and alienation, took to the streets during the riot, targeting all symbols of white dominance, especially the all-pervasive white police force.

Substandard housing and racially restricted living spaces produced an unhealthy environment for education for students and teachers in Detroit's black communities. On the eve of the 1967 urban disorder, more than 50 percent of the black students (in black high schools) dropped out before graduation. Seventy-two percent of all black students went to schools that were 90–100 percent black. During the 1966–67 school year, "only 30 percent of the eligible students were assisted by the 11.2 million in Title 1 funds earmarked for inner city schools" (Detroit Urban League, 1967: 8).

Predictably, these conditions generated a high rate of unemployment among black youth. Most black youth less than twenty-five years of age in 1971 experienced a rate of unemployment

between 30 and 40 percent (Widick, 1972). Many of these youth fit the profile of the typical rioter, had dropped out of school, and were slightly more educated than their peers. They also had a great deal of racial pride (National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, 1968).

RACIAL HYSTERIA IN THE EARLY POSTDISORDER PERIOD

After the riot, white police feared blacks even more now that they knew how volatile the racial situation was in Detroit. Their perception of the future of race relations in Detroit led them to flock into the National Rifle Association, using their membership to buy carbines in preparation for the next black rebellion. Private citizens began buying guns in record numbers, and white suburban housewives were seen on television practicing shooting handguns (Widick, 1972). The city of Warren on the northeastern border of Detroit began organizing for "trouble" by forming a militia. Mayor Cavanagh described the buying of guns by blacks and whites in anticipation of the next riot as "literally an arms race in Detroit" (Fine, 1989: 387).

Breakthrough, a white far-right organization led by Donald Lobsinger, began to attract many whites after the riot, compared to the few hundred they were able to get to its meeting before the riot. Lobsinger explained that the purpose of the organization was to "arm the whites and to keep them in Detroit because if the city became black, there would be 'guerrilla warfare in the suburbs.'" According to Lobsinger, Breakthrough was needed "because the police had failed to protect the white community" (Fine, 1989: 383). The whites who attended these meetings tended to be "enthusiastic and revivalist," middle-aged, of East European background, drawn to Breakthrough's propaganda that the riot had been a "Communist-inspired insurrection" whose purpose was to 'terrorize blacks' to join 'the black power movement,' after which the 'entire Negro community' could 'move in on the whites.'" This claim had also been made by a John Birch Society front organization, Truth About City Turmoil (TACT) (Fine, 1989: 384).

Breakthrough's followers were urged to buy weapons and certain supplies to store up for the next "much more terrifying" riot." The organization "suggested that they arrange for safe locations to which they could send their children when the dreaded event occurred. It advised whites to establish a 'block to block home defense system' for protection against 'bands of armed terrorists' invading from the inner city to 'murder the men and rape the women'" (Fine, 1989: 384). As for those whites who were working to heal the racial wounds from the riots, Breakthrough "cautioned its audience not to allow themselves 'to be misled once more by the do-gooders and bleeding hearts' who were proposing as measures to forestall race riots the same kinds of 'solution' as had failed in the past" (Fine, 1989: 384).

Breakthrough not only fanned the flames of postriot racial hysteria among many whites, it also engaged in its campaign the support of other organizations, such as "American Legion Posts, the Detroit Police and Firemen's Association for Public Safety, and the Chaldean Society for Preservation of Liberty" (Fine, 1989: 384). In perhaps the most shameful and racist action in its history, the National Rifle Association displayed weapons at Breakthrough's meetings that contributed to the "arms race," which worried Mayor Cavanagh.

Perhaps the most dramatic white reaction to the 1967 riot and one of the singular historical events that stands out in the current white collective memory of the riot was white flight to the suburbs. "Many whites simply fled Detroit in the wake of the riot. White flight was

hardly a new phenomenon, but the rate of departure for the suburbs considerably increased in the aftermath of the riot," as Fine correctly points out. For example, "an average of twenty-two thousand whites had left Detroit each year from 1964 through 1966, but forty-seven thousand departed in 1967—it is a good guess that three-quarters of them did so after the riot—eighty thousand left in 1968, and forty-six thousand in 1969" (Fine, 1989: 384).

The racial hysteria among whites fleeing Detroit for the suburbs in the postriot period added to the greater fear and racial hysteria of whites already residing in the suburbs (Fine, 1989). Racial hysteria among some suburban communities created such a siege mentality that they hired auxiliary police to patrol their streets and organized a wave of gun clubs (Fine, 1989). Many white suburbanites felt they had to be prepared for the riot in the near future.

As whites in the suburbs were organizing and joining gun clubs and practicing pistol shooting, militant black leaders were warning blacks that the police were planning to provoke an incident as an excuse to attack them. In March 1968, one of these leaders advised blacks to "store enough food for a month in anticipation of an invasion by armed, white racist suburbanites." A month later, a black organization set up a Black Unity Day Rally "to inform blacks about defense and survival methods" (Fine, 1989: 384–85).

As could be expected during the postriot period, wild rumors began spreading in both the black and white communities, fueling the mounting tension and racial hysteria. According to rumors making the rounds in the white community, "Blacks would set fire to the expressways and shoot whites in their cars. . . . blacks would shut off the city's water supply and its public utility service. . . . there was talk of black 'killer squads' that would come from the inner city to murder children and of black maids dispatched to suburban communities to poison the residents of the households where they served. The castration of young whites by blacks was a common rumor toward the end of February 1968" (Fine, 1989: 385).

Rumors in the black community spoke of how whites would try "to provoke a race war and then would invade the inner city to murder blacks, that the police were training suburban whites to shoot (which was not that far from the truth), and that the police was anxious for a riot 'to get even' with Blacks" (Fine, 1989: 385).

The rumors mills in both black and white communities encouraged a dramatic rise in gun sales. Licenses to buy handguns rapidly rose during the first six months of 1968. More ominously, however, was the rise in sales of firearms that did not have to be registered, such as rifles, shotguns, and carbines, which "tripled after the riots" (Fine, 1989: 385). The "arms race" even extended to Ohio, where handgun laws were less restricted, giving Detroiters even more access to guns (Fine, 1989).

The courageous mayor did all he could to halt both the rumors and the "arms race." He tried in vain to persuade the Common Council to require that all sellers and purchasers of long guns be licensed, that such weapons be registered, and the sale of ammunition be restricted to legitimate gun users (Fine, 1989: 385). On March 7, 1968, Cavanagh appeared on television to calm citizens' fears and reassure them that "the police were prepared to prevent trouble and to attack the 'voices of the right and the left' that were seeking to divide the city" (Fine, 1989: 385). Unfortunately, this attempt to calm the rising tide of fear and rumor-making probably fell on deaf ears in the black community. Blacks had little faith in the predominantly white police force, with its long history of racism, not to take sides in the racial crisis. The mayor had to continue his efforts, however. To check the circulation of wild rumors, the mayor ordered the establishment of a Rumor Control Center "that would check out rumors and count falsehood with truth" (Fine, 1989: 386).

As well-intentioned and effective as the Rumor Control Center was, one scholar pointed out that it tended to serve “the white community and did nothing to deal with the discontents of the black community that led to riots. Rumors . . . do not cause riots but are rather ‘part of the same process that induces collective outburst’” (Fine, 1989: 386).

UNLIKELY BEDFELLOWS FROM THE ASHES: BLACK MILITANTS, WHITE CORPORATE LEADERS, AND THE FUTURE OF RACE RELATIONS IN DETROIT

The 1967 urban disorder—or “black rebellion,” according to some segments of the black community—galvanized an assortment of black leaders and organizations, ranging from black militant and separatist groups such as the Republic of New Africa, to storefront community organizations such as Operation Get-Down and the Inner-City Sub-Center, to well-established old-guard organizations such as the Detroit Urban League and various churches. There could be no doubt that the riot forever changed the historical, social, economic, and political trajectory of the black community in its relationship to white metro Detroit.

No matter how various segments of the black and white community choose to describe or interpret the tragedy of July 1967—whether as an “urban disorder,” “riot,” or “black rebellion”—it marked the beginning of a new community identity among many blacks. As one white scholar wrote, the 1960s riots “stimulated a new burst of pride and revived belief that blacks could force changes through united efforts.” “That many blacks derived satisfaction in the riot’s aftermath from the fact that blacks had stood up to whites seems evident,” echoed another white scholar (quoted in Fine, 1989: 371). A black friend of the *Free Press*’s Frank Angelo stated that, after the riot, he “had a feeling that Negroes in Detroit were walking taller” (Fine, 1989: 371).

To militant blacks and restless, unemployed, and recently politicized black youth, it was a defining moment in their lives. They refused to allow whites to define what happened during those bloody days in July as a mere urban disorder or riot. They decided to seize the power to define this momentous historical event that claimed so many black lives. Rather, it was a “black urban rebellion,” marking a revolutionary turning point in the lives of the “Black Nation.”

This process of redefining the historical meaning of “the riot” began with leaders like Detroit radical black preacher Reverend Albert B. Cleage Jr., who gave a sermon on the black struggle at a memorial service for those killed in “the rebellion.” “We are engaged in a nationwide rebellion,” he declared, “seeking to become what God intended that we should be—free men with control of our destiny, the destiny of black men” (Widick, 1972: 189).

Other voices soon emerged. Two black representatives of the Malcolm X Society, one of the many militant black organizations that surfaced during this period, presented a bold statement to the New Detroit Committee (to be discussed later) calling for control of black areas in the city:

We speak in the name of the Malcolm X Society, which represents the political side of the Black Revolution. We speak for the militants, not because we control or direct them—we do not—but we are both part of the same revolution . . . and we therefore understand what the goals of the revolution are, that those goals are not being achieved, and what will happen if they are not achieved. (*Michigan Chronicle*, December 2, 1967)

According to the statement, the “simple overriding goal for which Black people fought this July [was] control of our lives and all those institution which affect them. We have failed to gain control in the following areas: police . . . jobs . . . Housing . . . and economic control” (*Michigan Chronicle*, December 2, 1967). The Malcolm X Society went on to elaborate on each area that the group believed should be under black control. Regarding law enforcement, they wanted police in black areas to be under “Black command.” It would be unacceptable, they argued, to have a black in the number 3 position in the Police Department if the person could not give “a single order to a line policeman.” If the black community could not get a black police commissioner, then “the only acceptable approach to Black control is the creation of a Board of Commissioners to replace the single Commissioner, with each commissioner over a district and each Commissioner elected by votes in his District. This is an absolutely essential revision of police power. For the police force must cease to be a White people’s army used to oppress Black people” (*Michigan Chronicle*, December 2, 1967).

This view of the police force as “a White people’s army” was not limited to black militants but shared by many other segments of the black community, and was reinforced by the police and the National Guard during the urban disorder. Concerning police recruitment, the statement said that “police recruitment must be taken from the Department and placed under the normal civil service like the recruitment for other city departments” (*Michigan Chronicle*, December 2, 1967). However, radical changes in the Police Department would have to wait until the election of Coleman Young in 1973 as the first black mayor in Detroit (Ashton, 1981; Rich, 1989; Young and Wheeler, 1994).

The Malcolm X Society’s statements on jobs for the black community echoed age-old concerns of pre-riot moderate black organizations, so they were not introducing anything new. “The power of the state must be used to create Black employment and full employment, under a Black supervisor . . . the notion of Black people waiting on the largess of good White people is absurd.” A full employment program was needed and should be “time-phased, enforceable and reviewable.” Government “at the state and local levels must commit itself to full employment at decent wages at a given time, list the unemployment and the underemployed, match these people with jobs on a compulsory basis, and subject the entire program to systematic in-process review by a board of Black citizens.” In addition, “where jobs . . . at a decent wage no longer exist[], the government must open businesses directly to make such jobs [available]” (*Michigan Chronicle*, December 2, 1967).

As with other needs of the pre-riot black community, housing was even more of a need afterward, so it was not a surprise that it would be one of the top priorities in the Malcolm X Society’s statement to the New Detroit Committee. The Society demanded that “a crash program of immediate relief for people in the rebellion area must be instituted. Hundreds are without adequate sanitation facilities, without hot water, without heat, without properly working windows and doors, and, in the case of city welfare recipients, without the means of withholding rent from landlords, since the rent is sent directly to the landlords” (*Michigan Chronicle*, December 2, 1967). On their “must items” list for housing the Malcolm X Society included housing code enforcement, minimum housing standards, and “seizure and correction of bad housing” (*Michigan Chronicle*, December 2, 1967).

The Society assured the New Detroit Committee that it was prepared to “support these charges with specific data,” and expressed its concern over symbolic gestures, such as changing the names of streets in the riot areas. Such “farces as the turning of 12th Street [the main site

of the urban disorder] into a Boulevard while no concrete housing plans are implemented, must be halted" (*Michigan Chronicle*, December 2, 1967).

The items mentioned in the Malcolm X Society statement were not entirely new. Throughout the long tradition of black community building in Detroit, many of these issues and concerns had been tackled, but with much less radical spin. Traditional black organizations had a long history of struggling with housing, jobs, and police brutality. The Detroit branch of the Urban League had voiced these concerns for years and tirelessly built programs around many of them (Thomas, 1987a, 1992). The crucial difference in the voicing of these concerns after the 1967 riot was that, unlike the post-1943 period, key white power brokers were more interested in the voice of black militants. Therefore, at least for a while, the Malcolm X Society had their ear.

The final item in the Society's statement focused on black economic control:

Four million dollars are needed to start to assist Black churches, organizations, and businesses to get their economic projects off the ground between now and March 1, 1968. One-third of the money would be administrative grants; the rest, a revolving loan fund. The money must be made available on a simple and direct basis. (*Michigan Chronicle*, December 2, 1967)

As it turned out, the timing was on the side of black militants, at least for a while. White power brokers in Detroit were already setting up their own plans to address many of the same problems outlined by the Malcolm X Society; and because of their fear of more riots, they were more than eager to involve black militants. Mayor Jerome Cavanagh and the business community, reeling from the sheer devastation of the riot, realized that they needed help in rebuilding the city and that help had to come from the private sector. On July 28, just a few weeks after the riot, the Greater Detroit Board of Commerce, representing "thirty-eight hundred business, professional, and industrial interests asserted that since the riot had made it evident that the 'basic solution' for 'these problems' was jobs, its main response to the disorder would be an effort to cope with unemployment and underemployment in the city's disadvantaged areas" (Fine, 1989: 320). The Board promised to continue its support for the Career Development Center and announced the formation of a Manpower Development Committee along with other related initiatives (Fine, 1989). However, the black militants did not receive a hearing within the private sector until the establishment of the New Detroit Committee.

By far the most significant response of the business community to the riot was the establishment of the New Detroit Committee, which was formed on July 27, 1967. Mayor Cavanagh and Governor Romney led the way in the formation of the committee by convening a meeting of 160 community leaders to discuss Detroit's "current and future problems." Both men had asked Joseph L. Hudson Jr., president of the J.L. Hudson Company, Detroit's largest department store, to lead the new committee that would help rebuild Detroit's social and physical structures (Fine, 1989). Many segments of the community were represented at the meeting, but Congressman John Conyers "complained that 'the voiceless people of the community' were missing. 'I didn't hear anyone off of 12th Street' he declared. 'Anyone poor or black. And that's what triggered this as I understand it'" (Fine, 1989: 320). Conyers was, of course, right. The voiceless people needed to be heard, which was why they had "rebelled" earlier in the month. To the great credit of the mayor and the other white leaders at the meeting, they

agreed. Conyers was helping to pave the way for black militants to voice their concerns about black community building in the postdisorder period.

Mayor Cavanagh's concern, however, was how to "associate the commanding firms in the private sector with the well-being of the city to a degree that had previously been lacking. This, indeed, was the message the riot conveyed to the heads of the Big Three auto companies who Cavanagh invited to the July 2 meeting" (Fine, 1989: 320). Surprisingly, during this meeting there was an honest sense of repentance and remorse uncommon among white power elites. Instead of piling all the blame for the riot on blacks, they engaged in some obviously painful soul searching.

Of course, one could argue that they were also embarrassed by the riot because they were major figures on the world stage, and their city—with its reputation as a "model city"—had imploded on their watch. Still, their remorse was heartfelt. James Roche of General Motors declared, "We didn't do enough. . . . An extra effort is needed." Henry Ford, agreeing, confessed, "I thought I was aware . . . I guess I wasn't. This terrible thing has to wake us up." Lynn Townsend of Chrysler echoed their sentiments: "We'd better make an extra effort. Detroit is the test tube for America. If the concentrated power of industry and government can't solve the problems of the ghetto here, God help our country" (Fine, 1989: 320). Interestingly enough, Hudson felt that business leaders in the past had failed the city because they, as Fine explained, "left the city's problems to be solved by government and social workers and [believed they] had absolved their responsibilities by writing a check. Now, he said, they had to involve themselves personally in the rebuilding of Detroit's social and physical framework" (Fine, 1989: 320).

These remarks and "confessions" of remorse and guilt on the part of these business leaders were profoundly revealing. Most if not all probably remembered the 1943 race riot, and although that riot was more of a clash between blacks and whites than the 1967 riot, which was more of "rebellion" or "disorder" of some marginalized and alienated blacks, these leaders must have known that social and economic conditions of blacks had not changed that much between the 1943 and 1967 riots. Housing was still substandard, unemployment was still ravaging the Black community, and police brutality was still a problem. But as Henry Ford II, whose family had been involved with the black community since at least World War I, confessed, "I thought I was aware . . . I guess I wasn't" (Fine, 1989: 320). And if they were not aware of the smoldering fire in the belly of their precious model city, what would it take to make them sufficiently aware to make a difference? This was the challenge ahead for Hudson, and blacks, especially the black militants and Conyer's voiceless people on 12th Street, were waiting to see the results.

As anxious and repentant as the business leaders were to grapple with their past failures to address the problems that had led to the riot, Hudson realized that he needed more input than what they as leaders provided at the July 27 meeting. He was wise enough to seek other counsel outside his inner circle of white business leaders. He approached Hugh White and James Campbell, two leaders of the Detroit Industrial Mission. Hudson needed and trusted White's racial awareness and his understanding of the organizational dynamics.

White and Campbell were well aware of the tendency of leaders to create blue-ribbon committees as a substitute for real problem-solving, and they did not want the new committee to suffer the same fate. They suggested that black militants be included on the committee, with power that they could consider as meaningful. More important, and probably for the sake of racial diplomacy, they advised Hudson to consult with black community leaders to

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determine who should serve on the committee. He should, they advised, include leaders of organizations that the traditional black leadership was "out of touch with," such as the Inner City Organizing Committee and the WCO (West Central Organization), and militant leaders like Cleage (Fine, 1989).

For the moment this advice was on target. Some "established Negro leaders" were "out of touch" with certain militant leaders, but that did not mean that other established leaders, such as Conyers, Urban League workers, and some community church leaders were out of touch with people on the streets who had participated in the riot. Hudson took the advice, however, and involved a group of selected black militants with somewhat vague ideologies and strategies of black community building, on a committee with selected white power elites who were desperate to heal their city. These power elites had little understanding of the problems of the black community, but the riot had taught them the terrible lesson of what alienated and frustrated elements of that community could do to the peace and stability of the city.

Taking the lead in what was a new experiment in postriot social change, White and Campbell arranged a meeting in which Hudson asked some black militants to advise him on the "operation and the membership of the new committee." One well-known militant, Milton Henry, told the committee members that black nationalists should be involved in the reconstruction of the city. Reverend Cleage outlined areas in which cooperation between blacks and the committee was possible. Lorenzo Freeman, a WCO organizer, however, disagreed with the idea of an interracial committee, saying it was "passé." Not unlike similar black nationalist tendencies at the time, Freeman's ideological position was clear: White leaders should "unblock" the white community and black leaders should "take care of the black community" (Fine, 1989: 321). This was nothing more than vintage black nationalist rhetoric that often could not be translated into practical solutions. The committee needed the views of the militants, but it also needed the tested wisdom of black moderates, such as Arthur Johnson and Damon Keith, who were also at the meeting.

When the selection of the committee was completed, it had "three militants among the nine blacks . . . appointed to the thirty-nine member committee." Predictably, the inclusion of the black militants raised some reactions from some people who felt the New Detroit Committee was merely "rewarding lawlessness in adding the three militants to the committee." Hudson replied, "We are responding to complaints against injustices." Later, when the committee was accused of seeking "riot insurance" in embracing the militants, Hudson explained that there could be no guarantee that another disturbance would not occur. He argued that the voices of the black militants had to be heard. His hope was that the militants would "sensitize" and educate the whites on the committee (Fine, 1989).

Perhaps the whites on the committee were not the only ones who needed to be "sensitized." Some of the black moderates were far from comfortable with the views of the black militants. William T. Patrick, Jr., a black moderate, characterized the militants' approach to whites in the following way: "Give . . . us what we want or we'll burn your damn house down, whereas the moderates said, give us what we want because it is the morally correct thing to do" (Fine, 1989: 376).

The participation of black militants and moderates reflected a growing ideological conflict over how best to address the pressing problems of the black community during both the pre- and postriot periods. The black militant camp included Maoists, the Republic of New Africa—the most extreme of the black nationalist groups, which advocated the "creation of a separate Black nation on U.S. soil and independent Black city-states within our

cities"—advocates of self-determination, and followers of Malcolm X, including the young Black nationalists and students who produced the *Inner City Voice*, among others (Fine, 1989; Ingram, 1961: 20). These groups and organizations tended to be ideological and programmatically opposed to the tradition of interracial coalition-building advocated by the moderate camp.

The black moderates included those who still had faith in integration and in traditional means of black community building. While they were well aware that the current crisis called for some rethinking of traditional approaches, they did not think that their voices should be ignored. The Trade Union Leadership Council (TULC), the Cotillion Club, the Booker T. Washington Business Association, the *Michigan Chronicle*, and the Council of Baptist Ministers, among others, had played leading roles in the black community-building process for decades (Foner, 1981; Thomas, 1987a, 1992). Given their long history of involvement in the black community, one can understand why some of these moderates black organizations felt slighted by their exclusion from the New Detroit Committee.

The Booker T. Washington Business Association saw its exclusion as an "affront." The Council of Baptist Ministers shared the feeling, particularly since they spoke for "125 ministers and 150,000 communicants." Some people wrote letters protesting that "grass roots people from the immediate affected community had been excluded." The black newspaper, the *Michigan Chronicle*, criticized the committee's selection of the three black militants, complaining that they "did not speak for the 'man on the street'" (Fine, 1989: 323).

By August two major black organizations had emerged out of the ashes of the urban disorder or black rebellion, proclaiming their own views on what should be done to address the problems of the black community. The City Wide Citizen Action Committee took the lead in seeking ways to organize the black community after the riot. At their citywide meeting on August 9, 1967, at the City-County Building, militant slogans of black revolutionary rhetoric held sway. "We must control our community or we won't have a community." Moderate Robert Tindal of the NAACP did not have a chance and was shouted down. Reverend Cleage, who had emerged as the "most influential spokesman for black militancy and black nationalism in Detroit following the riot," declared that "the Toms are out." He was elected chairman of the CCAC. One local magazine commented that the CCAC was "possibly the most broadly based Black Power organization in any city" (Fine, 1989: 373).

Savoring what would turn out to be temporary postriot influence, several weeks later the CCAC met to spell out its goals and objectives to "an overflow crowd" and received unanimous approval. Cleage told the gathering that there was no east or west side of Detroit. "We are speaking for black people all over the city." This, of course, amounted to unabashed militant hyperbole. He reported that a structure would be put together similarly to that of the New Detroit Committee. The gathering was informed that "technicians and architects from many parts of the country have offered their services so that the needs of the community, which has been articulated so many times, can finally be put into action." The CCAC, Cleage explained, was trying to "find out what other organizations are doing . . . and we're not trying to supplant them" (*Michigan Chronicle*, August 12, 1967).

During the meeting, several committees reported on their tasks. The legal committee's responsibility was to be a "nuisance" whenever it saw black people getting unequal justice in the courts. A representative of the legal committee said that the only way to stop unequal justice was to unite, saying, "We are just a part of this total revolutionary picture, all working together." The chairman of the consumer control committee reported that the black

community must remove the Chaldeans from the community because they were exploiting blacks. He informed the gathering that a price index sheet would be published to show people how the corner store prices compared with prices from major stores. The chairman of the redevelopment committee mentioned that three experts in housing and development would be working with CCAC and that any plan that displaced the black community would not be accepted. Other goals and objectives were also discussed (*Michigan Chronicle*, September 23, 1967).

Although the CCAC's militant programs were at odds with the moderate approach to the black community's postriot problems, Hudson and the New Detroit Committee embraced the organization. This was consistent with their belief that some moderate black organizations were out of touch with the marginal elements of the black community, and consistent with their policy of involving militants in the work of the committee. This recognition by the committee validated the CCAC in the eyes of important segments of the larger Detroit community and no doubt encouraged Cleage to claim that for the first time in the history of the city, blacks had formed an "informal organization" that could speak for the entire community (*Michigan Chronicle*, September 23, 1967).

The CCAC was basically a black militant organization with a black nationalist self-determination approach to postriot black community building. Members of the organization ranged from those "favoring self-determination or separation" to those favoring an "all-out war." Notwithstanding their militant rhetoric, their strategies and proposed programs for addressing the problems of the black community arising from the riot were mainly funded by white sources. For example, in September the Interfaith Emergency Council contributed \$19,000 to CCAC. The Interreligious Foundation for Community Development presented the organization with a check for \$85,000 because it believed that the CCAC was the first "black organization in the country" that displayed "unity and determination in seeking to control the community where black people were in the majority. Essentially, this meant that CCAC was being funded to develop a community-building strategy based upon the philosophy of black community control. In December the CCAC opened a store through its Black Star Co-op to produce African dresses, and encouraged teaching black history, culture, and languages in public schools (Fine, 1989).

Although the CCAC had been embraced by Hudson and the New Detroit Committee and had been anointed by supporters as the voice of the entire black community, another black organization emerged with a competing ideology and strategy for postriot black community building. Composed of black moderates who resented the attention the militants were receiving through CCAC as spokespeople for the black community, the Detroit Council of Organizations (DCO) formed under the leadership of Reverend Roy Allen, president of the Council of Baptist Ministers (Fine, 1989).

The moderates who joined this organization held a special resentment for Cleage, who they saw as a Johnny-come-lately to the black movement. Perhaps this was due to the fact that many of these moderates had been involved in the black community much longer than Cleage and except for the rise of black radicalism, particularly during the postriot period, might have remained in position of power and influence both in the black community and in the white community. Clearly the riot and involvement of militants on the New Detroit Committee was perceived by some moderates as a slap in the face. Thus, one could argue that the establishment of the DCO was an attempt by these moderates to reclaim their traditional leadership position and influence.

The DCO recruited middle-class and upper-class black professionals, black trade union members, community leaders, and the Democratic Party. A few months after the establishment of DCO, a host of the traditional black organizations with a history of longtime service in the black community joined the organization. Among them were the Cotillion Club, the Wolverine Bar Association, the Trade Union Leadership Council, and the NAACP. With such an array of impressive traditional black organizations with time-tested credentials of service on behalf of the black community, it wasn't long before the DCO was able to claim to be the voice of twenty-nine organizations and 350,000 Detroit blacks (Fine, 1989).

If Cleage was a Johnny-come-lately, according to moderates in the DCO, he accused them of being "the creature of the white establishment, City Hall, and the UAW" (Fine, 1989: 375). These attacks by both camps meant little in the scheme of things. Both were committed to their particular philosophy of postriot social change. Reverend Allen argued that "legal and peaceful means" could solve the problems of the black community. The DCO, he explained, was not "out of touch" with the rioters and "was not opposed to any black group, and wanted to work with the CCAC." He did, however, characterize some of the CCAC's views and approaches to the postriot black problems as "irresponsible." The DCO, for its part, did not depart from the preriot traditional moderate's belief in integration as the best possible solution to black problems. It wanted "integrated schools, open housing, the building of low-cost homes for blacks, more blacks on the police force, and improved police-community relations, and increased job opportunities for blacks" (Fine, 1989: 376). One can see how this approach might have seemed "out of touch" with the new realities and demands of the postriot crisis, and why the New Detroit Committee was seeking "new blood."

If any progress was going to be made in unifying the black community during the early stages after the riot, the CCAC and the DCO would have to find common ground for working together. James S. Garrett, a member of the Cotillion Club and the DCO, expressed his concern for unity between the two organizations, even as he recognized their "fundamental differences." In October 1967, Garrett and Cleage spoke together before the Booker T. Washington Business Association, where they continued a discussion from the previous month. Recognizing the growing tension between the two organizations, both men agreed that unity was needed for the benefit of the black community. Garrett argued that in order to achieve unity "there must be efforts on the part of all groups." He said, "I get the feeling here of antagonism that anything that the DCO might propose is going to be knocked down. There are disagreements within each organization . . . but we have got to get together: we are all seeking self-determination" (*Michigan Chronicle*, November 11, 1967). Responding to a question concerning what issues DCO and CCAC could work on together, Cleage, speaking for CCAC, said that his organization "would support any black group that makes sense. We are going to love our black brothers in spite of what they might do." Garrett, in turn, suggested that one key program on which both organizations could work would be finding a black in each precinct to help DCO to establish a civilian review board. He pointed out that DCO had met to "hear and consider CCAC's proposals" (*Michigan Chronicle*, November 11, 1967).

Both organizations were aware of the need to reconcile their differences for the sake of the black community. The riot had certainly left the black community in a traumatic state. There was too much work to be done to waste time bickering over ideologies and programs. To his credit, Garrett extended a longer olive branch than the opposing camp in an article in the *Michigan Chronicle* in December 1967 entitled "Negro Community Must Strive for Unity,

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Not Division." His purpose was to explain to the black public the origins, philosophies, and strategies of the CCAC and DCO. "The riot in July of this year made a tremendous impact on the Negro community," Garrett wrote. "In essence, it was a great awakening to a vital need, the need to combine efforts to eliminate the cause and correct the conditions that brought about the explosive reaction. There was a sense of obligation and necessity permeating the air to draw closer together and work collectively toward common goals" (*Michigan Chronicle*, December 30, 1967). Commenting on how the black community responded to the riot, he continued, "Many individuals, groups and organizations made numerous attempts to provide a means in an organized manner to effectively give purpose, substance and form to these aspirations. Some meaningful success has been achieved in this regard." He mentioned CCAC as one of the "meaningful" successes.

Speaking as a moderate, Garrett demonstrated admirable generosity in his description of the origins of the CCAC. "The City-Wide Citizen Action Committee came into existence following a meeting of people who felt they could best express themselves and pursue their objectives under the leadership and concepts of their own choosing," he explained. "The Committee immediately set out to deal with grievances and problems in a manner determined as appropriate and necessary. The desire expressed was to bring about radical change in the Black areas for the primary benefit of Black people. Accomplishing these objectives meant obtaining control of the areas with respect to business, and social and structural development" (*Michigan Chronicle*, December 30, 1967).

After explaining the origins and philosophy of the CCAC, Garrett turned to the DCO, his organization. He explained how the DCO emerged at the same time as the CCAC, which "brought together organizations, groups and individuals whose ideas and attitudes were similar on methods and approaches for firm establishment of Negro citizens in the economic, social and political life of the whole community." The DCO's main objective was to assemble blacks to provide a source "for collective action in an organized fashion by its members and supporters . . . to act as a coordinating organization, to work toward the elimination of discrimination, and to carry out programs that will be basic to the specific needs of the city and the critical problems confronting the Negro community" (*Michigan Chronicle*, December 30, 1967).

Garrett conceded that both organizations desired to "improve conditions for Negroes." But there was still a major ideological divide between them. As Garrett pointed out, the "CCAC has advocated separatism. DCO does not, but rather endeavors to make Negroes an integrated part of the total community" (*Michigan Chronicle*, December 30, 1967). In short, the CCAC advocated a black nationalist, self-determination approach to the postriot black community, in contrast to the DCO's traditionalist integrationist approach. Notwithstanding their differences, however, Garrett believed that they were not so "acute that they could or should prevent them from finding a way of develop[ing] . . . means to plan together on common objectives. This would seem to be an important effort to make if the Negro community is to have some semblance of total unity" (*Michigan Chronicle*, December 30, 1967).

In his article, Garrett offered advice on how the DCO and the CCAC should cooperate. He cautioned that before matters became too serious, the two organizations should focus on "why they exist and what was intended to be accomplished for the benefit of the community. Every effort should be made to undo any damage that has been done and to start anew" (*Michigan Chronicle*, December 30, 1967).

As he summed up his article, Garrett outlined what his organization, the DCO, would do to address this "sensitive situation" with the CCAC. It would "cooperate as fully as possible

where appropriate and feasible in nature and to dissuade conflict, disunity, and competition and confusion between and among organizations operating toward common objectives. . . . Whether these very important groups work together or apart, neither should interfere with the other's efforts to accomplish worthwhile objectives" (*Michigan Chronicle*, December 30, 1967).

One wonders if the CCAC and the DCO might have been better able to work out their differences over how best to address the problems of the black community during this period if New Detroit had not influenced the interaction between militants and moderates. According to some observers, certain white business leaders on the committee had become awed by the black militants on the committee and their tales of life in the inner city. Arthur Johnson, one of the black moderates on the committee, reported that the white businessmen on the committee "were really out of it." This view was echoed by one of the black militant members: "You can shock [them] by telling them what goes on for one day in a Negro's life" (Fine, 1989: 376). As one local white newspaper reported, "There was a hypnotic attraction for these middle and upper-class Whites in dealing with the Inner City for the first time" (*Detroit Free Press*, August 11, 1968, quoted in Fine 1989). No wonder a teenage black militant on the committee was able to assume the role of the "teacher" of GM's James Roche concerning the nature of the black community" (Fine, 1989: 376).

New Detroit was experimenting with who should be "listened to" in the black community, which explains why some of the white leaders of New Detroit were not interested in listening to the DCO. From their perspective, the DCO did not represent the "real black" community. As Henry Ford put it, "The middle class black is as far removed from what's happening in the ghettos as we are" (Fine, 1989: 376). This attitude prompted the DCO to accuse New Detroit of trying to "buy off" so-called militants and misinterpreting the mood of the black community. In the end, the DCO ended its relationship with New Detroit when it was unable to come up with matching funds for the \$100,000 New Detroit had offered. Several militants left the committee, one returned, and the committee hired another, Frank Ditto, who became a trustee and its "brightest star" until he resigned several years later (Fine, 1989).

In the next few months relationships among all the parties in this drama shifted back and forth, illuminating the complex interplay between New Detroit, black militants, and black moderates over the best approach to address the problems of the black community (Fine, 1989; Gordon, 1971; New Detroit, 1968).

BUILDING FROM THE ASHES: BLACK COMMUNITY BASE ORGANIZATIONS TAKE ON THE TASK

While black militant and moderate organizations battled over who should represent the interests of the postriot black community within Detroit, two community-based organizations emerged that were destined to outlast and outperform many of their contemporaries. The Inner-City Sub-Center and Operation Get-Down were among the best examples of postriot community building that provided practical strategies for the long haul.

philosophy was explained: "To provide meaningful and relevant programs, services, and activities to the Black community that will serve to raise the level of Black consciousness, awareness and understanding, and promote positive Black values, pride, love, and respect among Black people (Inner-City Sub-Center, n.d.)."

Consistent with this philosophy, the ICSC developed a program based upon "Seven Principles of Blackness—Nguzo Saba," created by black cultural nationalist and founder of the US organization and Kwanzaa, Maulana Ron Karenga (Brown, 2003). Below is how it appeared in an ICSC brochure:

The Sub-Center's Value System

NGUZA SABA (Seven Principles of Blackness)

1. UMOJA (Unity). To strive for and maintain Unity in the family, community, nation and race.
2. KUJICHAJULIA (Self-Determination). To define ourselves, speak for ourselves, instead of being defined and spoken for by others.
3. UJIMA (Collective Work and Responsibility). To build and maintain our community together and to make our Brothers' and Sisters' problems our problems, and to solve them together.
4. UJAMAA (Collective Economics). To build and maintain our own stores, shops and other businesses and to profit together from them.
5. NIA (Purpose). To make our collective vocation the building and development of our communities, in order to restore our people to their traditional greatness.
6. KUUMBA (Creativity). To do always as much as we can, to leave our community more beautiful and beneficial than when we inherited it.
7. IMANI (Faith). To believe with all our heart in our parents, leaders and people, and the righteousness and victory of our struggle. (Brown, 2003)

These values seemed to be the motivating principles behind ICSC's impressive range of programs. A senior citizens program included hot lunches, arts and crafts, field trips, group sessions, counseling, bus transportation, and daily exercise, among other activities. The adult program offered career counseling, an exercise class, sewing, upholstery, and GED preparation. There also was a hot breakfast program and a self-supporting co-op store that modeled economic self-help or "Ujamaa" (Inner-City Sub-Center, n.d.).

In 1987 the ICSC's youth program formed the centerpiece of the organization. Since its establishment in the wake of the 1967 riot, it had focused on the problems of poor inner-city youth, guiding them away from the streets to more socially responsible roles in the community. At the Center black youth studied African and African American history and culture, learned African dance and choir, and participated in arts and crafts, baseball, basketball, gymnastics, and music. They also learned karate, obtained tutoring and counseling, and participated on a drill team. These youth-oriented programs reflected Taylor's belief that "when it comes down to the most significant thing we can do, the main program has always been and always will be the youth program, because it's our contention that consciousness raising for the young folk . . . is the key to the struggle." If "resources get so tight that we had to scrap everything, we would scrap everything but the youth program," Taylor said (Taylor, 1987).

This commitment to the development of black youth at the Center during the postriot decades no doubt redirected some of their lives from the frustration and alienation that had

led an earlier generation to riot. Instead, the Center and its values and programs provided a framework for both individual and community development. While we will probably never fully appreciate the tremendous influence that the Center had on this generation of black youth, we can applaud the role of the directors and the Center in providing them with a sense of vision and empowerment.

The Ujamaa Club

The Ujamaa boutique shop was one example of the Center's effort to empower black youth. The shop, housed in the Center, was operated by black youth between the ages of fourteen and twenty-one who were members of the Ujamaa Club. They sold clothes and candy, held bake sales, and solicited donations. The youth and the Center divided the profits. The members of the club met once a week on Thursday for a couple of hours. As one staff member said, the program was "a self-help program . . . operated by youth" (Morant, 1987).

During one of these meetings Paul Taylor gave an inspiring talk to the youth of the Ujamaa Club about how the principle of cooperative economics related to the black community. He started with an introduction to the concept of Ujamaa, explaining that Ujamaa money is used to benefit everyone. Taylor described what he considered to be the three kinds of young adults "out here." One kind is the person who needs money but does not care how he or she gets it. "He will hit people on the head, he will break into folks' homes, sell dope on the corner, and she will sell herself on the street . . . They will do any and everything because their thing is to get money by any means necessary."

The second kind of young adult understands that there are no jobs to be had, but he or she is "not going to break into people's houses, or sell dope on the corner, or sell herself on the street." This young adult will come home from school, talk on the telephone, watch TV, keep off the corner, and when he or she needs money they will ask their family or friends. This type of black young adult, according to Taylor, is the majority. "They are not going to do nothing wrong, but then again they are not going to do anything right in terms of trying to make some money or resources for themselves." These people will sit around waiting for summer jobs or their parents to give them some money.

The third type of young adult, "the one we are looking for, is not going to sell dope, or rob or sit around talking on the phone and looking at TV. This type of young adult is going to put his intelligence to work . . . is going to do something . . . to make some money for themselves." Instead they will babysit, shovel snow, mow lawns, and go to the store for people. "This young adult might be doing any number of positive things to make an honest living." This is "the kind of young adult that we are looking for to join . . . the Ujamaa Club" (Taylor, 1987).

Realizing that this generation of black youth needed to understand some basic economic facts about their community, which had steadily declined since the 1967 disorder, Taylor explained to them the nature of the sales industry and its impact on their community:

Believe me, when I tell you everything is brought and sold . . . most anything that we can look at in this room was brought by somebody and sold by somebody. Unfortunately, historically we as black folk have been the buyers and not the sellers. We buy everything and sell nothing . . . This club . . . is designed to teach us some basic principles about sales. We want to become salespeople . . . not just consumers . . . and that is really what the club is all about. (Taylor, 1987)

Black youth of the Ujamaa Club used three methods to make money. One was by direct sales through which club members approached people to buy merchandise by first explaining to them “what we are and what we are about and asking their support.” Members received commissions for each sale. The second method involved group projects. Once a month the club decided on a collective project to prevent club members from being “caught up and hung up on . . . individualism.” The profits from the group projects went into the club treasury and were earmarked for the club’s economic and business development programs, which helped to start businesses in the community, such as the club’s Boutique Shop. The goals, according to Taylor, were to “have as many businesses as we can . . . on each corner. . . . We want to be able to control . . . the businesses in our community through cooperative ownership. . . . We are trying to get away from the ideas that ‘as soon as I get . . . some money I am going to do something else.’ . . . We are trying to get to ‘we and us.’” The third method was through donations. Taylor believed that when people heard about what the Ujamaa Club was “doing and trying to do,” they would make donations to it. Taylor reasoned that people would support the club because they would be impressed with its objectives and goals and “wanted to see a group of young adults do something positive” (Taylor, 1987).

After advising black members on the three methods of generating money, Taylor pointed out that most of the businesses in communities were either owned by nonblacks or “individualistic blacks—the latter being the opposite of Ujamaa’s model of collective ownership” (Taylor, 1987). Therefore, members of the Ujamaa Club should see black businesses as community-owned.

The “nonblacks” Taylor referred to were the increasing numbers of Chaldean immigrant store owners in black communities who arrived during the early postdisorder period. This increase was caused in large part by changes in the immigration laws in the 1960s and 1980s (Sengstock, 1999). Chaldeans and other Middle Eastern grocers filled the vacuum in poor inner-city neighborhoods created by the flight of large supermarket chains in the wake of the 1967 riot (David, 2000; Sengstock, 1999). While providing inner-city neighborhoods with basic foods, these store owners created a challenge for black community organizers like Taylor who were trying to teach the younger generation the importance of black community business ownership.

Whatever one might think of the economic philosophy of the Ujamaa Club, it was certainly a vast improvement over the aimless, self-centered materialism of many black youth and adults of the generation that came of age in the period after urban disorders. It was a refreshing alternative to views held by many contemporary black business persons in Detroit, who saw blacks as consumers to be exploited instead of members of communities needing social and economic development.

Taylor’s example of “materialist” black businesses could have easily been a reference to the Motown Record Company. As historian Suzanne E. Smith commented in her study of the company, by 1973, when Motown left Detroit, it was “the most successful black business in the United States, with \$40 millions in sales” (Smith, 1999: 255). But what did its success mean for black community-building in Detroit? Smith convincingly argues that “the false promises of black capitalism originate in the faulty assumption that capitalism can be enlisted to remedy racial inequality. Improving the racial conditions of society has never been capitalism’s primary objective” (Smith, 1999: 255).

Essentially this was the message Taylor was conveying to the generation of black youth who grew up during the golden era of Motown, which was also the period after urban disorders.

This generation needed to understand that a successful black-owned company based on the principles of capitalism alone could in fact be a deterrent to the best interests of the black community. For example, as Smith explains so well: "On a more global level, Motown's decision to leave Detroit and the community that nurtured it not only participated in the larger process of deindustrialization of the city, but ultimately created the circumstances that left the company vulnerable to corporate takeovers in years to come" (1999: 256). Helping black youth see the difference between black capitalism/materialism and black cooperative ownership was crucial in helping them understand their responsibility to the poor and underdeveloped segments of their communities.

Taylor's discussion of the three kinds of black youth was an excellent way of helping young blacks recognize that they had to take the responsibility for improving their lives and the lives of their communities. The third kind of young adult Taylor discussed was the model that he hoped all black youth would emulate. The Ujamaa Club represented an excellent first step for this postdisorder generation.

Operation Get-Down

Operation Get-Down (OGD) also was a product of the early era after the 1967 civil disorder. Incorporated in September 1971 as a nonprofit organization (Operation Get-Down, 1986) the evolution of the OGD as a black self-help organization resembled that of the ICSC. Both organizations were founded by young black radicals who were motivated by the spirit of Malcolm X and the black movement of the 1960s and energized by the militancy of the era. In addition, both organizations used white resources for some of their most important community-based programs, yet neither organization compromised its commitment to the philosophy of black self-help as a community-building strategy.

In 1970, when Detroit was still recovering from the riot, the United Methodist Church hired Barry L. Hankerson, a young black activist, to work in Detroit as a community developer. Hankerson arrived in Detroit in 1969. He was twenty-one years old and just out of college and like other young blacks of his generation was inspired by the teachings of "Malcolm X, Marcus Garvey and other Black nationalists" (Hunter, 1997: 16). Before working for the United Methodist Church, Hankerson was a substitute teacher at Post Middle School. While there he wrote plays and taught social studies. Soon he attracted attention for his ability to organize and inspire people (Hunter, 1997). Undoubtedly these were the skills for which he was recruited by Rev. Charles P. Strong of the United Methodist Church as a community liaison (Hunter, 1997).

In 1969, Bernard Parker, who with Hankerson cofounded OGD in 1971, was an eighteen-year-old student at the University of Michigan. He was a member of the Black Panther Party and the University of Michigan Black Action Movement. Encouraged by his mother to become active in the Detroit east side community where he was raised, Parker made daily commutes home to serve as the first youth director for the United Methodist Church organization (Hunter, 1997). Parker recounts how he first met Hankerson, with whom he would work for several decades:

Back in 1969, I went to a meeting at the urging of my mother, at Bethany United Methodist Church . . . that was the community where I was raised and my mother wanted me to go and hear

what they were suggesting for the community. She really wanted to get me out of the Black Panther Party and other organizations I had joined at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. (Hunter, 1997: 16)

Parker went to a meeting where he met both Rev. Charles Strong, the minister of the church, and Barry Hankerson. "I was very impressed with what Barry was talking about," Parker later explained. "He talked about taking control of the community we lived in, the need to learn how to plan and that they were going to have a group of people come to community training classes to become leaders" (Hunter, 1997: 16). Meetings were set up that included Bernard Parker, black youth, senior citizens, college students, and families. They were held at St. Mark's United Methodist Church, which included weekly leadership classes focusing on communication skills, problem-solving techniques, conflict management, and group motivation. Hankerson played a leading role in conducting these classes. Parker credited a local white minister for teaching him and other young blacks techniques of problem solving, long-range planning, and self-development (Parker, 1987).

In June 1971, the United Community Services Summer Project Fund financed the group's first summer project, which provided services to unemployed, "unoccupied" low-income black youth. The group later adopted the language of these youth in naming the organization "Operation Get-Down." "Get-down" referred to how well one was performing a particular activity: "The brother was really getting down." Several months later, when the organization was incorporated, the members elected Barry Hankerson as chairperson and Bernard Parker and Frances Messinger as vice chairpersons (Operation Get-Down, 1986).

From the beginning, OGD viewed itself as a self-help organization. According to one source, "their guiding principle was self-help, the motivating force and motto was adopted from Malcolm X," who said, "I believe that when you give the people a thorough understanding of what confronts them and the basic causes, they will create their own programs; and with a program, you get ACTION!" (Operation Get-Down, 1986).

Much like other black community-based organizations at the time, OGD had to rely upon funding sources outside of its control. As the need for community programs increased and "funding . . . remained elusive," OGD was forced to function one day at a time. There were long periods of rejections; requests for grants were constantly turned down. It seemed that no one was willing to trust this unknown group of people from the east side (Operation Get-Down, 1986). Finally, however, the organizers came up with a solution solidly grounded in the black self-help tradition and an excellent example of community building in the postdisorder era.

This solution involved organizing a fund-raiser for sickle-cell anemia, which at the time had not gained much attention as a health risk peculiar to blacks. The effort provided city-wide exposure for OGD while addressing a serious health need in the black community. The organization received support from Dr. Charles Whitten, who was already working with the Sickle Cell Detection and Information Center at Kirwood Hospital. Operation Get-Down then approached WKBD (Channel 50) for airtime to produce a telethon for sickle cell. The TV station refused to go along with the project until OGD came up with 50,000 signatures on a petition. In addition, WKBD wanted OGD to come up with a nationally known personality to host the telethon and five well-known stars to be on the show (Operation Get-Down, 1986; Hunter, 1997).

After much hard work, OGD was able to meet these requirements. On May 28, 1972, Operation Get-Down's Sickle Cell Telethon was on the airwaves. The show ran from 6:00

p.m. to 2:00 a.m., and Sammy Davis Jr. and Nipsey Russell were the cohosts. The nationally known stars who participated were Muhammad Ali, Gladys Knight and the Pips, the Four Tops, Marvin Gaye, the Spinners, and Stevie Wonder. Other people involved in political, professional, and community life volunteered to provide technical and other assistance. The telethon proved a great success and raised more than \$250,000 for the Kirwood Hospital Sickle Cell Detection and Information Center. As a result, OGD gained the needed exposure that forced the city of Detroit to recognize it as a serious and committed organization (Operation Get-Down, 1986; Hunter, 1997).

The successful telethon no doubt played a role in convincing New Detroit to award OGD a grant and also to purchase a building for the organization. In November 1972, OGD held its first open house. Larry Doss, New Detroit's president, was the keynote speaker. New Detroit's support for OGD was yet another example of its expanding role in the city's long healing process. OGD extended an invitation to the community to become involved in a range of programs, including Head Start day care, adult education (GED), a youth recreation project, and a community development program. These programs contributed to the reduction of gang violence in the 1970s and improved relationships between the black community and the police on the east side. In addition, OGD increased parent and community involvement at several Detroit Public Schools (Kettering, Burroughs, and A. L. Holmes School) and obtained recreation areas on the east side for black youth. The organization also played a key role in the establishment of the Harper Gratiot Multi-Purpose Center (Operation Get-Down, 1986).

Throughout this early period of growth and development, OGD continued to view itself as a black self-help organization. Much of black Detroit was still reeling from the emotional, social, and economic trauma of the riot, yet Detroiters were eager and willing to take charge of its future, with or without outside help. And OGD was a perfect example of this spirit. While at the same time securing funds from outside sources, it never forgot Malcolm X's advice about the role of black people in creating their own program. To this end, OGD tried to rely upon black resources as much as possible. In a 1987 interview, Bernard Parker, who had succeeded Barry L. Hankerson as OGD's executive director in 1974, said, "There are enough black dollars out here to support black programs; we just have to tap them" (Parker, 1987).

Tapping black dollars to support black programs proved very successful for OGD, particularly by focusing on black entertainers. The organization raised money through cabarets, dinner sales, and such productions as *Crack Steppin'* and *Rhythm's Blues* by playwright Ron Milner. Milner had worked closely with OGD over the years in writing, producing, and touring several plays. For example, Milner's play *Crack Steppin'* was created and written with the assistance of black youth associated with OGD. They performed in the play, which had a successful tour in Detroit and other cities. Other plays followed, demonstrating once again how blacks with imagination could build upon strength within their own community (Parker, 1987).

In 1973 OGD started a food co-op. In 1987 *Black Enterprise* magazine reported that OGD's co-op "has become the nation's largest inner-city food cooperative" (Gite, 1987). Referring again to the teachings of Malcolm X, Parker explained, "Malcolm said people who control their food control their minds . . . if people can control what they are eating, then they can control what they are going to eat, how they are going to eat where they are going to eat. There is power in that" (Gite, 1987). The 1967 rebellion also influenced the establishment of the food co-op, as explained by a member of OGD: "Initially, the program was developed as

a precaution. The 1967 rebellion (riots) was still fresh in our minds and we understood the consequences of challenging authority without a source for our food supply. Certain that there was a need for change and willing to take on the task, we decided to develop a Food Co-op program. In the event of a revolution, we would be able to supply ourselves and our community with adequate food" (Hunter, 1997: 21).

The food co-op also grew out of a 1970 boycott of a store for selling poor-quality food. Fifty families pooled their money and purchased vegetables and produce in bulk at lower prices than at grocery stores. Famous vocalist Gladys Knight contributed \$500 to get the project going. Detroit area residents on welfare and Social Security and the unemployed received free membership in the co-op. Others paid a membership fee of five dollars a year. Starting as a single small store, the co-op soon expanded to five other sites located in churches and Detroit Neighborhood Services Centers. In 1986, the largest of these sites was serving 1,200 people a week (Operation Get-Down, 1986).

A year earlier, OGD received another grant from New Detroit that allowed it to serve senior citizens with food vouchers that allowed them to obtain fresh food each month from the OGD food co-op system. That same year Detroit's Health Department asked to join OGD's food co-op system so that their expectant parents could obtain fresh food (Operation Get-Down, 1986). OGD's food co-op soon expanded to include 40,000 square feet of refrigeration and a fleet of trucks, vans, and cargo wagons that provided it with the capacity to receive, transport, and distribute more than three million pounds of food a year. This capacity and success resulted in OGD receiving a contract from the Michigan State Department of Social Services to supply food to twenty-two food shelters throughout Wayne County and a state grant of \$748,000 to provide fresh food to 9,000 families each month through emergency shelters (Gite, 1987).

By 1976, a decade after the riot and five years after OGD started, the organization had evolved into one of the most impressive self-help black community organizations in the city. Its accomplishments far exceeded most of the black community efforts that emerged out of the disorder, and continued to hold the lead for at least a decade longer. While it still secured grants, "the organization's guiding principle of self-help continued to prevail" (Operation Get-Down, 1986).

In 1985, two years shy of the twentieth anniversary of the 1967 riot, OGD was still going strong. That year it took on a new challenge and added a program called BIRTH (Babies' Inalienable Right to Health) as a response to the rate of infant mortality and morbidity in Detroit (Operation Get-Down, 1987). The program was run as a pilot during the summer of 1986 and supported entirely by funds raised through various activities. Although BIRTH received a \$20,000 grant from New Detroit in early 1987 for assistance in transporting clients back and forth between the Center and the location of their doctor's appointment (Operation Get-Down, 1987), the emphasis always was on self-help.

In 1995 OGD began collaboration with Hutzler Midwifery Services, which provided "health services such as prenatal care, post natal care, family planning, and OB/GYN services through its B.I.R.T.H. program" (Hunter, 1997: 124). The program expanded to include transportation for activities associated with the project, medical visits, field trips, shopping and food preparation instruction for healthy pregnancies, and the proper feeding of babies, along with helping clients deal with "family issues and conflict [and] mental and emotional stress" (Hunter, 1997: 124).

The problems of black youth had not been neglected in the expansion of OGD's food co-op and other programs. During the 1985-86 fiscal year, OGD organized and hosted several events

aimed at black youth. These included a youth conference at Wayne State University featuring Kim Fields and Taurean Blacque as keynote speaker, which attracted more than 350 young adults; a teen resources fair at which forty-two youth-oriented human services agencies participated; and the BIRTH program (Operation Get-Down, 1986). Four teenage mothers worked as assistants in this program, which provided expectant mothers with on-site meals; prenatal care; childbirth education; medical care; individual, family, and group counseling; family planning; transportation for medical visits; and field trips (Operation Get-Down, 1987; Hunter, 1997).

By 1991 OGD had become a United Way agency with close to a \$2,000,000 annual budget and a staff of about seventy people. The programs included a health clinic, emergency food programs, a program for pregnant teenagers, day care, adult education, an after-school youth program, and a homeless warming center. In addition, OGD operated "a caravan that goes out every night to feed about 400 homeless people." According to Parker, OGD was "the largest community agency of that nature in the nation" (Mast, 1994: 179).

In 1990 Parker was elected to the Wayne County Board of Commissioners, where he represented the constituency around the OGD community on the east side of Detroit. "I ran on my experiences in Operation Get-Down and said that I wanted to take that experience down to government: self-determination and helping people to solve their own problems. My campaign was very grass roots" (Mast, 1994: 179). As a commissioner, Parker was finally in a position to influence public policy. In his first year in office, Parker opened up the first community office of any Detroit commissioner. Half of his staff were placed in the neighborhood, addressing constituent concerns, such as the cutoff of their utilities and complaints about tax bills (Mast, 1994).

In 1997, the thirtieth anniversary of the 1967 urban disorder and black rebellion, Bernard Parker retired from Operation Get-Down after twenty-two years as its executive director. As one of the cofounders of OGD he became known as a strong advocate for poor blacks within the city of Detroit (Hunter, 1997). Three decades after the Detroit rebellion of 1967, the black community could boast of having produced one of the greatest community-based leaders of the era.

On the fortieth anniversary of the 1967 civil disorder, OGD was still going strong, still dedicated to the well-being of the needy in Detroit.

CONCLUSION

The 1967 riot, or rebellion, as many blacks preferred to describe it, was the result of decades of white institutionalized racism. Few whites were willing or able to connect the historical and social causes to their tragic consequences. Most blacks had no trouble doing so. It was a defining moment in the personal and collective lives of both communities. Segments of the white and black communities responded to it in vastly different ways. Many whites fled to the suburbs, and those already there armed themselves for the coming "racial war." It was a wakeup call to the white power elite as well as to some segments of the black leadership, who for some reason never saw the disorder coming and were not quite sure what to do after the flames died down. It radicalized many segments of the black community and encouraged them to look inward for their economic and social development. One of the most impressive developments during the post-1967 era was the growth of black community organizations such as the Inner-City Sub-Center and Operation-Get-Down, which emerged to meet the challenges of a distressed community still in the throes of the aftermath of the 1967 riot.