

✓ The Movement for Jobs in Civil Rights-Era San Francisco, 1963-64 ✓

A thesis submitted to the faculty of
San Francisco State University
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the
degree

Master of Arts
in
Ethnic Studies

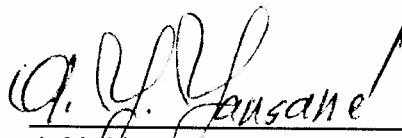
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CERTIFICATION OF APPROVAL

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The study of the Civil Rights Movement in the United States has left out a noteworthy chapter: the movement for jobs in San Francisco during 1963 and 1964. During these years, the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) and other organizations used direct action protest and other strategies in their attempts to win job concessions for African Americans and other people of color from major Bay Area employers. The events in 1963-64 were significant for a number of reasons. One, they pulled the cover off San Francisco's liberal image and thrust it into the politics of race as nothing else had to that point. The period of demonstrations also won over 260 employment agreements, bringing hundreds of jobs to communities suffering from high unemployment. The most significant aspect of the local movement, as far as this study is concerned, is that it differed from the other large-scale, mostly Southern struggles at the same time in that its primary objectives were economic (employment) and not social (desegregation) or political (voting rights).

I certify that the Abstract is a correct representation of the content of this thesis

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I. INTRODUCTION

The study of the Civil Rights Movement has up to this point been characterized with an almost singular emphasis. The documented research in the generation following the decade and a half era has centered quite extensively on the struggle by African Americans and their allies to abolish segregation and secure voting rights.¹ In most of these studies, the focus is typically upon key figures like Martin Luther King, Jr. and organizations like the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). With few exceptions, the bulk of research and attention has been given to the Southern-based movement, typically leaving out much of the defining issues and struggles from other parts of the country. When chapters have been devoted to Detroit, Newark and Watts, for example, they have principally looked at periods of "civil unrest" and have seldom examined the complexities of those situations with as much careful analysis and rigor as the struggles in Birmingham and Albany have been covered.

The scholarship dealing with the city of San Francisco during the tumultuous decade of the 1960's has also been characterized with particular emphases. These have typically highlighted the white, student-led peace movement and the countercultural movement.²

¹ For what are considered the seminal works on this aspect of the movement, see David J. Garrow's *Bearing the Cross*, Taylor Branch's *Parting the Waters*, Fred Powledge's *Free At Last*, Clayborne Carson's *In Struggle*, and Howell Raines' *My Soul is Rested*. The PBS documentary series, "Eyes on the Prize", particularly the first installment, is another example.

² See, for example, Todd Gitlin's *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage*, W.J. Rorabaugh's *Berkeley at War* and works by Jerry Rubin, Allen Ginsburg and other counterculturalists who put the Haight-Ashbury District on the map. Television has treated the decade in a similar fashion (See, for example, "Berkeley in the 60's.").

What is missing from the scholarship on both the national civil rights era and San Francisco's history of the 1960's is the movement led by the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and other local organizations which made up the San Francisco aspect of the Civil Rights Movement. During 1963 and 1964, San Francisco was embroiled in a wave of civil rights demonstrations which targeted corporate establishments in pursuit of securing employment for African Americans and other people of color in the city.

The events in 1963-64 did much to expose the underlying institutional racism in a city that had long prided itself on liberal race relations image. The demonstrations, which were both highly creative and, at times, massive, put the "liberal cosmopolitan" city squarely on the "civil rights hot spots" map.³ The period of demonstrations brought about over 260 employment agreements with companies around the San Francisco Bay Area, securing in pledges an unprecedented number of jobs to African Americans and other people of color. One campaign in particular had statewide implications and was the largest and most successful series of actions taken for jobs in the entire Civil Rights Movement.⁴

Perhaps the most enduring and significant aspect of the San Francisco movement is that it differed markedly from the Southern-based

³ Davies, Lawrence E. "A Cosmopolis in Shock." *The New York Times*, 19 March 1964.

⁴ T'Shaka, Oba (Interview), Chair of Black Studies Department at San Francisco State University and formerly William Bradley, local Chair of CORE during the demonstrations, 22 April 1993. San Francisco.

struggle. The organizing and activism in San Francisco was designed to meet the economic needs of the community by using pressure tactics to deliver jobs to a community beset by extraordinary rates of joblessness. The Southern-based movement, during the same years, was geared primarily around desegregation and voting rights and therefore different in more than just degree to San Francisco's struggle.

This study will concern itself with identifying the causes leading to the movement in San Francisco, i.e., the real economic status of the African American community relative to other communities in terms of employment and income. It is also the purpose of this study to explain the distinction between the San Francisco situation and other civil rights struggles occurring in the same period. It will ask and try to answer the following questions: What historical forces led to the Southern movement's drive toward desegregation and voting rights and not more immediate demands for employment? Were there unique, or at least different economic circumstances which distinctly characterized the Black San Francisco community from the Southern community? Did the San Francisco movement adequately address the needs of the African American community through its demands, and if so, how?

One of the reasons for this study is to pursue and achieve a coherent, new direction in the study of civil rights by exploring aspects of the struggle which are hopefully fresh and insightful from 1994 hindsight. Civil rights scholarship has heretofore not dealt very well with economic issues within the struggle. By placing a movement for jobs into the spotlight, this study will attempt to forge a new direction, away from the emphasis on lunch counter discrimination or voting rights struggles. It is also hoped that this examination will begin to establish a greater link

between the history of African American struggle in San Francisco and that of the national Black struggle for equality during the Civil Rights Movement.

If this study is to be successful, it will tell a detailed story of an extraordinary time in the history of African Americans. The study, however seeks to shed light not only on the events, but the attitudes and mood of the era as well. Like other monographs on the general subject of civil rights struggles, it will provide lucid and refreshing evidence of a time when people took their destinies in their own hands and created a distinct chapter in progressive history.

Methodology

The methodology underlying this study is part historical structuralism, part narrative and part analysis and criticism.

The method of historical structuralism requires that enduring patterns are properly covered. In terms of this study, some of those patterns will include the economic life of Black San Francisco in relation to the larger city economy in the 1960's and the years preceding and in the incessant call for economic improvement; the motivations which contributed to pressuring companies to create jobs for African Americans; and the larger-scale national movement---both North and South---and its various trends. The events of 1963-64 will hopefully speak for themselves, but will need to be tied to the constant drive on the part of the community to improve itself economically. This drive will be defined in the pattern which different organizations and individuals created as their response to the economic straits which faced them.

The method of the narrative will be used to simply tell the story of the events which took place in San Francisco in the early 1960's. It will rely, therefore, on both interviews and news accounts from the era itself.

The method of analysis and criticism will concern itself with examining why the San Francisco movement differed from the national movement and why it remains ignored in the body of material on the Civil Rights Movement and the history of San Francisco in the 1960's.

Definitions

A note on the terminology is important here for general reference; a more detailed explanation of terms will be provided in the following pages. The terms "African American" and "Black" will be used interchangeably and throughout the text to describe the community being examined. This is done because these are the most frequent designations the community uses to describe itself. Terms such as "Negro" and "colored" will only be used when they exist within the text of another reference. The "Civil Rights Movement" is generally regarded as the period from 1954-1970 when African Americans and their allies employed various means (e.g., legislation, direct action, etc.) to secure voting rights, desegregation, jobs and so on. While the national movement occurred over the period noted, this study is primarily concerned with the events taking place during the years 1963 and 1964.

II. BACKGROUND

The Pre-Civil Rights National Black Experience

The modern Civil Rights Movement did not emerge without a past. Like all social reform or revolutionary struggles, it had a history. The movement of the fifties and sixties had roots in the whole of U.S. history and, in particular, the Black experience of slavery, emancipation,

reconstruction, migration, caste-like segregation* and discrimination. The ever-present factor of racism and African American resistance to oppression has shaped this history. Since no examination of African American freedom movements can be divorced from their historical context and in order to properly understand why the contemporary movement was seen as a logical extension of, what historian Vincent Harding calls "the river of struggle,"⁵ it will be necessary to provide some background information.

In August of 1619, the history of Africans in bondage in North America began with the landing of "twenty negars" in Virginia. Though this date is often considered the beginning of African American slavery, the fact is that the definition of "slave" had not yet been clearly defined. For all intents and purposes, however, Africans taken captive and forced to work toiled under slave-like conditions for the half century before the Virginia Assembly put the stamp on official slavery with the pronouncement of "durante vida" bondage.⁶

The codification of slavery in part characterized the colonial years in North America, as most of the Southern seaboard states depended heavily upon slave labor for the ever increasing cotton, tobacco and molasses export market.⁷ Slavery was later sanctioned in the U.S. Constitution, though not without a fierce debate over representation, which was at heart

⁵ Harding, Vincent. *There is a River: The Black Struggle for Freedom in America*. New York: Vintage Books, 1981. The term "caste-like" refers to the well-defined social tradition established in the South which made African Americans a "racial (as opposed to social) class separated and treated as inferiors."

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 26-27; Bennett, Jr. Lerone. *Before the Mayflower: A History of Black America*. New York: Penguin, 1961, p. 441.

⁷ Takaki, Ronald. *A Different Mirror: A History of Multicultural America*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1993, p. 117.

a debate over the increasingly bifurcated reliance on slave labor between Northern and Southern states.⁸

Southern slavery and the eventual change in labor status of Northern African Americans represented the reality of different developing regions within the same nation. Throughout the history of official slavery, and despite the Sambo mythology, Africans resisted and revolted on occasions too numerous to cite here. The Southern, and often times Northern response, was to put down all rebellions with military force. But the regions had developed in different ways--the North becoming heavily dependent on a manufacturing economy and the South clinging to its tradition of agricultural production, of which slave labor was an essential ingredient. Eventually, the converging economic realities, coupled with continued slave resistance and agitation for the abolition of slavery, led to the Civil War.

The internecine battles which raged for four years were peppered with U.S. political maneuverings designed to win the war. Thus, President Abraham Lincoln signed into law the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863, though strictly as a legal matter, the document freed no slaves.⁹ The conclusion of war marked the beginning of the Reconstruction era in the U.S.. Reconstruction has been construed by many historians to be the period which held the most promise of full emancipation for former slaves.¹⁰ The passage of the Thirteenth, Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments to the Constitution---the first civil rights laws---were designed, in part, to secure the social and political

⁸ Franklin, John Hope and Moss, Jr., Alfred A. *From Slavery to Freedom: A History of Negro Americans*. New York: McGraw Hill Publishing, 1947, 1988, p. 76-77.

⁹ Bell, Derrick. *Race, Racism and American Law*. Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1980, p. 9.

¹⁰ See, for example, DuBois, W.E.B. *Black Reconstruction in America, 1860-1880*. New York: Meridian Books, 1935.

freedom of African Americans by abolishing slavery, and guaranteeing the right to citizenship (for males) and the franchise. However, what many fail to include in their analysis of the emancipatory potential of the Civil War Amendments is the fact that they included no provisions for economic equality under the law.¹¹ Though later provisions were made under various "Radical Reconstruction" initiatives, including the Homestead Act and the movement for "forty acres and a mule," reconstruction was doomed to fail under the weight of Southern reaction and Republican Party betrayal.¹²

It is this point that underscores the importance of a background section which relates to the overall meaning of this examination. Since economic justice was never satisfied on any significant scale for African Americans in the two centuries preceding the Civil Rights Movement, the very real problem of economic inequity (e.g., occupational stratification, unemployment, low-skill levels, etc.) would continue to plague the community into the second half of the twentieth century.

The demise of Reconstruction was followed in the South by decades of caste-like segregation, cruelly sanctioned by the Supreme Court rationale of the "separate, but equal" doctrine in 1896 and by the savage rule of lynch law. In the years between 1881-1910, there were an estimated 3,000 lynchings of Black men and women throughout the South.¹³

The realities of the Black condition on both sides of the Mason-Dixon line were not casually noted by African Americans seeking to use social and political activism to ameliorate racial oppression. Since the days

¹¹ DuBois, *Black Reconstruction*, p. 34.

¹² Takaki, *A Different Mirror*, p. 133.

¹³ Davis, Angela Y. *Women, Race and Class*. New York: Vintage Books, 1981, p. 67.

of Frederick Douglass and before, African Americans had been involved in social protest organizations designed to "uplift the race."¹⁴

At the outset of the twentieth century, which W.E.B. DuBois correctly observed to be one plagued by the "color line," African Americans and their allies kept up the unfinished battles of Reconstruction. In 1909, DuBois and others formed the Niagara Movement, later to become the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). The NAACP was followed by other organizations, such as Marcus Garvey's nationalist Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) and labor-oriented groups like the socialist Negro American Labor Council. The emergence of these and other groups were the result of different forces taking shape in Black America.

The reality of large numbers of lynchings declined after the summers between 1917-1919, but violence directed toward Blacks was no less common. In the South, violence took on the form of continued intimidation, as a whole population was effectively disenfranchised and kept in economic straits by the systems of sharecropping and peonage. In the North, particularly after the World War I "Great Migration" for opportunity (especially in the factories), African Americans were still accorded the status of second-class citizenship. While in many cases Northern cities did not depend on the social custom of segregation, they did depend heavily on housing and occupational segregation (e.g., most labor unions excluded Blacks from membership) and, as a result, the emerging Northern and Midwestern Black centers were characterized by conditions of poverty and racial discrimination. In the years of the Great

¹⁴ DuBois, *Black Reconstruction*, p. 122.

Depression, conditions for African Americans were always one level below that of the general population.¹⁵

The Roosevelt New Deal did help bring the nation out of the Depression, but did little by comparison for the nation's Black population. Only continued pressure from the NAACP, the Citizens League for Fair Play and the National Negro Business League and other organizations allowed for Black participation in many of the "alphabet soup" programs during the pre-World War II years.¹⁶

In fact, the earliest "Don't Buy Where You Can't Work" campaigns in Chicago and New York were some of the earliest direct action strategies designed to address the material conditions of the Black community in Northern Cities. In some cases, the strategy led to success.

On street corners blacks harangued their listeners concerning the injustice of whites refusing to hire black workers....The campaign resulted in hundreds of Negroes obtaining employment in stores in Harlem and with public utilities, such as the telephone, electric and bus companies.¹⁷

While these strategies resulted in the increase in African American employment, particularly during the wartime years when cities and most of the rest of the country enjoyed relative economic prosperity, they had limited success. Of note was the threat by A. Phillip Randolph, then representative for the American Federation of Labor and later of the Negro American Labor Council, to organize a 1941 March on Washington demanding jobs in the war industries and an end to discrimination in the armed forces. Though it did result in jobs and actually pressured Franklin

¹⁵ Bennett, *Before the Mayflower*, p.297-326; Franklin and Moss, *From Slavery to Freedom*, p. 265-304; Aptheker, Herbert (Ed.). *A Documentary History of the Negro People in the United States: Volume 3*. New York: Citadel Press Book, 1973.

¹⁶ Franklin and Moss, *From Slavery to Freedom*, p. 355.

¹⁷ Ibid.

Roosevelt's administration to create the Fair Employment Practices Commission (FEPC), African Americans soon found that the wartime employment gains were to be followed by another sharp decline in both employment and income.¹⁸

The changes occurring in Northern, Midwestern and even Western cities was not mirrored by drastic change throughout the South. After World War II, as in the aftermath of the first World War, African American servicemen returned home to find the continued caste structure of segregation firmly in place. As with the case of returning soldiers three decades earlier, there were more than a few instances of "mysterious lynchings" of Black men still in their uniforms.¹⁹ This bitterly symbolic image was a salient one for a community, both North and South, about to enter the second half of the twentieth century and the Civil Rights Movement.

The Pre-Civil Rights San Francisco Black Experience

It is not widely known that as early as the Gold Rush days in California, there were African Americans thriving in San Francisco. In fact, much of the early Black presence in San Francisco remains largely ignored as an historical fact. While this section cannot serve as a highly detailed and comprehensive account of Black San Francisco's first century, it can provide highlights which hopefully will illuminate the following sections.

The first Africans living in the Americas to enter California arrived with Spanish settlers in the seventeenth century. The first Africans in the

¹⁸ Bennett, *Before the Mayflower*, p.365

¹⁹ Marable, Manning. *Race, Reform and Rebellion: The Second Reconstruction in Black America, 1945-1990*. Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 1991, p. 31.

Bay Area were Afro-Hispanics---those among Mexican colonists and Blacks from the Caribbean and South America.²⁰

After the annexation of California came the matter of a state constitutional convention. Held in Monterey in 1849, the question of whether or not California was to be slave or free was to be decided. Because the issue was so hotly contested and divisive in the rest of the country, California decided that "neither slavery nor involuntary servitude except for the punishment of crimes shall ever be tolerated."²¹ Though slaves were brought to California, it was always done so without the approval of law. The Monterey Constitutional Convention did include vehement debate, however, on the issue of Black migration to the new state. Delegate Morton Matthew McCarver echoed a familiar ring during the convention with the wish that the new legislature would pass laws to "effectively prohibit free persons of color from immigrating to and settling in this State."²²

While the Black population in San Francisco was relatively small at the time of statehood, several prominent and prosperous African Americans helped shape the city. William Leidersdorff, for example, captained the first steamship to enter San Francisco Bay, built and owned the city's first hotel and held several key city appointments, including Treasurer. Activist Mary Ellen Pleasant, often regarded locally as "the

²⁰ Tate, Will D. *The New Black Urban Elites*. San Francisco: R and E Research Associates, 1976, p. 12; Crouchett, Lawrence P., Bunch III, Lonnie G. and Winnacker, Martha Kendall. *Visions Toward Tomorrow: The History of the East Bay Afro-American Community 1852-1977*. Oakland: Northern California Center for Afro-American History and Life, 1989, p. 1.

²¹ France, Edward E. *Some Aspects of the Migration of the Negro to the San Francisco Bay Area Since 1940*. San Francisco: R and E Research Associates, 1974, p. 16.

²² Montesano, Phillip. *Some Aspects of the Free Negro Question in San Francisco, 1849-1870*. San Francisco: R and E Research Associates, 1967, p. 4.

mother of civil rights," was instrumental in securing the freedom of slaves being held illegally by their owners in rural areas of California.²³

Many former slaves made their way to San Francisco and made money in such Black-owned businesses as boardinghouses, laundries, beauty salons, barbershops and newspapers. Many worked in the gold mines during the early years of gold speculation in and around the Bay Area. The majority of African American workers at the time, though, worked as domestics, janitors, truck drivers, bootblackers and other semi-skilled to low-skilled and low-wage occupations.²⁴ A good portion of these early entrepreneurs and workers, who UC Santa Barbara Douglas Daniels calls "pioneer urbanites" in his historical study of San Francisco African Americans, returned or sent money back home to family still in the South and purchased the freedom of family members still held in chains.²⁵

Black labor was not widely supported, however, as both the labor unions and industry were reluctant to break their all-white memberships. Daniels reports that African Americans, with one or two exceptions, couldn't command power anywhere in the city, not as "elected officials, judges, heads of labor unions, captains of industry, or bankers. Nor were many Black pioneers skilled craftsmen or ordinary laborers, as these jobs were monopolized by whites from the 1850's."²⁶

Still, the number of African Americans living in San Francisco remained relatively small. By 1910, there were only 1,642 African Americans in the city, not quite one percent of the overall population. San Francisco's

²³ Larry R. Salomon, "San Francisco's African Americans." *Third Force* 1 (September/October 1993):12.

²⁴ France, *Some Aspects*, p. 20.

²⁵ Daniels, Douglas Henry. *Pioneer Urbanites: A Social and Cultural History of Black San Francisco*. Berkeley, University of California Press, 1990, p. 41.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p.17.

reputation in the matter of race relations was bolstered by two widely circulated statements. On the one hand, as James Weldon Johnson saw fit to remark in 1905, the city was "a civilized center."

I was delighted with San Francisco...With respect to the Negro race, I found it a freer city than New York. I encountered no bar against me in...places of public accomodation and entertainment....I moved about with a sense of confidence and security, and entirely from under the cloud of doubt and apprehension that constantly hangs over an intelligent Negro in every Southern city and a great many cities of the North.....The black population was relatively small, but the colored people that I met lived in good homes and appeared to be prosperous. I talked with some of them about race relations; the consensus of their comment was that San Francisco was the best city in the United States for a Negro.²⁷

Other opinions were not quite so glowing. The prevalence of hostile, white trade union racism in, for example the Typographical Union, led observers of the upcoming 1894 Midwinter Fair to remark about the inherent unfairness of white union domination. Several years later, W.E.B. DuBois wrote in *Crisis*, the NAACP publication, that "on the whole a Negro mechanic is a rare thing" in San Francisco. He reported that the unions have "held the Negro out and down. The opportunity of the San Francisco Negro to earn a living is very difficult."²⁸

The difference in the comments of Johnson and DuBois probably more than anything else reflects the class distinctions which were already apparent in the Black community. Certainly there were a handful of African Americans who because they were "prosperous" felt that San Francisco was "the best city in the United States." But Johnson's keen eyes most likely also witnessed the abuses and discrimination which DuBois alluded to. Johnson's comments also reflected the very general feeling

²⁷ Myrdal, Gunnar. *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy*. New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1944, p. 187.

²⁸ Daniels, *Pioneer Urbanites*, p. 34.

among the city's Blacks that in terms of a comparison between the "civilized" metropolis and the caste-ridden South, San Francisco was not such a bad place to live.

The Great Migration during World War I witnessed a tremendous increase of Black residents in major urban centers in the North and Northeast, but San Francisco's population remained modest in comparison. Because of this fact, perhaps, Blacks in San Francisco were not completely shut out of social and economic opportunities. There was, to be sure, racial discrimination, but most public institutions, including public housing and schools, did not operate on a segregated basis until 1940, when the Black population was still only around 4,000. (see Appendix 1)²⁹

Before 1940, though, the relatively small Black population still made its presence felt. The Bay Area NAACP was born in 1913 and by 1917 had over 1,000 members. In 1915, the local branch joined other branches across the nation in picketing D.W. Griffith's inflammatory and racist film *Birth of a Nation*.³⁰ By 1923, San Francisco members of the protest organization thought that the regional branch was too preoccupied with East Bay (mainly Oakland) issues and created a separate San Francisco branch.³¹

By the 1930's, Bay Area African Americans began to exercise some of their economic clout. Though limited in potential, local members of the NAACP, churches and political organizations picketed businesses that refused to hire Blacks. Using the Urban League slogan "Don't Buy Where You Can't Work," Blacks called for boycotts of such establishments as

²⁹ France, *Some Aspects*, p. 18.

³⁰ Crouchett, et al, *Visions Toward Tomorrow*, p. 32.

³¹ Ibid.

theatres and restaurants that discriminated in their employment practices.³²

Because of their relatively small numbers, as historian Albert Broussard writes, Black San Franciscans could not yet rely much on the support of Black-owned businesses. "Unlike black businessmen in many northern cities, which increased the size of their black business class substantially after the Great Migration, San Francisco's black entrepreneurs did not have the benefit of an expanded black population like Chicago's South Side or New York's Harlem."³³ Broussard concludes that "for many black workers, San Francisco offered less employment opportunity than most northern cities and several other California urban centers, such as Oakland and Los Angeles."³⁴

Citywide support for the Black community was practically nonexistent. Though African Americans increasingly found support from Harry Bridges and the International Longshoremen and Warehousemen's Union (ILWU) and from New Deal programs--most notably the Works Progress Administration and National Youth Administration--the general consensus in the "liberal" city was one of benign neglect. Chester Rowell, the editor at the *San Francisco Chronicle* for the better part of the 1930's showed little sympathy for a community beset by institutional discrimination and much higher than average unemployment. "If he [the Negro] does not always get these rights, that is a part of the slow adjustment of two racially contrasted peoples to a relatively new

³² Ibid, p. 41.

³³ Broussard, Albert S. *Black San Francisco: The Struggle for Racial Equality in the West, 1900-1954*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1993, p. 57.

³⁴ Ibid.

situation.....there is nothing to do about the problem but wait for time to cure it, as it has long since done with many of the older groups."³⁵

But time was slow in coming. As the Depression deepened in the industrial and manufacturing sectors where Blacks were disproportionately engaged, the community's unemployment rate increased significantly. The official data puts the figure at around 15 percent, but those figures often failed to include the majority of Black workers looking for work as unskilled laborers, domestics and personal servants.³⁶

Despite some relief from New Deal programs, Blacks were systematically being shut out of some of the larger projects, including the construction of both the Golden Gate Bridge and the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge.³⁷

The bombing of Pearl Harbor in December of 1941 propelled the nation into World War II. The shift in the national economy supported various war industries. In San Francisco and the Bay Area, shipbuilding was one major thrust of this new economic engine.

Of course, the major impetus to Black population growth during the period was the beginning of the war and the key role San Francisco played in it. African Americans came--or were recruited to come-- to the Bay Area to work in the war industries. As the national economy shifted to meet the demands of war, the surplus of jobs in the shipbuilding industry opened up opportunities for many who had been previously considered untrainable and unemployable. According to Douglas Daniels,

³⁵ Ibid., p. 111.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 115.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 127.

the demand for labor in California was a beacon call to African Americans in the South.

Most of the newcomers of World War II migrated from the western regions of the South--Texas, Louisiana and Arkansas. Henry Kaiser, the industrialist who built ships for the war, 'brought Blacks here from all over the South--every state--and he brought them in train loads. He brought one to three train loads every day for six months.'³⁸

The San Francisco Bay Area, an embarkation point for the U.S. military heading for the Pacific Theatre, became a center for shipbuilding. Henry J. Kaiser built shipyards in Richmond, Oakland, Vallejo and Sausalito; Bechtel established Marinship in Sausalito and the U.S. government bought the Bethlehem Shipbuilding Company at Hunters Point in San Francisco. In the 1940's alone, the African American population jumped over 600 percent until there were well over 40,000 by the end of the decade. (see Appendix 2)³⁹

While many African Americans in San Francisco prospered economically during the war, they were nonetheless still subject to discrimination. For instance, most labor unions refused union votes to Blacks despite the fact that they paid dues. Blacks levied continued allegations at business, demonstrating "the depth and pervasiveness of employment discrimination" against African American arrivals. For example, nearly half of the 100 leading San Francisco industries did not employ a single African American in 1944.⁴⁰

Still, before the end of the war, there were over 300,000 new workers in Bay Area shipyards, a considerable number among them Black. Many

³⁸ Daniels, *Pionner Urbanites*, p. 165.

³⁹ France, *Some Aspects*, p. 21.

⁴⁰ Broussard, *Black San Francisco*, p.150.

African Americans who migrated for jobs early in the war later sent for family and friends still in the South.

After the war, African Americans faced much greater obstacles in both employment and housing. Once the great demand for shipbuilding subsided and as many whites returning from military service settled in San Francisco, competition for jobs became intense. When the shipyards and other waterfront jobs closed and African Americans were laid off---the rate of unemployment in the Black community rose to over 30 percent. The era of prosperity came to a grinding halt. "Black workers," writes Broussard, "had a difficult time making the transition from defense employment to permanent employment in the private sector, and black women continued to face even greater obstacles because of their gender."⁴¹

Two factors led to the high Black unemployment rate: on the one hand, African American workers had been less diversified in their employment in World War II than had white workers and, as a consequence, were not "as qualified" as their white counterparts. Also, African Americans found that employment discrimination became the rule and thousands found themselves forced into low-wage employment. Educated Blacks were relegated to work as domestics, postal carriers, railroad porters and street sweepers.⁴²

The tremendous migration of Black war workers had created an equally tremendous demand for housing. Considered "temporaries," African Americans in San Francisco were placed in large, government subsidized housing tracts in Hunter's Point and into the Fillmore District, an area that had been inhabited by Japanese and Japanese American

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 205.

⁴² Ibid., p. 210.

citizens recently forced into government concentration camps during the war.

Housing patterns became distinctly racially segregated. As Blacks moved into the the Western Addition, whites left for the Sunset, Richmond, and other districts. Hunters Point, which had been nearly all white in 1940, became 90 percent Black by 1970.

After the war, as the Black population continued to grow, housing discrimination became the city norm. Restrictive covenants prohibited owners from selling or renting property to Blacks and many more were directed into dilapidated housing in substandard and forgotten areas of San Francisco. The local Black newspapers consistently protested unequal conditions. In one survey, the *San Francisco Reporter* concluded that in the Fillmore District, "domestic fascist practices" were creating conditions where Black residents were "crowded 9, 10, 15 to a single room with only one window."⁴³

Later, white San Francisco's housing restrictions on Black San Franciscans led to some embarrassing press when it was discovered that baseball star Willie Mays had been denied housing in a white, middle class section of the city.⁴⁴

The extent of San Francisco's popular image of "tolerance" and "liberalism" began to be earnestly questioned, even by members of mainstream news organizations. The *Christian Science Monitor* devoted an entire front-page story to race relations in San Francisco and concluded that "there are many flaws in San Francisco's once-vaunted cosmopolitanism."⁴⁵

⁴³ Ibid., p. 173.

⁴⁴ France, *Some Aspects*, p. 42.

⁴⁵ Broussard, *Black San Francisco*, p. 167.

Even Herb Caen, the popular *Chronicle* columnist and frequent San Francisco booster had to admit that

The Negro 'problem' is very much with the city, too. The Negro population has grown tenfold since World War II, but San Francisco, for all its vaunted tolerance, has moved slowly to meet the challenge that this presents. The Negro, now representing one-tenth of the city's population, is largely restricted to a single section of substandard old housing---centering on and radiating from Fillmore Street---and the ills implicit in such a situation are clearly to be seen: de facto segregation in the schools, inequitable job opportunities, crime out of proportion to the population, mass picketing and demonstrations.⁴⁶

Caen was correct in his analysis. Indeed other community members were echoing his reflections. A Japanese Protestant minister said that the Japanese American community should be mindful of one very salient fact---that the racism directed against that community since relocation has been redirected to a large degree. "I suspect, " he said, "that we have been bailed out by the Negroes. They moved in and frightened the whites, who then found that we Japanese weren't so bad after all. They could stop hating us and start hating the Negroes."⁴⁷

Racism and segregation were hitting the Black community hard, but it didn't destroy it. Still, while the creation of Black neighborhoods and communities resulted in thriving social institutions (churches, nightclubs, restaurants and cabarets), economically and politically, Black San Franciscans were being shut out as the dawning of the Southern and, later, San Francisco Civil Rights Movement appeared on the horizon.

III. COMPARATIVE U.S. BLACK POLITICAL ECONOMY

National/Southern Black Political Economy

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 239.

⁴⁷ Record, Wilson. *Minority Groups and Intergroup Relations in the San Francisco Bay Area*. Berkeley: Institute of Governmental Studies, 1963, p. 13.

In approaching the issue of a national political economy in the years preceding and covering the early part of the Civil Rights Movement, important distinctions must be made. Regional economies have existed in the U.S. since the very inception of the republic and those regional distinctions continued throughout the period covered here. Indeed, despite increased urbanization throughout the South, there still remains differences in respective political economies.

As the dawning of the Civil Rights Movement appeared, issues became more clearly defined, and it is the point here to show a correlation between region and importance of civil rights strategies. The fact that the early part of the movement in the South concentrated on issues of overt segregation and blatant violations of voting rights does not mean that the region's African Americans did not face dire economic straits. Indeed, the per capita earnings of African Americans in the South was typically less than those of Northern and Western counterparts. The fact is, however, that the issues of caste and segregation had to first be abolished if inroads were to be made in the economic sphere.

There was no uniform political economy in the South in the 1950's and 1960's. Labor markets did transcend traditional bounds of region, but for most African Americans living in the South, these diverse labor markets were often concentrated in urban areas like Birmingham and New Orleans, places where Black employment existed, but not on any equal scale. It should be noted again that African Americans migrated en masse out of the region in search of employment opportunities elsewhere, notably in the Northeast, Midwest and West Coast.

But the era's claim that "racial discrimination is greater and more entrenched in the South than in the North and West, where fair

employment practices policy have a longer history" is specious at best.⁴⁸ To be sure, racial discrimination has a long sordid economic history in the South, but its degree is not necessarily worse than in other parts of the country, rather, perhaps, only different. The extent to which racism plagued the sharecropping system, for example, did not necessarily eclipse the level of discrimination in hostile white-union controlled northern industry.

The decade of the 1950's witnessed another transformation of the political economy of African Americans. In the decade alone, the Black civilian labor force increased by nearly a million workers and 83 percent of all Black males and 48 percent of all Black females over the age of 16 were actively looking for employment. Between 1940 and 1960, the percentage of African Americans working as farm laborers decreased from 32 percent to less than 10 percent. A full third of Blacks were being classified as blue-collar workers.⁴⁹

This shift did not mean, however, that Black farm labor was no longer a strong force. What was being reflected, though, was the increasing migration of African Americans to the cities, where incomes were generally higher. Despite this fact, membership and apprenticeship in most unions were not readily available to Black workers and so, even though Blacks could find some work, their income levels were a fraction of what white workers earned.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Henderson, Vivian. "Regions, Race and Jobs," as quoted in Ross and Hill (Ed.). *Employment, Race and Poverty*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1967, p. 77.

⁴⁹ Marable, *Race, Reform and Rebellion*, p. 53.

⁵⁰ Marable, *Race, Reform and Rebellion*, p. 54.

By the 1960's, over half of all African Americans had migrated to the cities or to the peripheries of large metropolitan centers.⁵¹ Those African Americans remaining in the Southern states, like their counterparts in the North, made only a small fraction of what whites made. The Black per capita income in most Southern states was just over \$1,000 in the 1960's---about 45 percent of what whites made; in Mississippi, Blacks earned just thirty-five cents to the white dollar.⁵²

As noted, the diversification of the Southern economy in the 1950's and 1960's has meant that African Americans have not only migrated to other parts of the country looking for work, but in several cases have migrated to another part of their native state. Manufacturing employment, that is, factory jobs, increased substantially in the South during the 1950's and 1960's, particularly in such industries as lumber, paper and bituminous coal production.⁵³

While Southern economic diversification meant increased employment for African Americans, migration to cities outside of the region continued throughout the 1950's and into the 1960's. Still, the promises of employment anywhere too often went unrealized.

The Negro worker who is pushed out of Southern agriculture, who is employed in a low-skilled occupation, or who is denied opportunity to compete for higher-skilled jobs had virtually no place to go under conditions of present-day manpower demands, technological change, and structural shifts in industrial employment.⁵⁴

⁵¹ Perlo, Victor. *Economics of Racism U.S.A.: Roots of Black Inequality*. New York: International Publishers, 1975, p.24-25.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 35.

⁵³ Ross and Hill, *Employment Race and Poverty*, p. 79-80, 102; For specifics on African American participation in these industries, see Northrup and Rowan. *Negro Employment in Southern Industry: A Study of Racial Policies in Five Industries*, New York: Kraus Reprint and University of Pennsylvania, 1970.

⁵⁴ Ross and Hill, *Employment, Race and Poverty*, p. 92.

Change in the level of Black employment in the South did not begin to come to fruition until federal mandates made Southern industries, especially textile industries, accountable. This change really only began to occur after civil rights organizations like the NAACP in Georgia and later the Urban League and SCLC began exerting pressure in the mid-to-late 1960's. Until the latter half of the decade, in fact, most civil rights struggles occurred around issues of the franchise and the imposition of segregation. Until such time as this protest trend began to emerge, the majority of African Americans in the South were subject to superexploitation as sharecroppers, farm laborers, woodcutters and service workers (e.g., domestics and chauffeurs).⁵⁵

In the North, the Black political economy was subject to the ebb and flow of the larger national economy, particularly war industries, the principle reason for mass migration during both World Wars. African Americans were being shut out, with a few notable exceptions, of opportunities from both major trade unions and industry itself. As institutional discrimination flowered, Manning Marable writes, "blacks began to demand the inclusion of special economic reforms within the overall goals of the civil rights struggle. It was no victory for black men to be allowed to sit in a formerly white-only theatre or to rent hotel accomodation which had been segregated, when they had no jobs."⁵⁶

National/Southern Civil Rights Movement

The Civil Rights struggles in the U.S. have been extremely well researched and documented. It will be the purpose here only to review and summarize some of the major thrusts and tendencies of the national

⁵⁵ Ibid, p. 195; Northrup and Rowan, *Negro Employment in Southern Industry*, p. 136; Perlo, *Economics of Racism*, p. 57.

⁵⁶ Marable, *Race, Reform and Rebellion*, p. 54.

movement, both South and North. In the spirit of the focus of this examination, particular emphasis will also be given to employment struggles (in places other than San Francisco), though, unfortunately, most reviews of the era neglect this aspect.

The generally mentioned starting point to the modern movement is the 1954 Supreme Court decision in *Brown v. Board of Education, Topeka, Kansas* which declared unconstitutional the "separate, but equal" doctrine established in *Plessy v. Ferguson* in 1896. In 1955, *Brown II* was handed down, stating that implementation of desegregation in public schools should be handled with "all deliberate speed."⁵⁷

That same year, on December 1, Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat to a white patron on a Montgomery, Alabama bus, touching off the year-long Montgomery Bus Boycott and setting the wheels of the Black Freedom Struggle turning in rapid motion.

In 1957, President Eisenhower was forced to send federal troops to Little Rock, Arkansas to enforce the desegregation of Central High School. That same month, the first Civil Rights Bill since Reconstruction was passed. The next few years witnessed a continuation of the desegregation struggle in the South, coupled with the ascendancy of Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC).

In February, 1960, the movement took a new turn when four students were arrested for sitting-in at a segregated lunch counter in Greensboro, North Carolina. That action touched off similar protests and led to the creation of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC).

During the next two years, the sit-in movement in the South

⁵⁷ Bennett, Jr., *Before the Mayflower*, p. 549.

escalated. During the same period, the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) led the "Freedom Rides" campaign to desegregate interstate travel. Events grew increasingly violent as the Southern white community held steadfast with "Massive Resistance."⁵⁸

National attention was again focused on the movement when, in the summer of 1963, SCLC and other grassroots organizations stood up to the Birmingham "power structure" in what was dubbed "Operation Confrontation." Later that summer, in what some have termed the zenith of the freedom struggle, over a quarter of a million people assembled in Washington, D.C. for The March on Washington. It is interesting to note that one of the main slogans for The March was "Jobs and Freedom," yet the scope of the speeches, with the possible exception of those given by A. Phillip Randolph and the Negro American Labor Council, centered on desegregation and undefined and, at times vague, notions of "freedom and equality." More militant critics of the "gradualism" seemingly inherent in the movement of the time, blasted the March's lack of fire. Malcolm X, in particular, termed the historic assembly, "the Farce on Washington" for its suppression of grassroots interests.⁵⁹

As the "Freedom Summer" of 1964, a summer in Mississippi devoted to voter registration in the Deep South, captured headlines, an equally simmering situation was taking hold in many of the nation's large urban centers. The Northern-dwelling, urban African American faced a situation different in scope than that which immediately confronted Blacks in the South. While the movement had justifiably focused on abolishing Jim Crow and pursuing voting rights, the need for employment in many

⁵⁸ Williams, Juan. *Eyes on the Prize: America's Civil Rights Years, 1954-1965*. New York: Penguin Books and Blackside Production, 1987, p. 33-35.

⁵⁹ Marable, Race, *Reform and Rebellion*, p. 56-59.

urban cities like New York, Newark, Chicago, Rochester, Philadelphia and San Francisco was an even more immediate task to be faced.

Urban rebellions in many of those cities changed the complexity of the movement and, after the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, the nation's attention on the call for "Black Power" and growing militancy, particularly among Black youth, became more intense.

While this study is devoted primarily to examining events of 1963 and 1964 on both the national scene and in San Francisco, it is at least important to conclude here that the Civil Rights Movement took an increasingly different turn in the final years of the 1960's. The emergence of a more militant wing of SNCC, the Black Panther Party for Self Defense and other grassroots organizations along with the traditional, moderate organizations gave witness to increased discontent with the pace of reform. These feelings were most powerfully expressed in the form of massive urban rebellions following the assassination of King.

It is important to note here that urban rebellions were not the only dynamic of struggle in the decade. In fact, there were several places where organizations took the issue of jobs and economics head-on as distinct civil rights campaigns.

Taking off on the approach of the "Don't Buy Where You Can't Work" campaigns of a generation earlier, activists mainly in the Northern cities began to demand equal employment clauses and immediate hirings of African Americans. The first private establishments to be targeted were retail businesses (as the following section on San Francisco will demonstrate), but public companies, like gas and phone utility companies

were also picketed in places like Boston and New York City.⁶⁰

The movement in this country for civil rights had broadened itself from a struggle strictly devoted to integrating public facilities and abolishing restrictions on the franchise. But by the early sixties, employment protest strategies had not quite matured. With the exception of a few places outside of the South, like San Francisco, the economic problems facing African Americans were being put on hold in order to channel all energies into first defeating Jim Crow and the barrier which it imposed on any progressive change.

To put it another way, in most other parts of the country where civil rights issues were becoming increasingly explosive, social segregation had first to be abolished before economic progress could be envisioned on a grand scale. In San Francisco, though social and political segregation existed, they didn't factor on as crucial a level as in the South. Therefore, social and political Jim Crow wasn't as great a barrier to overall advancement in San Francisco. The largest and most visible barrier was not a "whites only" sign at a soda fountain; it was the de facto practice of "whites only" in the structures of the economy and makeup of the local workforce.

San Francisco's Black Political Economy

"Job discrimination based on color is, in my opinion, more vicious in the city of San Francisco than it is in other parts of the South," wrote Thomas Fleming, managing editor of San Francisco's largest Black newspaper, the *Sun-Reporter*.⁶¹

⁶⁰ Ross and Hill, *Employment, Race and Poverty*, p. 196-210.

⁶¹ Broussard, *Black San Francisco*, p. 221.

Fleming's observations were made in 1951. Indeed, in the decade preceding the Civil Rights Movement in San Francisco, African American community leaders were increasingly voicing the community's discontent with the status quo.

Reverend Hamilton T. Boswell, a "respected member of the community" and often a liaison between City Hall and the Black community, made a sharp indictment of San Francisco racism. Boswell regarded the institutional impediments to justice and equality as a "subtle contrivance...you are up to your neck before you become aware of its enclosure." Similarly noting San Francisco's highly touted liberal race relations image, which was little more than a "facade," Northern California NAACP President Joseph Kennedy remarked that "....as a matter of fact, we all tend to make the South the scapegoat for the nation's sins. People who live in segregated glass houses shouldn't throw stones [and] are in no position to jeer too loudly at the undemocratic practices in the South."⁶²

Were these community members simply attempting to posture or give their organizations purpose by claiming such difficult conditions? Or, more likely, as this section will attempt to demonstrate, were their criticisms on target?

To reiterate, the economic condition of San Francisco's African American community was looking bleak in the aftermath years following the end of World War II. Actually, signs that the opportunities afforded the community would come to an end began to appear in mid-1944 when the first shipyard layoffs occurred. As was usually the case in the "last hired, first fired" unwritten policy of both industry and unions, the

⁶² Ibid.

shipyard closings had a serious impact on thousands of recent Bay Area arrivals who had come to work in the war industry. But, as was also usually the case in the region (and the country as well) the closings had a disproportionately negative job effect on Bay Area African Americans. As a result, while the country was in the midst of wartime euphoria and slogans touting the preservation of freedom and democracy could be heard everywhere, literally thousands of San Francisco's African Americans began finding themselves out of work.⁶³

African Americans did not find much solace with the unions either. With few exceptions, notably the progressive ILWU, most local trade unions were systematically keeping Black San Franciscans out in the post-World War II downsizing cold (see Appendix 3).⁶⁴

It should be noted that private companies, like the Bethlehem Shipping company, managed the shipyards, but the ownership belonged to the federal government. It is instructive to widen the scope of examination to include not only the unions and private industry but local, state and national government as well. Black San Francisco was not at all pleased with the pace of federal action on their behalf. In fact, the federal government was guilty of many of the same kind of discriminatory hiring practices as was private industry; in some cases it was worse.⁶⁵

By 1950, even the city's conservative dispenser of information, the *San Francisco Chronicle*, was talking of "Jim Crow barriers" in jobs, housing and even public accommodations. Despite the continuing distance the paper would try to create between "our cosmopolis" and the "Jim Crow-accented South," it still could not help reporting a general Black

⁶³ Croutchett, *Visions Toward Tomorrow*, p. 53.

⁶⁴ France, *Some Aspects*, p. 73.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 75.

unemployment rate at nearly forty percent, five times that of whites living and working in the city. "Negroes are frequently refused employment [even] in jobs which with their race has been identified since slave days," reported the *Chronicle*.⁶⁶

The issue of having a sizeable percentage of the 50,000 African Americans in the city out of work disturbed the public relations-conscious city amidst the spectre of white supremacy in the South, which was becoming increasingly combative as evidenced by daily news reports from Montgomery and Little Rock and the Tallahatchie River, where Emmitt Till's body was found. San Francisco elites went out of their way to downplay the fact that its Black citizens were suffering the worst of times. Increasingly, African American organizations began to recognize the potential in having the "city fathers" put their "money where their mouth is."⁶⁷ Local Black leaders organized the vote in the Fillmore District, Hunter's Point and South of Market as one means of expressing to the local government that Blacks could vote and when they did, they would remember who had been energetic in sponsoring policy designed to ameliorate some of the barriers to prosperity.

By 1954, black leaders declared that they had made a number of significant political changes....In the fifties white politicians began courting the black vote and political appointments were granted more frequently. Black leadership increasingly advocated the ballot...Despite political achievements (the number of Black voters had increased tenfold since 1940), no black could be elected to city wide office.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ Hemp, Dick. Jim Crow--"Race Barrier in Our City." *The San Francisco Chronicle*, 5 November 1950.

⁶⁷ Warshaw, Steven and Kusserow, H.W. "To Be Black and Live in San Francisco." *The San Francisco News*, 25 June 1956.

⁶⁸ Broussard, *Black San Francisco*, p. 238.

In fact, Black community leadership soon found itself in the position with enough political leadership to pressure the city to follow through on one of the most hotly contested issues, one that had been highly sought after by the community since the end of the war. Year after year, a Fair Employment Practice Commission (designed after the federal Executive Order a century earlier) was placed on the San Francisco ballot and every year pressure from local corporate lobbies, including the powerful San Francisco Employers Council and statewide organizations like the Los Angeles Merchants and Manufacturers, the Associated Farmers, the California Retailers Association and the California Restaurant Owners Association influenced rejection of the initiative.⁶⁹

The Employers Council in the city did not want to "be pressured into hiring" it didn't feel was "qualified." The statewide lobbyists feared that San Francisco would eventually follow the federal government and states like New York and pass an FEPC, thereby creating a ripple effect throughout the state. Nevertheless, San Francisco elites, likely noting the considerable Black voting bloc but publicly endorsing the commission in terms of principles of egalitarianism, were pressured into backing the measure in 1958 and it subsequently passed. The following year, much to the consternation of statewide elites, the California FEPC passed.

Still, as with the case of the federal commission, employment discrimination did not fall off immediately or substantially. Some critics wondered aloud if the FEPC was instituted as a pacifier, another bureaucratic institution doing more to create the illusion of equality than anything else. As *Black San Francisco* author Albert Broussard writes, for

⁶⁹ Hemp, "Jim Crow--Race Barrier."

African Americans living in the city, "economic opportunity lagged behind that of whites despite the creation" of the commission.⁷⁰

More than ever, the issue of Black underemployment in San Francisco was making headlines. White reaction, both on an institutional level and a personal one, was at times hostile. Attitudes like the one expressed by an Employment Service official---"I just hope that the Negroes will go back to Texas and take the whole damned race problem with them"---were likely becoming more common as Black demands for employment continued into the late 1950's.⁷¹

Several studies correctly observed that despite any fair employment practice laws, long term unemployment among unskilled and semiskilled workers would continue to rise as the manufacturing base gave way to mechanization. Among the city's African Americans disproportionately in the "unskilled" and "semiskilled" categories, the future job outlook was grim.⁷²

Nevertheless, employment discrimination in industries where Black San Franciscans were "qualified" continued unabated. And despite the new "fair employment practices" the city was supposedly enforcing, economic deprivation in Black San Francisco was at an all-time high at the end of the decade.

By the close of the decade, the influential Council for Civic Unity (CCU) caused a stir in the city with the release of their comprehensive review of employment discrimination. Reporting a "Civil Rights Inventory," the Council found that: 1) Employment in the private sector is "widely restricted" according to race and that "these findings are

⁷⁰ Broussard, *Black San Francisco*, p. 241.

⁷¹ Record, *Minority Groups*, p. 3.

⁷² Record, *Minority Groups*, p. 19.

experienced most acutely by Negro members of the labor force," 2) Private employers, despite the barriers imposed by trade unions and employment bureaus, "have the ultimate control over hiring, upgrading and termination" and therefore are ultimately responsible for delivering on the promises of fair employment, and 3) These employers and union officials express, "when asked," a general expectation of employment integration of "minority groups" in the local labor force.⁷³

It was clear from the 350-page report that private industry in San Francisco was not living up to their professed "expectation" of employment integration. On the contrary, what the *Inventory* found was widespread discrimination in several key service industries, notably in banks, grocery stores, restaurant chains and department stores (see Appendix 4).

CCU's observations were "considered essential because some employers would neither provide estimates as to minority employment nor make an internal check among their personnel." Without naming the specific branch, though the next section will likely provide evidence that the branch in question was the Bank of America, the *Inventory* reported on its observations of the over one-third of the branches surveyed. Its conclusions pointed to the disturbing fact that out of the branches spread out in the various districts of the city, "in only one were any Negroes observed; that was in the Fillmore District, in the area of heaviest Negro concentration." Observed were four Black workers, one male teller and three female clerk-typists.⁷⁴

⁷³ Babow, Irving and Howden, Edward. *A Civil Rights Inventory of San Francisco, Part 1: Employment*. San Francisco: Council for Civic Unity of San Francisco, 1958, p. 303-329.

⁷⁴ Babow and Howden, *A Civil Rights Inventory*, p. 171.

Out of 315 total employees observed, 288 were white (over 90 percent), 23 were Asian American (about 7 percent) and only four were Black (approximately one percent). Additionally, the *Inventory* reported observing a heavy concentration of African American "and other races" as customers. The study also reported on observing three other downtown banks and seeing no people of color working in any capacity.⁷⁵

The study's observations of ten stores of a particular grocery chain (again not mentioned by name, but likely to have been the locations of the Lucky Stores grocery chain), the same type of conclusions were made. "Only two stores had nonwhite workers, and these were in the Fillmore District," the report stated. All told, of the ten stores checked, there were 87 employees observed, 83 of them being white, with only three African Americans and one Asian American.⁷⁶

The study next looked at three different local restaurant chains of 20 restaurants total. In total, there were no people of color observed as cooks, food-servers or managers. "No nonwhite workers were seen in any job involving public contact, and they were observed only in unskilled jobs as dishwashers, kitchen help or cleanup," reported the study. "In some of the restaurants, no Negro or Oriental workers were seen even in these menial jobs." Out of 242 total workers observed, only 17 were African Americans, and most held the lowest paying positions.⁷⁷

Fifteen San Francisco department stores and specialty stores--"all large retail establishments"--revealed that nearly three out of four had no

⁷⁵ Ibid, p. 171-172.

⁷⁶ Ibid, p. 173.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

Black sales personnel at all. Ten stores had no Asian American sales persons.⁷⁸

Though these businesses only represent a portion of the overall economic climate in the city, they are clearly representative of a general tendency. Following the observations, the study could do little more than conclude widespread and institutional inequities in San Francisco's private industry. It should be noted that the city, perhaps one of the largest tourist meccas on the West Coast, relies heavily on a solid service-sector economy in order to accomodate travelers. Thus, hotels and restaurants are key to the city's economy, as are, of course, banks, supermarkets and other typically large service outlets.

Despite the creation and institution of both the local and statewide FEPC's, tremendous employment discrimination persisted. Though "most of the employers professed--through their authorized executive spokesmen--a nondiscriminatory or merit employment policy," the fact remained that the expression of good faith meant very little to communities of color, particularly the African American community, reeling from heavy levels of unemployment. Perhaps the fact that the employers could now use FEPC-type language to purposefully appear vague so as to lack initiative in affirmative hiring, meant that the community would have to turn to other agencies or methods to secure their fair share.⁷⁹

The methods of employer justification for the status quo, however, would run the gamut. The most frequent response from local firms (and

⁷⁸ Ibid. It should be noted that the *Inventory* was designed to look at "all nonwhite" aspects of the overall community and, in fact, included Latinos, but because of "the difficulty in identifying" them, Latinos were not counted in the observations of the employment section.

⁷⁹ Ibid, p. 309.

unions) was that San Francisco's African Americans "lacked the sufficient amount of education" necessary to qualify for higher-level positions. The fact of the matter is, however, that one did not need a college degree to serve hamburgers, take reservations, update a bank account and the like. In fact, in study after study in the mid-late 1950's, the facts pointed to African Americans earning less--in some cases far less--than their white counterparts, even when both were performing the same task with the same amount of educational experience.⁸⁰

The CCU study concluded, as most studies of the type do, with recommendations that private industry take the initiative and live up to the various fair employment standards recently set. Again, however, for the city's Black community, thirty percent (and in some neighborhoods even higher) unemployment rates were enough proof that jobs were needed immediately. Relying on private industry, which was accountable only to different levels of government, to decide what was equitable and deliver jobs could take a long time. Increasingly, as the Civil Rights Movement and its spirit canvassed the South and spread to other regions, other measures and considerations were beginning to take shape. The destiny of the African American community did not belong in the hands of the FEPC or local businessmen; the burgeoning Black Freedom Struggle was demonstrating that the destiny belonged to the people who truly had a stake in it.

IV. THE SAN FRANCISCO CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT

Introduction

⁸⁰ Ibid, p. 325. The authors of the *Inventory* cite several studies, including the often-noted Columbia University study conducted by the National Manpower Council's Eli Ginzberg.

Despite a rich history of community and community struggle, the presence of African Americans in San Francisco seems to have been omitted from the major histories of both Black America and San Francisco. When the subject of San Francisco in the decade of the 1960's enters the mainstream public discourse, images are invariably presented which showcase white hipsters who have dropped out of the system in search of a new hallucinogenic plateau. The heavily packaged picture of San Francisco as a white city, therefore, has even included aspects which are not necessarily "cosmopolitan" but have nonetheless emerged throughout the generation following as "purely San Franciscan." That white counterculturalists have had a stronger impact on the history of the city's decade, though, has likely had more to do with who is telling the story than with the actual events.

In San Francisco, the 1960's were ushered in with political vengeance. The year itself has been pointed to as the beginning of a new generation of activism, though usually the discourse of this type centers on the activities of the "New Left" or the "White Left." Still, the Black Freedom Struggle was given a decided shot in the arm in Greensboro on the first day of the second month of 1960 when Black college students were arrested for sitting in at a lunch counter. As the Southern aspect of the movement continued to develop, events in San Francisco would make their way onto the headlines of newspapers across the country. In fact, the San Francisco Civil Rights Movement was beginning to take serious shape.

The local struggle did not develop out of one event, just as Rosa Parks was not the only force calling for change in Montgomery. As evidenced in previous sections here, the conditions in Black San Francisco

had more to do with potential activism than any single event or figure. Still, the discontent with the defining conditions needed articulation and organization if those conditions were to be challenged. The climate of the year and of the decade helped make that challenge possible. More than anything else, though, it was determined grassroots organizing and action from Black San Franciscans and their allies which served to make the San Francisco Civil Rights Movement what it was.

Beginnings

In the spring of 1960, the city of San Francisco learned that it would play the role of host to hearings of the House on Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC). For several years, Senator Joseph McCarthy and HUAC had been holding highly publicized hearings on the nature and extent of Communist Party infiltration at all levels of U.S. society. The level of hysteria created by HUAC had subsided to some degree by the time it made its return to San Francisco in 1960, but it remained a powerful and influential force of political intimidation.

The hearings were to be held in San Francisco's venerable City Hall building. Much to the surprise and dismay of the Committee and local media, HUAC's dealings were met with an organized response. On the first day of the hearings, a number of mostly white college students from San Francisco State College and the University of California at Berkeley attempted to "see for themselves what was going on" inside the hearing room.⁸¹ When a large group of students were denied entrance, they began shouting, "Let us in!" and "Open the doors!" Inside the chambers, the chants were taken up until police cleared the hall of students.⁸²

⁸¹ Barlow, William and Shapiro, Peter. *An End to Silence: The San Francisco State College Student Movement in the '60's*. New York: Pegasus, 1971, p. 34.

⁸² *Ibid*, p. 35.

Because of the press attention and student organization, an even larger crowd gathered for the hearings the following day. Again, when students were refused entry into the chambers, singing and chanting began. As the spontaneous demonstration grew in size and volume, San Francisco police were ordered to open up high-pressure fire hoses on the protesters. The spectacle of well-dressed, white middle class students being washed down the stairs of the opulent lobby of City Hall as they sang "We Shall Overcome" was played on the evening news around the country. "For thirty minutes," wrote one analysis of the events, "the students battled the police in a display of violent civil disorder that until that day most Americans would have scarcely believed possible. One expected this sort of thing to happen in Manila or Mexico City, not San Francisco."⁸³

What soon became known as "the City Hall riots" had a tremendous impact. FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover called the demonstrations "the most successful Communist coup in twenty-five years," and said that though "many Americans point to the strength of our nation and say, 'It can't happen here,' the Communist success in San Francisco in May 1960 proves it can."⁸⁴

But the events in the spring of 1960 had another impact. The national news media spoke of "an explosive new generation" of young activists "nobody knew was there."⁸⁵ The fact of the matter was clear, white middle students were beginning to make their presence felt in the arena of social activism. What is undeniable, but too often lost in the story, is the fact that these students were taking off on the heels of the

⁸³ Cagin, Seth and Dray, Philip. *We are not Afraid: The Story of Goodman, Schwerner and Chaney and the Civil Rights Campaign for Mississippi*. New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1988, p. 98.

⁸⁴ Barlow and Shapiro, *An End to Silence*, p. 35; Cagin and Dray, *We are not Afraid*, p. 99.

⁸⁵ Barlow and Shapiro, *An End to Silence*, p. 35.

emerging Civil Rights Movement and borrowing from both its moral appeal and direct action strategies. These same activists would later find themselves engaged in local civil rights struggles.

It must be properly understood once again, however, that San Francisco activism was not confined during these years to privileged whites. For decades, local protest organizations like the NAACP had been demanding changes and using direct action threats and, sometimes, action to further those demands. The conditions in Black San Francisco in 1960 were still bleak. The new San Francisco Negro American Labor Council (SFNALC), a local branch of A. Phillip Randolph's organization, made it clear what the Black community was in need of. "Automation and the recession have hit the Negro community very hard," read the organizational statement on the 1960 presidential election, and the U.S. government and private industry must "begin to address the serious economic issues" the African American community faced on a daily basis. Speaking of the South, but implicitly condemning the city of San Francisco, the SFNALC demanded that the "new Frontier" focus should make sure unemployment ceased to exist and "END THIS EVIL NOW!"⁸⁶

In 1960, another organization was founded in order to meet the increasing imperative for material improvement. Though as a national organization, the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) had roots dating back to 1942, the San Francisco branch did not enter existence until 1960, thanks to the efforts of community activist Ella Hill Hutch and Bob Slattery.⁸⁷

⁸⁶ San Francisco Negro American Labor Council. "Statement on the 1960 Election." 3 November 1960.

⁸⁷ Oba T'Shaka. Black Studies 320 class lecture notes, 5 May 1992. Actually, CORE was reintroduced, after an earlier and brief San Francisco career, as a civil rights force.

Soon, CORE had developed into a small but active cadre of organizers, including William Bradley, now known as Oba T'Shaka. "I had been influenced by the Cuban Revolution and the HUAC meetings in San Francisco," he said, "but I finally broke from my 'Negro mold' when I attended my first CORE meeting."⁸⁸

Many Black San Franciscans were beginning to call for improved conditions in the face of ongoing Southern struggles and deepening joblessness. Local mainstream (white) media establishments were not entirely ignorant of this mood. By 1963, "dire" predictions were beginning to be voiced about "another Little Rock or Montgomery" in San Francisco. A *San Francisco Chronicle* article reported that because San Francisco "has failed dismally to learn to live with [Negroes], only increasingly tense racial conflict---even racial clashes---lies ahead."⁸⁹

Pressure for reforms came in different forms. The San Francisco branch of the NAACP was on the verge of picketing newly elected Governor Edmund G. Brown's inauguration. Through the media, the NAACP made its discontent with Brown's early reluctance to appoint a Black judge to a Municipal Court bench widely known. In the end, the local branch voted and decided not to picket Brown. The votes in favor of abstaining from "publicly embarrassing the Governor" included that of lawyer Terry Francois' and 31 other members. Francois' vote was the deciding one in the face of 31 dissenting opinions from an increasingly outspoken membership. The split in voting reflected, perhaps, a widening gap in the organization between those who identified "with the poor black man getting enough to eat" and those with more consciously middle class

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Waite, Elmont. "Bay Area Racial Forecast---'Clashes.'" *San Francisco Chronicle*. 5 May 1963.

interests. When NAACP member Cecil Poole chastised those wanting to "embarrass" Brown as "emotional," another member, Percy Moore, snapped back, "You haven't lived in the ghetto for many years."⁹⁰

Political and class allegiances did not hamper full participation in a massive San Francisco rally in solidarity with African Americans in Birmingham who were at the time doing battle with Bull Connor and the racist white Birmingham, Alabama city government. Over 20,000 people took part in the rally, which was put on by local clergy and labor leaders. But, as with the March on Washington two months later, the large mobilization was co-opted by those not directly interested in seeing "another Birmingham in San Francisco." In reality, though, the presence of politicians from Governor Brown to candidate for mayor John F. Shelley to Police Chief Thomas Cahill (the leader of the most hated enemy in the Black community), could not truly co-opt an event sponsored by essentially white, bourgeois organizations such as the San Francisco Labor Council and the San Francisco Council of Churches. Still, the attendance and participation of local African Americans, coupled with the rally's size, put out some notice that "civil rights awareness" was beginning to take hold in San Francisco.⁹¹

In July of 1963, as the "Negro problem" heightened in many Southern cities and mounting articulated discontent grew from organizations like CORE, the city's "bastion of objective information," the *Chronicle*, sent a reporter to explore "The Other City" (Black San Francisco) in order to gauge the mood (and, probably, the likelihood of Black revolt among the unhappy San Franciscans).

⁹⁰ "NAACP in Close Vote Not to Picket Brown." *San Francisco Chronicle*. 7 January 1963.

⁹¹ "20,000 in San Francisco To Support Alabama Negroes." *The New York Times*. 27 May 1963.

The *Chronicle* published a widely discussed series of "A Reporter's Journey Into the Ghettos," a series of articles which proved to be the usual racist diatribe from the paper. The series read more like an anthropologist's musings than anything else. Yet in between the lines of "these people" and descriptions of "colorful," "highly sexed," and "violent prone people," were very honest descriptions of a population which was segregated and in the throes of deep and structural economic hardship. It was no wonder, the anthropologist/reporter was fond of remarking, that "riptides of ragged emotion swirl day and night in the Negro ghettos of San Francisco."⁹²

The same week that white San Francisco learned about "ghetto life," Black employees of the city's Yellow Cab Company and Gray Line tourist buses were demanding anti-discrimination guarantees in all hiring procedures.⁹³

The veneer of a contented and inactive Black population was beginning to be lifted in San Francisco.

Setting the Stage

The San Francisco Civil Rights Movement was not exclusively a movement for jobs; during the embryonic weeks and months of activity, there were signs that the discontent in other major aspects of Black life in the city would soon come to be noticed. In August of 1963, during state Senate debate on the Rumford Fair Housing Bill, twenty CORE members signaled the first volley of the new movement when they were arrested during a demonstration over housing discrimination at the Select Rental

⁹² Draper, George. "I Lived with SF's Negroes." *San Francisco Chronicle*. 15 July 1963; "Frank Talk in a Crowded 'Ghetto' in SF." *San Francisco Chronicle*. 16 July 1963; "Elusive Life in an S.F. Ghetto." *San Francisco Chronicle*, 17 July 1963.

⁹³ Meister, Dick. "Discrimination Fight By City's Cab Drivers." *San Francisco Chronicle*. 12 July 1963.

Agency.⁹⁴ The action, part of what CORE called "Operation Windowshop," marked the first mass arrests in "the history of civil rights controversies in San Francisco." After continued pressure from CORE, the real estate agency finally succumbed and signed a comprehensive antidiscrimination pact. Select Rentals became the third rental agency to do so, but the first publicly to do so. CORE president Bradley (T'Shaka) hailed the victory but cautioned that there were still other agencies which hadn't signed agreements.⁹⁵

While activism around anti-bias in housing became a thorn in the side of city elites, other issues were not being ignored. The NAACP continued its fight for a comprehensive desegregation plan in the city's school district. There were also struggles around sporting events where, for instance, *Sun-Reporter* sportswriter and CORE member Sam Skinner helped initiate a boycott of football games at Kezar Stadium where the San Francisco 49ers played. In one demonstration, protests centered on the visiting Washington Redskins "because they had no Black skins."⁹⁶

Increasingly, however, CORE, the NAACP and newly formed organizations like the Art Sheridan-led Direct Action Group were looking upon the growing civil rights climate in San Francisco as ripe turf for a new program aimed at cracking open the jobs market for African Americans and other people of color. A few months earlier, the Oakland NAACP announced plans to begin pressuring local business leaders with threats of demonstrations and economic boycotts. Oakland, a city with a larger percentage of Blacks than in San Francisco, did move on civil rights

⁹⁴ Barlow and Shapiro, *An End to Silence*, p. 44.

⁹⁵ Jarvis, Birney. "Charges Dropped in S.F. Anti-Bias Demonstration." *San Francisco Chronicle*. 29 September 1963.

⁹⁶ Ussery, Wilfred (Interview). 15 April 1993.

issues (many times in conjunction with the San Francisco campaigns), but the actions never amounted to the size or impact that the San Francisco groups were able to generate.

On July 22, San Francisco's civil rights leadership, which included not only "established groups" like the NAACP, but CORE as well, announced a call for a united front. One prominent organization receiving a great deal of national attention because of its "anti-white" rhetoric and charismatic national spokesman was absent from this growing alliance. The Nation of Islam, despite offices in the Bay Area, was not lining up with CORE and the other organizations. Though Malcolm X met with some, though certainly not all of the local civil rights leadership, in the *Sun-Reporter* offices in the Fillmore District, he would not pledge organizational support for the local plans.⁹⁷

In late July, CORE member Wilfred Ussery returned from Birmingham in the late summer of 1963, where he spent a month "observing the make-up and function of that movement to see how applicable it would be here."⁹⁸ Ussery and the rest of CORE began meeting with NAACP members, the Negro American Labor Council, the Bayview-Hunters Point Citizen Committee and the San Francisco Council of Negro

⁹⁷ "Bay-Wide Program of Sit-Ins." *San Francisco Chronicle*. 23 July 1963. In fact, CORE had been looking for an avenue to begin work on the employment front. A year earlier, CORE's regional director Genevieve Hughes had criticized the San Francisco branch for "looking too much like the NAACP" and having no employment program to speak of (see Meier and Rudwick's *CORE: A Study in the Civil Rights Movement 1942-1968*, p. 183). Despite the fairly close relationship of the Nation of Islam and CORE, who shared offices only a block apart from each other, Malcolm was constrained by the conservative attitudes of the national headquarters when it came time to engage politically and demonstrably. The relationship between CORE and the Nation was still one of competition, in that both organizations were actively pursuing the community for loyalty. See T'Shaka, Oba. *The Political Legacy of Malcolm X*. Richmond: Pan Afrikan Publications, 1983, pp. 39-41. The Afro-American Association, under Donald Warden, was perhaps the most visible nationalist body outside of the Nation in the Bay Area.

⁹⁸ Larry R. Salomon. "A Job is a Civil Right." *Third Force* 1 (September/October 1993):11.

Women. Together, the organizations formed under the umbrella heading, the United Freedom Movement (UFM).

On July 28, 1963, UFM co-chairpersons Dr. Thomas ("Nat") Burbidge and Ardath Nichols announced the UFM's goal of "complete equality for San Francisco Negroes, with particular emphasis on employment." At an early meeting, Cambridge, Maryland desegregation leader Gloria Richardson spoke to the UFM of her commitment "to instruct local leaders in the tactics used in Cambridge."⁹⁹

Richardson's planned appearance coupled with the fact that nearly 2,000 would attend the mass meeting was enough to grab the attention of city leaders. Mayoral candidates were in attendance and statements were read from other local politicians, including Mayor George Christopher. Burbidge, who had recently been elected chapter president of the NAACP, read most of the UFM's demands, including an end to "lily white textbooks in the school district and a human relations commission appointed to the housing authority." But by far the most pressing of the demands was that the "white power structure" begin to fulfill its long promise on employment. With loud applause, Burbidge concluded, with obvious reference to Birmingham, "that there demands could be met "without the police dogs."¹⁰⁰

The demands and the threats of demonstrations led to an immediate response from Mayor Christopher, but only in rhetorical terms. Christopher pretended to be confused by the UFM's insistence in using the term "white power structure," saying "I personally believe the 'power structure' of this city rests in the hands of 750,000 people."¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ "Negro Leader Comes to S.F.; Tells Plans." *San Francisco Examiner*. 29 July 1963.

¹⁰⁰ "Mass Meeting for Negro Rights Here." *San Francisco Chronicle*. 30 July 1963.

¹⁰¹ "Negroes Get Set For S.F. Talks." *San Francisco Chronicle*. 31 July 1963.

Equally disengenuous was the editorial musings of the *Chronicle*. Labeling the term a "deceptive cliché," the *Chronicle* said that "if the NAACP, CORE and the Hunters Point Citizens Committee should ask, we wouldn't be able to identify the 'power structure' here."¹⁰²

When pressed, Burbidge defined the "power structure" as a combination of white political leadership, private industry and labor. A week later, the UFM made inroads by calling for talks with these sectors "to seriously discuss the matters of Negro underemployment in this city."¹⁰³

Talks never got off the ground because leaders from each sector refused to meet separately with the UFM as requested. Other problems soon ensued when dissension within the ranks of the UFM became apparent. The influential Baptist Ministers Union and other church leaders, including Reverend Hamilton Boswell of Jones Methodist Church, soon became disillusioned with both the makeup and strategies being employed by the UFM. As factions began to emerge, UFM co-chair Ardath Nichols submitted her resignation, claiming allegiance to the disgruntled ministers. Following several days of intense coverage of "the impending demise of the UFM," Burbidge and other UFM leaders refocused efforts back into the arena of civil rights.¹⁰⁴ When the leadership of the UFM called on the mayor to institute a civilian police review board to handle the numerous police harassment and brutality complaints by members of the Black community, Christopher angrily

¹⁰² "'Power Structure'--A Deceptive Cliche." *San Francisco Chronicle*, 1 August 1963.

¹⁰³ "S.F. Negroes Ask Talks on Employment." *San Francisco Chronicle*, 9 August 1963.

¹⁰⁴ See *San Francisco Chronicle*, 14-18 August 1963.

refused, saying that "such a move would certainly hamstring" the effectiveness of the force.¹⁰⁵

But likely hoping not to completely alienate the Black community, the mayor quickly announced a proposal to organize a Human Relations Committee to deal "with the city's Negro problem." The plan, which was seen by some Black community leaders as a slick way for the mayor, business and labor to avoid dealing with the specific problems of Black unemployment, was met with disapproval from the city's African American newspaper, the *Sun-Reporter*. "In far too many instances city-wide committees or commissions have proven to be little more than instruments which deter the assumption of direct responsibility" of government, industry and labor.¹⁰⁶

Recognizing recalcitrance on the part of the city, the UFM stepped up its demands in a nighttime rally in front of 1,500 people at Third Baptist Church. Burbridge, surprising not only city officials but perhaps NAACP leaders who likely elected him president with the understanding that he would be another racial moderate, called for a militant response from the Black community should negotiations break down.

I don't mean negotiations for months either, I mean weeks--and a very few weeks. But if they fail, [we will have to employ] the sheer, naked, unrobed, undressed manipulation of power. This is ordinarily accomplished by the manipulation of money. the Negro community is the poor community, therefore, all we can do is interfere with the normal flow of money in San Francisco by demonstrations, boycotts and picket lines. We've got to really hurt somebody in the pocketbook.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵ Anspacher, Carolyn. "Mayor Spurns Freedom Group's Plan." *San Francisco Chronicle*. 16 August 1963.

¹⁰⁶ "Come, Let Us Reason Together." *San Francisco Sun-Reporter*. 17 August 1963.

¹⁰⁷ "Negro Leader Threatens 'Attack on Pocketbooks.'" *San Francisco Chronicle*. 20 August 1963.

Burbidge was followed that night by a speech given by author Louis Lomax. Lomax, in a fiery address, told the audience that "only when you walk the streets of San Francisco by the thousands will the Negro get what is rightfully his." If the mayor didn't soon give in to the embryonic movement's demands, Lomax continued, "then there should be 20,000 of you ready to start marching." Disruptions like this "would not only disrupt the economy of San Francisco, but of the whole world."¹⁰⁸

The next day, Christopher announced plans to hold a summit between the leadership of the UFM and government, business and labor officials.

At the same time, the UFM was mending its earlier wounds and strengthening its solidarity with the ministers and other groups. But talks with the respective voices of San Francisco's white power structure never amounted to much beyond the usual photo opportunities and appearances of progress. The organizations which made up the UFM were growing impatient and, after realizing that only pressure could lead to solutions, began initiating some of the action at Select Rentals and other places where protest could have an immediate impact.

The Mel's Drive-In Pickets

One of these places was the chain of Mel's Drive-In restaurants. In August and September of 1963, the Direct Action Group (DAG) began looking into the hiring practices of the popular San Francisco drive-in chain. What DAG soon found was a confirmation of the CCU's *Civil Rights Inventory* conclusions regarding the make-up of local restaurants. According to DAG chairman Sheridan, African Americans, when they were observed as Mel's workers at all, were "always out of sight. They're

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

janitors, dishwashers and people like that. Sure we can do these jobs, but we can also wait on tables."¹⁰⁹

On October 19, three Mel's Drive-In restaurants were picketed by members of DAG because of the absence of greater numbers of African American employees. Suspecting that such a demonstration was imminent, Mel's owner Harold Dobbs, a San Francisco Supervisor who at the time was the leading candidate to succeed Christopher as the city's mayor, called the protest "politically contrived" in order to get his Democratic opponent, John F. Shelley elected.¹¹⁰

DAG members, who made clear that the protests would continue "everyday until our demands are met," denied that they were pawns of Shelley, as Dobbs had suggested. In reality, what the movement recognized was the opportunity to thrust the issue of race and employment into the political mix as the election neared. Both candidates had made pledges to one another in the pre-campaign stages of the race to abstain from injecting the "race issue" into the election.¹¹¹

But in the wake of Birmingham and, more recently, the March on Washington, Dobbs couldn't afford to appear in kinship with the racists in the South. Damage control of the situation was necessary if he was to escape having the unsophisticated label of a racist placed upon him. Dobbs immediately countered the demonstrations and its demands with denunciations of DAG as "misguided youngsters" who, in the best diplomatic appeal to Black voters he could muster, were hurting "the legitimate aspirations of the Negro community."¹¹²

¹⁰⁹ "Bias Pickets At Dobbs' Drive-Ins." *San Francisco Chronicle*. 20 October 1963.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Barlow and Shapiro, *An End to Silence*, p. 44.

¹¹² "Bias Pickets," *San Francisco Chronicle*, 20 October 1963.

The local white news media didn't pay much attention to the pickets at first, but soon found that the continuing demonstrations could no longer be ignored. The *Chronicle*, the biggest paper in the city and the one most aggressively endorsing Dobbs in the election, which was now just days away, finally began looking at the issue when demonstrators picketed Dobbs' home on November 2.

Dobbs main opponent, Shelley, wasn't at all anxious to make "political capital out of the race situation in San Francisco," despite the invigorated charges against Dobbs. Dobbs, on the other hand, was livid at the public action against him and his restaurant's practices. He maintained that he believed in the principle of equal opportunity for everyone, but wouldn't be "pushed around" by demands of "special rights or privileges for anyone, or any group."¹¹³

The demonstrators, who carried pickets with slogans reading, "I'll have a freedomburger please," put forth the biggest demonstration on the eve of the election. At the Mel's on Geary Boulevard, sixty-four people were arrested picketing the biggest of the restaurants. Two nights later, as the candidates were preparing their final appeals to voters, another forty-eight were arrested in what was termed a "wild melee." Amidst chanting and singing and pounding on tables, Mel's manager Jack Everett called police and when he went to each individual protester and asked if they had anything to order, police arrested and hauled them off when they responded that they only wanted "freedom and jobs for Negroes."¹¹⁴

Dobbs' final appeal to the "good and reasonable people of San Francisco" included remarks that the demonstrations were creating

¹¹³ "Picketing at Dobbs' Home." *San Francisco Chronicle*. 3 November 1963.

¹¹⁴ "Mass S.F. Sit-In Arrests---Dobbs, Shelley Argue." *San Francisco Chronicle*. 4 November 1963.

"another a Birmingham atmosphere" in the city. "If [Shelley] gets elected, "Dobbs said, "then San Francisco would indeed become another Birmingham."¹¹⁵

Dobbs' statement had even the *Chronicle* denouncing his stance as "irresponsible." The demonstrations had the effect, local observers said at the time, of turning the race around, eventually in the favor of Shelley, who was pronounced mayor the next night.

By election night, the organizational make-up of the protesters no longer included only DAG, the offshoot of the UFM. Demonstrators also included members of Youth for Jobs, the DuBois Club, a Marxist group, and student organizations from San Francisco State University and UC Berkeley. What these organizations, who were now calling themselves the Ad Hoc Committee to End Discrimination, had in common was their almost uniform white, middle class college student status. Despite some exceptions, many of whom assumed leadership positions in the Ad Hoc Committee, the group mirrored the profile of demonstrators at the HUAC hearings three years earlier. In fact, there were many of the same faces.

The demonstrations had the effect of elevating Shelley almost as much as it did of elevating "the race issue." In fact, Shelley's own positions on "equal opportunity" were highly suspect. In a hastily written position piece written to coincide with the latest demonstration, Shelley correctly observed that lack of education and job skills are a barrier to "Negro advancement within the ranks of the employed," but practically ignored the reality of institutional and widespread discrimination based on race.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

Shelley's narrow victory was probably sealed by the lack of voter turnout in his favor, but the issue of Mel's and the city's racism were not over. The same day of the mayoral election, new national CORE chair Floyd McKissick was in San Francisco echoing what Bradley (T'Shaka) and the rest of CORE's local leadership had long been saying: that in terms of material racial equality, the city "is lagging far behind" other areas of the country and that San Francisco employment discrimination and segregation "is as rampant as in the South."¹¹⁷

But the election results did not translate into quiet on the picket front. After a two-day moratorium on demonstrations, picketing in front of Mel's on Geary continued, this time with participation from the NAACP's (and UFM chair) Burbidge and other Black leaders. The management of the restaurant had to admit that the action were having their effect. "Usually we have about 200 people either inside or eating in their cars at this time," lamented M.H. Everett, the general manager of the chain, "I can count only 10 now."¹¹⁸

Mel's ownership/management and Black leadership then sat down to negotiate a settlement. With the threat of renewed and enlarged demonstrations, which would carry over to Berkeley restaurants owned by Dobbs if the demands of immediate and substantial hiring of Blacks were not met, Mel's negotiators proposed as a solution the filling of "the next 10 to 20 positions with Negroes." CORE chair Bradley (T'Shaka) called the proposal one laced with tokenism and said that "it would mean [jobs for only] a few Negroes in Mel's in San Francisco and Berkeley. I construe this as an effort to buy off this negotiating committee."¹¹⁹

¹¹⁷ "New CORE Leader Criticizes S.F." *San Francisco Sun-Reporter*. 6 November 1963.

¹¹⁸ "Pickets Resume Drive-In Siege." *San Francisco Chronicle*. 7 November 1963.

¹¹⁹ "Mel's, Rights Aides Bicker Over Hiring." *San Francisco Chronicle*. 8 November 1963.

The employment dispute carried over to a state Senate hearing when Senator Eugene McAteer chastised outgoing mayor Christopher and the civic leadership of the city for failing to take advantage of "an adequate opportunity to take a firm position" against employment discrimination.¹²⁰ It was clear that city and now state political leadership was sitting up and taking notice of the demands of San Francisco's Black community. In fact, despite the state-created FEPC, McAteer and his colleagues in the Senate could not show how their actions over the "past eight years" had made improvements. What was clear was that only once pressure was applied, as in the case of the Mel's demonstrations, were political and business elites forced to take notice.

The day after the negotiations began and the threats were put on the table, Mel's caved in and signed a comprehensive nondiscriminatory hiring agreement and training school for Black workers at all 13 restaurants in the chain. The settlement, which included provisions for immediate hiring at all the restaurants, was read to about 200 demonstrators just before they were about to resume picketing.¹²¹

The ushering in of a new movement in San Francisco to deal with the ugly matter of racial economic inequality was now at hand. Against the backdrop of record-breaking increases in Bay Area employment for the general population (the civilian labor force increased by nearly 30,000 in the year 1963 alone), came powerful demands that the Black community, long at the bottom of the economic ladder, would not be shut out of the prosperity.¹²²

¹²⁰ "McAteer Blast At Christopher." *San Francisco Chronicle*. 8 November 1963.

¹²¹ "Mel's Settles Civil Rights Dispute." *San Francisco Chronicle*. 9 November 1963.

¹²² "Bay Area Jobs Set October Record." *San Francisco Examiner*. 9 October 1963.

In late 1963, CORE was beginning to assert itself as the most militant organization in the UFM. Threatening a Christmas boycott of downtown stores, CORE gave vocal indication of the community's frustration:

We in the Congress of Racial Equality know that the Negro community is fed up with the scraps and crumbs the power structure has heretofore been willing to dole out with respect to jobs....Stores that are unwilling to meet with CORE and reach [employment] agreements will be subject to a wide range of direct action designed to win concessions.¹²³

The threats became a reality when CORE and the Baptist Ministers Union boycotted Penney's and Macy's (part of the industry-wide unit called the Retail Dry Goods Association). Employing the "Don't Buy Where You Can't Work" strategy, the Ministers and CORE were able to "hit the weakest link" (since a substantial number of the stores' customers were Black) and force hiring agreements from not only the two stores, but other department stores as well, who feared the same tactics.¹²⁴

The issue of Black joblessness was not about to be addressed substantively by "the power structure," however. Claims of structural problems relating to low job skills and few numbers of "qualified" Black applicants rang hollow to a Black community that was beginning to organize itself against job discrimination. In fact, the Black community in San Francisco was dissatisfied with continued racism in housing, education and with proposed plans for the "redevelopment"---or gentrification, if the UFM's objections are to be counted---of the Western Addition. The growing refusal to accept the status quo made for a charged atmosphere where continued African American joblessness at

¹²³ Meier and Rudwick, *CORE*, p. 233.

¹²⁴ T'Shaka, Oba. *The Art of Leadership, Volume 1*. Richmond: Pan Afrikan Publications, 1990, p. 258.

unprecedented rates would be cause for big fights as 1964 dawned the horizon.¹²⁵

The Lucky "Shop-Ins"

The CCU's study five years earlier had revealed tremendous inequities in the workforce participation of Blacks in local supermarkets. While not mentioning the grocery chain specifically in the report, the CCU's conclusions were probably about the Lucky stores.

With the exception of a CORE campaign in 1948, which netted three jobs from a San Francisco Lucky store, not much had been done to address the gross disparity in employment representation.¹²⁶ The UFM had signed an agreement with Lucky management over the summer, but in the intervening four months, Lucky had hired only 18 Blacks out of 320 total new hires. A later survey found that only 50 Blacks had been hired out of over 600 new employees. Overall, less than one percent of all Lucky employees were Black.¹²⁷

In late 1963, the National CORE, a committee representing local New York City CORE chapters, NAACP branches and Puerto Rican groups had won major concessions from the A & P grocery chain. The agreement in New York called for the hiring of over two hundred Blacks and Puerto Ricans over the next two years; in essence, A & P had agreed to hire *only* people of color for two years.¹²⁸

The San Francisco CORE branch went into the month of February with the news that San Francisco's business elite, in meetings with the

¹²⁵ "Unemployment--Panel Takes A Gloomy View." *San Francisco Chronicle*. 17 November 1963; "Bias Pickets at 2 Bay Realty Firms." *San Francisco Chronicle*. 17 November 1963; "Rights Group Opposes Renewal." *San Francisco Sun-Reporter*. 4 December 1963.

¹²⁶ Meier and Rudwick, *CORE*, p. 59.

¹²⁷ Meister, Dick. "Lucky Stores Picketing Set." *San Francisco Chronicle*. 13 February 1964; Professor Oba T'Shaka, BLS 320 Class Notes, 14 May 1992.

¹²⁸ Meier and Rudwick, *CORE*, p. 235.

newly established Human Relations Commission, had agreed to "cooperate in setting up a human relations program to promote jobs and civil rights for minorities." The agreements were signed by virtually all of the city's large companies, including Bank of America, Wells Fargo Bank, downtown department stores and the San Francisco Chamber of Commerce.¹²⁹

But San Francisco CORE couldn't be blamed for looking upon the latest maneuver from the business community as one designed to create the impression that pressure was not necessary and those in power could be counted on to take pro-active measures themselves. In fact, the discovery of the Lucky hiring figures after the summertime agreement only fueled the impetus to move forward with public protest.

The day after the business roundtable announcement, CORE and the Baptist Ministers Union announced at a Providence Baptist Church rally that the two groups would begin to work more closely together in the developing movement. The Ministers Union represented San Francisco churches with a total membership of 40,000 people, most of them African American.¹³⁰

Less than a week after the rally, CORE and the Ministers Union announced that the Lucky chain, because of its "clear violation" of the hiring agreement, would be pressured by picketing to increase employment substantially. In response to the news that demonstrations would soon commence at all of the chain's sixty Bay Area markets, Lucky refused to be forced "to engage in reverse discrimination."¹³¹

¹²⁹ "Employers Plan to Push Job Equality." *San Francisco Chronicle*. 8 February 1964.

¹³⁰ "Two Groups Form S.F. Negro Alliance." *San Francisco Chronicle*. 8 February 1964.

¹³¹ Meister, "Lucky Stores Picketing Set," *San Francisco Chronicle*, 13 February 1964.

On February 17, CORE members stood outside the Lucky store at Lakeshore Plaza and picketed and sang protest songs. Inside the store, however, an entirely new tactic had been ushered into the Civil Rights Movement. Termed a "shop-in" by Bradley (T'Shaka), CORE demonstrators loaded shopping carts full of groceries and then abandoned them at the checkout stand, walking away after saying, "That's too much money," or "I'll have more money to pay you when you hire more Negroes." In some cases, demonstrators would bring the carts to the checkout station and purchase only a pack of bubble gum. The demonstrations went on that day for over an hour before police were called and the "shoppers" dispersed.¹³²

CORE had wanted to boycott the Lucky on the corner of Geary Boulevard and Gough Street, but when it was realized that the mostly white shoppers in the predominately white community wouldn't honor the pickets, other locations were chosen. This fact, more than any other, led to the use of the shop-in tactic.¹³³

The demonstrations continued and began having a tremendous effect. Lucky manager Arden Grauman reported that, despite the large crowd inside the store and the busy ringing of the cash register, "we didn't do any business to amount to anything."¹³⁴

CORE's actions continued for nine days and, in spite of groups of fraternity and sorority members from UC Berkeley who attempted to help the "besieged" stores by putting their items back on shelves, the impact was being felt by Lucky upper management who reported "substantial

¹³² "CORE Jams Up S.F. Store." *San Francisco Chronicle*. 18 February 1964.

¹³³ Professor Oba T'Shaka, Notes, 14 May 1992.

¹³⁴ "CORE 'Shop-In' at S.F. Supermarket." *San Francisco Chronicle*. 20 February 1964.

losses."¹³⁵ CORE was enjoying considerably the consternation of San Francisco Police, who were frustrated that they couldn't "lock these people up" because the "gutless Lucky management" wouldn't press charges.¹³⁶ Doubtlessly, Lucky management and city officials, including Mayor Shelley who was frantically attempting to mediate the dispute, did not want a police provocation to become a "melee" like protests at Mel's had become and like the nightly news coverage from the Deep South was portraying.

CORE was dealt a setback, however, when the Ministers Union denounced "the mess created" at the Gough Street store and said that CORE's tactics had become "more destructive than constructive."¹³⁷

CORE called off the demonstrations the next day in order to deal with negotiations in "good faith" but that, according to Bradley (T'Shaka), if Lucky refused to agree with CORE's demands and only continue with its practices of "tokenism and gradualism," the demonstrations would continue in full force. Shelley announced that the offices of the mayor would be used to mediate the dispute but that "there was great concern about the effect the 'shop-ins' were having on human relations in San Francisco and elsewhere."¹³⁸

On February 28, Lucky caved in and agreed to a comprehensive hiring agreement with CORE. The specifics of the agreement were not made public, but it was later reported that the agreement would guarantee the hiring of up to 75 Negroes among the 155 new clerks to be hired in the

¹³⁵ "UC Students Counteract A 'Shop-In.'" *San Francisco Chronicle*. 25 February 1964; Salomon, "A Job is a Civil Right," *Third Force*, p. 11.

¹³⁶ "Pastors Rap CORE 'Shop-Ins.'" *San Francisco Chronicle*. 26 February 1964.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Meister, Dick. "CORE Calls Off Market 'Shop-Ins.'" *San Francisco Chronicle*. 27 February 1964.

next five months. It was later discovered that the private agreement CORE was able to secure included provisions for the hiring of only people of color (including "Orientals" and "Latin Americans") at Lucky stores for an entire year.¹³⁹

Lucky officials denied that the "shop-in" tactics had anything to do with the agreement, saying that "these methods do not further the cause of minority groups." But it was clear from the unprecedented and "milestone" agreement that Lucky had been forced by what Bradley (T'Shaka) called "an awakened community" to give in to demands for justice and equality.¹⁴⁰

With the huge victory, CORE looked stronger than ever, representing the most militant and cutting edge organizational aspect of the growing local struggle for jobs. The campaign against Lucky stores had been helped along tremendously by both white CORE members and other white college students. But CORE's focus, which was becoming more connected to "the grassroots" than ever before, was now appealing directly to the Black community. Under Bradley's (T'Shaka's) leadership, CORE membership grew considerably and now included larger percentages of African Americans than ever before.

In 1960, CORE had been four-fifths white, but under the new leadership, community support increased. One explanation of this is the fact that CORE had "moved to the heart of the Negro community," establishing offices in the Fillmore District, the political heart of Black San Francisco. Bolstered by the Lucky campaign and galvanized by intensive recruitment in the Black community, San Francisco CORE became

¹³⁹ Meister, Dick. "Settlement by CORE and Lucky Stores." *San Francisco Chronicle*. 29 February 1964; Salomon, "A Job is a Civil Right," *Third Force*, p. 11.

¹⁴⁰ "Impact of Lucky's Pact With CORE." *San Francisco Chronicle*. 1 March 1964.

predominately Black and decidedly more militant in the wake of future campaigns. Certainly the growing trend of Black nationalism, given the increasing exposure of Nation of Islam adherents and the Afro-American Association, helped CORE's constituency identify with activism. Other CORE chapters didn't enjoy the kind of success that San Francisco's chapter had in attracting Black support, and in fact, some chapters, including the Los Angeles branch, were looking at San Francisco CORE as a model.¹⁴¹

The significance of the membership changes in CORE was that the Black community was identifying itself more and more with the militant response and tactics--not just rhetoric--of local civil rights leadership. The San Francisco Civil Rights Movement had secured two major victories, winning major employment concessions. But the euphoria over breaking the back of Lucky's did not last long. The same day the agreement was announced, a new move aimed at more jobs was underway.

Victory at The Palace

In mid-February, the local news media reported that San Francisco's hotel and restaurant industry had reaped the windfall of record-breaking profits gained from visiting conventions and tourists. One of the hotels, the opulent Sheraton Palace, was featured in accounts as one of the reasons the hotel and restaurant industry was able to report multi-million dollar profits on a daily basis.¹⁴²

¹⁴¹ Professor Oba T'Shaka, Notes, 17 May 1992; Meier and Rudwick, *CORE*, pp. 198, 304, 317.

¹⁴² Craib, Ralph. "A Bonanza for Hotels, Motels." *San Francisco Chronicle*. 29 February 1964.

Yet San Francisco's African Americans were not to be found among the workforce of the city's lucrative hotel and restaurant industry--perhaps its biggest sectoral recipient from the booming tourist economy. In the early days of San Francisco, many of the city's "pioneer urbanites" were employed in the hotels and restaurants as waiters, bellhops, cooks, maids and the like. Following the Panic of 1873 and the deep and prolonged national and local recession that followed, Black San Franciscans were forced out of many jobs by boycotting whites who felt that no whites should be jobless while there were Blacks in decent-paying positions.¹⁴³

That era's racism coupled with the subsequent decades of hostile and protectionist white union racism and large-scale employment discrimination effectively kept Blacks out of the downtown workforce. With the exception of the recent successful boycott and hiring agreements of downtown department stores, in the early 1960's, "the only Blacks downtown were those shining shoes and sweeping streets."¹⁴⁴ Again, it was this recognition of the context of Black unemployment that led to the decision on the part of Black civil rights leadership to move forcefully. The downtown hotel and restaurant soda fountains didn't need desegregation on the customer side; San Francisco's structural economic racism required a response to put Blacks on the working side.

On March 1, the very same day the Lucky/CORE agreements were announced, there was an organized picket of the Sheraton Palace Hotel. The Ad Hoc Committee to End Discrimination, led by 18-year-old San Francisco State student Tracy Sims (one of the few Blacks in the organization), had sixty of its members march through the ritzy hotel

¹⁴³ Professor Oba T'Shaka, Notes, 14 May 1992. See also Daniels, *Pioneer Urbanites*, pp. 35-40.

¹⁴⁴ Salomon, "A Job is a Civil Right," *Third Force*, p.10.

lobby, much to the surprise and consternation of wealthy tourists and native San Franciscans. The Ad Hoc Committee listed as its biggest demand that the hotel, which had only nineteen Black workers out of a total of over 550 employees, begin "immediately hiring a reasonable number" of Blacks.¹⁴⁵

The following day, more than eighty demonstrators, including Black comedian Dick Gregory, were arrested and taken to jail after they defied a court injunction and picketed the Sheraton Palace again. Also arrested were the NAACP's past and present presidents, Terry Francois and Burbridge. Later in the evening, after many of those originally arrested, including CORE members, were released, the pickets resumed. The police response was swift and, often times, brutal. Gregory, commenting on the national news after watching his fellow picketers being dragged to waiting paddy wagons by their feet, with their heads bouncing off the pavement, remarked, "this is as brutal as anything I've seen in the South." Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee Executive Secretary James Forman also condemned the police action in a statement that lended even more national attention to the situation.¹⁴⁶

Sheraton Palace manager Morgan Smith announced that the hotel would not be pressured into make special hiring arrangements "because

¹⁴⁵ "Pickets at DOWtown Hotel---Bias Charge." *San Francisco Chronicle*. 1 March 1964. The Sheraton Palace insisted that the numbers of "minority representation" in their workforce was greater than that which was being alleged. But the hotel was counting Greeks and Armenians as members of minority groups and therefore ignoring the claim of bias against Blacks. See Kauffman, George. "CORE's big night at the Sheraton-Palace." *National Guardian*. 14 March 1964.

¹⁴⁶ Graham, Robert. "Mass Arrest Of Pickets at Palace Hotel." *San Francisco Chronicle*. 2 March 1964; "Litters for Passive Pickets?" *San Francisco Examiner*. 4 March 1964. The effect of the police repression, according to Thomas Dammann, Jr., one of the participants in the sit-in, was actually helpful to the campaign since "it drew many more people to our ranks." See "We Shall Overcome." *San Francisco*. July 1964, Vol. 6, No. 10, p.27.

this hotel does not and will not tolerate discrimination in hiring."¹⁴⁷ Mayor Shelley worried that "some of these demonstrators are just young kids who are going out and having a ball." Shelley remarked in a packed press conference that the pickets could "do great harm to the cause of better race relations in San Francisco" and that Gregory's comments about police brutality were unfounded. "I think Gregory still thinks he's in the South--he'll find that the attitudes in San Francisco aren't anything like feelings there."¹⁴⁸

But, as in the South, the district courts were making efforts to prevent massive demonstrations. Superior judges Joseph Karesh and Francis McCarthy ordered restraining orders against the pickets and forbade demonstrations inside the opulent lobby of the Palace.¹⁴⁹

Nevertheless, the demonstrations continued. On March 6, over 1,500 protesters surrounded the Palace and later sent in over a third of that number inside the lobby for a sit-in.irate hotel guests, disgusted with the pickets visible use of slogans reading "Jim Crow Must Go in San Francisco" and "Freedom Now,"commented bitterly that "it's disgraceful that the city would permit so many misfits to demonstrate." Though no arrests were made, Sheraton Palace representatives and members of the Ad Hoc Committee, including Sims and Mike Myerson, announced they were working on an agreement.¹⁵⁰

But when demands from the protest negotiators appeared to equate an acceptable solution to the one reached with Lucky stores, the hotel management rejected it. The proposal called for FEPC equal opportunity

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ "A Truce in Palace Picketing." *San Francisco Chronicle*. 3 March 1964.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ "Big Palace Sit-In--500 Sit in the Lobby." *San Francisco Chronicle*. 7 March 1964.

signs to be posted, job announcement postings in the Black community and mention that opportunities for advancement apply to all applicants. The source of the disagreement, though, was the insistence that the hotel implement hiring numbers equal to the proportion and immediacy as was reached in agreement with Lucky and Mel's.¹⁵¹

The next day, thousands of demonstrators packed the lobby and surrounded the outside of the hotel, leading to a San Francisco-record 167 arrests. Though most of those arrested were white students, the make-up of the demonstration was about fifty percent Black. Dissension set in the ranks of the action when many of the demonstrators, against the pleas of some of the moderate Black leaders, including Francois--who some Black protesters were calling 'UncleTom' because of his public disagreement with some of the tactics being used--blocked the entrance to all doorways. The news accounts spoke of "bedlam" in the Palace, once "celebrated as the Bonanza Inn of the Comstock Lode era and symbol of elegance that catered to Presidents and the potentates of the world."¹⁵²

In the wake of the massive demonstrations and three-inch headline publicity from the local dailies, negotiations continued. While hundreds of protesters camped inside the lobby in the early hours of the morning, the Palace management continued to resist the pressures of not only the demonstrations, but the powerful Hotel Owner's Association (HOA). The HOA, which represented thirty-three of the city's biggest hotels, was concerned that if the Palace eventually gave in, the other hotels would be forced into similar agreements.¹⁵³

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² "Police Take 167 From Hotel Sit-In." *San Francisco Chronicle*. 8 March 1964

¹⁵³ Barlow and Shapiro, *An End to Silence*, p. 45.

When negotiations broke off again and the 167 were arrested at sunrise, more sit-ins continued. Finally, at about two o'clock in the afternoon, an excited Tracy Sims and other members of the negotiating committee addressed the demonstrators. What the negotiations had finally determined was that the hotel could no longer bear the publicity of massive racial protests; nor could the Owners Association. "We came here trying to end the discriminatory hiring practices at the Sheraton Palace Hotel," announced Sims. "We're coming away with an agreement covering *thirty-three* hotels!"¹⁵⁴

The terms of the agreement were essentially similar to the ones at Mel's and Lucky and included provisions for the hiring of people of color at rates proportion to their population figures. For a period of two years, the thirty-three member hotel association agreed to give public records of their progress. The agreement was signed by the Ad Hoc Committee members and endorsed by the UFM, including the NAACP, CORE and, despite their denunciations of the protest methods, the Baptist Ministers Union (see Appendix 5)¹⁵⁵

The fallout from the agreement was felt in many circles. The *Chronicle* denounced the tactics of "avowed Marxist-Leninists" and former San Francisco Mayor Roger Lapham sharply criticized Shelley and the hotels for "knuckling under to pressure."¹⁵⁶ Even Governor Edmund G. Brown attempted to put a negative spin on the demonstrations and agreement. The protestors, the governor announced, had hurt the campaign against repeal of the Rumford Fair Housing Act. "These young people, 75 percent of whom are white, according to my reports, violated

¹⁵⁴ Ibid, p. 46.

¹⁵⁵ "The Hotel Hiring Agreement." *San Francisco Chronicle*. 8 March 1964.

¹⁵⁶ "Lapham Hits Shelley Over Palace Pact." *San Francisco Chronicle*. 9 March 1964.

the law and have little in common with the responsible Negro leadership of San Francisco."¹⁵⁷

But the cutting edge Black leadership of the San Francisco Civil Rights Movement would hear none of it. Nowhere to be found were criticisms from the NAACP or CORE (unless you count Bradley's comment that the reason more Blacks were not in the picket lines was because few of them could subscribe to nonviolence when being dragged by police). Both organizations were also in the Palace Hotel struggle and had members arrested as well. The movement was, despite large numbers of fines and court tie-ups resulting from the arrests, gaining steam and--more importantly--winning huge job concessions from San Francisco's "power structure."¹⁵⁸

Driving Auto Row Crazy

The momentum stemming from the hotel agreement stayed with the movement. On March 11, the moderate regional office of the NAACP blasted the hotel demonstrations, calling into question both the legitimacy of the Ad Hoc Committee and the activism of Burbridge. Regional secretary Tarea Hall Pittman announced that "no NAACP unit has endorsed such sit-ins or demonstrations" and that Burbridge's statements and the actions of him and other San Francisco NAACP members were not going to be supported by the regional or national bodies. Burbridge had acted irresponsibly, according to Pittman, and his words and support for the demonstrations were those "of an individual."¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁷ Doyle, Jackson. "Brown Hits The Sit-In At Palace." *San Francisco Chronicle*. 11 March 1964.

¹⁵⁸ Barlow and Shapiro, *An End to Silence*, p. 46; Meier and Rudwick, *CORE*, p. 240.

¹⁵⁹ Wax, Mel. "An Appeal by Shelley to City's Negro Leaders." *San Francisco Chronicle*. 12 March 1964.

The same day that the regional office was attempting to distance itself from the NAACP's hotel actions, a new campaign had begun. This time the NAACP was at the vanguard of the demonstrations, which targeted the discriminatory hiring practices of the Cadillac automobile agency and other car dealers on San Francisco's Auto Row on Van Ness Avenue. For about an hour Burbridge led about sixty demonstrators as they walked in a picket line inside the dealership showroom, singing and chanting freedom slogans as salesmen watched.¹⁶⁰

The action taken by the NAACP coupled with the hotels being forced to sign a comprehensive agreement, sent the clear message to powerful corporate interests and local and state officials. In mid-March, Mayor Shelley and Governor Brown convened a summit session on the issue of continued civil disobedience and its impact on corporate San Francisco and corporate California. Hoping to keep civil rights disputes "in the hearing room and not in the streets," the high-level meeting was called in order to prevent "a state-wide pattern from being set." Brown announced later that he would not tolerate any repetition of such "unruly demonstrations" as that which took place at the Palace.¹⁶¹

The meeting, which included the U.S. Attorney, State Attorney General, District Attorney and Police Chief Cahill, was played down as a regular meeting occasioned, in part, by Brown's annual St. Patrick's Day golf date the next day. This casual dismissal of the meeting's significance belies the fact that virtually every high-level local and state official

¹⁶⁰ "60 Picket Inside S.F. Cadillac Showroom." *San Francisco Chronicle*. 12 March 1964. Burbridge was one of the few NAACP heads in the country who, according to T'Shaka, "made significant stands with the grassroots." Salomon, "A Job is a Civil Right," *Third Force*, p. 11.

¹⁶¹ Wax, Mel. "Summit Session on Rights--Brown, Shelley Peace Plan." *San Francisco Chronicle*. 14 March 1964.

participated in the meeting. Moreover, the meeting between officials followed a meeting in the Mayor's office with leading corporate leaders, including bank officials from the Bank of America, Wells Fargo, and various CEO's from Macy's, Levi-Strauss, Pacific Telephone and Telegraph and the San Francisco Employers Association, among others. T'Shaka (Bradley) correctly notes that the Bank of America "feared it was next on the hit list" as did other businesses, indicating the urgency with which the meetings were convened.¹⁶²

The corporate leaders' fears were certainly not being assuaged by statements from the victorious camp of the Ad Hoc Committee. Sims and Myerson both spoke at rallies around the Bay Area and declared their will to keep the fight on, despite pending litigation which threatened to seriously hamper the numbers of demonstrators. Myerson, addressing a UC Berkeley crowd, boldly reported that the protests "had touched a raw nerve in the power structure of San Francisco that hasn't been touched in 15 years. In 1964, we're going to be rubbing a whole lot of raw nerves."¹⁶³

CORE officials, meanwhile, were denying that they had plans to demonstrate against the Bank of America, which in 1964 was the largest and most powerful bank in the world. Noting that threats of protest would exhaust the important first step of negotiation, CORE nevertheless was implying that the Bank was at least a source of inquiry.¹⁶⁴

The Bank, for its part, used the offices of the FEPC to highlight its claims of equal employment opportunities. The FEPC offered the Bank

¹⁶² Ibid; T'Shaka, *The Art of Leadership*, pp. 322-26. T'Shaka writes of the power corporations possess over elected officials and cites this meeting as a prime example; Salomon, *Third Force*, p. 11.

¹⁶³ Robertson, Bob. "A Defiant Challenge in Rights Battle." *San Francisco Chronicle*. 14 March 1964.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

advice, however, by encouraging it to address the inequities in their actual representation of "minority participation," which was little more than two percent of all the Bank's employees.¹⁶⁵ That week, CORE and the Bank of America met for the first time to begin "exploratory" discussions of African American employment in the Bank. The meeting, which included representatives from all of CORE's 26 California chapters was a "frank" but "friendly and optimistic" session.¹⁶⁶

Meanwhile, the NAACP still had its eye on the Cadillac Agency and Auto Row's employment practices. On March 14, 107 pickets were arrested at the Cadillac Showroom and forcefully placed into police paddy wagons and taken to jail. Quiet resumed on Auto Row for the rest of March, due mainly to attempted mediation on Shelley's part between the NAACP and the city's Automobile Dealers' Association, but the pickets returned to the Cadillac Showroom on April 4. Only days earlier, Burbidge told an audience at a United Freedom Movement rally that "it's time to go to jail again."¹⁶⁷

Then on April 11, hundreds of demonstrators poured into several of the major automobile showrooms on Auto Row. Thousands of other demonstrators lined the sidewalks in front of the showrooms on Van Ness Avenue. Demonstrators used new tactics by packing into cars and lying under cars, waiting to be arrested. Dismayed Chrysler-Plymouth Manager Jack Kent attempted to talk the demonstrators out of his showroom. "We believe in equal job opportunity," the exasperated manager said, "but applicants must be properly trained and capable."

¹⁶⁵ "FEPC Says Bank Could Do More." *San Francisco Chronicle*. 16 March 1964.

¹⁶⁶ "CORE and Bank in Friendly Talk." *San Francisco Chronicle*. 17 March 1964.

¹⁶⁷ "Quiet Day of Picketing At S.F. Cadillac Agency." *San Francisco Chronicle*. 5 April 1964.

Demonstrators ignored Kent and entered the showroom and the offices of sales manager Joseph McGoldrick. One Black picketer dropped to his knees in front of McGoldrick and mockingly said, "Please Mr. Charley, give a black boy a job." Another Black demonstrator sat at McGoldrick's desk, saying "We don't hire no niggers here."¹⁶⁸

San Francisco Police arrived and, employing Chief Cahill's new strategy of dealing with protesters more gently, arrested a San Francisco-record 226 people. Four hours after the demonstrations began at noon, police had cleared the area, but not before national media attention had descended upon Auto Row.¹⁶⁹

Negotiations between the Motor Car Dealers Association and the NAACP broke down the next day and plans were made for further protest. The San Francisco action had the effect of quickly spreading across the country. NAACP local affiliates in over fifty cities, including New York and Detroit, scheduled a nationwide drive to begin on May 4. San Francisco's branch office, now with the active support of many of the participants who had engaged the Sheraton-Palace and Lucky stores, continued with their picketing.¹⁷⁰

The negotiations had stalled again, due primarily to the reluctance of the dealers to admit that racial discrimination in hiring took place at all, when the low single digit percentage representation of people of color in Auto Row's workforce belied the claim. Burbridge and the NAACP then modified their original proposal that from 16 to 30 percent of Auto Row's workforce be composed of people of color.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁸ Bess, Donoran. "'Auto Row' Protest--226 Sit-In Arrests." *San Francisco Chronicle*. 12 April 1964.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ "Auto Sit-Ins To Continue Across U.S." *San Francisco Chronicle*. 13 April 1964.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

The NAACP and its allies were insisting that more Blacks and other people of color be hired as workers "in the whole spectrum of jobs in the automobile industry--not just mechanics, but salesmen, clerks and accountants." If the dealers did not sign a hiring agreement within two days, warned CORE chair Bradley (T'Shaka), "Auto Row will get what it justly deserves."¹⁷²

As city officials worked behind the scenes to revive talks between the parties in hopes of preventing a threatened massive demonstration, trials began for the over 600 demonstrators arrested over the past weeks. With city elites wringing their hands over the "stubbornness of CORE and the NAACP" and their refusal to be "reasonable," the parties once again joined at the negotiating table. Thousands of demonstrators who did not have to appear in court (though the courts did report high absenteeism in active cases before the court) were mobilized for action and poised to enter the showrooms if talks broke down. Bradley (T'Shaka) warned that if talks did break down again, there would be "creative destruction and a great loss of dollars and further damage to the liberal image of San Francisco."¹⁷³

¹⁷² Robertson, Bob. "Sharp Warning to S.F. Auto Dealers." *San Francisco Chronicle*. 16 April 1964.

¹⁷³ "Pact is 'Near' in Auto Row Dispute." *San Francisco Chronicle*. 18 April 1964. Faced with the usual media and "power structure" criticism over the demonstrations' tendencies of becoming "violent prone" and beset by "irresponsible behavior," both Sims and Bradley (T'Shaka) defended the protest tactics employed up to that point. Speaking at a large CORE rally in Grace Cathedral on the eve of the final Auto Row mobilization, Sims said that only when massive demonstrations were utilized could there be any progress. "15 years of work by the NAACP and CORE to open up the hotel industry," had failed to achieve what those and other organizations achieved with only a couple of instance of demonstrations. Furthermore, Sims added, "Human rights are far more important than property rights and until those segments of the community cease trespassing on my rights, dignity and education, I will trespass on their property rights." Bradley was no less blunt, stating that the "biggest lie" about the demonstrators is that they are irresponsible. "Those in the 'Establishment,'" he continued, "who have not done a thing to guarantee freedom and equality are hardly in a position to call others irresponsible." See "CORE Rally in Grace Cathedral." *San Francisco Chronicle*. 18 April 1964.

On the afternoon of April 18, with nearly 5,000 demonstrators parading peacefully in front of seven Auto Row dealers, Burbridge announced to the crowd that "You have won a victory...we have an agreement." The crowd erupted at the news that the NAACP had forced the Motor Car Dealers Association to acquiesce and sign a hiring agreement closely modeled after the hotel agreement. Though not quite as demanding as Burbridge and the NAACP had wanted, the agreement still provided for, in the carefully worded statement, "acceleration of employment opportunities for minority group persons." The dealers were basically being forced to increase "minority hiring to a level of from 15 to 20 percent of total employees (see Appendix 6)."¹⁷⁴

In the wake of the largest numbers of arrests in San Francisco civil rights history, the San Francisco Civil Rights Movement had added another huge feather in its cap. The demonstrations were forcing San Francisco's business leaders to cave in to demands that they live up to their own principles of equal opportunity. The lessons were becoming crystal clear: if corporate San Francisco did not agree to substantially increase the numbers of its Black workforce, there would be "consequences." The movement in San Francisco was showing itself to be an uncompromising force and, in spite of the concerted efforts of government and industry to stem its tide, the legitimate demands from and on behalf of the city's economically disenfranchised community would continue to be heard.

Challenging "The Most Powerful Bank In The World"

¹⁷⁴ "'Auto Row' Peace--Civil Rights Agreement." *San Francisco Chronicle*. 19 April 1964; "Texts of Auto Row Agreement." *San Francisco Chronicle*. 19 April 1964.

"Within the movement, we all choose projects," said Burbidge after the NAACP celebrated its victory over the dealers. "The Ad Hoc Committee went after the hotels, the NAACP had the auto dealers, and CORE has the banks."

Indeed, the Bank of America's fear that it was "next on the hit list" was confirmed by CORE requests for meetings in early March and again, after reports from CORE's Western Regional meeting in the Fillmore Auditorium suggested that a direct action strategy was being set against the bank. CORE and the bank had been in negotiations for nearly a month when talks hit a snag on April 19. CORE's demand that the bank turn over a "racial census," (i.e., an inventory of the numbers of African Americans in all job categories within the bank's employee ranks) was met with refusal from Bank of America officials.¹⁷⁵

The "showdown" between CORE and the bank was temporarily averted the following day when the bank agreed to turn over its employees demographic figures to the state FEPC. Chair Bradley (T'Shaka) announced that CORE would wait for results from the FEPC and denied that demonstrations were being planned against the financial giant because CORE "was working toward an agreement." The bank bridled at the use of the word, "agreement" and restated the bank's stand that "it is unlikely we will enter into a signed agreement."¹⁷⁶

CORE leaders Wilfred Ussery and Chet Duncan, also announced that CORE was considering action at the regional level against the trucking industry and Greyhound Lines unless more African Americans were soon

¹⁷⁵ Hinckle, Warren. "Snag Reported in Rights Talks With B. of A." *San Francisco Chronicle*. 20 April 1964.

¹⁷⁶ Anspacher, Carolyn. "Rights Truce With Bank Of America." *San Francisco Chronicle*. 21 April 1964.

hired. Greyhound had earlier signed a voluntary hiring agreement in the White House, but CORE declared that its demands for employment "go far beyond" the agreement worked out under the President's Committee on Equal Employment Opportunity.¹⁷⁷

Meanwhile, verdicts were beginning to come in on the hotel demonstrators. Some guilty verdicts came in, along with jail sentences of up to 90 days and fines of \$200 each. The first wave of those arrested in civil rights protests were also beginning to find that juries were deadlocked in their decisions. The trials of the over 500 cases of those arrested since the end of the Lucky stores demonstrations, resulted more often in hung juries. The hung juries, which meant that the cases (which were usually tried in groups of fourteen or fifteen) had to be tried over and over again, also proved to be demoralizing for the local movement, since defendants were required to attend trials daily and the lengthy process consumed time, energy and resources from lost wages. The early trials, despite the relatively small amount of guilty verdicts, increasingly led to less and less organizing and direct action participation, simply because "no one could afford to get arrested again."¹⁷⁸

On April 30, another jury acquitted 13 Palace demonstrators but convicted Tracy Sims of the same offense, presumably because of her leadership role in the protests. Her excessive sentencing later of 90 days was reduced to a month. From that point, according to one observer, it was

¹⁷⁷ Ibid; "Greyhound Vs. CORE On Hiring. *San Francisco Chronicle*. 23 April 1964. CORE leaders in San Mateo were also announcing the successful conclusion of talks with Hillsdale department stores, noting that agreed to hiring arrangements were modeled after those reached in stores in downtown San Francisco and the Stanford Shopping Center.

¹⁷⁸ "First Verdicts In Sit-In Trials--Ten Are Guilty." *San Francisco Chronicle*. 22 April 1964; "Mistrials in Two Sit-Ins--Hung Juries." *San Francisco Chronicle* 25 April 1964; Barlow and Shapiro, *An End to Silence*, p. 47.

all downhill. The trials continued and by the end of May nearly 100 had been convicted.

Judges were almost uniformly hostile and often flagrantly prejudicial in their conduct of the trials; black people were systematically excluded from the juries, and sentences were generally harsher than those meted out for similar offenses to civil rights workers in the South¹⁷⁹

Later, the movement was dealt another blow when Burbridge, for his actions during the Auto Row protests, was sentenced to nine months in prison. Told by the presiding judge that his sentence was severe due to the fact that Burbridge's actions were "calculated" and lectured him to halt any further "indoctrinating of your students" at UC Berkeley's Medical School. The NAACP president remarked that "only someone who viciously attacked and beat another would be given this type of sentence. We harmed no one."

The sentence was uniformly denounced by civil rights leaders and even some local politicians, including Mayor Shelley. James Farmer, national director of CORE, said that as far as civil rights sentences go, "San Francisco is the worst city in the country." The *Sun-Reporter*, the city's Black weekly, called the court "an instrument of persecution," Harry Bridges, the longtime ILWU leader, said Burbridge's sentence was "cruel and unusual punishment."¹⁸⁰

Both Burbridge and Sims were later sentenced to additional time of 30 and 60 days respectively for their actions in other demonstrations. The courts, which included Judge Joseph Kennedy, the former NAACP

¹⁷⁹ "Tracy Sims Convicted." *San Francisco Chronicle*. 1 May 1964; "26 More Guilty In S.F. Sit-Ins." *San Francisco Chronicle*. 30 May 1964; Barlow and Shapiro, *An End to Silence*, p. 47.

¹⁸⁰ "Judge Gives Burbridge Nine-Month Sentence." *San Francisco Chronicle*. 14 July 1964; "Rights Trials---Negro Pleas To Shelley." *San Francisco Chronicle* 14 July 1964; "Unfair Jail Term Shocks People," "Tale of II Cities." *San Francisco Sun-Reporter*. 18 July 1964.

Regional President and direct beneficiary of Black demands for greater representation in the courts, were making it clear that civil disobedience would not go unpunished, particularly if the defendants were key organizers.

The key organizers involved in the negotiations with the Bank of America, while fazed by the ongoing and punitive court action, still had their sights set on a major employment agreement. The essential fact of the situation remained clear: for months, San Francisco and other Bay Area employers had caved in to the movement's power and its demands, whether they came from the negotiating table or the streets. A San Francisco CORE publication noted that "this entire country is shaking with awe before the anger of the Negro people." CORE's regional field secretary, Genevieve Hughes, was at least as sanguine about the momentum of the movement in the Bay Area. "Civil rights is so red-hot just now in the Bay Area," she said, "that the white folks are scared out of their minds. We can do anything we want. Every newscast is civil rights. It may be that the day has finally come when no matter what CORE does or how it does it, it still wins."¹⁸¹

The Bank of America project headed by CORE increased its focus to the bank's nine hundred statewide branches. Heading its negotiating team was San Francisco Chair Bradley (T'Shaka).

When the bank finally turned over its "racial census" to the FEPC--the same information it refused to provide directly to CORE--its conclusions were similar to CORE's suspicions. Out of nearly 30,000 statewide staff, the Bank had only about six hundred Black employees, or two percent of all total workers. The percentages were only slightly higher

¹⁸¹ Meier and Rudwick, *CORE*, p. 229.

for Asians and Latinos. In the Bay Area, the numbers were only slightly higher, but overall, there were only about two hundred Blacks on the bank's payroll. These figures, according to a Bank of America spokesperson, were representative of a commitment on the bank's part to "equal opportunity for minorities."¹⁸²

The paltry figures represented something entirely different to CORE. Claiming that even the figures released were likely "inaccurate," Bradley (T'Shaka) immediately called the "head count" inadequate. "Not only is this statistical data inadequate," he said, "but the bank has tried CORE's patience to the breaking point. In the past four meetings--in which CORE has engaged in good faith--The Bank of America has equivocated on our most basic demands." Calling the bank's decision to go through the FEPC a "deliberate stalling effort," Bradley (T'Shaka) gave clear indication that CORE was being left with no other choice than to take more drastic action.¹⁸³

After a fifth meeting between CORE and the bank in the corporation's Montgomery Street headquarters, CORE announced the breaking off of talks, claiming the bank was acting in "bad faith." The bank countered with the charge that CORE was "more interested in staging demonstrations than in assuring jobs for members of minority groups." Furthermore, the Bank of America was not interested in continuing negotiations with a "pressure group" whose "only mandate comes from the streets."¹⁸⁴

¹⁸² "FEPC Gets 'Head Count' By B. of A." *San Francisco Chronicle*. 13 May 1964.

¹⁸³ "CORE Isn't Happy With Bank's Count." *San Francisco Chronicle*. 14 May 1964.

¹⁸⁴ "B. of A. Talks With CORE Break Down." *San Francisco Chronicle*. 19 May 1964; B of A Says CORE Acts in Bad Faith." *San Francisco Chronicle*. 20 May 1964; Salomon, "A Job is a Civil Right," *Third Force*, p. 11.

CORE's demands that the bank hire up to 3,600 people of color across the state and provide 350-600 jobs for Blacks in the Bay Area within six months, were being met with intransigence. The bank figured that they could avoid massive picketing if they voluntarily entered into dialogue with the FEPC, but now it appeared that it had underestimated the degree to which CORE would stick to its guns.

On May 20, CORE announced that it would kick off "the biggest demonstrations anybody ever saw anywhere" against what many believed to be the most powerful bank in the world.¹⁸⁵ It had been over a month since any large civil rights demonstration had taken place in the city but, barring any last minute agreement, picketing would resume again--this time across the state.

The plans for action came out of the CORE regional meetings as well as within the local offices. "We knew we couldn't conduct another shop-in," recalls T'Shaka, "so we had to figure out how to put the pressure on them. We figured that a bank rests on the faith and confidence of the public, so the best strategy would be to hurt its image somehow."¹⁸⁶

On March 22, mass picketing in thirteen California cities--from Sacramento to San Diego--began around various branches of the bank. In San Francisco, over 300 demonstrators surrounded the Powell and Market Street branch and were themselves surrounded by nearly 1000 others, mostly observers, but also hecklers. With signs reading "Jim Crow Must Go" and "Bank With CORE," the demonstrators included Bradley

¹⁸⁵ "CORE Will Picket Bank Tomorrow." *San Francisco Chronicle*. 21 May 1964.

¹⁸⁶ Salomon, "A Job is a Civil Right," *Third Force*, p. 11. The quotes in this article come from lectures originating out of Professor T'Shaka's Spring 1992 Black Studies 320 course entitled, "Black Politics and Liberation Themes."

(T'Shaka), and other CORE members as well as Sims, Myerson and other "veterans" of recent demonstrations in the city.¹⁸⁷

The demonstrations were immediately denounced as "irresponsible" by local politicians, business leaders, the media, and even some top-ranking local clergy. Joseph T. McGucken, the Roman Catholic Archbishop of San Francisco and Rabbi Sanford Rosen, President of the Board of Rabbis of Northern California, criticized CORE's actions as "damaging to the cause of civil rights" and claimed that CORE was attempting to "take the law into its own hands."¹⁸⁸

Another prominent clergyman, however, had a different take on CORE's struggle against the bank. Addressing a crowd of 8,000 at the Cow Palace in San Francisco, Dr. Martin Luther King compared the movement's goals with those of the SCLC in the South. "We have discrimination in employment all over the country," King said. "It may be a Bank of America or a bank in Georgia."¹⁸⁹

The Bank of America wasn't about to be compared to any institution in the unsophisticated South; major damage control was imperative. Using full page advertisements in all of the region's daily newspapers, the bank attempted to put its own spin on the dispute with CORE. Ads entitled "Bank of America and the pickets: What's it about?" spoke of its "deep concern with the social problem of equal opportunity" and claimed they were "keenly aware of its responsibility to achieve a solution." Yet the bank wasn't about to give in to a "self-appointed pressure group." Noting the governor's efforts to mediate the dispute, the bank concluded its message with an appeal to readers: "We are sure that

¹⁸⁷ "Mass Picketing Begins in 13 Cities." *San Francisco Chronicle*. 23 May 1964.

¹⁸⁸ "Bank Protest Deplored." *San Francisco Chronicle*. 27 May 1964.

¹⁸⁹ "8000 Hear Rev. King at Cow Palace." *San Francisco Chronicle*. 31 May 1964.

all responsible citizens share our outrage at the manner in which CORE has so cynically disregarded an effort by the people's chosen chief executive."¹⁹⁰

But the bank's "appeal" wasn't likely to influence the people who had already drawn the battle lines; the mood of the Black community and its allies was not about to be swayed by the polished image of an institution that most knew was not concerned with either "equal opportunity" or any other "social problem" affecting their lives.

The bank attempted even more public relations campaigns, this time going so far as to sign an agreement with the state FEPC, a move designed to, according to Bradley (T'Shaka) "make it appear they were really doing something." The bank's pledge, called a "memorandum of understanding" was set in terms of a vague hiring commitment. Essentially what the pact with the FEPC did provide for was a stated pledge to make regular reports to the commission regarding its employment figures. Executive Vice President of the bank, Samuel Stewart, said he "doesn't particularly care" if CORE approves of its pact with the FEPC, adding that "as far as we're concerned, CORE is a bystander in this matter."¹⁹¹

At the same time, CORE members were employing new direct action tactics. About forty CORE members who had been picketing, entered the bank and went to the tellers window where they requested pennies and other coins in exchange for their dollar bills. After they received their change, the protesters went to another teller and had the change be made

¹⁹⁰ "Bank of America and the pickets: What's it about?" *San Francisco Chronicle* (Advertisement) 27 May 1964.

¹⁹¹ Anspacher, Carolyn. "Bank Signs FEPC Pact; New Tactics by Pickets." *San Francisco Chronicle*. 2 June 1964.

into bills. The effect of the "bank-in" was to create long lines inside the bank and slow down the regular operations of the branch.¹⁹²

The bank's frustration at not being able to halt the demonstrations and preserve its image as an equal opportunity employer was felt in other circles as well, most powerfully by the courts.

The day after the first "bank-ins," San Francisco Superior Judge Raymond J. O'Connor, who hadn't been involved in any of the trials, called members of the media into his chambers to announce that he considered the ongoing demonstrations the result of a "felonious criminal conspiracy." The judge, calling for a Grand Jury investigation, said it was "time to take a long, hard look at the civil rights demonstrations," which, according to O'Connor, harmed the legitimate goals of civil rights. "Their demands are made so that they cannot be met," the jurist said, "and a demonstration and sit-in follows. This is not civil disobedience. It is a criminal conspiracy to violate the law."¹⁹³

While O'Connor's strange meeting with reporters was underway, Bradley (T'Shaka) was in another City Hall courtroom being sentenced to jail time and a \$500 fine for being late to his courtroom appearance for his part in one of the Sheraton-Palace demonstrations. It was becoming clear that the courts were meting out harsh fines and jail time to the leadership of the movement, and the most recent action taken by San Francisco's criminal justice system was yet another example. The CORE Chair went to jail, but not before he took a shot at the courts. "Civil rights have been on trial in San Francisco and the sentence meted out to me is indicative. The community should understand the lengths to which the courts have gone

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ "S.F. Judge Calls Sit-Ins 'Criminal.'" *San Francisco Chronicle*. 2 June 1964.

to silence civil rights protests." Ironically, he added, one of Judge O'Connor's sons was an active member of CORE.¹⁹⁴

At a rally held in front of the San Francisco County Jail in San Bruno, where Bradley (T'Shaka) was being held, other leaders of the San Francisco movement similarly condemned the court's action. Tracy Sims accused the San Francisco judicial system of "conspiring to destroy the freedom movement" and said the judges occupy the bench "clothed in racism and bigotry." Burbidge also accused the courts of trying to destroy the movement both "spiritually and economically." Ussery said the courts were "worse than any court in the country in prosecuting and persecuting" the movement. Bradley's (T'Shaka's) father, William H. Bradley, declared that "I never thought I would see the day when I'd be proud of having a son in jail."¹⁹⁵

The length to which the courts were sentencing the movement's organizers was, it appeared, conditioned largely by the wishes of San Francisco's business elite. From the perspective of the movement's organizers, it was clear: the real conspiracy involved the Bank of America and other powerful local corporations and their influence over the political operations of the city, the criminal justice system being a part of those operations.

The bank, meanwhile, continued to take out full-page announcements in the newspapers--something the resourceless CORE and the UFM could ill afford to do. With the help of newspaper editorials and mayoral press conferences, the bank was succeeding in demonizing CORE, stating that the organization--and its leader Bradley (T'Shaka) were more

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ "Rights Pickets At The S.F. Jail." *San Francisco Chronicle*. 4 June 1964.

interested in "publicity and self-aggrandizement" than jobs for the community. The demonstrations were given a boost, nonetheless, after Bradley's release, and the "bank-in" tactics kept adding to the consternation of bank officials.

The bank continued to dispute the numerical demands placed on it by CORE, saying it and the FEPC refused to even consider "hiring quotas." But CORE leaders maintained that its employment demands, which were increased to 800 jobs, were not quotas but "a realistic goal based upon the bank's internal structure." If the demands were not met soon, CORE explained, "then statewide CORE will remain in the streets" until they are.¹⁹⁶

CORE announced that it would also picket the visit of President Lyndon B. Johnson to San Francisco in order to urge the president to take more aggressive action in the South and to intervene in the sit-in prosecutions. The city responded by deploying the largest police detail in the city's history to protect Johnson. News of CORE's plans led to sharp criticism from Mayor Shelley, who wanted to spare the city further national embarrassment, and from Governor Brown, who chastised CORE for showing "rank ingratitude" towards a president who was making a "great all out fight at political peril for the civil rights bill."¹⁹⁷

CORE couldn't find much to be grateful for; the community was still reeling from layoffs and the pace of hiring agreements was beginning to slow. The bank, to compound the frustration, was stubbornly refusing to give in to CORE's demands. CORE, for its part, would continue to

¹⁹⁶ "An Arrest At CORE's 'Bank-In.'" *San Francisco Chronicle*. 13 June 1964; "New CORE Demand on Bank for Up to 800 Jobs." *San Francisco Chronicle*. 17 July 1964.

¹⁹⁷ "Massive S.F. Security for Johnson." *San Francisco Chronicle*. 18 June 1964. Later in the summer, CORE and other civil rights groups picketed Barry Goldwater appearances and the Republican National Convention itself, which was held at the Cow Palace.

demonstrate statewide against the bank. In San Diego, CORE members blocked the entrance to a local bank and were arrested. San Diego CORE Chair Harold Brown was sentenced to sixty days for his part in the action.¹⁹⁸

San Francisco CORE renewed its tactical creativity by staging protests at three downtown Bank of America offices on July 3. At once, CORE members were picketing in front of the Powell and Market branch, using the "bank-in" at a Montgomery Street branch and marching and singing inside yet another.¹⁹⁹ The next week, Bradley was sentenced again to jail, this time for 45 days for his part in the Auto Row demonstrations.²⁰⁰

On July 23, the Public Utilities Commission announced that the Pacific Gas and Electric Company, Pacific Telephone and Telegraph and the Western Greyhound Lines were signing hiring pledges designed to increase "minority participation in the workforce of these large utilities." While CORE announced that the over 100 new Black employees with the utility companies was a good start, more had to be done still.²⁰¹

Protests continued at the Bank of America and, on one occasion, nearly 10,000 people surrounded the Day and Night branch on Powell and Market, the hub of San Francisco's tourist activity since it was the location of one of the cable car turn-arounds and was centrally located to the downtown department stores.²⁰²

By the end of the summer, after three months of ongoing protest against the bank, CORE announced that its pickets would leave. "The bank

¹⁹⁸ Meier and Rudwick, *CORE*, p. 238.

¹⁹⁹ "Three Way CORE Picket at B. of A." *San Francisco Chronicle*. 4 July 1964.

²⁰⁰ "CORE's Bradley Draws 45 Days." *San Francisco Chronicle*. 11 July 1964.

²⁰¹ "Three Big Utilities And Negro Jobs." *San Francisco Chronicle*. 23 July 1964.

²⁰² Salomon, "A Job is a Civil Right," *Third Force*, p. 11. The information gathered for this article also was provided largely by news accounts and Professor T'Shaka's BLS 320 course.

has met our minimal expectaions," Bradley (T'Shaka) announced, by hiring more than 300 Black in the past thirty days alone. The "truce" would hold pending notification from the FEPC that the bank was living up to its stated commitment to hire even more in the coming months. While the bank had kept from signing an agreement with CORE, its "memorandum of understanding" with the FEPC was providing the ground by which CORE could hold it to its word. Six weeks later, the FEPC announced that the bank had indeed increased its Black employment figures by nearly forty percent, not quite the large-end number CORE had hoped for, but a significant increase nonetheless.²⁰³

Wells Fargo Bank, as well as other major local financial institutions, sensing that they might be "next" also signed onto major hiring agreements with the FEPC. As with the hotels, restaurants, auto dealers and other local and statewide firms, the pressure on others was enough impetus to hurry into agreements, lest they be the next target. Despite Bank of America's frequent claims to the contrary, CORE and the local movement had been instrumental in their capitulation. It is highly doubtful that the bank would have immediately hired up to 400 new Black workers, much less a few, without a mass organized movement of militant action demanding accountability.

The San Francisco Civil Rights Movement, in the wake of its success with dozens of local corporations (over 260 separate agreements were reached throughout the Bay Area), was turning to other local issues--the NAACP, for example, was continuing its fight with the San Francisco Unified School District over the segregated and inferior education Black

²⁰³ Bess, Donoran. "CORE Truce---Pickets To Leave the B. of A." *San Francisco Chronicle*. 2 September 1964; Meister, Dick. "FEPC Cites Progress By Bank of America." *San Francisco Chronicle*. 23 September 1964.

students were enduring. The victory over "the most powerful bank in the world" was the final of the large-scale wins for the movement. Though its success had been a costly one, the benefits of hundreds of new jobs for the community outweighed anything else.

V. LEGACY

Conclusion

The struggle for jobs in San Francisco did take its toll on local organizations. The UFM was effectively dissolved after the major demonstrations; the Baptist Ministers Union, which had distanced itself from some of the more controversial direct action tactics during the early months of 1964, had made the coalition a fragile one from the beginning. San Francisco CORE had become a major influence on its national body, forcing the James Farmer-led organization into a more radical and Black nationalist view of the larger movement.

The San Francisco branch of the NAACP experienced tremendous growing pains during the 1960's. The venerable national organization, long regarded as a moderate to liberal organization which did most of its work in the courts, saw in its maverick San Francisco branch of the 1960's a direct threat to its stability. After the Burbridge-led insurgency within the San Francisco branch won control of the branch in late 1964, the regional and national offices, fearing a "CORE takeover," broke the San Francisco chapter into different offices. The NAACP had engaged itself in the direct action protests of the major job campaigns that year, something the national organization never completely sanctioned. Its leaders, though, had seen the importance of linking up with other grassroots organizations

who were poised and ready to take on "the power structure" which denied their constituency a better livelihood.²⁰⁴

The difference in civil rights action philosophies between the local branch and its headquarters underscored, in fact, the reason for success in 1963-64. San Francisco's civil rights organizations had been trying to better the lot of the African American community for decades prior to the 1960's. The significance of this fact can be summed up by a statement made in 1964 by Carlton Goodlett, the longtime community leader and publisher of the *Sun-Reporter* newspaper. Goodlett understood that the militant organizations in San Francisco drew the wrath of the power structure because "you have turned this town upside down. You have accomplished more than the leaders of my generation did in 15 years. They don't like you because you're changing things."²⁰⁵

Indeed the movement in San Francisco during the eleven month-span between 1963 and 1964 accomplished a tremendous amount of progress on the local level. Though its success was certainly not an end-all solution for a community which still was at the bottom-end of the economic ladder, it did mark a significant departure in civil rights strategies nationwide. The local movement grew out of the very fact that the community suffered more from economic oppression than that which emanated from social segregation. "The movement here differed from the other movements, especially in the South where the main goal was to eliminate segregation," said T'Shaka. "We in San Francisco CORE went into the pool halls, the beauty parlors and everywhere else where the grassroots were. We organized around everyday Black folks' needs. In the

²⁰⁴ "NAACP Looks At Its Rights Role." *San Francisco Chronicle*. 11 June 1964; "'Militant' Slate Wins NAACP Vote." *San Francisco Chronicle*. 21 December 1964.

²⁰⁵ "Rousing Rally for 'Freedom Fighters.'" *San Francisco Chronicle*. 28 July 1964.

early sixties, there were no Blacks downtown except those shining shoes and sweeping streets, so the movement here had to be in that context."²⁰⁶

According to the established image---which, of course depends on who is being asked, since economically oppressed communities of color would likely not concur--San Francisco was a place of racial tolerance and progressivism. It was in the 1960's, according to this image, a place so far removed from the backwardness of the bigoted South as to be counted among the finest "cosmopolitan" cities in the world. There couldn't be Black discontent in a city with such liberal politics and praxis. Yet, the mood in the Black community, as it had been in the Chinese community for decades and in the Japanese community during World War II and in the growing Latino community, stated that the city was not the easiest place to live. The prolific writer, James Baldwin, toured the city in 1964 for a public television documentary and concluded with views along the same lines that "the grassroots" had been talking about for years. "All right," Baldwin said, "they talk about the South. The South is not half as bad as San Francisco. The white man, he's not taking advantage of you in public like they're doing down in Birmingham, but he's killing you with that pencil and paper, brother. This city is a somewhat better place to lie about is really all it comes to."²⁰⁷

The San Francisco Civil Rights Movement was premised on the understanding that the real power was in "the pencil and paper" of economic and employment discrimination. It did effectively go to the grassroots and was successful in delivering literally hundreds of jobs from

²⁰⁶ From Professor T'Shaka's Black Studies 320 course, 14 May 1992; T'Shaka, Oba (Interview), 19 April 1993.

²⁰⁷ Robertson, Bob. "Baldwin's TV Tour of S.F. Negroes." *San Francisco Chronicle*. 4 February 1964.

the powerful interests who controlled the pencil and paper. For a while, though, the movement wrestled control from the corporations and challenged them on a scale unprecedented in the city's history.

The struggle for jobs in San Francisco can be seen as being significant for at least two major reasons: For one, the movement, which is almost completely left out of the extensive body of material on the era, is itself a major chapter of the larger story of the national movement and should be viewed as another example of a location where determined Black leadership, organizations and "everyday folk" themselves made inroads in the struggle for Black equality.

Secondly, and perhaps more significant for contemporary analyses of the problems affecting the Black community, the San Francisco Civil Rights Movement demonstrated that the struggle for equality needn't be limited to social and political realms. In fact, issues of "civil rights" could be dealt with on an economic level as well. This point, more than any other perhaps, is one that should give direction to oppressed communities today, where the biggest problems are materially based. Any civil rights movement today needs to, as Manning Marable puts it, "extend democratic principles from the social and political system into the structures of the economy, making a job a human right."²⁰⁸

It is this point that hopefully is a consistent theme demonstrated throughout this thesis. If civil rights scholarship is to begin to achieve a coherent new direction, it will need to tell the story of how civil rights strategies were employed to deal directly with issues of employment. There has been a plethora of material dealing with issues of social and political achievements as the result of the movement, but seldom are

²⁰⁸ Marable, *Race, Reform and Rebellion*, p. 230.

campaigns like the Memphis sanitation workers strike given widespread attention. Interestingly enough, when the historical spotlight is placed on the striking sanitation workers, it is only in connection with Dr. King's visit to Memphis and his murder there a month later. Yet the situation of most African Americans and people of color in dire economic straits today have more to do with the issues those workers and their families faced than with lunch counter discrimination. This does not mean that civil rights scholarship should ignore the latter aspects of the struggle, it is only to suggest that the story be broadened to reflect upon the lessons that economic issues within the movement can teach.

The organizations in San Francisco of the early 1960's showed that it could begin to extend those principles into the structures of the economy. They did so by refusing to be limited by what was deemed "reasonable" or even legal and by countering the power of big local corporations and their political operatives with mass collective action. But it was only a beginning. The times are different today, the issues more complex. The imperative, though, remains the same.

VI. APPENDIX

1. Growth of California's Black Population, 1850-1960

<u>Year</u>	<u>Total Pop.</u>	<u>Black Pop.</u>	<u>% Black</u>
1850	92,597	962	1.0
1860	379,994	4,086	1.1
1870	560,247	4,272	0.8
1880	864,694	6,018	0.7
1890	1,213,398	11,322	0.9
1900	1,485,053	11,045	0.7
1910	2,377,549	21,645	0.9
1920	3,426,861	38,763	1.1
1930	5,677,251	81,048	1.4
1940	6,907,387	124,306	1.8
1950	10,586,223	462,172	4.4
1960	15,717,204	883,861	5.6

Source: France, Edward E. *Some Aspects of the Migration of the Negro to the San Francisco Bay Area Since 1940*. San Francisco: R and E Research Associates, 1974, p.23; See also U.S. Census figures for years 1850-1960.

2. Growth of the Bay Area Black Population by City, 1940-1950

<u>San Francisco</u>	<u>Black population</u>	<u>% of total</u>
1940	4,846	0.8
1950	43,460	5.6
*800 percent increase from 1940-1950		
<u>Oakland</u>		
1940	8,462	2.8
1950	47,610	12.4
*463 percent increase		
<u>Berkeley</u>		
1940	3,395	3.9
1950	13,289	12.0
*291 percent increase		
<u>Richmond</u>		
1940	---	---
1950	13,374	13

*not applicable

Entire Bay Area totals
1950

147,223

6.1

Source: *Pioneer Urbanites: A Social and Cultural History of Black San Francisco*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990, p.165; See also U.S. Census figures for 1940 and 1950.

3. San Francisco Bay Area Black union membership, 1948

<u># of Blacks in Local</u>	<u># of Locals in Fed. A.</u>	<u># of Locals in Fed. B</u>
0	55	6
1-10	23	9
11-25	21	6
26-50	17	5
51-100	13	3
101-200	8	9
201-500	16	1
501-1,000	8	1
1,001-2,000	1	2
over 2,000	1	2
total	163	42

Source: Babow and Howden, *A Civil Rights Inventory*, p.182.

4. Number of employees in restaurants and dept. stores, 1955*

<u>Restaurant</u>	<u>Total Employees</u>	<u>White</u>	<u>Black</u>
<u>Asian</u>			
A	121	108	13
B	40	35	0
C	81	74	0
			5
			3

*Out of three popular restaurants observed

Dept./specialty stores with no Black sales persons	11
Dept./specialty stores with 1-3 Black sales persons	2
Dept./specialty stores with 4-8 Black sales persons	2

*Out of 15 observed stores

Source: Babow, Irving and Howden, Edward. *A Civil Rights Inventory of San San Francisco Part 1: Employment*. San Francisco: Council for Civil Unity of San Francisco, 1958, p. 173-174.

5. Excerpts from the text of the Hotel Agreement

"The parties hereby agree as follows:

The purpose of this agreement is to affirm the Equal Opportunity policy of the Member Hotels of the Hotel Employers Association of San

Francisco (hereinafter referred to as the Member Hotels) and to establish implementation of that policy. This agreement shall become effective when signed by representatives of all of the organizations appearing below.....

The policy of the association is that employee selection and promotion respecting all job categories are determined solely upon the basis of the qualifications of the individual for the job in question, without reference to race or color.....

FEPC Equal Opportunity signs will be posted in all Member Hotels bulletin boards.....

All job requests to unions will included a reminder that Member Hotels are Equal Opportunity Employers....

A statistical analysis will be made by each Member Hotel within 60 days, every 30 days thereafter for three months and every 90 days thereafter showing by job category the number of employees who are of racial minority groups.....

Based upon the assumption that future rates of turnover will approximate those of comparable periods during the past two years, and assuming further that qualified applicants who are of racial minority groups will be available as openings occur, it can be reasonably anticipated that as a general policy at each hotel employees of all minority racial groups and herein defined will be employed in order to bring the total employed of such minority groups to a level of 15 to 20 percent of total employees from time to time having in mind special circumstances which may prevail with respect to fluctuation in business volume and special conditions at certain hotels. In general the objective of each hotel will be to accomplish such hiring by July 26, 1964....

As used herein, minority racial groups means Negroes, other nonwhites and persons of Mexican or other Latin American descent....

On March 7, 1964, all boycotting, picketing and other forms of demonstrations against Member Hotels will cease, and the parties shall refrain from boycotting, picketing, demonstrating or other forms of direct action against Member Hotels during the term of the agreement and shall use their best efforts to dissipate the effects upon the community of the demonstrations conducted heretofore....

The term of this agreement shall be from March 7, 1964 until March 7, 1966....

6. Excerpt from the text of the Auto Row Agreement

PLEDGE-Motor Car Dealers Association of San Francisco, Inc.

Motor Car Delaers Association of San Francisco, Inc., acknowledges the necessity for the acceleration of employment opportunities of minority group persons and hereby gives its pledge to the Mayor's Interim Committee on Human Rights (or any successor commission or body performing the same function) that its members will undertake to increase the percentage of minority group persons employed by the

members of the Motor Car Dealers Association of San Francisco Inc., consistent with the efficient and responsible operation of the dealerships.