

**THE 'SILENT ARRIVAL':
THE SECOND WAVE OF THE GREAT MIGRATION AND ITS AFFECTS ON BLACK
NEW YORK, 1940-1950**

by

CARLA J. DUBOSE-SIMONS

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in History in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York.

2013

©2013
Carla J. DuBose-Simons
All Rights Reserved

This manuscript has been read and accepted by the
Graduate Faculty in History in satisfaction of the
Dissertation requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Date

Judith Stein, Chair of Examining Committee

Date

Helena Rosenblatt, Executive Officer

Joshua Freeman

Thomas Kessner

Clarence Taylor

George White

The City University of New York

ABSTRACT**THE 'SILENT ARRIVAL':
THE SECOND WAVE OF THE GREAT MIGRATION
AND ITS AFFECTS ON BLACK NEW YORK, 1940-1950****By****Carla J. DuBose-Simons****Advisor: Judith Stein**

This dissertation explores black New York in the 1940s with an emphasis on the demographic, economic, and social effects the World War II migration of blacks to the city. Using census data this study examines the basic characteristics of the migrants moving to New York during the war years; characteristics such as state of origin, age, and sex. It also maps where these migrants settled in the city revealing new areas of black settlement outside of Harlem, the largest black neighborhood in the city.

Black New Yorkers, looking to escape the high rents, dilapidated living conditions, and increasing crime rates left Harlem. Attracted to the integrated working-class neighborhood by the abundance of newer housing, better schools, and fresher air, hundreds of Harlem's families settled in the Morrisania section of the Bronx. Thousands of new migrants chose to move to Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brooklyn which was in close proximity to many of the city's war industries and where a small black community already existed. Many of Bedford-Stuyvesant's white residents opposed black settlement; some organizing campaigns to prevent blacks from moving in and others fleeing the neighborhood. By the end of the 1940s white flight and black settlement had transformed Bedford-Stuyvesant into New York City's second largest black neighborhood.

One of the primary reasons southern blacks migrated to New York during World War II was employment opportunities available in war industries. When New York factories began converting to war production, many did not hire black workers and those that did placed them in unskilled and janitorial positions. This dissertation explains the process by which blacks found skilled and semi-skilled jobs in industries making ships, electrical instruments, and scientific instruments.

Civil Rights organizations, most importantly the Brooklyn Urban League, pressured the state and federal governments into taking steps to integrate war industries. These organizations used the State War Council's Committee on Discrimination and the Fair Employment Practices Committee to open new occupations to African Americans and ensure the fair treatment of those blacks employed in war industries. Initiatives for equal employment opportunities for blacks were at the center of civil rights activism during the 1940s.

For my nana Mary Wilson whose life story inspired my passion for the subject of this dissertation and my father Daniel DuBose Jr. whose presence and pride I have continued to feel during the completion of this achievement.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The completion of this dissertation would not have been possible without the aid and support of numerous people. First and foremost I want to give my sincerest thanks to my advisor Judith Stein. Your guidance and support were invaluable throughout the course of my graduate studies. Your tough questions and tough comments continually required me to expand my intellectual capacity and improved the quality of this dissertation. I would also like to thank my other dissertation committee members Joshua Freeman, Clarence Taylor, Thomas Kessner, and George White. Your comments on drafts helped make this dissertation a better one. I would also like to thank Barbara Brooks for the insightful comments you gave me on early drafts of chapters in the dissertation seminar I took with you at the Graduate Center.

I would not have been able to complete this dissertation without the materials of several libraries and collections. I would like to thank the staffs of the Northeast division of the National Archives and Records Administration, the Library of Congress, the Schomburg Center for African American Cultural Study of the New York Public Library, and the Brooklyn Public Library. Special thanks are in order to the librarians of the Brooklyn collection of the Brooklyn Public Library, Wendy Phlug at the University of Pittsburgh archives, Daniella Romano at the Brooklyn Navy Yard Archives, Marjorie McNinch at the Hagley Museum and Library, and Laura Tosi at the Bronx Historical Society. Each of you helped me to navigate the archival collections at your respective institutions and for that I am grateful.

I would be remiss not to acknowledge the various organizations that provided me with financial assistance. I would like to thank the Colonial Dames of New York, the Office of Educational Opportunity and Diversity Programs at the CUNY Graduate Center, the estate of Alexander C. Naclerio, the Ford Foundation, CUNY's Writing Across the Curriculum Program, the Lehman College Writing Across the Curriculum Program, and Lehman College's Institute

for Literacy Studies for the fellowships and grants they provided. I would also like to thank the Lehman WAC program coordinators Elaine Avidon, Tyler Schmidt, Marcie Wolfe, and Jessica Yood for extending my fellowship and keeping me on as a Faculty Development Associate for the program.

I must thank my professional colleagues and friends for their support and camaraderie throughout this process. I thank David Golland for reading significant parts of this dissertation with a critical and supportive eye; Cindy Lobel and Kathleen Lopez for acting as mentors to me by providing professional guidance and support; and Toure Reed for invaluable suggestions on a portion of the chapters. I have to give a special shout out to my closest friends and colleagues Kevin McGruder, Kristopher Burrell, Carrie Pitzulo, Anthony deJesus, and honorary historian Melvin Coston. The advice, support, and encouragement you gave me every step of the way made the difference in whether or not I finished this dissertation.

Last but definitely not least I must thank my family for the encouragement and support they gave me throughout my graduate studies. I give my eternal thanks to my siblings Tansa Langley and Eddie DuBose, my brother-in-law Pierre Langley, my aunt Carolyn Mitchell, my uncle Vernon Mitchell, and my nephew James Langley for always supporting my endeavors and putting up with me when I was stressed out and under pressure. I would never have finished this dissertation without the help of my mother Madeline DuBose especially in the final stages of writing. Mom, your continuous encouragement and unwavering belief in me made this achievement possible. I also want to express my gratitude to my husband Benjamin Simons who pushed me and supported me every step of the way to the finish line. Even if I did not say it often, I appreciated it. Lastly I want to thank my son Alexander whose early arrival may have delayed progress on this dissertation but whose existence ultimately pushed me to complete it.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Abbreviations	x
List of Tables, Charts, and Figures	xi
Introduction	1
Chapter 1: A Shifting Population: Black Population Growth and the Creation of Alternative African American Communities	26
Black Mobility Throughout the Nation	
Harlem: New York’s Continuing Black Mecca	
Bedford-Stuyvesant: The second area of black settlement	
The Bronx: Moving Away from the Hustle and Bustle	
Conclusion	
Chapter 2: Opening Opportunities: Collaboration between Black Organizations and Fair Employment Agencies	45
No Conversion, No Jobs, No Place for Negroes: New York City War Production 1941-42	
Finding a “Place for Negroes”: Pressure for Fair Employment Legislation	
America at War: More Contracts, More Job Opportunities in New York City	
Chapter 3: The Road to Full Integration: The 1943 Labor Shortage, Government Agencies, and Civil Rights Activism	85
1943: A Turning Point	
Continued Activism for Equal Employment Opportunities	
Unrest for Opportunity: The Harlem Riot of 1943	
Anxiety and Action: Government Agencies’ Increased Efforts for Black Employment	
The Next Step: The Question of Upgrading in 1944	
From the Factory to the Office: Black Employment in White Collar Positions	
Ives-Quinn Law: Anti-Discrimination after the War	
Inclusive Representation: Unionizing Black Workers	
The Fight to Hold On: The Process of Reconversion	
Conclusion	
Chapter 4: The Sperry Gyroscope Corporation: A Case Study	150
Black Pressure for Negro Hires	
The UE Fights for Black Rights at Sperry	
Full integration in 1943: Government Activity for Fair Employment	
Preserving Victory: Retaining Black Jobs in the Race of Reconversion	
Fulfilling the Vision: Black Employment after the War	
Chapter 5: Busting Out: Black New York in the 1940s	202
Brooklyn’s Little Harlem: Bedford-Stuyvesant in the 1940s	
Movin’ on Up: Morrisania in the 1940s	
Conclusion	
Conclusion	262
Appendix	279
Selected Bibliography	300

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AFL: American Federation of Labor
BCCDE Brooklyn Coordinating Committee on Defense Employment for Negroes
BJCE: Brooklyn Joint Committee on Employment
BKUL: Brooklyn Urban League
BSIM: Brotherhood of Scientific Instrument Makers
CAD: New York State Committee Against Discrimination
CADC: Citizens' Anti-Discrimination Committee
CIO: Congress of Industrial Organizations
COD: New York State War Council Committee on Discrimination
FAECT: Federation of Architects, Engineers, Chemists, and Technicians
FEPC: Fair Employment Practices Committee
IBEW: International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers
ILGWU: International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union
MCOU: Mayor's Committee on Unity
MOWM: March on Washington Movement
NAACP: National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
NLC: Negro Labor Committee
NLRB: National Labor Relations Board
NLVC: Negro Labor Victory Committee
NNC: National Negro Congress
NUL: National Urban League
NYA: National Youth Administration
NYCHA: New York City Housing Authority
NYT: New York Times
NYUL: New York Urban League
OPA: Office of Price Administration
OPM: Office of Production Management
SCAD: State Committee Against Discrimination
UE: United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America
ULGNY: Urban League of Greater New York
USES: United States Employment Service
WMC: War Manpower Commission
YMCA: Young Men's Christian Association
YWCA: Young Women's Christian Association

LIST OF TABLES, CHARTS AND FIGURES

Table 1: Population of Whites and Blacks in New York City 1940-1950	31
Table 2: Population of Whites and Blacks in Manhattan 1940-1950	35
Table 3: Population of Whites and Blacks in Brooklyn 1940-1950	38
Table 4: Population of Whites and Blacks in the Bronx 1940-1950	41
Table 5: Negro Employees in War Production firms, 1942	82
Table 6: Brooklyn Urban League Placements in the first half of 1943	97
Table 7: NYUL Employment placement statistics, 1947	136
Table 8: Classification of African American and other Non-White workers at Sperry Gyroscope, 1945	194
Table 1.1: New York City 1940 Statistics	279
Table 1.2: New York City 1950 Stats and Difference from 1940 statistics	279
Table 1.3: 1940 Census Statistics for Manhattan	280
Table 1.4: Manhattan 1950 Stats and Difference from 1940 statistics	280
Table 1.5: 1940 Brooklyn Census Statistics	281
Table 1.6: Brooklyn 1950 Stats and Difference from 1940 statistics	281
Table 1.7: 1940 Bronx Census Statistics	282
Table 1.8: Bronx 1950 Stats and Difference from 1940 statistics	282
Table 1.9: New York City Negro population change by Sex and Age	283
Table 1.10: Manhattan Negro population change by Sex and Age	283
Table 1.11: Brooklyn Negro population change by Sex and Age	284
Table 1.12: Bronx Negro population change by Sex and Age	284
Table 1.13: Manhattan Census Tract Statistics for 1940 and 1950	285
Table 1.14: Brooklyn Census Track Statistics for 1940 and 1950	286
Table 1.15: Bronx Census Track Statistics for 1940 and 1950	288
Table 3.1: Summary Table	293
Table 3.2: Firms Appearing before FEPC at New York Hearings	294
Table 3.3: Workers Employed in Eight Firms Appearing before FEPC at New York hearings, February 16 and 17, 1942	295
Table 3.4: Total and Non-White Workers Employed in Skilled, Semi-skilled, unskilled, and other categories by 6 Firms appearing before the FEPC at New York Hearings	296
Table 4.1: Non-White Workers Employed in Skilled, Semi-skilled, unskilled and other categories by Sperry Company Inc.	297
Table 4.2: Total and Non-White Workers Employed by Sperry Company Inc. (February 1942- January 1944)	297
Figure 1: “It Just Doesn’t Make Sense	53
Figure 1.1: 1940 Manhattan Census Tracts and Demographic Change	289
Figure 1.2: 1940 Brooklyn Census Tracts and Demographic Change	290
Figure 1.3: Map of Brooklyn Neighborhoods	291
Figure 1.4: 1940 Bronx Census Tracts and Demographic Change	292
Figure 5.1: Neighborhood Map of the Bronx	298
Figure 5.2: Bronx Street Map	299

Chart 1: Negro Labor at Sperry Inc, May 1942	179
Chart 2: Negro Labor at Sperry Inc, May 1943	180

Introduction

World War II was a pivotal point in American history as it, according to historian Neil Wynn, marked the emergence of modern America.¹ By creating a defense industry that pulled black migrants from southern rural areas to northern and western industrialized centers, the government produced changes in the places from which migrants left and those to which they traveled. The migration produced new and expanding black communities in northern cities, new jobs in war industries, and new racial antagonisms. The new black workers earned more than they had and enjoyed more freedom to protest the discrimination that greeted them in their new homes. Overcrowding of black communities and subsequent expansion of black residence into other communities, competition over war industry employment, unequal access to skilled employment, and race antagonisms were all effects of the World War II migration.

The World War II migration has not been documented as richly as the migration of African Americans to northern cities during World War I. There are few works devoted solely to studying the phenomenon and its consequences for both the southern areas from which the migrants left and the cities to which they traveled.² The majority of works that do address the second wave of the Great Migration, focus on its social effects and not the demographic changes

¹ Neil A Wynn, "The 'Good War': The Second World War and Postwar American Society," *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 31, No. 3 (Jul., 1996): 463-482.

² Some studies that do look at the migration as the main subject are Peter Gottlieb's "Rethinking the Great Migration: A Perspective from Pittsburgh," in *The Great Migration in Historical Perspective*, ed. Joe William Trotter Jr. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 68-82; Nicholas Lemann's *The Promised Land: The Great Black Migration and How It Changed America* (New York: Albert A. Knopf, 1991); Hollis Lynch's *The black urban condition: a documentary history, 1866-1971* (New York: Crowell, 1973.); James Gregory's *The Southern Diaspora: How the Great Migrations of Black and White Southerners Transformed America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005); Isabel Wilkerson's *The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America's Great Migration* (New York: Random House, 2010). Most of these works are not devoted solely to the second wave of the Great Migration but include an in depth look at the phenomenon as part of an examination of the migration as a whole.

it caused. These works do not describe the basic characteristics of the migrants or precisely track where these migrants settled.

One work that focuses on the migration of blacks to urban areas in the World War II era and beyond is Isabel Wilkerson's *The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America's Great Migration*. Wilkerson uses interviews to tell the story of three individuals who left the South and migrated to urban areas in the north and west. She delves into the stories of these three individuals who left the south between 1937 and 1953 in order to paint a composite picture of the personal experiences of those migrating to northern, western, and mid-western cities. Through the telling of these individual stories, Wilkerson is able to get at the view-point and motivations of the migrants in a way unlike any other monograph. However her focus on the stories of three individuals limits the scope of her work. The three stories she tells in detail do not stand in for nor are they representative of the stories of the millions of African Americans who migrated to urban areas during the Second Great Migration. Moreover, the structural factors affecting the choices of these three African-American migrants and thus the larger power-structure within which they operate are sometimes secondary to the biographic stories in the book.³ This dissertation aims to tell the larger story of Wilkerson's migrants in a particular place and time by exploring the demographic, economic, and social changes resulting from the migration of southern blacks to New York City during the 1940s.

Many histories of urban areas at mid-century do not explore the demographic changes involved in the migration, the process of community formation, or its social ramifications in detail. Nicholas Lemann's *The Promised Land: The Great Black Migration and How It Changed America* is an example. Lemann described the way the urban landscape changed in

³ Isabel Wilkerson, *The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America's Great Migration* (New York: Random House, 2010).

response to mass migration in the post-World War II era. According to the author the migration was one of the largest and most rapid mass movements of people in history and the result was a situation in which “urban” became a euphemism for “black” and eventually black urban communities changed into ghettos. Curiously Lemann does not begin his study with the World War II migration when the influx of blacks to urban areas began. Examining blacks’ relocation from rural Mississippi to Chicago in the 1950s and 1960s, Lemann explained the social changes resulting from the migration such as overcrowded tenements, increased crime rates, and a general demoralization of character that took place in the ghettos formed after the migration. Lemann does this in an effort to explain how the sharecropper culture of the southern migrants precipitated ghetto mentality of those living in the urban cities to which they relocated.⁴ This cultural explanation of the problem does not stress the role of racial hostility or the deindustrialization taking place in urban areas in the 1950s and 1960s. Though he gives some demographic data in the early chapters of the book, the majority of the remaining chapters are recollections of migrants used to illustrate the effects of the migration on the migrants and their experiences in the new and changing urban setting. These recollections were based on several families, not a large enough basis on which to make the sweeping conclusions he does and hardly the most objective way of approaching the question.⁵ Like Wilkerson, Lemann’s focus on

⁴ Lemann, *The Promised Land: The Great Black Migration and How It Changed America*. (New York: Albert A. Knopf, 1991), 6.

⁵ Lemann’s view that southern migrants bring with them a particular southern culture is a theme in migration histories. James Grossman’s *Land of Hope* also posits this idea. Discussing the initial wave of the Great Migration during World War I and immediately after, Grossman explained that these new migrants experienced a completely different environment that shocked their southern sensibilities. Grossman highlights the difficulties and adjustments these migrants had to make in leaving a segregated, rural, agricultural environment, and settling in an integrated, urban, industrial environment. Placing the migrants at the center of his book, Grossman explained how the ways migrants learned about the North and then moved and resettled drew upon and strengthened southern black culture, especially the role of kinship and community. These migrants brought a racially centered world view which also shaped their response to the new urban environment.

a few migrants' stories makes his work narrow in scope as it does not provide a comprehensive picture of the varied experiences of the migrants.

Those works that explain the changes in community composition, emerging racial antagonism, and beginning of urban blight that resulted from the World War II migration are not focused on the North East, but on Mid-West and Western cities. Thomas Sugrue's study of urban decline in Detroit, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis* is a prime example. Sugrue discusses the formation of centers of black urban life in the post-World War II era. However, the migration does not figure in his work. In his study of Detroit, Sugrue argued that the origins of the urban crisis are much earlier than social scientists have recognized, placing them in the 1940s instead of the 1960s. In this analysis the Second World War plays a much larger role in the current situation of black urban areas than previously thought. As migration of blacks into Detroit during the World War II increased, the housing available to them did not, causing severe housing shortages. Few blacks were able to escape "Paradise Valley", the black ghetto, and those who did were faced with many obstacles including fierce white resistance.⁶ Though Sugrue pointed to the migration as an important component that created "Paradise Valley," there is no discussion of details of the movement in terms of who moved, how many people came, sex and age characteristics, and employment prospects. Many studies of the World War I migration made distinctions between black residents and migrants. Sugrue ignores this possible line of analysis. He does not analyze the role that declining jobs and continued migration had upon racial discrimination. In the end, Sugrue wants to tell the story of racial discrimination, not the history of blacks in Detroit.

⁶ Thomas Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996.)

The clearest example of a study that fully examines the effects of black migration into an area and its social ramifications is Shirley Ann Moore's essay "Getting There, Being There" a study of the black migration into Richmond, California. Moore argued that the increasing employment opportunities and the passage of Executive Order 8802 banning race discrimination in defense industries accelerated the movement of black workers into California. Between 1942 and 1945 14,000 blacks moved into Richmond to take advantage of job opportunities, most importantly in the Kaiser shipyards. The migrants were part of a general process of movement where black people relocated from the rural south to southern cities, and later on to the cities of the North and West. According to Moore, blacks were recruited by Kaiser to fill the wartime labor shortages. These migrants also relied on personal networks such as kinship ties and church associations, to inform and assist them in their move. Upon arrival, they initially met a cold reception from the long-time black Richmond residents who felt the newly arriving blacks were uneducated, abrasive, and unrefined. Though the black old-timers initially feared the migrants would threaten their tenuous position in Richmond's economic and social hierarchy, in the face of increasing racial conflict the two groups joined to overcome prejudice. One of the reasons for this change may have been that whites did not accept the distinction between long-standing and recent blacks in the neighborhood, a situation which forced the old residents to embrace the new. White Richmond residents responded to the influx of black migrants by establishing more stringent social, political, and economic restrictions on all black residents, newcomers and long-time residents alike. As black migrants entered Richmond, African Americans were isolated and confined to their North Richmond neighborhoods with little chance of moving from this burgeoning ghetto. Richmond's war industries provided enough jobs for African Americans, so the largest problem was the inadequate housing supply. Furthermore, local newspapers and

police departments began to characterize criminal activity in racial terms, giving a distorted picture of black criminality and stigmatizing the entire community.⁷

Many of the questions Sugrue asked of Detroit and Moore asked of Richmond can be asked about New York City. Was New York City like Sugrue's Detroit with blacks bottled up in certain areas? At first glance, it appears that New York was different as African American migrants settled in new areas in Queens, Brooklyn, and the Bronx. But one can still ask the question, was there white flight or did neighborhoods become integrated? Was this integration contentious? Did whites organize to prevent blacks from moving into various areas? If the patterns of black settlement varied in different neighborhoods, why? Were there intraracial conflicts between long-time black residents and the new blacks moving in? What are the links between the Second Great Migration and black community formation across the city in the 1940s?

This dissertation attempts to fill a gaping hole in the historiography on African Americans in New York City during the 1940s. Much of the existing literature on New York City in the 1940s lacks a study of the demographic significance of the migration. The body of scholarship on New York in the 1940s has yet to explain where migrants originated, settlement patterns, and characteristics of these migrants for example their age and gender. The overwhelming majority of studies that do deal with New York history during the 1940s document the economic and social trends but fail to mention the role of the migration. Employment discrimination, black poverty, mortality, and residential segregation in the 1940s are all subjects covered in works by Cheryl Greenberg, Nat Brandt and Frederick Binder, David

⁷ Shirley Ann Moore, "Getting There, Being There: African-American Migration to Richmond, California, 910-1945," in *The Great Migration in Historical Perspective*, ed. Joe William Trotter Jr., (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 106-126.

Reimers, and Craig Steven Wilder.⁸ All of these scholars wrote about New York in the 1940s, and often mentioned the migration as a contributing factor to the social, economic and political conditions of African Americans in the city; however none specifically deal with the details of the migration itself, only with the effects.

The availability of better paying jobs in the factories producing goods for the war was the most important reason blacks moved to New York during World War II. No works currently explain the process by which blacks were able to find employment in the city's war industries.

⁸ Cheryl Lynn Greenberg, *"Or Does it Explode?": Black Harlem in the Great Depression* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), Nat Brandt, *Harlem at War: the Black Experience in WWII* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1996), Frederick Binder and David Reimers, *All Nations Under Heaven: An Ethnic and Racial History of New York City* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), Craig Steven Wilder, *A Covenant with Color: Race and Social Power in Brooklyn* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000.) Cheryl Greenberg in her book *Or Does It Explode* explores the continued problems Harlemites faced after the Great Depression. While many of Harlem's residents found employment, and often better employment, and while some improvements came as a result, black poverty, mortality, and residential segregation continued. The new war industries discriminated against blacks even after the creation of the Fair Employment Practices Committee (FEPC) and other wartime measures. Greenberg argues that Harlem moved out of the Depression more slowly than other areas: for blacks, racism, segregation, and discrimination limited the wartime opportunities others enjoyed. In this analysis the increase of blacks to the New York area is not even discussed nor considered as a possible reason for the continuation of African Americans' denigrated position in the society of New York. Again the migration and its effects on the social situation are conspicuously missing from analyses of social, political and economic conditions in Harlem in the book *Harlem at War: The Black Experience in World War II*. The author Nat Brandt, outlines various events in Harlem and attitudes of Harlemites, however the World War II migration is reserved for only one line of the book. Pointing out that the movement of blacks to New York City during the Second World War made blacks influential voters in elections. Frederick Binder and David Reimers in their book *All Nations Under Heaven* discuss the development of ethnic enclaves in New York as well as relations among these groups. Blacks achieved a widening of employment opportunities, however African Americans experienced economic recovery from the Great Depression at a slower rate than other ethnic groups throughout the city. Mortality rates, housing discrimination and shortages, higher rents, and lower paying jobs still plagued black communities. Racial tensions mounted throughout the war and post-war years and blacks moved out of Harlem and into other racially segregated neighborhoods or in areas becoming all black because of white flight. The black settlement in Brooklyn's Bedford Stuyvesant area expanded rapidly to adjacent Crown Heights and Brownsville, a trend that very well may have been due in part to skyrocketing black population augmented by black migration from the south, a source the authors ignore. The economic woes of blacks in Brooklyn and the benefits from the World War II economy are a topic addressed in depth by Craig Steven Wilder in *A Covenant with Color*. Wilder argues that though African Americans experienced a widening of employment opportunities, black men would find it nearly impossible to turn their wartime training into lasting opportunity. Furthermore federal agencies exaggerated the opportunities that wartime production brought African Americans – in reality they never received their share of the benefits from the federal funds that inflated New York City's defense industries during the war. While providing invaluable information about black economic life in Brooklyn, the role of increasing black population again is not mentioned in Wilder's analysis. An actual study of how many blacks were employed in wartime industries, how they found employment, and their relations with labor has not yet been done, nor has there been any study of how black migrants fared in the job markets of World War II New York. Many of these works do not use primary sources in their analysis of the reasons for these trends in New York, they simply site the conventional wisdom found in other books.

Craig Steven Wilder in *A Covenant with Color* describes discrimination against African Americans in war industries, but fails to explain where and how blacks were able to find jobs in war industries. In *Brownsville, Brooklyn* Wendell Pritchett also argued that African Americans were denied employment in many occupations, especially in war industries. Nevertheless, he argued, blacks were able to move into other industrial and white-collar jobs previously closed to them. Though Pritchett made this distinction, he did not analyze where these barriers were and what blacks were doing to confront them. He did however explain what jobs were open to blacks. According to the author, many black women moved out of domestic service and into the factories (particularly in the garment industry), and they also made inroads in the clerical, communication, and sales sector. In addition, some black men were hired for skilled positions, promoted to foremen in some factories, and secured jobs as trolley and train operators.⁹ This dissertation begins to systematically analyze black employment in New York during the 1940s in order to add to our understanding of the causes and effects of the second wave of the migration to New York.

The role government agencies established to investigate allegations of discriminatory hiring by war industries played in opening new employment opportunities to blacks in New York City has not been studied thoroughly enough. Though instances of discrimination continued in many war industries, by examining the records of local War Manpower Commission and Fair Employment Practices Committee offices and New York State Committee on Discrimination records it is clear that in the scientific instruments, electronic instrument, and shipbuilding sectors investigations by government agencies did indeed expand the number jobs and improve

⁹ Wendell Pritchett, *Brownsville, Brooklyn: Blacks, Jews, and the Changing Face of the Ghetto*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002.) Much of Pritchett's analysis of African Americans' employment limitations and opportunities were based on secondary sources, therefore it is difficult to verify the sources or evaluate his arguments.

the quality of the positions open to African Americans. Moreover, this dissertation emphasizes where the most significant shifts were in employment opportunities – the opening of skilled and semi-skilled industrial jobs to black men in war industries. After the war black women also moved into clerical occupations and as store clerks after the war. These were white collar occupations not open to them before World War II.

Several scholars have noted that the Second Great Migration, the widened employment opportunities blacks enjoyed, the participation of black men as soldiers in World War II, and a war-time national ethos of democracy and human rights spurred African Americans all over the country to fight for equal rights.¹⁰ Historian Harvard Sitkoff argued that the Second World War “would challenge the color line on many fronts for most minority groups in the United States.”

In Sitkoff’s estimation

“Jim Crow would be wounded, but not killed, by a series of interrelated developments, including (1) the hypocrisy of fighting for freedom abroad while denying it to minorities at home; (2) the equation of racism and Nazism by prominent American liberals; (3) the nation’s need for the loyalty and manpower of all its citizens; (4) the massive migration of blacks to urban areas and out of the South; (5) the opening of new opportunities for minorities in industry and the military; (6) heightened expressions of white support for minority rights; (7) shifts in federal policies to lessen racial discrimination; (8) pressures arising from America’s new world role; (9) fears that continuing racial violence would hinder the war effort; and, last but hardly least, (10) the growth and militancy of African American groups and institutions, who consciously used the war effort to extract concessions and make gains.¹¹

¹⁰ Martha Biondi, *To Stand and Fight: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Postwar New York City* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003.); Richard Dalfiume, “The ‘Forgotten Years’ of the Negro Revolution.” *Journal of American History*, Vol. 55, No. 1 (June 1968): 90-106; Robert Korstadt and Nelson Lichtenstein, “Opportunities Found and Lost: Labor, Radicals, and the Early Civil Rights Movement.” *Journal of American History*, Vol. 75 No. 3 (Dec., 1988), 786-811., Harvard Sitkoff, ““Part Four: African Americans and Other Minorities on the Home Front,” in *World War II and the American Homefront: A National Historic Landmarks Theme Study*, pub. National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, October 2007. 104-127. Accessed June 23, 2011. <http://www.nps.gov/nhl/themes/HomefrontStudy.pdf>

¹¹ Sitkoff, ““Part Four: African Americans and Other Minorities on the Home Front.”

African Americans all over the country began to a struggle for greater economic opportunities and by extension equal rights during the 1940s. Though more historians are focusing on the early struggles for equal rights in northern cities, few examine the decidedly economic cast civil rights struggles took during the World War II era and the connection between labor and civil rights.

The struggle for equal economic opportunity that took place in New York City during the Second World War is an additional subject of this dissertation. Books like Delores Greenberg's *Or Does it Explode* examine the economic focus of civil rights activism in New York during the Depression Era however that activism continued in the next decade and has largely remained undocumented. Like Richard Dalfiume and Nelson Lichtenstein and Robert Korstad, I argue that the main focus of the movement for equal rights for African Americans during the war years focused on equal employment opportunity for blacks.¹²

Korstad and Lichtenstein clearly examine the economic focus of early civil rights efforts in their article "Opportunities Found and Lost: Labor, Radicals, and the Early Civil Rights Movement." The authors locate the start of the civil rights movement in the early 1940s as the nation's black population migrated to urban centers and became "increasingly urban, proletarian [in] character." In their view the key to this early civil rights activism was black membership in labor unions, particularly those of the Congress of Industrial Organizations. Together these unions and black activists "were in the vanguard of efforts to transform race relations." The rise of egalitarian and inclusive industrial unions and the evolution of New Deal labor laws offered working-class blacks an economic and political standard by which they made demands and began a popular struggle for civil rights. Korstad and Lichtenstein argue that by the mid-1940s

¹² Richard Dalfiume, "The 'Forgotten Years' of the Negro Revolution.>"; Robert Korstadt and Nelson Lichtenstein, "Opportunities Found and Lost: Labor, Radicals, and the Early Civil Rights Movement."

civil rights issues had reached a level of national political importance that they would not again have until the 1960s. By the end of the 1940s the moment of opportunity for a lasting labor-based civil rights movement passed because of attacks against organizations and individuals associated with communism.¹³

Korstad and Lichtenstein make a very important point about the early movement for equal rights for blacks – that the goals of civil rights activists in the 1940s were based on the idea of equality of economic opportunity for all races. Korstad and Lichtenstein’s stress on civil rights as a struggle for employment is critical and unexamined in the literature on the history of New York City. Several works have explored black New Yorkers’ very public campaigns for equal rights in the years before and after World War II but none of those tell the story of the fight for equal employment opportunities in the war years.¹⁴

Martha Biondi is the best known book on the early struggle for black rights in New York. Her book begins after the war in 1945 and focuses mostly on the activities of Communist organizations. In *To Stand and Fight: The Struggle for Post-War Civil Rights in New York City* Biondi examines grassroots efforts to achieve black rights in New York between 1946 and 1954. She argues that black leaders had a new urban agenda, pushing issues such as police brutality

¹³ Robert Korstadt and Nelson Lichtenstein, “Opportunities Found and Lost: Labor, Radicals, and the Early Civil Rights Movement”, 786-811.

According to the authors there were three elements that contributed to the decline in labor-black civil rights coalition. The first is employers’ offensive against unionism in the 1940s. Conservatives used the Communist issue to attack New Deal and Fair Deal reforms, as well as unions and union leaders (black and white) affiliated with the Popular Front. Second most institutions of American liberalism, including the unions, race advancement organizations, and liberal advocacy organizations, focused their energy to bring the courts to act in order to win citizenship rights for blacks. Finally, the routinization of the postwar industrial relations system caused unions to focus only on the goals of union leadership. Focused on incremental collective bargaining gains and committed to social change only if it was well controlled, the big unions became less responsive to the particular interests of its black members.

¹⁴ Clarence Taylor, *Knocking at Our Own Door: Milton A. Galamison and the Struggle to Integrate New York City Schools* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997); Martha Biondi, *To Stand and Fight: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Postwar New York City* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003); and Brian Purnell, “A Movement Grows in Brooklyn: The Brooklyn Chapter of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) and the Northern Civil Rights Movement During the Early 1960s” (Ph.D. diss., New York University, 2006).

and fair housing to the center of big-city politics. The black struggle for equal rights changed the landscape of New York and helped to give it a liberal image. After World War II, black New Yorkers increasingly asserted their right to patronize public accommodations without discrimination. They challenged exclusionary practices in restaurants, bars, nightclubs, hotels, swimming pools, and trains. These efforts to desegregate the city's cultural life, nightlife, and transportation helped lay the groundwork for the rise of New York as a cosmopolitan global city.¹⁵

Biondi focused her study on leftist and Communist activism, arguing that the Cold War both advanced and hindered the aims of Civil Rights activists. The Cold War opened up domestic policies to a global audience critical of American segregation and racial inequality but also caused the government to crack down on domestic dissent. Biondi described how virtually every leading activist suffered persecution, investigation, repression, or censorship in the 1950s. The repression dramatically slowed black mobilization in New York City and undermined the civil rights-trade union alliance, reduced civil rights leaders' calls for economic reform, and muted these leaders' criticism of American foreign policy. Biondi concluded that the movement for equal rights in New York City was ultimately derailed by the Cold War because the movement was so closely allied and associated with the American left.¹⁶

Biondi acknowledged that the migration was important to spawning the Civil Rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s writing, "The massive Black migration of the 1940s transformed the racial geography of the nation and raised the question of whether segregation would intensify and spread in the North and West." She explained how civil rights leaders in New York City mobilized Black New Yorkers and pushed civil rights onto the city's political

¹⁵ Martha Biondi, *To Stand and Fight: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Postwar New York City* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003.)

¹⁶ Ibid.

agenda. Biondi clearly mentions that the early movement for equal rights in 1940s centered around employment issues.¹⁷ However, because Biondi focused on Cold War issues, she did not examine the migration itself or the employment concerns that were so important in mobilizing blacks in New York to fight for equal rights.

Unlike Biondi's work this study includes an examination of the migration and the employment issues Biondi identified as contributing to the emerging civil rights movement in New York. It also explores the economic activism of civil rights organizations during the 1940s. I examine the activities of Communist Front organizations like the National Negro Congress and the Negro Labor Victory Committee but cast the net more widely to consider the activities of mainstream civil rights organizations as well. The main goal for New York civil rights organizations – including the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the New York and Brooklyn Urban Leagues, the National Negro Congress, and the Negro Labor Victory Committee – was equality of economic opportunity for New York City's black residents. Of these organizations the Brooklyn Urban League was the most successful at opening employment opportunities for blacks in New York City because of the focus and goals of the organization as well as its collaborative relationship with state and federal fair employment agencies.

The Silent Arrival also looks at the effects of black migration and skyrocketing New York City population on community formation in the city. Other books have examined the effects of the World War II migration in New York in the context of community studies. Wendell Pritchett's *Brownsville, Brooklyn*, Craig Steven Wilder's *A Covenant with Color*, Evelyn Gonzalez's *The Bronx*, and Harold Connolly's *A Ghetto Grows in Brooklyn* all mention the

¹⁷ Biondi, *To Stand and Fight*, 287.

influx of black residents during the World War II era and explain the effects on the region they studied.¹⁸ This dissertation situates the changing demographic trends in several neighborhoods in the larger context of the migration's effects on the city's population distribution, neighborhood composition, and race relations.

Wendell Pritchett examined the effects of the World War II migration as part of his study on the development of the black community of Brownsville, Brooklyn. In his book *Brownsville, Brooklyn* Pritchett examined the increasing black settlement in this section of Brooklyn. At the beginning of the 1940s Brownsville was a working class neighborhood of Jews and African Americans. These two groups resided in separate communities within Brownsville and generally avoided conflict. Pritchett argued that this arrangement worked as long as the percentage of blacks in Brownsville remained small. However as the black population almost doubled because of the migration, white residents' concerns about crime and juvenile delinquency in the neighborhood increased resulting in heightened racial tensions. Discrimination against blacks rose and blacks claimed increasing incidents of police brutality.¹⁹ The 1940s brought on important shifts in racial composition of Brownsville and profoundly affected race relations in that area – changes that occurred in other neighborhoods in the city as well. A continuation of the analysis Pritchett does in his work is necessary to fully understand black community formation in the city in the 1940s and beyond.

This study seeks to address many of the same topics as Shirley Anne Moore's work on Richmond, California as I attempt to explain how black communities in New York City

¹⁸ Harold X. Connolly, *A Ghetto Grows in Brooklyn* (New York: New York University Press, 1977); Craig Steven Wilder, *A Covenant with Color: Race and Social Power in Brooklyn* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000); Wendell Pritchett, *Brownsville, Brooklyn: Blacks, Jews, and the Changing Face of the Ghetto* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002); Evelyn Gonzalez, *The Bronx: A History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004).

¹⁹ Wendell Pritchett, *Brownsville, Brooklyn: Blacks, Jews, and the Changing Face of the Ghetto* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).

developed during the World War II era. Through this dissertation I hope to add complexity to the story of the effects of the migration in urban areas and reveal how the migration contributed to the creation of modern cities for the second half of the 20th Century. New York follows and departs from the general narrative of the effects of the migration on urban areas in this country. One significant difference is that blacks in New York moved to areas outside of the primary area of black settlement. New black migrants and Harlemites moved to Bedford-Stuyvesant while other Harlemites moved north to the Morrisania section of the Bronx. Brownsville as Pritchett proved also has a significant increase of blacks move to the area. New York's blacks were not hemmed into one district as the black residents of Detroit and Richmond were. This dispersion of the black population affected the character of race relations in the city. Black New Yorkers did not focus their frustrations and discontent on white residents and civilians during violent racial conflicts. Instead African Americans in the city focused on the government and law enforcement to express their discontent in the 1940s.

The dissertation also complicates the narrative of post-war urban decline that we see in works like Sugrue's *Origins of the Urban Crisis*. Though Bedford-Stuyvesant and Morrisania experienced declining living conditions, increased crime rates, and inadequate social services and became the picture of urban blight in the 1950s and 1960s; that outcome was not inevitable. This dissertation elucidates the process by which blacks began to move to these areas and seeks to present the 1940s as an era of burgeoning opportunity for blacks. In the 1940s New York African Americans viewed relocation to Morrisania and Bedford-Stuyvesant as a chance to improve their living standards and quality of life. This dissertation also seeks to compare the development of black communities in Bedford-Stuyvesant and Morrisania to examine intraracial class divisions and compare race relations in the two areas. The class composition of the new

black residents in Morrisania and Bedford-Stuyvesant and the economic means of the white residents in each area had profound effects on race relations in each of these neighborhoods and ultimately determined whether they would become integrated communities or whether white residents would flee.

Chapter 1 explores the demographic changes in the New York City population. It explains where black migrants came from, where they settled, and the sex and age of the migrant population. Most of the approximately 200,000 black migrants came from the South Atlantic states – Virginia, North Carolina, and South Carolina. The largest group of migrants was young women in their 20s. The two primary areas migrants settled were Harlem, the existing center of black settlement in the city, and Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brooklyn which became a black neighborhood during the war years. The black population already living in New York City also moved to new areas. In particular we see black middle class families moving from Harlem to the Morrisania section of the Bronx creating integrated neighborhoods there.

Many of the black migrants came to find better-paying employment in the city's war industries. Chapter 2 of this dissertation examines the changing structure of black employment in the early years of World War II and explains how war industries in the city came to hire black workers. It explains which jobs were closed to blacks, the rationale used by employers for refusing to hire them, and the process that led employers to, for the first time, offer jobs to black workers.

New York's industries did not receive many government contracts during the first two years of the war. The factories, which were mostly light industries, were not given federal contracts because they could not easily convert to produce the massive quantities of goods

needed for the war. Therefore the labor market remained tight and jobs hard to find for black and white workers alike.

Even though there was a tight labor market, African Americans protested for their fair share of the jobs that were available. Civil Rights organizations like the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the National Urban League (NUL) used boycotts, marches, and publicity campaigns to try to pressure the management of these industries to hire black workers. These measures were largely unsuccessful. Where black activists did find success however was in pressuring the federal and state governments into passing legislation barring hiring discrimination by war industries and creating agencies to investigate their hiring practices. The New York State assembly also established a Committee on Discrimination that was eventually given the power to enforce state anti-discrimination laws.

New York's industries began receiving production contracts from the federal government in 1942 but despite increased production in war industries, African Americans did not immediately see employment opportunities in those factories. Black organizations continued to pressure the management of war industries and state and federal fair employment agencies to open war industries to African Americans. The activities of the New York State Committee on Discrimination in conjunction with the local offices of the FEPC to investigate discriminatory hiring practices made illegal by state legislation and Executive Order 8802 prompted some war industries in New York City to begin hiring black workers by the end of 1942.

Though war industries began to hire black workers in 1942, these factories were not fully integrated until 1943. Chapter 3 explains which industrial sectors integrated and what kinds of jobs blacks held. It also describes the continuing role of civil rights organizations and fair employment agencies in expanding the occupations open to black workers.

A labor shortage in 1943, further opened skilled and semi-skilled industrial jobs to African Americans in the scientific instruments, electronic instrument, and shipbuilding sectors. Black men left their service jobs to work in skilled and semi skilled jobs at companies that produced scientific instruments, electronic instruments, and naval vessels during the war. Black women also benefitted from war-time labor shifts as they found employment other than domestic work. During the war black women worked in war industries in skilled, semiskilled and clerical positions.

The NAACP, the Negro Labor Committee (NLC), the Negro Labor Victory Committee (NLVC) along with its Communist Party affiliated parent organization the National Negro Congress (NNC), and most importantly the Brooklyn Urban League (BKUL) acted to exert pressure on the management of war industries and unions that discriminated against black workers. Through community meetings, press campaigns, cooperation with labor unions, and anti-discrimination agencies these organizations produced the dramatic employment changes of the era. The Brooklyn Urban League (BKUL) was the most effective organization in opening new employment opportunities for blacks in New York City's war industries. The BKUL worked with the New York State Committee on Discrimination (COD) to identify war industries engaging in discriminatory hiring practices. The organization also published reports of this discrimination to maintain pressure on the COD to continue its investigations. In this way the Brooklyn Urban League acted with the state to open new areas of employment to African Americans.

The war caused lasting changes in the employment available to black men and women. Though many of the city's African American men were ousted from their skilled and semi-skilled jobs when veterans returned from the war, not all black men were forced to return to the

low paying service jobs they had before the war. In the five years after the war the number of black men working in service positions had declined and increasing numbers of black men worked in semi-skilled industrial positions, as skilled craftsmen, and in clerical jobs. Likewise, most black women were forced from their war-time industrial jobs by the return of soldiers; but after the war many black women worked in clerical occupations, as phone operators, and as clerks in department stores. These better-paying positions had been closed to black women before the war.

The patterns and practices described in Chapters 2 and 3 are examined at the micro-level in Chapter 4. This chapter presents a case study of how one Brooklyn company that produced scientific instruments for the Navy began hiring black workers. The Sperry Gyroscope Corporation employed almost no African Americans before the war. By the end of the war they employed more than one thousand African Americans and almost 60 percent of those employees worked in skilled or semi-skilled positions.

Sperry became the focus of black protests for equal employment opportunities because it held large government contracts to produce scientific instruments for the war but had virtually no African American workers. The NAACP, the NUL, and the NNC all worked to pressure Sperry to hire blacks. The initial efforts of these groups prompted Sperry management to hire its first black workers in 1941, but African American activists continued their protests because the company had only hired a few blacks. The NAACP, the NUL, and the NNC brought their allegations of racial discrimination at Sperry to the attention of the local offices of the Fair Employment Practices Committee prompting an investigation of Sperry's hiring practices.

It was not until local offices of the FEPC and the state Committee on Discrimination investigated Sperry's employment practices in 1942 that the company began to hire larger

numbers of blacks and more importantly placed them in skilled and semi-skilled positions. A labor shortage in 1943 then prompted management to make more black hires. Though historians have argued that the labor shortage was the primary reason for the employment of blacks in war industries; Sperry's case undermines this argument. Company management hired comparable numbers of blacks in the years before and after the labor shortage. This indicates that Sperry changed their hiring policies before the labor shortage likely in response to the FEPC and COD investigations.

The chapter also highlights the importance of the United, Electrical, Radio, and Machine Workers of America (UE) in facilitating black employment at Sperry. The progressive, Communist-led union which advocated inclusion of black members took over representation of Sperry workers in 1942 and pressed management to hire black workers as well. At the end of the war, the UE cooperated with the Negro Labor Victory Committee to prevent lay-offs of black industrial workers. The activities of the UE underscore the point that labor unions, as well as the racial organizations, were important in integrating New York's war industries.

Sperry's case also illustrates how individuals affected the process by which industries were integrated. The employment of blacks by Sperry changed the attitude of the company President Thomas Morgan. He became an advocate of fair employment for blacks in Sperry as well as in other war industries. Morgan advocated for black employment and education outside of the company as well, extending his activism to fundraising for the United Negro College Fund. After the war Morgan's commitment to employing black workers prompted management to rehire black workers late 1940s after initial post-war lay-offs.

The employment opportunities offered by companies like Sperry prompted thousands of African Americans to move to New York during World War II and the migration permanently

changed the composition of some communities in the city. For migrants housing was a large concern, only second in importance to finding employment. Moreover, many migrants left the south to escape Jim Crow and improve their quality of life. Harlem, already overcrowded, could not hold the thousands of migrants moving to the city. Therefore, many African Americans chose to move to other areas of the city during the 1940s. Chapter 5 of this dissertation studies the demographic and social changes, as well as the changes in race relations resulting from the expansion of black residency to Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brooklyn and the Morrisania section of the Bronx. This final chapter attempts to answer many of the questions Thomas Sugrue asked about Detroit in the post-war era. It examines the neighborhoods where blacks lived in the 1940s, by exploring the migration's effects on the extant center of black residency Harlem and the growing community of blacks in Bedford-Stuyvesant and Morrisania. As Sugrue did with Detroit, Chapter 5 studies whether there was white flight or integration in these neighborhoods and whether whites organized to prevent blacks from moving into the new areas of black settlement. The chapter also compares the patterns of black settlement in different areas of the city and explores whether there was conflict between long-time residents and new black residents.

Black migrants were not confined to one area of black settlement in New York as they were in Detroit and Richmond. Black New Yorkers and migrants alike settled in Bedford-Stuyvesant creating a second area of black settlement there. Middle class and in the latter half of the decade working class blacks moved from Harlem to Morrisania as well, integrating that neighborhood. As in Detroit, the second wave of the Great Migration caused overcrowding, high rents, crime, and deteriorating social conditions in Harlem. These conditions prompted blacks to settle in other areas of the city. The ability of blacks in New York to move outside of the central area of black settlement is very different from the way blacks in "Paradise Valley" and North

Richmond were bottled up in the black districts of those cities. Finding available housing was not as acute a problem for blacks in New York as it was in Detroit or Richmond.

Harlemites and migrants alike looked to settle in Bedford-Stuyvesant because of the war jobs available in close proximity. Moreover, a small black population already lived in the area which attracted more African Americans. Bedford-Stuyvesant was less crowded than Harlem and had better housing, two of the primary reasons blacks moved there. Furthermore, the area was easily accessible from Harlem because of the new train line directly connecting the two neighborhoods. Thousands of working class and middle class blacks moved to the neighborhood and by the end of the 1940s Bedford-Stuyvesant was called “Little Harlem” because it was the second central area of black settlement in the city. The name was even more accurate because the condition of blacks in the neighborhood increasingly resembled the condition of those living in Harlem. Landlords began to charge higher rents of new black tenants in Bedford-Stuyvesant, housing in the area became overcrowded, real estate values plummeted, and crime levels increased. All of these factors prompted white flight from the neighborhood. But some whites would not leave without a fight.

As in Detroit during the 1940s, Bedford-Stuyvesant whites organized in opposition to black settlement. Monsignor John Belford, a priest at the Roman Catholic Church of the Nativity, led white protests against increased crime in the neighborhood. He embarked on a public campaign against black residency by publishing articles in his parish newspaper and the *Brooklyn Eagle* highlighting the ignorant and destructive character of blacks migrating to the area. He blamed blacks, and southern migrants in particular, for crime and vice. The Midtown Civic League, led by Sumner Sirtl, became the primary organization fighting decreasing property values in Bedford-Stuyvesant. The organization used numerous tactics to try to stop black

settlement in Bedford-Stuyvesant and in 1943 pressured the King's County Grand Jury to investigate the condition of blacks living in Brooklyn, primarily in the Bedford-Stuyvesant area. The Grand Jury reported a general sense of lawlessness in Bedford-Stuyvesant detailing the various types of crime plaguing the area. The activities of the Midtown Civic League, Father Belford, and the Grand Jury investigation drew public attention to the deteriorating conditions in Bedford-Stuyvesant prompting whites to associate black residency in the area with crime. This precipitated white flight from the neighborhood.

Despite the racial tension, higher rents, and deteriorating housing in Bedford-Stuyvesant, blacks still considered the area an attractive place to live in the 1940s. The borough's more modern housing and industrial job opportunities continued to attract middle and working class blacks from Harlem and the south. The continued settlement of blacks in Bedford-Stuyvesant and the social effects it created precipitated white flight from the area and by the end of the 1940s the formerly white neighborhood was predominately inhabited by African Americans.

Black families from Harlem also moved to the Bronx in the 1940s to escape high rents and overcrowding. During the war these families settled in present-day Morrisania in the southwest Bronx. Most of the families who moved were members of the black middle class. Very often these families had the economic means to move because black men were hired as postal workers or Pullman porters. Some of the earliest black residents of Morrisania could not find apartments due to discrimination. Often the families that did move to the area were able to find apartments because the men of those households worked as superintendents in Morrisania buildings.

The majority of Harlemites that moved to the Bronx were looking for better living conditions. Parents moved their families to the area because of the abundance of better housing,

fresher air, more parks, and better schools. Many blacks believed that settling in Morrisania would provide a better quality of life for themselves and their children. Morrisania represented a step up not just in their living conditions but in their social status as well.

In the 1940s some of the white residents of Morrisania had left the area for newer and more modern housing in the upper Bronx. This left apartments vacant for blacks to occupy. However many of the white working-class population of the neighborhood did not have the economic means to move to emerging middle-class neighborhoods in the upper Bronx and had to stay in Morrisania. African Americans living in the Crotona Park section, as the area was then known, were quite proud of the fact that they lived in an integrated neighborhood. Integrated neighborhoods were not common in cities across the country in the 1940s. In fact the growing black populations in Detroit, Los Angeles, and Chicago found themselves even more hemmed into distinct black districts as those cities became more rigidly segregated. The residents of Morrisania, both black and white, worked together to foster a sense of unity resulting in very little racial conflict in the area. Perhaps the fact that both populations tended to be employed and the Harlemites resettling in the area were mostly families; fostered good relations between the different races and ethnicities living there.

As in Bedford-Stuyvesant some negative effects accompanied black settlement in the area. Higher rents and increasing crime and juvenile delinquency levels accompanied increasing black residency. Moreover the social and recreational organizations in the area were not sufficient to deal with the expanding black population. These affects caused the area's white residents to look for new places to live. More affluent black residents of Morrisania were also unhappy with the social effects of increased migration from Harlem, especially towards the latter half of the 1940s. These black middle class residents complained about higher rents, increased

crime, and more visible vice in the neighborhood as working class blacks began to move to the area. Despite these complaints, both middle and working class blacks believed living in Morrisania was a much better alternative to living in Harlem. Black churches and other organizations attempted to provide social services that would address the problems emerging as a result of black settlement in the area.

Through this dissertation I hope to add complexity to the story of the effects of the migration in urban areas and reveal how the migration contributed to the creation of modern cities for the second half of the 20th Century. The activism of civil rights organizations in the city pressured the state and federal government to establish fair employment legislation and agencies which looked into allegations of discrimination by war industries. Continued civil rights agitation and the investigations of the FEPC and COD prompted companies with government contracts to hire black workers providing them with better paying industrial jobs and expanding the occupations open to African Americans. These advances carried over into the post-war period as blacks found jobs on white collar, clerical and skilled industrial positions after the war. The *Silent Arrival* also presents a revision of the history of New York City as it considers the creation of black neighborhoods outside of Harlem in the 1940s, a process has yet to be treated on its own terms in historical works. Moreover, I hope that this examination of New York in the World War II era will complicate the story of urban decline in cities to show that the 1940s was not merely a decade creating the conditions for ghettoization of black neighborhoods in urban areas, but was an era of opportunity for New York's blacks – opportunity to improve their jobs prospects, their economic standing, and their living conditions.

Chapter 1
A Shifting Population:
Black Population Growth and the Creation of Alternative African American Communities

The 1940s was a decade of mobility for African Americans as approximately 1.5 million blacks moved out of the south to take advantage of better employment opportunities in war industries in the North and West. Approximately 150,000 blacks moved to Detroit and more than 200,000 moved to Chicago between 1940 and 1950. There was little provision made for migrants of any color during the war and the increased population resulted in housing shortages, racial antagonisms and, after the war, job competition. Nearly 350,000 African Americans chose to move westward to work in the newly established defense factories on the West Coast. This new black migration to Los Angeles and the Oakland area created new black communities. As the population of blacks increased, whites responded by establishing more stringent social, political, and economic restrictions on all black residents. Most importantly there were housing shortages in these California cities and African Americans were confined to overcrowded and declining neighborhoods.²⁰

New York City, was part of these larger migratory trends. Approximately 200,000 blacks moved from the South to New York during the 1940s. Many of these new migrants initially settled in Harlem, already by that time the most famous northern center for black settlement. Like Detroit, Harlem became overcrowded, black residents were charged higher rents, and there

²⁰ For more information on the Second Great Migration and its effects on urban areas see Nicholas Lemann's *The Promised Land: The Great Black Migration and How It Changed America* (New York: Albert A. Knopf, 1991); Hollis Lynch's *The black urban condition: a documentary history, 1866-197* (New York: Crowell, 1973); Kenneth L. Kusser's "African Americans in the City Since World War II: From the Industrial to the Post-Industrial Era," *Journal of Urban History*, Vol. 211, No. 4 (May 1995): 458-504; Arnold Richard Hirsch's *Making the second ghetto: race and housing in Chicago, 1940-1960* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983); Sugrue's *The Origins of the Urban Crisis*; Shirley Ann Moore's *To Place our Deeds: The African American Community in Richmond California. 1910-1963* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), Marylenn S Johnson's *The Second Gold Rush: Oakland and the East Bay in World War II* (Berkeley, C.A.: University of California Press, 1996.); Josh Sides' *LA City Limits: African American Los Angeles from the Great Depression to the Present* (Berkeley, C.A.: University of California Press, 2003).

was competition for housing. African Americans in New York, however, were not confined to Harlem. There was already a black community in Brooklyn and many more migrants joined them to take advantage of newly available jobs in the city's war industries, several of which were in that borough. Two of the city's largest manufacturing plants, Sperry Gyroscope Inc. and the New York Navy Yard, were located in Brooklyn and hired blacks. The migrants who moved to Brooklyn settled in Bedford-Stuyvesant, an area where a small black middle class community already resided.²¹ In the 1940s Bedford-Stuyvesant became the second area of black settlement in the city. Middle and working class blacks also moved northward from Harlem to the Bronx, integrating neighborhoods in present-day Morrisania. These new black residents of Morrisania were not new migrants, but had been living in Harlem. Many long-time Harlem residents moved to Morrisania in search of better living conditions. At the beginning of the decade the Bronx was overwhelmingly white with very few African Americans living in the borough. As the decade progressed Morrisania became an integrated multi-ethnic, multi-racial neighborhood. There, blacks were able to escape the overcrowding of Harlem in larger apartments with more room, and more fresh air.

Histories of New York City have mentioned the fact that thousands of southern African Americans migrated to the city during the Second World War. However, the historical work lacks analysis of the social characteristics of this group, and the neighborhoods and districts in which they settled.

Black mobility throughout the Nation

The flow of African American migrants entering New York City during the 1940s was part of a larger movement of peoples throughout the country. Overall the United States

²¹ Harold Connolly, *Blacks in Brooklyn from 1900-1960*, New York University PhD dissertation, 1972.

population was moving from rural areas to urban industrialized ones during the war years to take advantage of employment opportunities in factories in need of personnel to accommodate the increased production demands of the war. According to historian Richard Polenberg people were generally moving “from the country to city, from south to north, and from east to west.”²² The Southern agricultural economy had changed dramatically since the 1930s as a result of New Deal legislation. Crop reduction during the depression, as well as mechanization of farming through the adoption of tractors, harvesters and sprayers reduced the need for black rural workers. The lack of work in the south and the new availability of industrial jobs prompted blacks living in the rural south to migrate. Furthermore, the Jim Crow system and potential violence at the hands of whites contributed to the factors pushing African Americans to leave the south.

From 1938 through 1950 the federal government promoted economic growth in the south through federal legislation. In the latter stages of the New Deal program, President Franklin Roosevelt focused his attention on industrializing the Southern economy which he saw as the most “backward” and “underdeveloped” in the nation. According to historian Bruce Schulman, the Roosevelt administration “decrying the South’s economic backwardness and political conservatism,...launched a series of aggressive programs to reorder the southern economy.”²³ In 1937 the South’s per capita income was half of the standard of the rest of the nation. The South registered the nation’s lowest industrial wages, farm income, and tangible assets. Sickness, misery and unnecessary death were a direct effect of low farm and industrial wages in the region. Southern farms and businesses lacked mechanization, employed labor intensive modes of

²² Richard Polenberg, *War and Society: The United States, 1941-1945* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1972), 139.

²³ Bruce Schulmann, *From Cotton Belt to Sunbelt: Federal Policy, Economic Development, and the Transformation of the South, 1938-1980* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994), xii.

production, and lacked access to capital. The federal government saw industrialization as a way to end southern poverty.

Tenants and sharecroppers, many of whom were black, suffered the most from the failures of southern agriculture. They confronted deep and desperate poverty and suffered the machinations of powerful landlords. One of the methods tenants and sharecroppers used to escape this situation was migration. During the Depression the economic situation became much more grave. Bruce Schulmann wrote, “The initial blows of the Depression hit hardest in the South, collapsing the already fragile foundation of many southerners’ subsistence.” The region for decades had resisted federal intervention in favor of states’ rights, even at the expense of economic development. However the Depression injured the economy so badly, southern people and their leaders who had rejected government assistance looked to the federal government for relief.²⁴

Government efforts to rehabilitate the southern economy had ambiguous effects on blacks’ situation in the South. The Agricultural Adjustment Administration (AAA) transformed southern agriculture at the expense of tenant farmers and farm laborers. The legislation reduced the amount of acreage in production, replaced southern tenants with wage laborers, and mechanized farm work. The implementation of these measures reduced the number of blacks farmers needed in southern agriculture and black sharecroppers and tenant farmers were displaced.²⁵

The displacement of black farm and industrial workers, Jim Crow laws, and threats of violence motivated African Americans to migrate to other areas in the country. These dynamics stimulated black movement out of the south as many looked to improve their lives. This

²⁴ Ibid, 14.

²⁵ Ibid., 21-30.

movement did not occur in the 1930s because there were few jobs available in the north for blacks then. World War II provided industrial opportunities for southern blacks looking to leave a stagnant economy that had less and less of a place for them. These better paying jobs attracted them to Northern and Western areas. Even in the years after the war, when job growth in the North ebbed, the flow of blacks out of the south continued as mechanization on southern farms caused further displacement of black agricultural labor and shrinking economic opportunities of southern African Americans.

Millions of Americans in northern cities, both black and white, had migrated at some point from the south. Approximately five million people born in the south, or ten percent of the population, were in 1950 living in northern cities. One million people born in southern areas migrated north between 1940 and 1950.²⁶ The migration of both black and white southerners to northern and western communities during the World War II era was part of a long continual process of relocation that had been taking place since the First World War. Both New York State and New York City were recipients of migrants from southern areas.

During the 1940s New York City's general population increased but the African American population increased at a higher rate than the white population. The black population rose from 458,444 people to 749,080, an increase of 63.4 percent while in general the city population increased 5.8 percent and the white population increased by 1.90 percent.²⁷ By 1950 African Americans comprised 9.49 percent of the city population in comparison to 6.14 percent in 1940. The black population in the entire New York metropolitan area (including portions of

²⁶ United States Census Bureau, Table 3. 1950 United States Population Census, Volume IV, Part 4: Mobility of the Population.

²⁷ All calculations of percentage increase between 1940 and 1950 are expressed as percentages of the 1940 population for that specific population sub-group. See Tables 1.1-1.6 in the Appendix for calculations.

New Jersey) increased by 56.6 percent between 1940 and 1950.²⁸ State statistics were similar to the city. Between 1940 and 1950 New York State's population decreased overall, the net loss amounting to 34,000 people; however the non-white population²⁹ increased by 477,685 residents.³⁰ During the 1940s the numbers of African Americans in the city increased, but more importantly the proportion of the population that was black increased at a rate much faster than the white population of the city, evidence that this increase was due to in-migration.

Table 1: Population of Whites and Blacks in New York City 1940-1950

	White population 1940	White population 1950	White Change	Black population 1940	Black population 1950	Black Change
New York City	6,977,501	7,110,275	+1.90%	458,444	749,080	+63.4%
% of total city population	93.6%	90.2%	- 3.4%	6.1%	9.5%	+ 3.4%

The largest number of migrants of all races into New York State came from the south. Most of the New York state population, 10,389,085, were native to the Middle Atlantic area (New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania).³¹ By 1950 the largest number of residents born out of state came from the south Atlantic - Virginia, Maryland, South Carolina, North Carolina, Georgia, and Florida. Over a half million people (531,465) had migrated from these states. The

²⁸ Howard Selsam, *The Negro People in the United States: Facts for all Americans* (New York: Jefferson School of Social Science, 1953).

²⁹ Though the 1950 census does not have a Negro category, the overwhelming majority of the non-white population was comprised of Negroes, so I have taken the liberty of using the counts interchangeably for this paper. At a later time I will have to calculate the percent error based on how many of the actual non-white population are African American. However from every indication that I have the non-white population was overwhelmingly African American and should not severely flaw the conclusions I come to using these calculations.

³⁰ United States Census Bureau, Table 8, 1950 United States Population Census, Volume IV, Part 4: Mobility of the Population.. 4A-15 & 4A-16.

³¹ In the calculations of areas from which New York residents were born the native state population was included in the figure for the North East. Therefore migrants who moved from other states in the North East region as well as native New Yorkers are included in this number. This is true for most all calculations given in this chapter. It will be duly noted if the calculations are different.

largest number of migrants came from South Carolina (124,460), followed by North Carolina (104,895), Virginia (103,560), Georgia (77,955), Florida (44,005) and Maryland (35,725).³²

Very similarly to the case of the general population, in New York State most out-of-state born African American residents came from the south Atlantic region. The state's total nonwhite male population equaled 403,175 of which 49.34 percent was from the south, 42.29 percent from the north east, 1.87 percent originally hailed from north central states, and .63 percent from western states. Of the southern states contributing nonwhite male migrants over the years South Carolina added the most people to the state population (48,225), followed by North Carolina (38,010) and Virginia (31,835).³³ As for nonwhite females, of a total 477,205 54.53 percent were from the south, 38.31 percent were born in the north east, 1.65 percent hailed from the north central, and .37 percent migrated from the west. Most non-white women originally born in other states came from South Carolina (66,900), followed by North Carolina (50,505), and Virginia (47,685). These figures illustrate that the largest proportion of nonwhite men and women in New York State migrated north from southern areas. Most of these migrants came from South Carolina, North Carolina and Virginia.³⁴ Since 85 percent the African American population of New York State (749,080 of 880,380 people) lived in New York City at the time of the 1950 census, it is logical that the above proportions are similar for New York City's Negro population as well.

The census for 1950 does not provide direct information on the nativity of African Americans living in New York City; however the 1940 census does provide this information for

³² United States Census Bureau, Table 13. 1950 United States Population Census, Volume IV, Part 4: Mobility of the Population, 4A-19 & 4A-20.

³³ United States Census Bureau, Table 16. 1950 United States Population Census, Volume IV, Part 4: Mobility of the Population, 4A-34.

³⁴ United States Census Bureau, Table 17. 1950 United States Population Census, Volume IV, Part 4: Mobility of the Population, 4A-34.

the years 1935 to 1940. In that study it shows that most African American men and women who migrated from other areas to New York City between 1935 and 1940 were from southern states, most coming from South Carolina, North Carolina, and Virginia in descending order.³⁵ These migratory trends most probably carried over into the next decade especially as the flow of black migrants to the city increased after the start of World War II.

The largest increase of the population of African Americans was among people ages 25-29 throughout New York City, as well as in Manhattan, Brooklyn and Bronx boroughs, indicating that most migrants were in this age range. In New York City the number of African Americans between the ages of 25 and 29 increased by 33,812 persons. In Manhattan the increase was 12,112 people, in Brooklyn 13,371, and in the Bronx 8,480. This was true for both men and women in those same boroughs, as well as New York City overall.³⁶ The higher proportion of single blacks to black families living in Manhattan suggests that many of these migrants were single.³⁷

Through further inspection of the statistics it is possible to ascertain the sex of many of the migrants. African American females seemed to be moving to the city in greater numbers than black males. This discrepancy was perhaps due, in part, to black males being overseas for military duty during World War II and later the Korean War. Perhaps the available jobs in the city's women's industries in New York also attracted more women to migrate. The Negro female population in New York City as a whole consistently increased more than the male population in each age group. In 1950 there were 159,503 more females in the city than in 1940. In comparison there were 131,133 more males in New York in 1950 than there were in 1940.

³⁵ United States Census Bureau, Tables 19 and 20. 1940 United States Population Census, Volume II, 395.

³⁶ See Tables 1.9-1.12 in Appendix.

³⁷ Olivia P Frost, "An analysis of the characteristics of the population in Central Harlem," (New York: New York Urban League Research Department, 1946).

Therefore though the population of both males and females increased, there was an addition of 28,400 more women than men.³⁸ Though there was a general increase in the population of blacks citywide and in the boroughs of the Bronx, Brooklyn and Manhattan, it is clear that the population of black women increased more quickly than that of men. Perhaps New York attracted more females than other industrial cities with heavy industry which generally employed males.

Other demographic factors must be considered. Because the white population of New York was much larger than that of the black population, small percentage increases in the white population represented a much larger number of people than percentage increases in the black population. Furthermore, there was much white migration out of the city. Still, the large discrepancy in the rate of growth between these two groups indicates an influx in the Negro population from outside areas. It is not probable that natural increase could produce such a marked increase in the number of African Americans in New York, particularly in Manhattan, Brooklyn, and the Bronx, over a ten year period.

The statistics prove that the sharp increase in black population in New York indicated migration. These migrants came from the South Atlantic states of Virginia, North Carolina, and South Carolina. Most were young people in their 20s no doubt looking for opportunities to improve their working and living conditions.

Harlem: New York's Continuing Black Mecca

In Manhattan, where the largest population of African Americans in New York resided, there was a marked increase in the number of Negroes between 1940 and 1950. The black population increased by 35.24 percent from 298,365 to 403,502. This increase was much higher

³⁸ See Table 1.9 in Appendix.

than that of the general or white populations in the borough. The general population increased from 1,888,942 to 1,960,101 or by 3.77 percent and the white population actually decreased from 1,577,625 to 1,556,599 a loss of 1.33 percent. By 1950 African Americans were 20.58 percent of Manhattan's population in comparison to 15.79 percent a decade earlier. The proportion of whites in Manhattan's population fell from 83.5 percent to 79.4 percent.³⁹ The gains in black population were due to migration.

Table 2: Population of Whites and Blacks in Manhattan 1940-1950

	White population 1940	White population 1950	White Change	Black population 1940	Black population 1950	Black Change
Manhattan	1,577,625	1,556,599	-1.33%	298,365	403,502	+35.24%
% of total borough population	83.5%	79.4%	- 4.1	15.8%	20.6%	+ 4.8

Negro population of central Harlem was very transient during the War years. African Americans who lived in Harlem moved to other boroughs during the war. Therefore the actual migration into the area, taking into account those who were also leaving, was much larger than statistics showed.⁴⁰

Most of Harlem's new black residents came from southern states. A survey of out-of-state students in two school districts of central Harlem and white Washington Heights make this point clear. In comparing the composition of the student population in each district from July to October 1945, the Urban League found that migration in the black districts was four times that of the upper Washington Heights section. Furthermore it was found that the majority of pupils

³⁹ See Tables 1.3 and 1.4 in Appendix.

⁴⁰ Olivia P Frost, "An analysis of the characteristics of the population in Central Harlem," (New York: New York Urban League Research Department, 1946).

moving into the central Harlem districts were from South Carolina and North Carolina, with Florida, Georgia, Virginia and New Jersey also contributing many.⁴¹ These findings complement the information provided by the census as to the origin of increase of African American interstate migrants to New York.

The increasing African American population in Manhattan remained concentrated in overwhelmingly black neighborhoods, like Harlem. In the areas of Manhattan where blacks resided there were very few whites. These areas, each of which was in or directly adjacent to central Harlem, retained these population characteristics during the 1940s. In all but three of the tracts where African Americans were the majority, the number of black residents increased from 1940 to 1950.⁴² Very few areas with a majority of white residents experienced a dramatic increase of black residents during the 1940s. There were six in total, three of which were in central Harlem and the other three in northern sections of Harlem from 146th Street to 153rd Street along the Hudson River.⁴³ Though more and more blacks moved into Manhattan, the areas blacks could live in did not. Black residents in the borough remained confined to central Harlem and its adjacent areas although in a few adjacent white areas, the number of blacks increased. The growing black population would strain the already overcrowded and dilapidated housing in the area.

Like the city in general, the largest number of migrants moving to the area were between the ages of 25 and 29. The second largest groups of migrants however differed from the city population in general. In Manhattan the age group with the second largest population increase was 20 to 24 year olds.⁴⁴ Unlike other areas in the city, in Manhattan a relatively equal number

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² See Table 1.10 in Appendix.

⁴³ See Figure 1.1 in Appendix.

⁴⁴ See Tables 1.9-1.12 in Appendix.

of men and women entered the city. Statistically, the increase in the number of men outnumbered that of women by only a small margin, 799 persons.⁴⁵ The relatively young age of African Americans moving into Manhattan suggest those migrating were young adults in their 20s.

The black population was confined to Central Harlem because of white resistance. Whites living in Washington Heights (168th northward to 181st Streets) and upper Harlem fought black settlement in their neighborhoods. Property damage, vandalism, and racial slurs were some of the tactics disgruntled whites used to discourage black families from moving into their communities in Washington Heights.⁴⁶ The resistance was successful as black population in Manhattan remained primarily confined in Central Harlem.

As a consequence of the southern migration, Harlem's population continued to rise ultimately straining the housing and community facilities in the area. If blacks were blocked from moving north, they did move to black enclaves in other boroughs. Most black migrants initially settled in Harlem, the first area of settlement for the majority of migrants.⁴⁷ Because Harlem could not accommodate all the migrants entering Manhattan, many African Americans moved to other boroughs like Brooklyn and the Bronx. Bedford- Stuyvesant quickly became the second principal area populated by African Americans in New York in the 1940s.

⁴⁵ See Table 1.10 in Appendix

⁴⁶ "Police Smash Plots to Drive Negroes From Heights," *Amsterdam News* October 23, 1943 and "Terrorize Homes in Upper Harlem," *Amsterdam News* November 13, 1943.

⁴⁷ Olivia P Frost, "An analysis of the characteristics of the population in Central Harlem" (New York: New York Urban League Research Department, 1946) Schomburg Research Center, New York Public Library, New York, NY, 16.

Bedford Stuyvesant: The second area of black settlement

The most striking increase of African Americans took place in Brooklyn. That borough's black population almost doubled, rising to 213,057 in 1950 from a population of 107,253 in 1940. This is in comparison to a general population that increased from 2,698,285 to 2,738,175, a difference of only 1.48 percent and a white population that decreased from 2,587,951 to 2,525,118, a loss of 2.43 percent. Brooklyn's Negro population in 1950 comprised 7.78 percent of the county population in comparison to 3.97 percent in 1940.⁴⁸ As in Manhattan, the increase in blacks in Brooklyn's population far outpaced white growth in the borough.

Table 3: Population of Whites and Blacks in Brooklyn 1940-1950

	White population 1940	White population 1950	White Change	Black population 1940	Black population 1950	Black Change
Brooklyn	2,587,951	2,525,118	- 2.43%	107,253	213,057	+98.65%
% of total borough population	95.9%	92.2%	- 3.7	4%	7.8%	+ 3.8

As in Manhattan, most African American migrants to Brooklyn were between the ages of 25 and 29. However there were some subtle differences. In Brooklyn the 30 to 34 year olds experienced the second largest population increase and 20 to 24 year olds had the third largest amount of increase in Brooklyn and the Bronx.⁴⁹ Moreover the gender composition of the new black population in Brooklyn differed from that in Manhattan. The black female population increased by approximately 5,400 more than the increase of the population of black males.⁵⁰ This was a statistically marginal difference with regard to the 100,000 person increase in the black population of Brooklyn; but it is notable that the gender distribution was more skewed than

⁴⁸ See Tables 1.5 and 1.6 in Appendix.

⁴⁹ See Tables 1.9-1.12 in Appendix.

⁵⁰ See Table 1.11 in Appendix.

that of Manhattan. The increase in the population of both sexes was significant. The number of black men and women residing in the borough almost doubled and many of those new residents were young men and women many of whom would find increasing employment opportunities in Brooklyn's war production factories.

There were expanding job prospects for black men and women in the most important war industries in the city. Some of the largest war production plants, including the Brooklyn Navy Yard and Sperry Corporation, accepted African Americans in various positions. Though some of these positions were often the lowest paying in the factory, black men and women would receive higher pay than they could doing janitorial, domestic, or farm work in the South. In addition to job openings in war industries, black women were also able to find better paying clerical and retail positions as white women vacated them for well-paid skilled and semi-skilled employment in war industries.⁵¹ The availability of higher-paying jobs in war industries as well as clerical and retail positions for black women served as a compelling pull factor attracting southern African American migrants to New York.

The fact that the largest increases in the black population in Brooklyn during the 1940s were people between the ages of 20 and 29 does not seem to be coincidence. Harlem during this era was very overcrowded and had been since the first wave of black migration during World War I. Furthermore, the majority of New York City's war industries were in the outer boroughs (Brooklyn and Queens) and Long Island. The Navy Yard and the Sperry Gyroscope Company, both located in Brooklyn, were major war-time employers in the city which would attract black workers.

⁵¹ Office of War Information, Press Release, August 8, 1942, New York State War Council COD Papers, Box 7, Folder 320; "Negro Worker Asset or Liability? America Must Decide," Semi-Annual Report of the Brooklyn Urban League Industrial Department, August 1943, New York State War Council COD, Box 7, Folder 340; "Placement in New Openings, Training Get Greater Emphasis," *Report to the Community*, Olivia Frost Papers, Box 2, Folder 11.

The Bronx: Moving Away from the Hustle and Bustle

Though the increase of African Americans in Brooklyn skyrocketed, there was evidence that blacks were moving into the other boroughs of New York. The Bronx, previously an overwhelmingly white county, experienced an influx of black residents. The population of African Americans in that borough more than tripled in the 1940s, increasing from 23,529 in 1940 to 99,615 by 1950, an increase of 323.37 percent. Like Manhattan and Brooklyn, the increase of black residents in the Bronx far outpaced the increase of white residents in that area. Between 1940 and 1950 the white population of the Bronx increased by only 1.56 percent, from 1,370,319 people to a population of 1,391,662.⁵² Though the increase in the number of blacks moving into the Bronx was significant, the main areas of black settlement were Manhattan and Brooklyn during the 1940s. Most of the early black residents that settled in the Bronx were middle class blacks relocating from Harlem for more space and quieter streets, not migrants from the south.⁵³

Table 4: Population of Whites and Blacks in the Bronx 1940-1950

	White population 1940	White population 1950	White Change	Black population 1940	Black population 1950	Black Change
Bronx	1,370,319	1,391,662	+1.56%	23,529	99,615	+323.37%
% of total borough population	98.3%	90.3%	- 8	1.7%	6.5%	+4.8

⁵² See Tables 1.7 and 1.8 in Appendix.

⁵³ “Thousands from Harlem In Exodus to the Bronx,” *Amsterdam News*, September 12, 1942, 1.

The characteristics of blacks moving to the Bronx were more like those of blacks settling in Brooklyn. As in Manhattan and Brooklyn, the largest number of blacks moving to the Bronx were 25 to 29 years of age. As in Brooklyn the 30 to 34 year olds experienced the second largest population increase and 20 to 24 year olds had the third largest amount of increase in the Bronx.⁵⁴ As in Brooklyn, more black women than men moved to the Bronx. Of the 76,086 more blacks living in the Bronx by 1950 the population of African American women in the borough increased by 6,250 more than the population of men.⁵⁵ These numbers show that during the 1940s the largest group of people to move to the Bronx was young women.

Many African Americans moving into the Bronx during the war years did so to escape the high rents in Harlem. The area of the Bronx with the largest population of African Americans, 161st Street to 169th Street and from Franklin to Prospect Avenues, experienced an increase in population from 3,000 in 1939 to a projected 30,000 by 1942. At the time, it was estimated that 200 families moved to this area each month from Harlem, therefore the migration of blacks was secondary migration within the city not direct migration from southern states.⁵⁶

The west Bronx from Crotona Park south to 161st Street between Webster and Prospect Avenues in the present-day Morrisania section housed the majority of the new black Bronxites.⁵⁷ As the black population increased the white population did not significantly decrease, creating integrated neighborhoods. This was unusual for demographic trends of the day. Most urban areas in other cities that experienced black settlement also experienced white flight as an almost immediate response creating segregated black neighborhoods. This was not the case in Morrisania in the 1940s. Perhaps this was due to the middle class stature of the blacks moving

⁵⁴ See Tables 1.9-1.12 in Appendix.

⁵⁵ See Table 1.12 in Appendix.

⁵⁶ "Thousands from Harlem In Exodus to the Bronx," *Amsterdam News*, September 12, 1942, 1. Also see figure 1.4 in Appendix which corroborates the information given in the article.

⁵⁷ See Figure 1.4 in the Appendix.

into the neighborhood but it was more likely due to the limits of whites' finances to move to the new middle class developments being built in the upper Bronx. It should be noted that some whites left the area as neighborhoods that were previously all white became predominately African American but it is not clear from the statistics alone whether the whites left the area before or after blacks began to move in.⁵⁸ Maybe the fact that, in comparison to Brooklyn, relatively few blacks moved into the Bronx kept whites from fleeing Morrisania.

There seemed to be relatively little racial tension as blacks moved into Morrisania. A reporter for the *Amsterdam News* described Morrisania as being a veritable melting pot, with Italians, Jews, Germans, Poles, Irish, Puerto Ricans, and Cubans living all together with blacks, all getting along "remarkably well."⁵⁹ The lack of racial conflict was likely due to the marked efforts by middle-class blacks already living in the Bronx to prevent many of the social problems such as juvenile delinquency and crime present in Harlem.⁶⁰ In any event, the effects of the movement of blacks into the Bronx played out quite differently from what happened in Manhattan and Brooklyn, and in many other cities across the country. Integrated neighborhoods and relative racial harmony were not typical outcomes of the demographic changes of the 1940s.

Conclusion

Through examination of the census it is clear that African Americans were migrating into New York City. The Negro population measured as the percentage of the total population in the city increased much faster than the white population during the 1940s. The large difference in the rate of increase most likely is due to emigration from outside areas into the city. The probable age and sex of the migrants can also be ascertained from census data. The largest group

⁵⁸ See Table 1.15 in the Appendix.

⁵⁹ "Inside Story on How Bronx Rivals Harlem," *Amsterdam News*, July 3, 1943, 3.

⁶⁰ *Ibid*, 19.

of blacks migrating to New York in the 1940s was between the ages of 20 and 34; and most were women. These women found job opportunities in the city's many war industries during the war. Most of these migrants came from states in the South Atlantic region just as they had during the first wave of the Great Migration. Most of the migrants moved from South Carolina, North Carolina, and Virginia to New York City.

During the 1940s the distribution of blacks in the city changed. Due to the migration and resulting increase in the city's black population, new areas of black settlement emerged. Harlem continued to be the largest and most famous black neighborhood, but due to overcrowding in Harlem Bedford-Stuyvesant became the second major area of African American settlement in the city. The majority of the African Americans who moved to Brooklyn during the 1940s settled in the Bedford- Stuyvesant neighborhood. The migration transformed that section of Brooklyn from a predominately white community to an African American community.⁶¹ By 1945 central Brooklyn had become "the primary locale of nonwhite residency in the borough" and the place where most of those who were entering the borough settled down.⁶² So many blacks moved into Bedford Stuyvesant that newspapers began to refer to Bedford- Stuyvesant as "Little Harlem."

In addition to these central areas of black settlement, blacks moved into new areas like the South Central Bronx. Harlemites began moving to the ethnically mixed neighborhood in present-day Morrisania where a small number of middle class blacks resided. Some whites abandoned the area both before and after the black migration but for the most part the neighborhood remained integrated. Though the number of blacks in total in the Bronx remained low, black settlement in this area significantly changed the complexion of the neighborhood.

⁶¹ See Table 1.11 and Figures 1.2 and 1.3 in Appendix.

⁶²Craig Steven Wilder, *A Covenant with Color: Race and Social Power in Brooklyn* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 177.

The creation of multiple areas of black settlement in the boroughs of New York made the racial spatial arrangement this city very different than in others. As blacks migrated into Detroit, Chicago, and Los Angeles, new residents were forced to live in one black community. Overcrowding, declining living conditions, and increased crime resulted from the migration. This arguably caused more intense competition over space and access to community resources. Perhaps the creation of a black neighborhood outside of Harlem and the dispersal of New York's increasing black population into other boroughs prevented widespread racial violence from breaking out in New York during the war.

The expansion of employment opportunities for blacks in New York during the war was most probably a motivation for blacks to migrate and settle in New York City. It is no surprise that many of those migrating to the city settled in Harlem and Bedford Stuyvesant. Harlem had served as the center of black residence in the city since the 1910s and black migrants continued to settle there. Brooklyn was the site of many of the employment opportunities newly opened to black New Yorkers. Many of the major war employers had plants in Brooklyn and there growing numbers of jobs became available to blacks. The expanding job opportunities available in the Manhattan and Brooklyn attracted migrants and changed the employment landscape and financial opportunities not only for black newcomers from the south, but for all blacks New Yorkers.

Chapter 2

Opening Opportunities: Collaboration between Black Organizations and Fair Employment Agencies

World War II ushered in important changes in the type of jobs open to African Americans. Before the war most African Americans in urban areas held low-paying service jobs or worked as farmers in the south. At the start of World War II in the cities of the Midwest and West, notably Chicago, Detroit, Los Angeles, and Oakland, the jobs in most factories were closed to blacks. This changed after President Roosevelt issued Executive Order 8802 in 1941 prohibiting discriminatory hiring practices by defense industries. Some industries which had excluded blacks, like the aircraft and shipbuilding industries, hired black workers only after the Fair Employment Practices Committee was established. A labor shortage in 1943 also caused employers to begin to relax the bars to hiring and unions found it more difficult to maintain restrictive policies.⁶³ Many of the war-time employment trends in New York fit that trajectory.

During the early years of the war New York did not have large war production plants that could easily convert for the production of war goods. Therefore the city's industries received few contracts in the first two years of the war. There were few job openings in most war industries and a labor surplus in the city. By and large black New Yorkers did not find industrial employment in the first two years of the conflict. Unlike other cities where factories were immediately converted or built for war production, it was not just discrimination that prevented blacks from getting jobs.

⁶³ Richard Polenberg, *War and Society: The United States, 1941-1945* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1972); John Blum, *V Was for Victory: Politics and American Culture during World War II* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976); Shirley Ann Moore, "Getting There, Being There," *The Great Migration in Historical Perspective* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1991), 106-126.; Robert Weaver, *Negro Labor: A National Problem* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1946).

Despite the tight labor market African American civil rights activists protested for industrial jobs for blacks at the onset of war. They wanted what they viewed was a fair share of the few jobs that were available in war industries for black workers. Advocating for fair employment became the focus of several civil rights organizations including the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and the Urban League. These organizations led protests to the headquarters of some of the city's largest war-time employers, but these early initiatives were ineffective.

Given the limited success of black activists' efforts to pressure companies to hire African Americans, black organizations began to focus their agitation on the government. The March on Washington Movement was one of the principle organizations to undertake this type of activity and successfully pressured President Roosevelt to establish the Fair Employment Practices Committee to investigate companies accused of discrimination. Local offices of the NAACP and Urban League pressured the New York State government to pass legislation prohibiting discriminatory hiring practices by companies with government contracts.

In 1941 the New York State Assembly prohibited discrimination against black workers in war industries and created a Committee on Discrimination in Employment in the New York State War Council. During the war the Committee on Discrimination (COD) investigated hiring and employment practices in war industries, and worked with the regional offices of the United States Employment Service (USES), the Fair Employment Practices Committee (FEPC), and the War Manpower Commission (WMC) to see that war industries adhered to anti-discrimination legislation. The COD also worked in conjunction with organizations focused on improving black employment, most importantly the Brooklyn Urban League, to expand the number and type of jobs open to black New Yorkers.

The passage of federal and state legislation outlawing discrimination in war industries in 1941 and the enforcement of this legislation by state agencies also prompted some war industries to stop discriminatory hiring practices. During the early war years, African Americans were able to find employment in skilled and semi-skilled industrial positions never before open to black workers. The new jobs blacks found in war industries represented a definite and significant change which continued and increased after a labor shortage in 1943.

No Conversion, No Jobs, No Place for Negroes: New York City War Production 1941-42

Whether blacks obtained new jobs was initially a function of New York's labor market, which was not too friendly in the early years of the war. As the nation's economy geared up for war and President Roosevelt moved the country towards supporting the Allies through the Lend Lease program in March, 1941, the seemingly far away conflict impacted the American economy. New York's industries were difficult to convert to war time production and the city received few production contracts from the government. Most of the factories in New York were small scale factories that could not be converted into the large-scale factories needed to produce war goods. To organize the growing economy and to ensure that it produced the goods needed for war, the federal government created mobilization agencies which purchased or arranged for the military to purchase goods, closely directed those goods' manufacture, and heavily influenced the operation of private companies and whole industries. The government also curtailed production destined for civilians. Moreover these agencies rationed steel, aluminum, copper, and cotton which were needed to produce military goods to ensure their availability for war industries.

The New York area was primarily a producer of nondurable consumer goods with more than a third of factories and industrial workers producing apparel.⁶⁴ Moreover the majority of New York's factories had to decrease production because of a shortage of materials which were increasingly being consumed by war production. This resulted in a decrease in the number of manufacturing jobs in the metropolitan area. The factories that did convert to war production did not use the same workers it previously employed because they did not have the technical skills required.

Higher employment rates in New York City during 1941 were an effect of recovery from the Depression, not increased war production. The 65 percent increase in job placement by the New York State Employment Service (NYSES), the state government's apparatus for helping the unemployed find positions in state sponsored or supported firms and offices, seemed to indicate an improved economy in 1941. Those placements, however, were in mostly non-manufacturing positions.⁶⁵ Moreover, unemployment rates increased as well. Layoffs due to conversion of civilian plants to wartime production, for which some workers were not qualified, was part of the reason for the increasing number of unemployed New Yorkers. An unexpected drop in consumer buying caused plants that produced consumer goods to lay off workers as well. Government restrictions on the use of building materials also caused unemployment among construction workers. More than 50,000 workers in the building and construction sectors were unemployed at the end of 1941 with little prospect of work unless they could be absorbed by other industries or find jobs outside of the city. A government proposed cut back on use of

⁶⁴ Labor Market Conditions and Employment Service Program, December 1941; Employment and Unemployment New York State – June 1942 (formerly titled Labor Market Conditions and Employment Service Program), Papers of the New York State War Council's COD, Box 6, Folder 270 – Department of Labor.

⁶⁵ Labor Market Conditions and Employment Service Program, December 1941, Papers of the New York State War Council's COD, Box 6, Folder 270 – Department of Labor.

cotton textiles due to the redirection of cotton to war production prompted fears of more layoffs and dislocations in the apparel industry.⁶⁶

The shortage of manufacturing jobs continued through the first half of 1942. In the midst of the wartime employment boom and the mounting demand for manpower state-wide, New York City was considered a “black spot” where thousands of skilled and unskilled workers were unemployed. The city’s factory, construction, trade, and service workers continued to experience dislocation and unemployment as a result of materials shortages due to rationing, military priorities, and curtailment orders. Of the 3.5 million employed New Yorkers, only 300,000 were engaged directly in war production while another 300,000 were unemployed. Among the city’s factories, the apparel trades constituted a third of the establishments and workers. Materials shortages and uncertainty of factory owners on government controls caused owners to fire some workers.⁶⁷ Moreover, credit curtailment, higher taxes, and purchasing of war bonds caused the purchasing power of New Yorkers, and thus retail sales, to decrease.⁶⁸ The demand for labor in the city’s construction sector in 1942 was still far below normal, but employment for skilled construction workers improved slightly. The supply of skilled construction workers declined as workers migrated to other areas where work was readily available, reducing the labor surplus in that sector. Moreover some construction workers converted their knowledge and training to industrial skills which further reduced the surplus. Unemployment was much higher for unskilled construction workers.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ Labor Market Conditions and Employment Service Program, December 1941, Papers of the New York State War Council’s COD, Box 6, Folder 270 – Department of Labor.

⁶⁷ “Employment and Unemployment” New York State – June 1942 (formerly titled *Labor Market Conditions and Employment Service Program*), Papers of the New York State War Council’s COD. Box 6, Folder 270 – Department of Labor, Committee on Discrimination Papers.

⁶⁸ “Labor Market Conditions and Employment Service Program, May 1942,” Papers of the New York State War Council’s COD, Box 6, Folder 270 – Department of Labor.

⁶⁹ “Labor Market Conditions and Employment Service Program, May 1942,” Papers of the New York State War Council’s COD, Box 6, Folder 270 – Department of Labor.

One reason New York City experienced difficulties converting to war production was the nature of city factories. Establishments were small in size, employing on average only nineteen workers. Typically war production required large-scale operations and highly specialized and integrated management.⁷⁰ Thus, New York City could not be like Detroit, which had large auto factories which could be converted. Considering the state of the labor market in New York City and the general unavailability of jobs, it is little surprise that African Americans were not considered for the few war jobs available in 1941 and 1942.

Finding a “Place for Negroes”: Pressure for Fair Employment Legislation

In spite of the general lack of war contracts and jobs in New York, the city’s blacks mobilized to protest for equal employment opportunity. Some organizations and black leaders used the press to voice their opinions and gather support. Others took to the streets with protests, mass meetings, and rallies. Before the Great Depression, organizations like the Urban League tried to convince employers to hire blacks. But now these requests were powered by mass protests and legislation. Targets widened too. Initially the targets were managers of war industries, but black protest expanded to state and federal government. Black activists in New York pushed the state and federal government to create and enforce legislation outlawing discriminatory hiring practices by industries with war contracts.

Economic activism was an outgrowth of protests in New York City during the Depression. Black New Yorkers felt the Depression most sharply as unemployment rates for African Americans were double that of whites in the city. The problems blacks faced in the 1920s had not been jobs, but the Great Depression changed all of that. As unemployment levels

⁷⁰ “Employment and Unemployment,” New York State – June 1942 (formerly titled *Labor Market Conditions and Employment Service Program*), Papers of the New York State War Council’s COD, Box 6, Folder 270 – Department of Labor.

rose, the political activity of individuals, churches, philanthropic and social uplift organizations came together around the issue of employment. Whether the organizations worked together, or at cross-purposes, these Harlem groups tried to improve economic opportunities for the city's African Americans. In the absence of laws prohibiting discriminatory hiring in industry, black political action was the critical force in gaining skilled and white-collar positions during the Depression. Numerous Harlem organizations turned their energy toward this struggle, relying on activism from the Harlem community. The campaign participants used mass protests, strikes, and boycotts as its most important weapons.⁷¹ No longer did blacks meekly petition employers. Blacks now demanded their rights. Mark Naison argued that it was the Communist Party that pioneered this kind of action in Harlem.⁷² And as Harvard Sitkoff has argued, this militancy continued in the 1940s.⁷³ As the nation, state, and city recovered from the depression, black New Yorkers used similar tactics to sustain the fight for economic rights and set their sights on equal employment opportunities in the city's war industries.

Again, unlike the 1920s, blacks had allies. Historian Richard Chamberlain and others showed that, labor organizations were especially important to African Americans' fighting for war jobs. In the north and south black activists in trade unions and civic organizations, National Urban League (NUL) affiliates, and National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) chapters worked together and separately to advance black employment, the number one civil rights goal. These activists advocated laws and demanded enforcement of laws to obtain jobs for black workers.⁷⁴

⁷¹ Cheryl Lynn Greenberg, *Or Does it Explode: Black Harlem in the Great Depression* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 113-116.

⁷² Mark Naison, *Communists in Harlem during the Depression* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2005).

⁷³ Harvard, Sitkoff, "Racial Militancy and Interracial Violence in the Second World War," *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 58, No. 3, (Dec., 1971), 661-681.

⁷⁴ Charles D. Chamberlain, *Victory at Home: Manpower and Race in the American South during World War II* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 2003), 2-5, 42.

Black protest began shortly after the outbreak of war in Europe. Though statistics showed there was little wartime conversion and few jobs in New York's war industries, the city's blacks felt that they were not getting their fair share of the war work that was available. Week after week in 1940 and 1941 articles appeared in the *Amsterdam News* lamenting the lack of job opportunities for blacks in defense industries nation-wide.⁷⁵ One editorial criticized defense industries for ignoring members of the National Technical Association, an organization of skilled black workers, and engineering graduates from Hampton and Tuskegee universities. The author argued that labor shortages in the defense industries would be abated if employers would consider hiring black workers.⁷⁶ It was not simply the morality of the issue. Defense industries, they said, could not efficiently produce goods because of their refusal to hire black skilled workers.⁷⁷ The discrimination against black workers was particularly prevalent in the aircraft and shipbuilding sectors. Aircraft companies notoriously refused to hire blacks to work on production lines, offering them only janitorial positions. The following cartoon appeared in the *Amsterdam News* depicting an African American mechanic applying for employment at a company that made Triplane aircrafts. In the cartoon the manager of the company told the applicant that though there is a need for manpower in the airplane industry, they refuse to hire Negroes.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ "WPA Defense Job Opportunities," *Amsterdam News*, November 30, 1940, 3; "Seek Race Employment in Defense Industries," *Amsterdam News*, December 7, 1940, 11; Editorial, *Amsterdam News*, December 7, 1940, 16; "Must Better Themselves," *Amsterdam News*, December 14, 1940, 16; "Give Negroes Jobs," *Amsterdam News*, January 18, 1941, 14; "Means by which Defense Commission can Eliminate Discrimination Suggested," *Amsterdam News*, February 15, 1941, 4; "Millions of Negroes Idle," *Amsterdam News*, March 1, 1941, 16; Editorial, *Amsterdam News*, December 7, 1940, 16; "Real Bottleneck of Defense Production," *Amsterdam News*, December 21, 1940, 16.

⁷⁶ Editorial, *Amsterdam News*, December 7, 1940, 16

⁷⁷ "Real Bottleneck of Defense Production," *Amsterdam News*, December 21, 1940, 16.

⁷⁸ "It Just Doesn't Make Sense," *Amsterdam News*, January 18, 1941, 14.

Figure 1: “It Just Doesn’t Make Sense”⁷⁹



In the early 1940s the NAACP’s primary concern was equal employment opportunities in war industries. The NAACP began a national letter writing campaign to President Roosevelt, Secretary of War Henry Stimson, Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox, and members of Congress protesting discrimination in defense industries. The NAACP tried to enlist the government, advocating a Congressional investigation into the status and treatment of black workers in the defense program.⁸⁰ Walter White, the executive secretary of the organization, held a community meeting in Brooklyn to discuss the place of blacks in the nation’s defense industries and suggest

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ “Defense Bias Will Be Aired,” *Amsterdam News*, January 25, 1941, 5.

ways to fight for black employment in that borough.⁸¹ The New York branch of the NAACP declared January 26, 1941 National Defense Day, using radio, public forums, and meetings throughout the city to highlight the discrimination blacks faced. On that day ministers, civic leaders, and prominent black New Yorkers described the patriotism of the race in defending democracy and the failure of the National Defense program to include blacks in military service or in war jobs.⁸²

Brooklyn proved to be one of the central areas for protest as many of the war industries were located there. The National Negro Congress, NAACP, and other grassroots organizations focused their activities against discrimination in that borough. Robert Washburn, the Executive Secretary of the State War Council's Committee on Discrimination considered Brooklyn the "capital of discrimination." In a speech to the Brooklyn Bureau of Charities on March 12, 1942 Washburn said that the entire borough had failed to stop or slow down job discrimination against blacks, Jews, and Italians. In his view less progress had been made in Brooklyn than in any other defense industry center in New York State.⁸³ Despite the tight labor market in New York, Washburn blamed discrimination by plant owners for low employment levels of African Americans in war industries. He believed that the problem of discrimination could "not be solved by legislation, but by public opinion operating on employers and labor alike."⁸⁴ Black organizations did just that by publicizing discrimination in Brooklyn's war industries and trying to turn public opinion against companies with discriminatory hiring practices.

⁸¹ "NAACP Maps Huge Confab: Walter White to Give Main talk at Boys' High Meeting," *Amsterdam News*, January 25, 1941, 11.

⁸² "Drive Against Program Bias," *Amsterdam News*, January 18, 1941, 4.

⁸³ Washburn did make an exception for the Navy Yard, whose employment practices were said to be fair. This exception is significant to note since the Navy Yard was a principal employer during the war years and became the largest employer of black workers.

⁸⁴ "Governor's Man Blasts Brooklyn," *Voice*, March 21, 1942, "Discrimination Against Races Prevails Here," *Brooklyn Citizen*, March 18, 1942, New York State War Council COD, Box 4, Folders 209 -Newspaper Clippings.

In January, 1941 the Brooklyn branch of the NAACP called a mass meeting at which questions pertaining to blacks' place in the national defense program were addressed.⁸⁵

Approximately 900 Brooklynites heard Walter White, the National Secretary of the NAACP, speak. White urged blacks to unite to combat racial discrimination in the Army, Navy, and Air Corps. He also agreed to lead a delegation to the Brooklyn offices of the Sperry Gyroscope Corporation, one of the largest wartime employers in New York, in an effort to secure jobs for African Americans.⁸⁶ Though the initial meeting was not successful, black organizations continued to target Sperry and the company hired its first black workers later that year.⁸⁷

Following White's failed trip to Sperry, E. Frederic Morrow, the Branch Coordinator of the NAACP asked Fred Turner, the President of the Brooklyn Branch for his help in a campaign against discriminatory hiring practices in war industries. The national organization was looking to compile information on hiring practices of war industries to make recommendations to Congress for more stringent rules against hiring discrimination based on race. The NAACP focused on Brooklyn for the campaign because there were many large plants in the area with millions of dollars worth of war contracts. Sperry Gyroscope, Worth Engineering Corporation, Atlantic Basin Ironworks, the Brooklyn Navy Yard, Arma Corporation, and Brewster Aircraft were just a few of the many war production plants located in Brooklyn. Morrow asked Turner to personally investigate whether African Americans were being employed and generally what the policies of these plants were in this regard.⁸⁸ It is not completely clear what became of this NAACP campaign. However it is clear that the organization targeted Brooklyn companies for

⁸⁵ "Rally To Determine Negro's Part in Defense," *Amsterdam News*, January 25, 1941, 11.

⁸⁶ "Boro NAACP Conference Assails Discrimination," *Amsterdam News*, February 1, 1941, 6.

⁸⁷ R. E. Gillmor, "How Can the Negro Hold His Job?" 1945, Records of the Sperry Corporation, Box 18, Folder 4.

⁸⁸ E. Frederic Morrow to Fred Turner, February 3, 1941, Legal Papers of the NAACP, Part 15: Series A: Legal Department Complaints and Responses, 1940-1955, Discrimination Sperry, 1941-1943 Folder, Microfilm 10786, Reel 7 of 19.

legal action against discrimination because of the overt racism of companies' hiring policies and the concentration of federally funded war industries in that borough.

The NAACP's activism in Brooklyn was indicative of the organization's new focus on expanding employment opportunities for African Americans. From its inception the NAACP was an interracial organization, with a middle class membership, that concentrated their strategies for expanding black rights on legal campaigns. According to historian Beth Tompkins Bates the NAACP was influenced to begin focusing on African Americans' economic problems during the late 1930s due to challenges from outside and within. New activists like A Philip Randolph and organizations like the National Negro Congress, along with pressure from several local branch offices pushed the NAACP to endorse collective action and mass unionization.⁸⁹

Just as civil rights organizations and black newspapers urged defense industries to hire black workers, they urged blacks to learn trades to increase the supply of skilled blacks. One writer to the *Amsterdam News* urged African Americans to acquire the technical skills war time employers were looking for. The author also recommended that New York's skilled black workers assert themselves in the job market.⁹⁰ Special courses in skilled trades were offered to blacks in Harlem through a variety of programs such as the New York Urban League's job training courses for black workers at Columbia University.⁹¹ When war industries opened their doors to black employees, African Americans would be trained and ready to take those jobs.

Refusal to hire black workers in skilled positions was not unique to employers in war industries; it was a problem that plagued many skilled crafts as well. Though blacks were urged to get training in trades, they found that training did not always convert into jobs. In fact Alice

⁸⁹ Beth Tompkins Bates, "A New Crowd Challenges the Agenda of the Old Guard in the NAACP, 1933-1941," *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 102, No. 2 (Apr., 1997): 340-377.

⁹⁰ "Must Better Themselves," *Amsterdam News*, December 14, 1940, 16.

⁹¹ "Training for Defense Work" and "Tech Training Now Available," *Amsterdam News*, January 25, 1941, 4.

Citron, a delegate of the Teacher's Union in New York, reported her experience with the Vocational Guidance Council for Students. She said that Negro graduates, although they left school with extensive training and were qualified in various trades – plumbing, mechanics, electrical work, sheet metal work – could not find positions upon graduation. She alleged that this was due to the fact that unions controlling these trades refused to accept black graduates.⁹² The exclusion of African Americans in some labor unions was a problem blacks would have to overcome to attain more profitable employment.

Consequently in addition to addressing the problem of discrimination in defense industries, New York's African Americans fought discrimination in labor unions, especially the craft unions which had some control over training and hiring. At the 1940 annual convention for the American Federation of Labor, A. Philip Randolph, president of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, asked the union federation to officially end discrimination against black workers in all of its locals. Randolph's demand was met with apathy and disinterest. In fact the federation reneged on its promise to integrate blacks into the administrative organizations of its national body and claiming local autonomy, the AFL refused to terminate lily white crafts which prohibited black membership.⁹³

The Negro Labor Committee (NLC) and the Negro Labor Victory Committee (NLVC) also attempted to integrate war industries through labor unions. Due to the strong belief in the rights of workers and the unity of the working classes regardless of race they were prompted to try and work for black rights through the labor movement. These leftist organizations worked

⁹² Minutes of the Negro Labor Assembly, January 19, 1940, Negro Labor Committee Papers Microfilm reel 4, Folder b84.

⁹³ "AFL Snubs Randolph's Plea for Racial tolerance; Remains Lily-White," *Amsterdam News*, December 12, 1940, 1.

under the assumption that if craft unions would accept black members then black workers through the unions could obtain training for skilled industrial jobs.

The Negro Labor Committee was founded in 1935 by Frank Crosswaith to organize and guide black workers in trade unions and to establish solidarity between black and white workers.⁹⁴ The organization was active in seeking better wages, working conditions, and improved benefits for all workers. The Committee attempted to organize black workers and to lend its support to unions interested in organizing blacks.⁹⁵ Many of the labor unions affiliated with the NLC were locals of garment industrial unions.

The International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union (ILGWU), an affiliate of the American Federation of Labor, was known for its socialist leaders, inclusive ethos, and progressive stance with regard to race. Therefore the union was open to black workers and advocated for black employment in garment firms in the city. In fact the "ladies' garment workers union became one of the most militant promoters of civil rights for blacks." The ILGWU had a particularly strong relationship with the Negro Labor Committee and Frank Crosswaith who also worked as a general organizer for the union.⁹⁶ The activities of the NLC therefore focused mostly on expanding job opportunities for blacks in the needle trades through black membership in the ILGWU.

The Negro Labor Victory Committee, founded on June 27, 1942, was a subsidiary of the National Negro Congress. The purpose of the organization was to open the doors of industry to all Americans regardless of race and to encourage black workers to join trade unions. Leaders of

⁹⁴ Letter sent from Negro Labor Committee, February 25, 1946, NLC Papers, Box 1, Folder a6.

⁹⁵ Biography of Frank Crosswaith, Inventory of the Frank R. Crosswaith Papers, 1917-1965, Schomburg Research Library, New York Public Library. Accessed January 2008
<http://www.nypl.org/research/manuscripts/scm/scmcrosw.xml>

⁹⁶ Nancy L. Green "Blacks, Jews, and the "Natural Alliance": Labor Cohabitation and the ILGWU," *Jewish Social Studies*, New Series, Vol. 4, No. 1 (Autumn, 1997): 81-83.

the organization were all Communist trade unionists including Ferdinand Smith, Secretary of the Maritime Union; Dorothy Funn a member of the Teachers Union; and the most active member Charles Collins, Executive Secretary of the Hotel and Club Employees Union. The organization's leaders sought to make the fight for equality for blacks and other minorities an integral part of the program of the organized labor movement. By the 1940s, the National Negro Congress was mainly Popular Front organization that was labor oriented, but also supported freedom for the Scottsboro Boys, anti-poll tax legislation, and freedom for colonial peoples of Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean; goals that evidenced its connection to the Communist Party.⁹⁷

Most of the Committee's efforts focused on forcing union locals to alter their practices and influencing national unions to enforce their non-discrimination policies. The NLVC did this through anti-discrimination committees it set up in union locals affiliated with the AFL and CIO such as the Fur Dress and Dyers Union and the National Maritime Union. The organization functioned mostly in unions affiliated with the Communist Party. While the NLVC failed to reach a majority of unions, the organization pushed labor unions to open its doors to black workers, thus negating industries' claims that union discrimination prevented them from hiring African Americans, and expanding the industries in which black workers could find jobs.⁹⁸

Though the Negro Labor Committee and the Negro Labor Victory Committee had the same goal and attempted to reach it through the same mechanisms, the relationship between the organizations was contentious. These two groups represented the division between Socialists and Communists on the left. Frank Crosswaith and the leadership of the NLC viewed the NLVC as a rival group which tried to replace the NLC as the premier organization representing black

⁹⁷ C. Alvin Hughes, "Let Us Do Our Part: The New York City Based Negro Labor Victory Committee, 1941-1945," *Afro-Americans in New York Life and History*, Vol. 10 (Jan 1986): 19-29.

⁹⁸ C. Alvin Hughes, "Let Us Do Our Part", 19-29.

labor. Crosswaith seemed to be trying to protect his turf as the younger NLVC began looking for labor affiliates and tapping potential donors for financial support. Moreover Crosswaith's ire towards the Communist NLVC was linked to the decades long political rivalry between the Socialist Party and the Communist Party.⁹⁹

The National Negro Congress, the NLVC's parent organization, was founded in 1936 as a coalition of activists with diverse view-points fighting for improvement of African American rights. The organization was not affiliated with any political position or party. Black trade unionists, community activists, women's clubs, Communists, and disgruntled NAACP members advocating a greater focus on labor issues supported the NNC. The NNC focused its efforts on the immediate concerns of African Americans – including the repeal of the poll tax, passage of a federal anti-lynching law, abolition of discrimination in public services, and enactment of a comprehensive civil rights program.¹⁰⁰

By 1940 the NNC had lost much of its ideological diversity. The majority of the NNC's members were American Communist Party members or supporters and CP ideology and the Popular Front's agenda began to dominate the position and activities of the NNC. After Soviet leader Stalin surprisingly signed a non-aggression pact with Hitler in 1939, NNC leadership also went along with the CP party line criticizing Roosevelt's retreat from New Deal programs as the country pumped more money into production for war goods. The changing position of the NNC prompted A Philip Randolph, the NNC's president, to refuse to stand for re-election paving the way for Max Yergan, a former YMCA official and NNC vice-president firmly in the CP camp, to be elected president. Many of the NNC members opposed to the pro-CP position the

⁹⁹ NLC Meeting Minutes, December 11, 1942, NLC Papers, Folder b84, Microfilm reel 4.

¹⁰⁰ Eric Arnesen, "No 'Graver Danger': Black Anticommunism, the Communist Party and the Race Question," *Labor: Studies in Working-Class History of the Americas*, Vol. 3, No. 4, Winter 2006, 13-16, 23; Wilson Record, *The Negro and the Communist Party*, 129-136, 191.

organization had taken also left. Ralph Bunche and the Urban League's Lester Granger publicly criticized the new ideology of the NNC.¹⁰¹

After Germany invaded Russia violating their non-aggression pact in 1941, the Communist party changed their position and supported the war. Communist affiliated civil rights organizations like the NLVC became less isolated.¹⁰² Many Communists, therefore, were involved in initiatives to better job opportunities for blacks in New York during the war. Harlem leaders such as Ben Davis affiliated with Communist influenced organizations like the National Negro Congress and the Negro Labor Victory Committee and advocated for fair employment for black workers.¹⁰³ For the remainder of the war Communists in New York forged collaborative relationships with liberal interracial organizations like the NAACP and Urban League.

Some of the early campaigns to end discriminatory hiring practices by war industries found success. In August of 1941 the NAACP set its sights on the seemingly impenetrable airplane industry, using the press to pressure Brewster Airplane Company in Long Island City, Queens into hiring black workers. Criticism from representatives of local NAACP branches and other New York City groups, combined with accusations of discrimination and bad publicity, caused the company's management to hire their first ever black worker in August of 1941. The NAACP's criticism of Brewster revolved around the case of Edmond Van Osten. Van Osten was a black tinsmith with nine years of experience whom Brewster management had deemed under-qualified for a position. Though he was not hired, the company readily employed numerous white candidates with only two years experience in the same position refused Van Osten. The NAACP brought Van Osten's case to the attention of the New York Employment

¹⁰¹ Eric Arnesen, "No 'Graver Danger': Black Anticommunism, the Communist Party and the Race Question," 13-16, 23.

¹⁰² Wilson Record, *The Negro and the Communist Party*, 129-136, 191.

¹⁰³ Martha Biondi, *To Stand and Fight*, 1-16.

Service, where an agency official confirmed Van Osten's qualifications. After the NAACP's criticisms were published Brewster hired four other black workers.¹⁰⁴ These hires, though small in number, were large in significance as the aeronautic industry was one of the toughest for blacks to penetrate. Bad publicity highlighting discriminatory hiring practices pressured some companies to hire black workers in an era in which discrimination was increasingly looked down upon and viewed as un-American, especially in the face of Nazi fascism and xenophobia.

Even more dramatic was the People's Court of Inquiry's town meeting to address many of the problems facing Harlem's blacks including discrimination in the job market. New York City government officials were invited to attend the meeting and respond to the complaints and opinions of the Harlem community. Designed to resemble a mock trial, the People's Committee planned to present witnesses who would testify to their deplorable living conditions and lack of employment opportunities.¹⁰⁵ The People's Committee was created out of the Greater New York Coordinating Committee for Employment by Adam Clayton Powell Jr. to support his bid for City Councilman in 1941.¹⁰⁶ Powell publicly announced that the People's Committee would attempt to bring together African Americans and Puerto Ricans to use their organized strength to obtain employment.¹⁰⁷ Interestingly one of those scheduled to be interviewed at the Court of Inquiry meeting was a migrant single mother who left the South and brought her children to New York in "pursuit of life, liberty, and happiness for herself and her children." The mother was disappointed when instead she found "unemployment, poverty, and public officials who had consistently attempted to deprive her of a miserly relief."¹⁰⁸ Meeting organizers invited city

¹⁰⁴ "Airplane Firm Said Bending to Pressure," *Amsterdam News*, August 23, 1941, 3.

¹⁰⁵ "People's Court Plans Quiz on Harlem Conditions," *Amsterdam News*, February 1, 1941, 1 & 4.

¹⁰⁶ Cheryl L. Greenberg, *Or Does it Explode?: Black Harlem in the Great Depression*, 203, 133

¹⁰⁷ "Pressure Planned by Harlem Group," *NYT*, November 13, 1941, 24.

¹⁰⁸ John Roman, "People's Court Plans Quiz on Harlem Conditions," *Amsterdam News*, February 1, 1941, 1 & 4. For more on the Worker's Alliance of America see Chad Alan Goldberg's "Contesting the Status of Relief Workers

officials to the inquiry and urged them to directly respond to the problems blacks faced. The inquiry was an attempt on the part of the People's Committee to bring the problems of black New Yorkers to the direct attention of city leaders.

Blacks widened their efforts to open employment in defense industries to black workers, pressuring not only the companies themselves but the state and federal government as well. Blacks believed that the state employment service did not refer blacks to jobs. So, in January of 1941 the New York Urban League pressured the State Employment Service to assign black interviewers to all of its New York City offices so that black applicants would be better served. This was done in order to avoid the tendency for white interviewers to refer only white applicants to jobs.¹⁰⁹

Black politicians looked to find legislative solutions to the problem of employment discrimination. In March of 1941 three Harlem assemblymen William Andrews, Daniel Burrows, and Hulen Jack introduced bills aimed at destroying all forms of job discrimination. These proposed laws would make discrimination in companies with government contracts illegal, increase punishments for those who violated these laws, and amend state laws to include racist hiring practices as transgressions of the civil rights of state residents.¹¹⁰ In the spring of that year Governor Herbert Lehman established the New York State War Council Committee on Discrimination in Employment (COD) and the state assembly passed legislation outlawing discrimination in war industries. State Senators Walter Mahoney, Charles Perry, and Phelps

during the New Deal: The Workers Alliance of America and the Works Progress Administration, 1935-1941," *Social Science History*, vol. 29 no. 3, (2005): 337-371.

¹⁰⁹ "Placing Negro Interviewers," *Amsterdam News*, January 25, 1941, 5.

¹¹⁰ "Harlem Assemblymen Spur Movement to Air Racial Discrimination in State," *Amsterdam News*, March 1, 1941, 1 & 17.

Phelps introduced three supporting measures to the State Senate.¹¹¹ This was a critical first step in state prohibition of employment discrimination.

Though these bills were not passed by the assembly, Governor Herbert Lehman established the New York State War Council Committee on Discrimination in Employment (COD) to deal with complaints of hiring bias.¹¹² Lehman, a long time supporter of progressive legislation for equal opportunity, appointed the members of the COD in March of 1941, and chose Frieda S. Miller, the Industrial Commissioner of New York, as its chairman. The COD operated under the State War Council, which oversaw the mobilization of all state resources for the war effort, and its initial purpose was to fight bias against blacks and Jews who had suffered discrimination for decades, as well as Italians and Germans who were discriminated against because of their perceived association with the Axis powers in Europe.¹¹³ To ensure efficient production Lehman impelled the committee to make war industries utilize all individuals without consideration of race, color, creed, or national origin. The committee consisted of twenty-seven members appointed by the governor representing industrial, labor, civic, and racial organizations.¹¹⁴

The committee's first task was to mold public opinion against discrimination in employment so their first action was a publicity campaign. The COD staff sent ten thousand letters to leaders in the state asking them to endorse full employment for minority groups. When

¹¹¹ "Harlem Assemblymen Spur Movement to Air Racial Discrimination in State," *Amsterdam News*. March 1, 1941, 1 & 17.

¹¹² Cheryl Greenberg, *Or Does it Explode*, 203.

¹¹³ History of the Committee on Discrimination in Employment, New York State War Council Committee on Discrimination, 8/14/1942, Papers of the New York State War Council's COD, Reel 14, Box 6, Folder 265 – Committee Reports March-December, 1942.

¹¹⁴ "They Also Served --- Committee on Discrimination in Employment," History of the State Committee on Discrimination in Employment, New York State Archives website, accessed February 10, 2012

http://www.archives.nysed.gov/a/research/res_topics_mi_homefront_cde.shtml

a large number responded, they were sent to local newspapers to drum up more support for the committee's activities.¹¹⁵

The COD itself had little power to concretely end discriminatory employment practices. Its members and chairman conferred with war contractors throughout the state in an attempt to expand job opportunities for minorities through moral suasion and education. Complaints were investigated by voluntary organizations because the COD lacked field staff and the committee could do little in the face of delay, obstruction, or noncompliance by companies. Though it is not clear from the COD documents what they considered voluntary organizations, the organization actively cooperated with black organizations such as the National Urban League. There were few concrete advances made by the COD during its first year of existence.¹¹⁶

It was not until the fall of 1941 that legislation went into effect giving the COD legal grounding for its activities. In April of that year, Governor Lehman signed the Mahoney bill which barred discrimination in government funded or supported industries. The bill, which was sponsored by the Congress of Industrial Organizations and strongly backed by Lehman, read

It shall be unlawful for any person, firm or corporation engaged to any extent whatsoever in the production, manufacture or distribution of military or naval material, equipment or supplies for the State of New York or for the Federal Government to refuse to employ any person in any capacity on account of the race, creed or color of such person.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁵ History of the Committee on Discrimination in Employment, State War Council Committee on Discrimination, 8/14/1942, Papers of the New York State War Council's COD, Reel 14, Box 6, Folder 265 – Committee Reports March-December, 1942.

¹¹⁶ History of the Committee on Discrimination in Employment, State War Council Committee on Discrimination, August, 14, 1942, Papers of the New York State War Council's COD, Reel 14, Box 6, Folder 265 – Committee Reports March-December, 1942; Anthony S. Chen, "'The Hitlerian Rule of Quotas': Racial Conservatism and the Politics of Fair Employment Legislation in New York State, 1941-1945," *Journal of American History*, (March 2006): 1238-1264.

¹¹⁷ "100 Bills Adopted in Rush at Albany," *NYT*, March 26, 1941, 40; "Lehman Signs Bill Barring Race Bias," *NYT*, April, 19, 1941, 9.

In September 1941 the Mahoney Act went into effect.¹¹⁸

New York's black activists pressured for similar anti-discrimination legislation at the federal level. Leaders of national civil rights organizations headquartered in New York led the charge to pressure the federal government to eliminate discriminatory hiring practices in defense industries. Lester Granger, in charge of industrial relations for the National Urban League, blamed the National Defense Advisory Commission for the virtual exclusion of black skilled workers from defense projects.¹¹⁹ Granger believed the Commission could secure compliance with its non-discrimination order through the Office of Production Management (OPM).¹²⁰ The OPM, which had representation in the Advisory Commission, exercised general direction over federal war procurement and production programs.¹²¹ Granger urged OPM Associate Director Sidney Hillman to withhold special tax privileges from defense industries if they discriminated against black workers. Granger argued that the government could rightfully penalize these companies because by not employing black workers, they were compromising war-time production and thus the national interests.¹²² In the spring and summer of 1941 black leaders went further and aimed to take their protests directly to the president.

In April, 1941 A. Philip Randolph, leader of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, announced plans for an "all-out march" to Washington, D. C. to demand an executive order to end racial discrimination in defense industries. It was his hope that 10,000 blacks would

¹¹⁸ History of the Committee on Discrimination in Employment, State War Council COD, August, 14, 1942, Reel 14, Box 6, Folder 265 – Committee Reports March-December, 1942.

¹¹⁹ "Means by Which Defense Commission Can Eliminate Discrimination Suggested," *Amsterdam News*, February 15, 1941, 4.

¹²⁰ Means by Which Defense Commission Can Eliminate Discrimination Suggested," *Amsterdam News*, February 15, 1941, 4.

¹²¹ Guide to Federal Records – Records of the War Production Board, National Archives Records Administration website. Accessed February 16, 2012.

<http://www.archives.gov/research/guide-fed-records/groups/179.html>

¹²² "Means by Which Defense Commission Can Eliminate Discrimination Suggested," *Amsterdam News*, February 15, 1941, 4.

participate in this March on Washington.¹²³ On April 1, 1941 Lester Granger, Walter White, Channing Tobias of the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), Mary McLeod Bethune of the National Youth Administration (NYA), and Randolph asked President Roosevelt to forbid discrimination in the armed forces and defense industries. When Secretary of War Stimson and Secretary of the Navy Knox refused to desegregate the armed forces, Roosevelt, afraid of angering employers and Southern Democrats, did not insist. Instead he weakly issued a statement condemning discrimination. African American leaders were incensed. The black delegation felt that this was not enough and proposed a March on Washington at a meeting in Chicago. Randolph agreed to lead the March on Washington Movement (MOWM) and issued a formal call for support.¹²⁴

Responding to Randolph's call, local blacks formed a greater New York Committee to aid in mobilizing thousands for the proposed March on Washington which was scheduled for July 1941. The New York Committee planned a mass demonstration on City Hall to urge Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia and the City Council to assist in the efforts to ban discrimination in national defense industries. A large committee of black women supported the March on Washington Movement as well. These women began a March on Washington button campaign throughout the Greater New York area.¹²⁵

In June Randolph spoke to more than 500 Brooklyn residents at a mass meeting at the Alexander Hamilton High School. Randolph told the crowd the story of a black New York University of Technical Engineering student who applied to twelve companies for employment. The student received replies from six telling him no employment vacancies were available, and did not hear from the other six companies at all. Randolph used this episode to illustrate the

¹²³ "To Demand FDR Issue Exec Order Banning Bias," *Amsterdam News*, April 12, 1941, 9.

¹²⁴ Cheryl Greenberg, *Or Does it Explode?*, 202.

¹²⁵ "Organization of Local 'March on Washington' Committee is Announced," *Amsterdam News*, May 24, 1941, 3.

need for the federal government to step in to end unfair employment practices, and gain popular support for the Movement.¹²⁶

The March on Washington did not come to be. On June 25, 1941, the pressure from blacks and the March on Washington Movement pushed President Roosevelt to issue an executive order banning discriminatory hiring practices in industries with government war contracts. Threatened by the embarrassment of having a mass protest in the U.S. capital highlighting government injustice; the President issued Executive Order 8802. Not only did Executive Order 8802 prohibit hiring discrimination, but it also prohibited government training programs from discriminating against black workers. Finally the executive order established the Committee on Fair Employment Practices (FEPC) in the Office of Production Management.¹²⁷ The committee was to receive and investigate complaints of discrimination in violation of the executive order, and take appropriate steps to redress grievances which it found to be valid. The MOWM was successful in exerting enough pressure on the president to force him to outlaw discrimination in war industries and create a federal institution devoted to identifying and investigating discriminatory hiring practices.

Buoyed by the passage of the executive order, black New Yorkers were euphoric and optimistic about their place in the workforce. Roosevelt's executive order received front page coverage in the *Amsterdam News*, and was the subject of many editorials in the following weeks. The newspaper published a political cartoon entitled "It Means What it Says!" In the cartoon the large hand of the federal government delivers the executive order prohibiting discrimination in

¹²⁶ "500 Brooklynites Attend Big Rally for Defense Jobs," *Amsterdam News*, June 21, 1941, 16.

¹²⁷ This organization went through some name changes therefore, through the rest of the dissertation this committee will be referred to as the Fair Employment Practices Committee to maintain a consistent name.

the national defense program to “Prejudiced Employers”¹²⁸ By the summer of 1941 black protest had pressured the state and national government to take first steps towards outlawing discrimination in employment.

After the passage of New York State and federal anti-discrimination legislation, there were some immediate gains. Brewster Aeronautical Corporation in Long Island City hired a crew of black sheet metal workers, but it was clear that Executive Order 8802 and the FEPC were not immediate and complete solutions to the problem of job discrimination.¹²⁹ In order to get those sheet metal workers employed at Brewster Aeronautical, heavy pressure from the NAACP and other black organizations in New York was needed. Despite the executive order passed only two months before, it took public press campaigns about the discriminatory hiring practices of Brewster Aeronautical to force the corporation to begin to employ blacks. The NAACP concluded that, “the Brewster Company furnishes an example of the necessity of constant vigilance by organizations outside of OPM [Office of Production Management] and the need for close examination of all the ‘smooth excuses’ of companies seeking to dodge the employment of Negroes by one pretense or another.”¹³⁰ Black protests brought attention to discriminatory hiring practices in war industries under the purview of Executive Order 8802 in an effort to influence the companies to employ African Americans.

The passage of the Executive Order 8802 and the Mahoney Act in and of itself was not enough to convince employers to hire black workers. The situation at Brewster was not uncommon. Employers continued to refuse to hire black workers. Companies often blamed

¹²⁸ “President Roosevelt’s Order to Bar Bias,” *Amsterdam News*, June 28, 1941, 1; Editorial, *Amsterdam News*, July 5, 1941, 14; Roy Wilkins, “Watchtower column,” *Amsterdam News*, July 5, 1941, 12; “It Means What It Says!,” *Amsterdam News*, July 5, 1941, 14.

¹²⁹ “Fair Practice Committee Head to Speak Here Tuesday; Defense Hiring Spurts,” *Amsterdam News*, August 2, 1941, 1.

¹³⁰ “Airplane Firm Said Bending to Pressure,” *Amsterdam News*, August, 23, 1941, 3.

white workers, claiming they refused to work with blacks. Furthermore some unions refused to accept black workers.¹³¹ It was clear that the vigilance of black organizations would be needed to address these problems in order for the executive order and Mahoney Act to be effective.

The Brooklyn Coordinating Committee on Defense Employment for Negroes found some success in placing black workers after the establishment of the Committee on Discrimination and the FEPC. From April to October of 1941 more than 600 African Americans received help from the Committee, 199 being directly referred to jobs and 122 of them being placed. Defense training was obtained for 183 African Americans through the NYA and Board of Education. The NYA worked alongside the New York City Board of Education to offer training opportunities for black men in a variety of occupations. The Board of Education accepted African Americans in all categories of training, but trained black women only for jobs in the garment trades (one of the few industrial areas open to black women during the early years of the war). The National Youth Administration however provided training for black women in the radio trades as well.¹³² Industrial training for African Americans was very important in the fight for black employment. Training would create a group of skilled blacks ready to enter jobs in war industries, effectively eliminating managers' claims that they could not hire black workers because they were not trained in the needed skills to work in the factories.

During the New Deal, the National Youth Administration had operated youth training programs and continued to do so during the war. The NYA, when it was conceived, aimed to combine economic relief with on-the-job training in federally funded work projects designed to provide youth with marketable skills for the future. The organization, which was directly controlled by the federal government, attempted to encourage training and full employment for

¹³¹ Franklin O. Nichols, "Summary of the Proceedings of the Eastern Regional Conference of the Urban League Industrial Secretaries," February 1942, Edward Shakespeare Lewis Papers, Box 2, Folder 1.

¹³² "Negroes Here Get Defense Training," *NYT*, November 9, 1941, 35.

African Americans as well. In 1937 it launched a program specifically targeted for African American youths headed by Mary McCleod Bethune.¹³³ In January of 1941 the NYA launched a drive to place Negro machinists and placed every black applicant in a position.¹³⁴

The NYA also collaborated with the BCCDE's parent organization the Brooklyn Urban League to achieve greater black employment in defense industries. The NYA aided the Brooklyn Borough Urban League's (BKUL) defense employment drive which it launched in April 1941.¹³⁵ The National Urban League had close ties with the NYA as Lester Granter, the Urban League's assistant Executive Secretary in charge of industrial relations, served on the Advisory Committee on Employment problems of Negro Youth for the NYA.¹³⁶ In May 1941, twelve National Youth Administration workers assisted the Brooklyn Urban League's drive to get technically skilled blacks hired by industries with government contracts. These NYA workers compiled lists of recent black technical school graduates and submitted them to the league. BKUL Industrial Secretary Charles Berkley then approached employers with the names. The NYA workers also went to unions to query about their policy for admitting qualified black workers. Trained black workers were then encouraged to apply for industrial positions and union membership.¹³⁷ The BKUL collaborated with government offices with which it had personnel ties to train and place black workers in war industries a tactic that it would continue throughout the war years.

¹³³ Allida Black, June Hopkins, et. al. ed., "National Youth Administration," The Eleanor Roosevelt Papers, *Teaching Eleanor Roosevelt*, (Hyde Park, New York: Eleanor Roosevelt National Historic Site, 2003. Accessed January 29, 2009. <http://www.nps.gov/archive/elro/glossary/nya.htm>

¹³⁴ "National Youth Administration Officials Reveal Advances in Employment Field," *Amsterdam News*, February 1, 1941, 2.

¹³⁵ "Borough (BK) Urban League Launches Defense Employment Drive to Secure Positions," *Amsterdam News*, April 12, 1941, 11.

¹³⁶ "National Youth Administration Officials Reveal Advances in Employment Field," *Amsterdam News*, February 1, 1941, 2.

¹³⁷ "NYA to Assist League's Drive for Defense Jobs," *Amsterdam News*, May 3, 1941, 10.

After the passage of Executive Order 8802, the NLVC also looked to use the federal government to open up jobs in war industries to African Americans. They called on the War Production Board to immediately place trained black workers in jobs in war industries, asked for additional war contracts for New York City, and urged that blacks be appointed to policy-making boards and commissions.¹³⁸

The creation of the COD and the FEPC and the passage of the Mahoney Act were very significant in that the federal and state governments took measures to protect minorities from hiring discrimination. Each however had its limitations. Though black organizations increasingly looked to use government agencies to open up jobs in factories with government contracts to African American workers, the COD lacked the staff to investigate companies and enforce its legislation and the FEPC did not have mechanisms to force companies to comply with its findings and suggestions. Therefore the agencies were not very effective in opening jobs to blacks in war industries. This would change in 1942 as increased war time production created more available jobs, the government strengthened the powers of the COD and FEPC, and civil rights organizations stepped up pressure on these government agencies and employers alike for more jobs in war industries.

America at War: More Contracts, More Job Opportunities in New York City

After the United States officially entered the war on December 8, 1941, the United States government looked to gain a firmer grasp on the economy. As in previous American wars money and resources were of the utmost concern to the federal government. Consequently, the government expanded its power to oversee production of war materials and food as well as the

¹³⁸ C. Alvin Hughes, "Let Us Do Our Part," 19-29.

manpower supply for factories within the states, especially in centers of production. The War Manpower Commission (WMC) was created in April, 1942 under the chairmanship of the Federal Security Administrator Paul V. McNutt. The WMC consisted of representatives from the War Department; the Departments of Agriculture, Labor, and the Navy; the Federal Security Agency; the War Production Board; the Selective Service System; and the Civil Service Commission. The WMC recruited labor for war and essential civilian industries, trained labor for jobs essential to the war effort, analyzed manpower utilization practices to increase labor efficiency, and accumulated national labor market information.¹³⁹

Many other government offices were incorporated into and operated under the umbrella of the War Manpower Commission during the war in order to centralize oversight of the nation's wartime economy. The FEPC was part of the WMC from 1942 until its reorganization by Executive Order in 1943. In May, 1943 the President issued an executive order that moved the FEPC under the president's jurisdiction and required all government contracts to have a non-discrimination clause. Though it was no longer under the jurisdiction of the WMC, the FEPC retained close ties with the organization.¹⁴⁰ The cooperation of these two organizations would help ensure that racial discrimination did not interfere with war production.¹⁴¹

¹³⁹ Records of the WMC , Administrative History (211.1) National Archives and Records Administration website, Accessed on February 13, 2012 <http://www.archives.gov/research/guide-fed-records/groups/211.html#211.1>

¹⁴⁰ Memo from Lawrence Appley, Deputy Chairman and Executive Director of WMC to all regional, state, and area manpower directors, WMC Papers, Box 367, Office file of Lawson.

¹⁴¹ Some scholars argue that the placement of the FEPC under the jurisdiction of the WMC was an attempt to stymie its activities, a situation which led to the organization's collapse in 1943. Pressure from civil rights groups to reorganize the agency led Roosevelt to issue Executive Order 9346. For more on this see Hugh Davis Graham's *The Civil Rights Era* pp. 9-11 and political scientist Ken Mayer's "Executive Orders and Civil Rights in the 20th Century" from *With a Stroke of the Pen: Presidential Power and Executive Orders* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002). Accessed September 8, 2008 <http://www.polisci.wisc.edu/apw/archives/mayer.pdf>.

The United States Employment Service (USES) also operated as part of the WMC during war years (1942-1945).¹⁴² Local USES offices were responsible for taking action against companies who discriminated and USES officials were responsible for persuading employers or anyone acting on their behalf to eliminate restrictive hiring or training practices.¹⁴³ These activities during the war years were overseen by the WMC.

Not only did the federal government integrate national offices, it also began to incorporate and cooperate closely with offices of the state government. On January 1, 1942 all staff and facilities of the New York State Employment Service were transferred to federal jurisdiction at the request of President Roosevelt.¹⁴⁴ The USES and the State War Council's Committee on Discrimination in Employment cooperated closely. As the COD investigated the hiring policies of corporations, it asked USES and other interested social, religious, and racial organizations to refer black applicants to companies lacking colored workers.¹⁴⁵ Tightening of federal control over offices of state government provided a unity of purpose, at least in New York.

The COD looked for new tactics to increase its effectiveness. Early in February of 1942 it intensified its attacks on discriminatory hiring practices using a two-pronged strategy. It tried to end the evasion of existing laws with a bill to prevent employment agencies, utility companies, and not just the defense industries, from discriminating against minority job

¹⁴² After the war USES was moved to the Department of Labor where it stayed until 1948. Records of the Office of Employment Security, Administrative History (183.1), National Archives and Records Administration website, Accessed on February 13, 2012 <http://www.archives.gov/research/guide-fed-records/groups/183.html>

¹⁴³ Memo from Lawrence Appley, Deputy Chairman and Executive Director of WMC to all regional, state, and area manpower directors, WMC Papers, Record Group 212, Box 367, Office file of Lawson.,

¹⁴⁴ "Labor Market Conditions and Employment Service Program," December 1941, New York State War Council COD, Box 6, Folder 270 – Department of Labor.

¹⁴⁵ NYS COD Monthly Report September 1942, New York State War Council COD, Box 6 Folder 265 Committee Reports, March-December 1942.

applicants. Second the committee hired more field staff to increase the pressure of persuasion on employers with discriminatory practices.¹⁴⁶

Just as the COD was becoming more active, the city's economic conditions improved. At mid-year state and city authorities secured additional war work for New York City. Until this point, the city had received less than four percent of the total volume of war orders when it did nearly 8 percent of the nation's peace-time manufacturing. As a result, USES encouraged New York City's unemployed workers to find jobs in the more active markets in adjacent counties in Long Island, New Jersey and Connecticut.¹⁴⁷

As more jobs became available, state and local government organizations more actively tried to obtain jobs for New York's blacks, but war industries continued to discriminate against black workers. Several members of the Committee on Discrimination expressed frustration with the organization's inability to make employers comply with their findings and asked Governor Lehman to strengthen the powers of their committee.¹⁴⁸ New legislation was passed to allow Lehman to do just that by establishing more severe consequences for those who evaded the law and giving state officials the ability to enforce anti-discrimination legislation.

In the spring of 1942 two amendments to the Mahoney Law, the Schwartzwald and Washburn Acts, were passed by the state legislature giving the Committee more power. The Washburn Act made it a misdemeanor to exclude a citizen of the state by reason of national origin, race, color or creed from employment in war industries or enjoyment of privileges furnished by innkeepers, common carriers or employment agencies. The second law, the

¹⁴⁶ "Defense Council Group Intensifies Drive," *New York Sun*, February 3, 1942, "Plan to End Racial Bias," *New York Telegram*, February 3, 1942, New York State War Council COD, Box 4, Folder 209 Newspaper Clippings NYS Committee on Discrimination.

¹⁴⁷ "Employment and Unemployment," New York State – June 1942 (formerly titled *Labor Market Conditions and Employment Service Program*). New York State War Council COD, Box 6, Folder 270 – Department of Labor.

¹⁴⁸ Anthony Chen, "The Hitlerian Rule of Quotas: Racial Conservatism and the Politics of Fair Employment Legislation in New York State, 1941-1945," 1238-1264.

Schwartzwald Act gave the State Industrial Commissioner administrative powers in relation to discrimination in war industries. This meant that the Commissioner could enforce the laws against discrimination. The Commissioner could also require submission of information, records and reports pertinent to an investigation of discriminatory hiring practices.¹⁴⁹ Consequently the COD began a campaign to eliminate all questions regarding race, religion, color, or national origin from employment applications for war contractors.¹⁵⁰

The amendments to the Mahoney Act also authorized the Industrial Commissioner to use the “powers of administration, investigation, inquiry, subpoena and hearing vested in him to enforce of anti-discrimination laws in war industries.” The commissioner could require submission at regular intervals of information, records and reports pertinent to discriminatory practices in industries. Frieda Miller, the state Industrial Commissioner, promised to use the law to issue orders to defense contractors prohibiting discriminatory hiring practices and to request affirmative action to correct past discrimination.¹⁵¹ Miller’s tough position and threat to use administrative orders that demanded action was an outgrowth of her past work in the labor movement. As a longtime labor official, she “reached for the regulatory tools most familiar to her.” Administrative orders like those she promised to issue were commonplace in labor relations since the Wagner Act, which conferred cease-and-desist authority to the National Labor Relations Board as well as the power to order offending companies to take affirmative action to compensate people who had been victimized. Many state labor boards, including New York’s,

¹⁴⁹ “Cecilia Ager Meets: The State Industrial Commissioner,” *New York P. M.*, May 12, 1942, New York State War Council COD, Box 4, Folder 209 – Newspaper Clippings.

¹⁵⁰ “War Plants Shelve Questions on Race,” *Post*, June 2, 1942, New York State War COD, Box 4 Folders 209 - Newspaper Clippings NYS Committee on Discrimination Papers.

¹⁵¹ History of the Committee on Discrimination in Employment, State War Council Committee on Discrimination, August, 14, 1942, New York State War Council COD, Reel 14, Box 6, Folder 265 – Committee Reports March-December, 1942.

enjoyed such powers. Therefore when Miller began to invoke similar powers she was just extending a regulatory model prevalent in industrial relations.¹⁵²

The passage of the Mahoney Act and the Schwartzwald and Washburn Acts gave the COD the power to actually achieve its goals. In March, 1942, a field staff was organized to investigate specific complaints and to undertake investigations on the Committee's own initiative.

The state legislation was reinforced by new legislation from the city. A New York City law aimed at employment agencies was added to the arsenal in the legal war against racial and religious discrimination. The Hart Bill, signed into law by Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia, outlawed employment agency ads which specified race, creed, or color limitations. If an advertising agency ran such an ad at the request of a factory or company, the agency would be held liable for violating the law unless it could prove it had written instructions from the employer to do so. In addition when an employer ordered an agency to place limitations in the ad, the employer's name had to be given in the advertisement. Therefore if there were discriminatory ads being placed by employers, state officials could identify them easily. Violation of the law was a misdemeanor and could result in the offending agency losing its license to operate.¹⁵³

Other state offices attempted to adhere to the mandate from federal and state governments to end discrimination in war industries and government offices. Anna Rosenberg, regional director of the Social Security Board, cracked down on discriminatory practices in the United States Employment Service in the New York area. In July of 1942 she warned USES staff that there could be no misunderstanding of her 1941 ban on bias against minority groups,

¹⁵² Anthony Chen, "'The Hitlerian Rule of Quotas': Racial Conservatism and the Politics of Fair Employment Legislation in New York State, 1941-1945," 1243.

¹⁵³ "City Joins War on Hate," *New York P.M.* n.d., New York State War Council COD, Box 4, Folders 209 - Newspaper Clippings.

which she issued when she took over direction of the office. She also declared that any future violation would be interpreted as willful. Rosenberg's new order also clearly defined discrimination by USES and other employers as a "failure to refer occupationally qualified applicants" to jobs because of their race, color, creed, national origin, or citizenship. Under these new orders it was discriminatory for an employer to pay one group higher wages than equally qualified members of other groups. It was also considered discriminatory to refuse to hire an applicant on the grounds that he or she will be excluded from a union because of race. Confining any group to a specific occupation under the guise of maintaining a balanced staff was also considered discrimination. Rosenberg stated that it was also discrimination when a union, acting as an agent for an employer, excluded any person from membership because of any of the above reasons. Rosenberg asked the COD to advise USES when factories were utilizing discriminatory hiring practices.¹⁵⁴

The COD strengthened its efforts to end discrimination after passage of the Schwartzwald amendment to the Mahoney Law. Industrial Commissioner Frieda Miller, Chairman of the COD, announced the beginning of a new phase in the committee's fight against discrimination. The State Labor Department implemented machinery to prosecute war industry employers who discriminated. All employers holding war production contracts who continued to use discriminatory hiring practices could be served a formal order by the state Department of Labor. Unless the employer complied with the order within ten days of its receipt, he was subject to criminal prosecution for a misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of no less than fifty dollars and no more than five hundred. In fact the State War Council, of which the COD was a part, began carrying out provisions of the New York State Penal Law effective September 1, 1942

¹⁵⁴ "New Rules Crack Down on USES Discrimination," *New York P. M.*, July 3, 1942, New York State War Council COD, Box 4 Folders 209 - Newspaper Clippings.

prohibiting private employment agencies from accepting job orders from war industries which contained discriminatory specifications referencing race, color, creed, or national origin.¹⁵⁵

The employment situation slowly began to improve for blacks in the summer of 1942. Placements of skilled and semi-skilled blacks had increased in New York and New England. At the same time enrollment of blacks in war training classes in the metropolitan area and New York City also increased from 4 percent to 10 percent of total trainees. The WMC attributed this increase to the coordinated efforts of the regional offices of the WMC, FEPC, COD, and the cooperation of trade unions in the area. One indicator that the employment situation was improving was the willingness, albeit reluctantly, of firms to train black women for skilled positions in industrial sectors that were very hard for blacks to obtain. Black women were being trained in aircraft classes, after the Eastern Aircraft plant of General Motors in the New York City suburb of Tarrytown accepted black women trainees. Moreover the United Electrical, Radio, and Machine Workers of America (UE), a progressive Communist led union, continued to campaign for the placement of Negro workers in the New York area, with locals 1225 and 1227 placing more than fifty colored workers in shops.¹⁵⁶

As more jobs became available African Americans stepped up their efforts to pressure the government to end hiring discrimination. The city's blacks used regional offices of the FEPC and COD to secure employment for skilled black workers. These agencies provided African Americans with a venue through which they could improve the job opportunities available to them and consequently their economic standing. Black organizations brought instances of violations of state and federal anti-discrimination legislation to the attention of these agencies

¹⁵⁵ Untitled, *Brooklyn Chronicle*, September 25, 1942; "State Moves to End Race Discrimination in War Plant Hiring," *Syracuse Herald*, September 18, 1942; "Job Agencies Helping to End Discrimination," *Kingston Leader*, September 17, 1942, NYS War Council COD, Box 4 Folders 209 Newspaper Clippings.

¹⁵⁶ Press Release, August 8, 1942 Office of War Information, War Manpower Commission, New York State War Council COD, Box 7, Folder 320.

which then conducted investigations of the accused companies, oversaw their hiring practices, and forced them to comply with the state and federal laws prohibiting discrimination.

The Brooklyn Urban League was one of the main organizations that brought discrimination cases to the offices of the COD and FEPC. African American job applicants who had been discriminated against reported the bias to the League's Industrial Department. The BKUL would often publicize these instances of discrimination. In a public statement in 1942 the New York and Brooklyn branches of the Urban League charged several industrial companies with war contracts of having discriminatory hiring practices and obeying "the letter but not the spirit" of the executive order, by hiring a few black workers for unskilled jobs making them token black workers in plants with hundreds of men. Furthermore they alleged that war industries often had higher qualifications for Negro applicants and frequently never reviewed the accepted employment applications from black job seekers.¹⁵⁷ The League brought these cases to the attention of the COD for the dual purposes of bringing public attention to the discriminatory practices of the companies and to make the government anti-discrimination agencies aware of them as well. In most instances the BKUL conducted investigations into the hiring practices of the accused companies and upon finding evidence of discrimination would forward complaints to the appropriate offices of the COD and FEPC for investigation and, hopefully, corrective action.

The goals and activities of the Urban League made it a perfect working partner for fair employment agencies. From its inception the NUL had been concerned with the problems faced by blacks living in cities. Throughout the organization's history, a major goal had been to broaden economic opportunities and break barriers to black employment.¹⁵⁸ The Urban League

¹⁵⁷ "Negro Associations interested in Training and Placement," March, 15, 1943, New York State War Council COD, Box 4, Folder 202 – Negro Organizations.

¹⁵⁸ New York Urban League, *National Urban League, Inc. 75th Anniversary, 1910-1985*. 1985, Schomburg Research Library, New York Public Library.

focused its efforts on meeting the needs of the nations' urban black communities and in New York and other large cities dealt with massive migrant populations, discriminatory housing and labor markets, and radical political movements. According to historian Toure Reed from the League's birth through World War II the organization used two major strategies to achieve its goals. The first was that it attempted to prepare blacks for life in the industrial city by offering moral and vocational training and assisting migrants and longtime residents in locating housing, employment and city services. Secondly the Urban League encouraged employers, unions, and landlords to open jobs and housing to blacks.¹⁵⁹ This second goal was the focus of New York City's Urban League branches.

After the strengthening of the COD's power to enforce anti-discriminatory legislation, the Urban League increasingly looked to use government agencies to aid its efforts at opening up new posts and new occupations to blacks New Yorkers. According to the state Committee on Discrimination, the League served as the most important employment agency for blacks in Manhattan and Brooklyn because of its highly developed placement service.¹⁶⁰ Therefore when the COD wanted to steer black workers towards jobs in industries it deemed had discriminatory hiring practices, the agency often looked to the Urban League placement service to provide qualified applicants. Strengthening this collaborative relationship was the fact that Charles Berkley, appointed to the COD in July of 1942, was the former Industrial Secretary of the BKUL.¹⁶¹ As a result the Urban League, the Brooklyn branch in particular, also became the primary conduit of skilled black laborers that the COD sent to integrate companies with discriminatory employment practices.

¹⁵⁹ Toure Reed, *Not Alms but Opportunity: The Urban League and the Politics of Racial Uplift, 1910-1950*. (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 1-5.

¹⁶⁰ "Negro Associations interested in Training and Placement," March 15, 1943, New York State War Council COD, Box 4, Folder 202 – Negro Organizations.

¹⁶¹ "Appoint Berkley to War Council," *Amsterdam News*, July 18, 1942, 16.

During late November and early December of 1942 the city economy continued to improve. Employment increased in the skilled trades, in the longshore sector, in delivery services, hotels, and other service industries, and in war plants. Employment in the six leading war industry groups – shipyards, ordinance, aircraft, electrical and non-electrical machinery, professional and scientific instruments – increased 8 percent between September and November. The Navy Yard, where employment was expected to increase, contributed largely to these gains. The employment of women and African Americans during the same period showed large gains – 25 percent and 21 percent respectively. There were labor shortages in a few trades. Acetylene welder trainees (male and female), arc sender trainees (male), skilled molders, wood and metal patternmakers (mechanics and trainees), typewriter, office machine and refrigerator repairmen, and highly skilled airplane sheet metal mechanics were needed. Reports from both building and repair shipyards in November disclosed a gain of 12 percent over employment in September. In many of the shipyard trades (shipfitters, boilermakers, machinists, welders, and caulkers) the supply of all classes of workers was exhausted.¹⁶² As employment prospects improved in the city, more jobs in war industries became available to black workers.

By the end of 1942 leading war plants in New York City hired many more blacks. From September to November the number of blacks more than doubled.¹⁶³

Table 5: Negro Employees in War Production firms, 1942

	Number of firms	Total employment	Black workers	% of total
July 1942	289	264,469	4,933	1.9
September 1942	302	252,102	4,705	1.7
November 1942	309	263,155	11,463	4.4

¹⁶² Labor Market Reports (ES-274), New York State Metropolitan Region, New York City, November 15-December 15, 1942, 13-14, 19-22, New York State War Council COD, Box 6, Folder 271.

¹⁶³ Labor Market Reports New York Metropolitan Region, December, 1942, New York State War Council COD, Box 6, Folder 271 – Confidential Labor Market Reports.

Several historians have argued that a labor shortage in 1943 was the most important reason for this increase in black employment.¹⁶⁴ But this increase in the number of blacks employed in war industries took place before the labor shortage began. Therefore it could not have been just a labor shortage that prompted the city's war industries to begin hiring black workers. The expansion of posts and occupations available in war industries in the first two years of the war was more likely due to a combination of factors.

Agitation from local chapters of the NAACP and National Urban League pressured the New York State government to pass legislation barring hiring discrimination in war industries and to establish the Committee on Discrimination. Black activists also lobbied the federal government for similar measures which resulted in President Roosevelt's establishment of the FEPC. As a result, a few war industries hired black workers in skilled and semi-skilled positions for the first time. The NYA also trained black workers in skilled trades to make them qualified for jobs in war industries. Many companies continued to discriminate against African Americans however and due to weaknesses in the FEPC and COD these government agencies could not force them to comply with state and federal laws outlawing discriminatory hiring practices. Black organizations therefore continued to pressure government agencies to end discrimination in war industries. In 1942 the state government responded by strengthening the COD by passing measures that allowed the organization to enforce the state anti-discrimination laws.

In 1942 the labor market also improved as city manufacturers received more production contracts from the government. Civil rights organizations like the Brooklyn Urban League cooperated with government agencies to place black workers in newly available positions in war

¹⁶⁴ Richard Polenberg, *War and Society: The United States, 1941-1945* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1972); John Blum, *V Was for Victory: Politics and American Culture during World War II* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976); Shirley Ann Moore, "Getting There, Being There" *The Great Migration in Historical Perspective* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1991), 106-126.; Robert Weaver, *Negro Labor: A National Problem* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1946.)

industries. The Urban League forwarded trained black workers to companies with government contracts that were hiring. Despite some scholars' depictions of the Urban League as a conservative black organization with regard to civil rights activism, in this period and in this borough, the Brooklyn Urban League was an active agent of change.¹⁶⁵ The focus of black organizations on working towards economic opportunity gave the movement for equal rights a decidedly economic cast in the 1930s and 1940s. The activities of the NAACP and the Urban League in the early 1940s illustrate that equal employment opportunity for African Americans was the civil rights issue of the war years.

The improved labor market, civil rights activism, and the enforcement of laws barring discriminatory hiring practices by war industries caused companies to hire black workers. Consequently the number of blacks working in war production plants increased in 1942. The expansion of employment opportunities for blacks in war industries continued after 1943 as increased production and a labor shortage prompted war industries to hire even more black workers.

¹⁶⁵ For a discussion of the historiography of the Urban League as well as the intellectual influences on the methods of social uplift undertaken by the Urban League, see Toure Reed's work *Not Alms but Opportunity: The Urban League and the Politics of Racial Uplift, 1910-1950*.

Chapter 3 The Road to Full Integration: The 1943 Labor Shortage, Government Agencies, and Civil Rights Activism

Across the nation a 1943 labor shortage caused employers to begin to relax the bars to hiring and unions found it more difficult to maintain restrictive policies.¹⁶⁶ 1943 proved to be a watershed moment in New York City's war industries as well. In that year New York firms began receiving more defense work prompting factories to hire large numbers of blacks. Though the labor shortage was the most important reason New York industries employed black workers, a combination of circumstances seemed to have contributed to the hiring of black workers for skilled and semi-skilled jobs in New York's war industries.

Though not all companies had exactly the same reasons for hiring black workers, many employed them because in the face of a severe labor shortage, black labor was the most readily available pool. Other companies were forced to hire black workers because they were targets of protests from civil rights organizations and investigations by the Committee on Discrimination or local offices of the War Manpower Commission. Some of these companies' workers were represented by integrated unions. Many of the companies hiring black workers had a combination or all three of those situations.

Though war industries in the city began hiring black workers discrimination persisted and black activism was still needed to ensure fair hiring and fair treatment of the blacks employed in war industries. Civil rights organizations like the Brooklyn Urban League and National Negro Congress continued to cooperate with the COD and local offices of the FEPC to investigate

¹⁶⁶ Richard Polenberg, *War and Society: The United States, 1941-1945* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1972); John Blum, *V Was for Victory: Politics and American Culture during World War II* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976); Shirley Ann Moore, "Getting There, Being There" *The Great Migration in Historical Perspective*, (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1991), 106-126.; Robert Weaver, *Negro Labor: A National Problem* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1946).

discrimination against workers employed in war industries. Other organizations like the Negro Labor Committee and the Negro Labor Victory Committee cooperated with progressive labor unions to ensure black membership and training which would open more industrial jobs to African Americans.

Some of New York's African Americans took to the streets to protest continued hiring discrimination. The Harlem Riot in August of 1943 drew attention to the inequality of job opportunities for blacks in war industries and prompted Mayor La Guardia to organize a committee to investigate race relations in the city. Moreover, the riot prompted the state government to pass fair employment legislation pertaining to all employers in the state.

The convergence of these factors pushed industrial producers in the shipbuilding, scientific and electric instrument sectors to hire black workers in skilled and semi-skilled positions. This was a dramatic shift. Blacks who could only formerly find employment as janitors, casual laborers, and domestic servants during the war years, found higher paying, unionized jobs never before open to them.

Across the nation at the war's end as soldiers returned to reclaim their jobs, demand for production decreased, and factories formerly producing war goods reconverted to consumer production, many blacks in these cities were ousted from the jobs they held during the war. Black women workers here hired in newly available service positions as secretaries, store clerks, and phone operators. As veterans returned to jobs in factories many black men were fired and returned to the low-paying service positions they held before the war.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁷ Richard Polenberg, *War and Society: The United States, 1941-1945* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1972); John Blum, *V Was for Victory: Politics and American Culture during World War II* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976); Shirley Ann Moore, "Getting There, Being There," *The Great Migration in Historical Perspective*, (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1991), 106-126.; Robert Weaver, *Negro Labor: A National Problem* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1946).

Similarly as New York's factories decreased their production capacity and soldiers returned from combat, many black men were ousted from their jobs in war industries. Many other black men however were able to use the skills they acquired working in war industries to find skilled and semi-skilled industrial work by the end of the decade. By 1950 the percentage of black men working in unskilled service positions had decreased. Black women also found employment in new sectors of the city's economy after the war. As in other cities as soldiers returned from the war, black women were laid off from their jobs in factories. Though they could no longer find industrial jobs, black women worked in clerical and retail positions - jobs which were closed to them before the war. These jobs were better paying than the domestic positions black women had before the war. The types of jobs blacks could find expanded during the 1940s, providing black workers with more options for gainful employment moving forward. World War II thus served as a watershed of employment opportunities for New York's African Americans.¹⁶⁸

1943: A Turning Point

Until late 1942, factories across the nation could fill their labor needs with workers from the large reservoir of Depression era unemployed. From that time forward there was a shortage of labor which became progressively more severe as production needs grew.¹⁶⁹ In New York City this was also the case. New York's war industries received more war contracts in 1943.

¹⁶⁸ Philip Foner, *Organized Labor and the Black Worker* (New York: International Publishers, 1982); Herbert Northrup, *Negro Employment in Basic Industry: A Study of Racial Policies in Six Regional Industries*, Vol. 1 – Studies of Negro Employment (Philadelphia: Industrial Research Unit at the Wharton School of Finance, 1970) ; Robert Weaver, *Negro Labor: a National Problem* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Company, 1946). For an alternative opinion see Karen Tucker Anderson's "Last Hired, First Fired: Black Women Workers during World War II," *Journal of American History*, Vol. 69, No. 1 (Jun., 1982).

¹⁶⁹ Irving Bernstein, "Chapter 5 Americans in Depression and War," History at the Department of Labor, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Administration and Management, United States Department of Labor. Accessed February 15, 2012. <http://www.dol.gov/oasam/programs/history/chapter5.htm>

Industries therefore increased production which meant more jobs for New Yorkers. As the labor market in the city improved blacks and women saw increased and expanded job opportunities in some of the leading war production factories.

The increase in black workers in New York's war industries was, in large part, caused by increased production. Between 1942 and April of 1943 the dollar value of New York City's war contracts increased from approximately 140 million to 980 million dollars.¹⁷⁰ The conversion process in New York had differed greatly from other industrial centers throughout the state. Steel plants and heavy industry in the Buffalo area had been readily converted to defense production. Existing aircraft industries and shipbuilding plants upstate needed only to expand and the electrical, chemical and precision machinery plants there had been ready for war-production. As we have seen, New York City was a different story. The thousands of small plants producing consumer goods, most of which were concentrated in the city, did not readily convert. Moreover in the metropolitan area, labor costs had been too high to compete successfully with other areas for war contracts. Among the 35,000 manufacturing plants in New York few were large factories employing thousands of workers. Most of these plants were packed into lofts and old industrial buildings. Only 2 percent of New York City's work force was employed in plants of more than a thousand employees.¹⁷¹

Some of the most important sectors of the New York economy finally began to convert to war production in 1943. One of those areas was the garment sector. The apparel industry was one of the largest industrial employers in the city before the war; however few contracts were given these small shops during the early war years. Those shops for the most part did lighter

¹⁷⁰ "War Jobs Fast Absorbing Idle Here; Smaller Plant Contracts Multiply," *New York Post*, April 9, 1943, New York State War Council COD, Box 5 Folder 213 - Newspaper Clippings Editorials.

¹⁷¹ "War Jobs Fast Absorbing Idle Here; Smaller Plant Contracts Multiply," *New York Post*, April 9, 1943, New York State War Council COD, Box 5 Folder 213 Newspaper Clippings Editorials.

sewing and did not have the heavy, multiple stitch sewing machines required for defense production. In addition the garment trade in the early days of the war was handicapped by high labor costs. The government began to offer New York's garment factories more contracts in 1943. The city's 3,700 metal-working shops were also fairly successful in converting to war work, subcontracting with plane, ship and ordnance plants elsewhere in the region.¹⁷² In 1941 and 1942 the government did not give woodworking plants war contracts, but in the early months of 1943 that changed as well.¹⁷³

The result was that industrial employers in the city hired more black workers. The number of black workers in war industries increased rapidly at the end of 1942 growing by 12.5 percent between November 1942 and January 1943. By February of 1943 close to 4 percent (13,000) of the approximately 350,000 workers at 281 major metropolitan war plants were black.¹⁷⁴ By April of 1943 the city's unemployed were being rapidly absorbed by plants that converted to war production.¹⁷⁵ By July of that year the city had become the second largest holder of war contracts in the country and as a result both essential and non-essential industries hired more African Americans.¹⁷⁶

Not only did the number of African Americans employed by war industries increase, but the proportion of workers who were black did as well. The proportion of African Americans to all employees in war industries rose from 1.5 percent in May 1942 to 6 percent in May 1943. Moreover, by May approximately 4 percent more black workers were employed than in March in

¹⁷² Ordnance is military supplies, especially weapons and their equipment and ammunition.

¹⁷³ "War Jobs Fast Absorbing Idle Here; Smaller Plant Contracts Multiply," *New York Post*, April 9, 1943, New York State War Council COD, Box 5, Folder 213 - Newspaper Clippings Editorials.

¹⁷⁴ Labor Market Reports, New York Metropolitan Region, February 1943, New York State War Council COD, Box 6, Folder 271.

¹⁷⁵ "War Jobs Fast Absorbing Idle Here; Smaller Plant Contracts Multiply," *New York Post*, April 9, 1943, New York State War Council COD, Box 5, Folder 213 - Newspaper Clippings Editorials.

¹⁷⁶ "Negro Worker Asset or Liability? America Must Decide," Semi-Annual Report of the Brooklyn Urban League Industrial Department, August 1943, New York State War Council COD, Box 7, Folder 340.

354 selected war factories in the city. By mid-1943 nearly 20,000 non-whites worked in New York City war production plants, a threefold increase from May 1942.¹⁷⁷ By January, 1944 the workforce in New York almost doubled from the summer of 1942, while the number of black employees quadrupled.¹⁷⁸

The largest increases in black employment occurred in the electrical machinery and chemical industries. Employment of non-whites in all private shipbuilding yards increased 3.7 percent between March and May of 1943. Nonferrous metals, chemicals, electrical machinery, iron and steel industries as well as the shipyards employed an average or above average proportion of black workers by mid-1943. The non-electrical machinery and aircraft industries had the lowest proportion of non-white employees. Of the war production plants shipyards employed the largest number of African Americans (7,000), followed by professional and scientific instrument factories (2,200), and electrical machinery firms (1,850). The non-electrical machinery and aircraft industry, notorious in the past for discrimination against African Americans, had the lowest proportion of non-white employees.¹⁷⁹

In many cases it was the labor shortage that prompted war industries to hire large numbers of African Americans. This is evident in the hiring practices of Titeflex Metal Hose Company, Fairchild Aviation, and Curtis Wright. These companies hired more black workers during 1943 than they had the previous year. Fairchild Aviation had hired only six black workers from February to December of 1942. By January of 1944 they hired 96 more totaling

¹⁷⁷ Labor Market and Developments Report, April 15-May 31, 1943, New York Metropolitan Region, United States Employment Service of the War Manpower Commission, June 1943, New York State War Council COD, Box 6, Folder 271.

¹⁷⁸ Summary Table, "Compliance Data on All Establishments Throughout the Country of Firms Involved in Old Committee Hearings," Papers of the FEPC, Entry 75, Box 546, Folder – Statistics.

¹⁷⁹ Labor Market and Developments Report, April 15-May 31, 1943. New York Metropolitan Region, United States Employment Service of the War Manpower Commission, June 1943, New York State War Council COD, Box 6, Folder 271.

102 black workers. Titeflex hired 110 black workers between February and December of 1942. Over the course of 1943 the company hired 625 more blacks to make it 800 black workers. Wright Aeronautical hired 672 during 1942, but hired more than 3,000 black workers the following year. These numbers indicate that the labor shortage created by increasing contracts caused this large increase in the hiring of African Americans.¹⁸⁰

The labor shortage in 1943 was felt in New York's very lucrative shipbuilding industry causing shipyards to hire large numbers of black workers.¹⁸¹ In June of 1943 the labor shortages at the Brooklyn Navy Yard became so acute that it began to appeal directly to blacks to fill jobs. Lieutenant Commander N. D. Hubbell released a statement to the *Amsterdam News* alerting black workers to skilled and unskilled job opportunities at the Brooklyn Yard. Openings included mechanic learners (open to female applicants), 1st, 2nd, and 3rd class skilled laborers, helper-trainees, and apprentices.¹⁸²

The labor shortage in the shipbuilding industry continued into the late summer and fall. In fact by August there was a manpower shortage in specific occupations in the shipbuilding industries.¹⁸³ And in September the shortage became so acute that the War Manpower Commission (WMC) ran stories in Harlem newspapers on cooperation between the agency and the Harlem Branch of the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) to recruit ship yard

¹⁸⁰ Table 7 - Total and Non-White Workers Employed in Skilled, Semi-skilled, unskilled, and other categories by 6 Firms appearing before the FEPC at New York Hearings, "Compliance Data on All Establishments Throughout the Country of Firms Involved in Old Committee Hearings", Papers of the FEPC, Entry 75, Box 546, Folder - Statistics.

¹⁸¹ Craig Steven Wilder, *A Covenant with Color*, 167.

¹⁸² "Many Jobs Open at Brooklyn Navy Yard," *Amsterdam News*, June 3, 1943, 13.

¹⁸³ Memo Richard Brockway to Richard Manoff, August 9, 1943, Weekly Reports of Divisions of Business Administration and Technical Services, New York Regional War Man Power Commission Correspondence, Papers of the WMC, Box No. 10-156, Folder 317.4 - Placement, Series 277.

workers.¹⁸⁴ The press release announced a job drive to recruit shipyard helpers and laborers for thousands of openings in shipyards in and around the Port of New York. Benjamin Barnette, Employment Secretary of the Harlem YMCA, explained that applicants for these jobs needed no previous experience, and that chances for advancement were good. Those hired as helpers would be used to assist journeymen electricians, outside machinists, welders, and pipefitters and would be upgraded to journeymen on the basis of their ability not seniority.¹⁸⁵ Skilled and semi-skilled positions had opened to black workers in one of the largest shipbuilding yards in the Greater New York area.

The labor shortage had similar effects on the hiring practices of other major war factories. By the end of 1943 the Calco Chemical Division of the American Cyanamid Company, the Arma Corporation, and the Sperry Corporation specifically set out to hire black employees. These companies promised black workers everything under the sun – good wages, good working conditions, and even union membership – to attract them to their companies.¹⁸⁶

Though the labor shortage seemed to be the most compelling reason for war industries to hire black workers, state and federal government organizations also played an important role in changing hiring practices. One important achievement was that in companies that had never hired black workers state and federal anti-discrimination agencies influenced management to integrate their workforce. Several war industries investigated by the FEPC for employing very few blacks, began hiring African American workers in the wake of their FEPC hearings. One

¹⁸⁴ Memo from Abe Savage (Information Services Representative) to Joseph O’Conner (Deputy Director), September 13, 1943, Weekly Reports of Divisions of Business Administration and Technical Services, New York Regional War Man Power Commission Correspondence, Papers of the WMC, Box No. 10-156, Folder 317.4IS, Series 277.

¹⁸⁵ “Help Wanted For Shipyards,” *Amsterdam News*, September 18, 1943, 7A.

¹⁸⁶ “Manpower Short In Harlem,” *Amsterdam News*, December 4, 1943, 1; “War Plants Recruit Workers in Harlem,” *New York Post*, November 29, 1943, New York State War Council COD, Box 5, Folder 215 -Newspaper Clippings Relative to Negroes.

such firm was Babcock and Wilcox.¹⁸⁷ The company, which had no black employees before 1943, hired thirty-one African Americans by January, 1944. The change in Titeflex Metal Hose Company's hiring practices was most impressive as the company hired 746 black workers between the summer of 1942 and early 1944, increasing their hires by almost 1400 percent. More importantly in January of 1944 these black workers represented 20 percent of the company's workforce after previously having comprised a mere 3.2 percent. Curtis Wright, the largest employer of African Americans in this group of companies appearing before the FEPC, increased their black workforce more than fivefold from 2,995 to 16,155. In total these six firms provided 15,461 black New Yorkers with jobs between the summer of 1942 and January of 1944.¹⁸⁸ Though the percentage of black employees working at firms appearing before New York City FEPC hearings seemed small, the increase in employment levels was impressive as the resistance to hiring blacks had been unusually strong in these industries.

The more significant change in employment trends was that employers hired larger numbers of African Americans for skilled and semi-skilled positions. Government agencies aided in making this happen as well. This is particularly true of factories investigated and then monitored by the New York FEPC. In May of 1942 100 percent of Ford Instrument's black workers were unskilled workers (110 of 110) and represented 1.83 percent of the company workforce. One year later in May of 1943 30 percent of the company's 343 black workers were in skilled and semi-skilled positions. Wright Aeronautical, in 1942, had 31 skilled and semi-skilled black workers with 241 African Americans in unskilled positions. The next year the company had 1,703 African American workers, of which almost half (891) were skilled or semi-

¹⁸⁷ The company produced synthetic rubber during the war.

¹⁸⁸ Table 3 - Firms Appearing before FEPC at New York Hearings (all reporting establishments included), "Compliance Data on All Establishments Throughout the Country of Firms Involved in Old Committee Hearings", Papers of the FEPC, Entry 75, Box 546, Folder. See Tables 3.2 and 3.3 in the appendix for more in depth statistics.

skilled workers. The general statistics for companies who came before the FEPC for hearings show that there was a significant increase in black skilled and semi-skilled workers. In the six companies with hearings before the FEPC the changes in employment trends are apparent. In these industries where there were 1,035 total black workers in 1942, one year later these same companies employed 1,308 black skilled and semi-skilled black workers alone with another 2,294 African Americans in unskilled positions.¹⁸⁹

Though many historians of World War II assert that the FEPC failed to make war industries hire black workers en masse and fully end discriminatory hiring practices they fail to highlight the positive achievements of the organization, especially those FEPC offices that were successful at the local level.¹⁹⁰ Though, by the end of the war, many of the companies investigated by the FEPC and found to have discriminatory hiring practices achieved black employment levels lower than the national average of blacks in the American population, the change was significant. These companies employed very few blacks before the war; therefore the increase in the number of black workers was gradual causing black workers to comprise a smaller percent of the companies' workforce. This was the case both nationally and in New York.¹⁹¹ Moreover, FEPC- investigated firms in Los Angeles, Chicago, New York, and

¹⁸⁹ Table 7 - Total and Non-White Workers Employed in Skilled, Semi-skilled, unskilled, and other categories by 6 Firms appearing before the FEPC at New York Hearings, "Compliance Data on All Establishments Throughout the Country of Firms Involved in Old Committee Hearings", Papers of the FEPC, Entry 75, Box 546, Folder - Statistics. See Table 3.4 in the appendix for more in depth statistics.

¹⁹⁰ Richard Polenber, *War and Society*, 116-123; Neil A. Wynn, *The Afro-American and the Second World War*, 48-59; Daniel Kryder, *Divided Arsenal, Race and the American State During World War II* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 113-32; and Harvard Sitkoff "Part Four: African Americans and Other Minorities on the Home Front," *World War II and the American Home Front A National Historic Landmarks Theme Stud.* (Washington, DC: The National Historic Landmarks Program, Washington, D.C.) October 2007, 104-10.

¹⁹¹ Total employment for the establishments involved in the four groups of hearings rose approximately 25 percent between the summer of 1942 and the early months of 1944 (an increase of 228 percent). See Table 3.2 in the Appendix.

Birmingham, showed larger proportional gains in black employment than other companies.¹⁹² Therefore the seemingly small gains represented large achievements for FEPC investigated companies. Perhaps the most important effect of FEPC investigations on companies' employment policies is the noticeable increase in the number of blacks employed in skilled and semi-skilled positions in FEPC monitored war industries.¹⁹³ In New York the FEPC's importance goes beyond being a symbol of the United States government's first foray into protecting the civil rights of its black citizens. The organization helped foster material advances for black workers in the war years.

Black women in particular benefitted from expanded job opportunities in 1943, leaving positions as domestics and laundresses to find jobs in factories. According to the Brooklyn Urban League, black women, many of whom were "recent migrants from the South", found employment in industries producing consumer goods and those engaged in war production. Black women sought inspection and blueprint reading, bench assembly, machine shop, radio assembly, aircraft mechanics, and riveting jobs. Many females between the ages of sixteen and twenty-five who applied to the Brooklyn Urban League's placement services took advantage of the National Youth Administration's (NYA) training program. The industrial and clerical training of the NYA allowed the Industrial Department of the Brooklyn Urban League to place many women in industrial positions. In the first half of 1943 alone 455 of 1,061 of the Brooklyn Urban League's placements of women were in skilled or semi-skilled positions.¹⁹⁴ The dissolution of the NYA in July of 1943 was a great disappointment to the members of the Urban

¹⁹² "Compliance Data on All Establishments Throughout the Country of Firms Involved in Old Committee Hearings," Papers of the FEPC, Entry 75, Box 546, Folder – Statistics.
See Table 3.1 in the appendix for more in depth statistics.

¹⁹³ "Compliance Data Firms involved in Old Committee Hearings," Papers of the FEPC, Entry 75, Box 546, Folder – Statistics.

See Tables 3.1-3.4 in the appendix for more in depth statistics.

¹⁹⁴ See Table 6 of this chapter.

League's Industrial Department. Black women referred by the Industrial Department had been placed in a variety of occupations including precision instrument workers, turret and engine lathe operators, milling machine operators, inspectors, and drill press operators among other occupations.¹⁹⁵

Beginning in 1943, as black women found employment in many major war production plants including the Brooklyn Navy Yard, the Intertype Corporation, the Arma Corporation, and garment firms, the Negro Labor Committee became active in organizing black women.¹⁹⁶ The NLC established a women's division of the organization in 1944 to deal with the large increase in women workers in the city and a club room was set up for women workers in the Harlem Labor Center, a meeting place run by the Negro Labor Committee that served as headquarters for trade unions in Harlem.¹⁹⁷ In the face of increasing racial hostilities and the foreseeable problems for black labor during reconversion, the Negro Labor Committee looked as early as 1944 to take steps to provide black workers, especially women, with a stable place in unions and industrial positions.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁵ "Negro Worker Asset or Liability? America Must Decide," Semi-Annual Report of the Brooklyn Urban League Industrial Department, August 1943. New York State War Council COD, Box 7, Folder 340.

¹⁹⁶ The Intertype Corporation made typesetting machines.

¹⁹⁷ Memo to American Labor Party, February 16, 1944, NLC Papers, Box 1 Folder a6 – History of the 1940s.

¹⁹⁸ Letter to Negro Labor Committee Supporters from Helen Holman Doughty, Public Relations, n.d., NLC Papers, Box 3, Folder a34 – Race Relations Committee 1943-1944.

Table 6: Brooklyn Urban League Placements in the first half of 1943¹⁹⁹

Female		Male	
General Factory	223	Laborers	102
Packers & Wrappers	75	Porters	72
P(ower) .M(achine) .O(perator).	72	Machine Shop	22
Clerical	25	General Factory	44
Dial Painters	21	Welding	7
Stock Clerks	20	Auto Machines	10
Inspection	16	Machinist	2
Assembly	16	Aircraft & Riveting	2
Welding	9	Shipfitters	3
Drill Press	3	Drill Press	1
Unclassified (Civil Service, USES, menial)	272	Training (with & without pay)	61
Training (with & without pay)	309	Unclassified (Civil Service, USES, Menial)	23
Total	1061	Total	349
Total Unskilled	606 (57%)	Total Unskilled	241 (69%)
Total Skilled / Semi-skilled	455 (43%)	Total Skilled / Semi-skilled	108 (31%)

Green – Unskilled Positions

Blue – Skilled / Semi-skilled

Work in war industries was not available to all black women however. The great majority of the 2,546 female applicants desiring war employment were between thirty and forty years of age. The Urban League's Industrial Department found it hard to place these applicants in positions in war industries because of age requirements set by the factories. Many factories set an age limit for women hired for work, and many African American women applying for jobs were older. Moreover, most black women had limited factory experience and needed training. Though white women did not have experience or training for factory work either, management more readily accepted them into training programs, evidence of management's preference for white workers. Training with pay jobs were the most coveted positions by black women, but

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

high education, physical, and “type” requirements (requirements that did not explicitly have to do with race but would exclude most black applicants) demanded by the major war industries in the city automatically disqualified most Negro women from these training positions. Although outright racial discrimination by war industries was illegal, factory employers used non-racial criteria to continue to exclude black women from skilled positions. They did however place black women in unskilled positions in factories.²⁰⁰

Despite these remaining bars to the employment of black women in war industries other areas of employment opened. Because whites were vacating positions in department stores (termed at the time retail selling) and restaurants for war or better paying industrial jobs, Negro women were being hired in large numbers for the first time.²⁰¹ Generally service occupations in non-essential industries were less desirable than jobs in war industry. Because of lower pay there was heavy labor turnover in the service positions. The complete shut-down of some luncheonettes, cutbacks on days of operation in restaurants, and the deterioration of services reflect the difficulties restaurants faced due to labor shortages. As restaurant workers left their jobs to fight in the war or for better paying jobs in war industries and elsewhere, restaurant owners took the USES’ advice and began hiring women, older workers and blacks to fill vacant positions. Placements of black workers increased considerably during the first five months of the year. African Americans comprised 35 percent of the total restaurant placements as compared to 12 percent for the same period a year earlier. Black membership in Local 6 of the

²⁰⁰ “Negro Worker Asset or Liability? America Must Decide,” Semi-Annual Report of the Brooklyn Urban League Industrial Department, August 1943, New York State War Council COD, Box 7, Folder 340.

The document does not explicitly state that these jobs were unskilled positions however it does explain that the tasks these women were hired for had been previously intricate tasks simplified in the production process during the war.

²⁰¹ “Negro Worker Asset or Liability? America Must Decide,” Semi-Annual Report of the Brooklyn Urban League Industrial Department, August 1943, New York State War Council COD, Box 7, Folder 340.

Hotel and Club Employees' union increased as well, rising from 5 percent of the locals' 16,000 members to 20 percent.²⁰²

Many black women also found employment in the needle trades as the Brooklyn Urban League placed its third largest group of applicants in positions in that sector. Many black women who had worked in garment factories before the war had industrial experience.²⁰³ The International Ladies Garment Workers Union (ILGWU), a major labor organizer for the apparel industry, had readily accepted black members since the 1930s.²⁰⁴ Black women however were reluctant to take these positions during the war because the pay in war industries was substantially better; but they were forced to by the lack of other job opportunities.²⁰⁵

As more and more women used the Brooklyn Urban League's placement service to find employment, the number of men using the organization to obtain jobs decreased. In the first half of 1943 of a total 3,447 applicants to the League's Industrial Department only 901 were males. Men made up 27 percent of all applicants interviewed by the organization, however a large percentage of those interviews were conducted in the first few months of 1943. In fact the number of male applicants decreased so much that even with the increase in its service to women the Brooklyn Urban League's total number of persons served in 1943 was lower than the similar period of the previous year. Moreover the number of men placed in skilled and semi-skilled positions by the League was much lower than that of women applicants. Aircraft industries

²⁰² Labor Market and Developments Report, April 15-May 31, 1943, New York Metropolitan Region, United States Employment Service of the War Manpower Commission, June 1943, New York State War Council COD, Box 6, Folder 271.

²⁰³ "Negro Worker Asset or Liability? America Must Decide," Semi-Annual Report of the Brooklyn Urban League Industrial Department, August 1943, New York State War Council COD, Box 7, Folder 340.

²⁰⁴ "Negro Labor Committee: 10 Years of Struggle – 10 Years of Progress," Negro Labor Committee Papers, folder b67, microfilm.

²⁰⁵ "Negro Worker Asset or Liability? America Must Decide," Semi-Annual Report of the Brooklyn Urban League Industrial Department, August 1943, New York State War Council COD, Box 7, Folder 340.

remained largely closed to both black men and women.²⁰⁶ There is no concrete information as to why this was the case. Perhaps fewer men used the job placement service because the labor shortage had forced industries to lower their barriers against black employment.

Despite the opening of new occupations to blacks in war industries, many companies continued to hire blacks for unskilled, low skilled and menial positions.²⁰⁷ Moreover, discrimination continued in various forms including refusal to hire African Americans and hiring of blacks for only maintenance and porter positions. Some war industries also employed blacks as token workers, hiring just enough to avoid investigation by government agencies. In addition some war plants would hire minorities sent by USES for jobs and then quickly fire them.²⁰⁸

The U.S. Employment Service, a federal organization that was supposed to enforce laws barring discriminatory hiring practices, itself practiced racial discrimination. In August of 1943 the State, County and Municipal Workers of America (SCMWA), a CIO union, charged that the New York State USES was not following its own antidiscrimination policy. James King, the New York district president of the SCMWA, criticized USES for allowing employers who had been refused service at a local office for discriminatory hiring policies to use the service at another location. Moreover King charged that USES did not adequately and fairly train applicants because its employees did not want to work with blacks, Jews or Catholics.²⁰⁹ This was not surprising as USES was more closely oriented toward employers and concerned with continuous, efficient production. No matter the reason, the continued discrimination against

²⁰⁶ "Negro Worker Asset or Liability? America Must Decide," Semi-Annual Report of the Brooklyn Urban League Industrial Department, August 1943, New York State War Council COD, Box 7, Folder 340. See Table 6.

²⁰⁷ "Negro Worker Asset or Liability? America Must Decide," Semi-Annual Report of the Brooklyn Urban League Industrial Department, August 1943. New York State War Council COD, Box 7, Folder 340.

²⁰⁸ New York State Office of War Information Report, released May 9, 1943, New York State War Council COD, Box 6, Folder 265.

²⁰⁹ "USES Drafts New Plan to Fight Discrimination," *New York P. M.*, August 29, 1943, New York State War Council COD, Box 5, Folder 217 - Organizations Other Than NYSCOD.

African American workers, even by government offices that were supposed to uphold non-discrimination policies was a source of disappointment for many African Americans.

Despite continued challenges integrating war industries, 1943 proved to be a pivotal year for the employment of black workers. As the government gave factories in the city more production contracts, they in turn hired African Americans. Electrical machinery and chemical industries, shipyards, and scientific instrument factories hired black workers. More and more African Americans found higher-paying skilled and semi-skilled positions, particularly in the case of companies investigated by the FEPC. Employment opportunities were especially important for black women as many found jobs outside of domestic service positions. Some found jobs in war industries as the Urban League placed 43 percent of women in skilled and semi-skilled positions as opposed to 31 percent of black men.²¹⁰ Others found employment in restaurants and department stores.

Continued Activism for Equal Employment Opportunities

The success of efforts by the FEPC and COD in opening jobs in war industries to blacks could not have been achieved without the continued cooperation of black organizations. The Brooklyn Urban League led in these efforts. The organization continued to pressure both employers and government agencies for equal employment opportunity as New York City's labor market improved in 1943.

The Brooklyn Urban League (BKUL) continued its close collaboration with the COD. The cooperation of BKUL and the New York State Committee on Discrimination was facilitated by close communication between officers in the two organizations. The BKUL kept in close

²¹⁰ "Negro Worker Asset or Liability? America Must Decide," Semi-Annual Report of the Brooklyn Urban League Industrial Department, August 1943, New York State War Council COD, Box 7, Folder 340.

contact with the COD in order to make the government agency aware of any activities concerning black employment and discrimination against blacks in companies that produced war goods. The BKUL Industrial Secretary Lorenzo Davis sent letters to COD Executive Director Charles Berkley detailing the BKUL's negotiations for black employment with companies with war contracts.²¹¹ In instances where Davis felt the Urban League's activities were not enough to effect change, he referred the organization's information on specific cases to the COD and asked for assistance in placing black workers.

The BKUL also shared information its workers gathered on companies the COD was investigating. In July of 1943 Davis sent Berkley reports on three companies the COD was currently investigating – Arma Engineering Corporation, Sperry Gyroscope Corporation, and the Bulova Watch Corporation.²¹² The BKUL claimed that Bulova, which had been paying for daily newspaper and radio advertisements for more than a week in a desperate effort to get women workers, told all qualified black women referred by the BKUL that there were no job openings. The BKUL charged that though there were supposedly no openings at Bulova, white women were being hastily hired. The report alleged the Arma Corporation, which manufactured scientific instruments - specifically analog computers - during the war, practiced a different method of discrimination equally effective. The corporation set extra high qualifications for black female applicants that the BKUL sent for jobs. At the time the report was published, only six of seventy black applicants sent to Arma had been hired. The report also provided details on the use of higher employment standards and rigid testing standards to eliminate black workers at

²¹¹ Lorenzo Davis, Industrial Secretary of the Brooklyn Urban League, to Charles Berkley, Executive Director, of the Committee on Discrimination, August 6, 1943, New York State War Council COD, Box 7, Folder 340 – Brooklyn Urban League.

²¹² According to *The History of Bulova*, in 1941 the Board of Directors of Bulova, a clock and watch company, adopted a resolution to sell products for national defense at cost. Throughout World War II Bulova worked with the US government to produce military watches, specialized time pieces, aircraft instruments, critical torpedo mechanisms and fuses. Accessed December 2008 <http://www.bulova.com/about/history.aspx>.

the Sperry Corporation. The BKUL claimed that Sperry, which had earlier in the year opened an employment office in Harlem in response to prolonged agitation for black employment, had announced that it would hire 500 black workers. The Harlem office was almost entirely staffed by blacks and received a majority of black applicants for trainee and skilled positions. The Harlem office rejected 93 of every 100 applicants through testing or while training. Many black job applicants to Sperry made complaints to the BKUL citing difficult testing and arbitrary rejections by the company's Harlem office.²¹³ From the evidence it is unclear whether the Urban League's charges were true or how much direct effect this particular episode had on the companies' employment policies. It is significant however that after COD initiated investigations into the hiring practices of these companies, both Arma and Sperry hired black workers in positions not open to them previously and Sperry continued to do so after the war. The Brooklyn Urban League played an important role in relaying information about the hiring practices of companies suspected of discrimination. With an established record for job placements perhaps the COD believed the Urban League was the most reliable source of information on black employment. The BKUL kept the COD's attention on the continued bias of firms that it was investigating; pushing the agency to continually confront the companies to make them end discriminatory practices.

Not only did the Brooklyn Urban League transmit information to the COD, but it received information as well. The COD provided the Brooklyn Urban League with information the COD had gathered during its investigations including statistics and official statements of companies' policies. After Bulova Watch Company rejected six of seven black female applicants for an advertised position in the company the BKUL looked to the COD for

²¹³ Lorenzo Davis, Industrial Secretary of the Brooklyn Urban League, to Charles Berkley, Executive Director of the Committee on Discrimination, August 7, 1943, New York State War COD, Box 7, Folder 340 – Brooklyn Urban League.

assistance. To help its efforts to get black women hired at Bulova, Davis asked the COD to get information on how many black women were employed by the firm in comparison to whites.²¹⁴

The Brooklyn Urban League incorporated these numbers in their reports and public statements.

In 1943 the BKUL also began to cooperate with federal offices. The League became the official cooperating placement agency of the United States Employment Service.²¹⁵ Officers in the League also cooperated with the FEPC to investigate one of the largest employers in the state, the Brooklyn Navy Yard. Davis, Industrial Secretary of the Brooklyn Urban League and Chairman of the Citizens' Anti-Discrimination Committee (CADC) on the Brooklyn Navy Yard, took steps to file a brief with the FEPC alleging discrimination by the Navy. Having received numerous complaints alleging discrimination, intimidation, and unsatisfactory treatment from superiors, Davis asked members of the CADC to approve an official complaint about the Navy Yard's discrimination requesting immediate FEPC intervention.²¹⁶ These reports of discrimination against the Navy Yard, along with agitation from the National Negro Congress, led the FEPC to conduct intensive investigations of the employment practices of the Brooklyn Navy Yard in 1944 and 1945.²¹⁷

The collaborative relationships between the Brooklyn Urban League and the FEPC and COD accounted for the organization's success in placing black workers in industrial positions. The Brooklyn Urban League's employment service placed 1,410 African Americans in jobs during the first half of 1943 alone. Though the majority (60 percent) of black workers placed by

²¹⁴ Lorenzo Davis to Charles Berkley, July 24, 1943, New York State War COD, Box 7, Folder 340 – Brooklyn Urban League.

²¹⁵ "Negro Worker Asset or Liability? America Must Decide," Semi-Annual Report of the Brooklyn Urban League Industrial Department, August 1943, New York State COD, Box 7, Folder 340 – Brooklyn Urban League.

²¹⁶ Lorenzo Davis to the Commandant of the United States Navy Yard. January 5, 1943 and Letter from Lorenzo Davis to members of the Citizen's Anti-Discrimination Committee on the Brooklyn Navy Yard, December 17, 1943, NNC Papers, Part IV, Box 73, Folder 16 - Brooklyn Navy Yard..

²¹⁷ For more an in depth discussion of the FEPC investigations of the Navy Yard see Chapter 2.

the employment service were placed in unskilled positions; the large minority (40 percent) of job applicants it placed in higher-paying skilled and semi-skilled positions was very significant.²¹⁸

These applicants held jobs that were closed to African Americans before the labor shortage in 1943.²¹⁹ The Brooklyn Urban League considered the State Committee on Discrimination one of its major supporters whose cooperation, along with the help of the FEPC, allowed the League to successfully facilitate the hiring of black women in civilian and defense industries. In its 1943 semi-annual report the BKUL Industrial Department paid tribute to the COD and the Fair Employment Practices Committee for aiding in its drive to secure equal economic opportunity for black workers in New York City.²²⁰ The BKUL's placement of blacks in these positions constituted a definite and significant change in employment trends for the rest of the war.

The influence of black activism in opening employment opportunities for black workers is clear. The Sperry and Arma Corporations, which previously did not employ African Americans, hired black workers and in 1944 were among the first companies to hire African Americans for office positions. Though the labor shortage accounted for some of the appreciable gains for black laborers in 1943, Arma and Sperry had been the focus of very public protests from the NAACP and the Brooklyn Urban League. Public protests, published reports of discrimination, and referral of complaints of discrimination also led to FEPC and COD investigations of the two companies. It was through a combination of these causes; a labor

²¹⁸ This was particularly true for black women. The Brooklyn Urban League placed 43 percent of women applicants in skilled and semi-skilled positions while 31 percent of the male applicants were placed in skilled and semi-skilled positions. Moreover there were more female applicants than male requesting services of the BKUL employment placement service.

"Negro Worker Asset or Liability? America Must Decide," Semi-Annual Report of the Brooklyn Urban League Industrial Department, August 1943, New York State War Council COD, Box 7, Folder 340 – Brooklyn Urban League.

²¹⁹ Ibid.

²²⁰ "Negro Worker Asset or Liability? America Must Decide," Semi-Annual Report of the Brooklyn Urban League Industrial Department, August 1943, New York State War Council COD, Box 7, Folder 340 – Brooklyn Urban League.

shortage, black organizational activity, and investigations by the FEPC and State War Council's Committee on Discrimination; that many blacks were able to find industrial positions. The cooperation between social organizations like the Urban League and government agencies which enforced progressive state legislation barring discriminatory hiring practices led to increases in the number of blacks working in war production plants. In this way the Brooklyn Urban League became part of the enforcement infrastructure for fair employment agencies. Despite some scholars' depictions of the Urban League as a conservative black organization with regard to civil rights activism, in this period and in this borough, the Brooklyn Urban League was an active agent of change.²²¹

Unrest for Opportunity: The Harlem Riot of 1943

In July of 1943 the Brooklyn Urban League issued a report stating that more job applications were coming in per day to war industries in New York than at any other time in history, but pondered why companies still complained of a labor shortage. In their estimation the manpower deficiency in the Brooklyn / New York area was artificial, created by the unwillingness of these industries to hire black workers.²²² As the report highlights, after the labor shortage the opening of industrial job opportunities to black workers did not come wholesale. Not all war industries integrated, nor did every factory in integrated industries hire black workers. The process was slow and incomplete.

The frustrations blacks felt at employers' continued refusals to employ them in higher paying war industries contributed to the Harlem Riot. On the night of August 2nd a riot began in

²²¹ For a discussion of the historiography of the Urban League as well as the intellectual influences on the methods of social uplift undertaken by the Urban League, see Toure Reed's work *Not Alms but Opportunity: The Urban League and the Politics of Racial Uplift, 1910-1950*.

²²² "Manpower is Sabotaged, Report Shows," *Amsterdam News*, July 31, 1943, 1.

response to a white police officer shooting an off-duty Negro soldier whom he charged with interfering in the arrest of a black woman in the lobby of a hotel on 126th Street. False rumors circulated accusing the officer of having killed the soldier while trying to defend his mother. In response to the rumors black rioters broke store windows, looted, damaged property, and attacked policemen. By the morning of August 3rd 6 people had been killed, 189 injured, 606 arrested, and hundreds of stores looted. Property damage was estimated at two million dollars.²²³

Though the catalyst for violence were the rumors of police brutality, many black New Yorkers and some African American leaders believed this burst of violent action was an outgrowth of unequal economic opportunities for New York's Negroes. In an editorial in the *Amsterdam News* one writer explained that equal treatment of blacks, including equal job opportunities, could have prevented the riot. He wrote:

While we are aware that absolute democracy cannot be attained for all of the people of this country in a short period of time, we believe that America will not be embarrassed before the world by other *race riots* if the Negro Americans are granted their just deserts [sic] of:

- 1) Equal job opportunity.
- 2) Equal treatment in the armed forces.
- 3) Equal protection of their legal and civil rights.

If these elementary rights of citizenship are not granted to Negroes now, other similar disturbances should cause no surprise.²²⁴

In this instance it is clear that the lack of equal employment opportunity was thought by some to be a major precipitating factor for the unrest in Harlem. From his placement of job discrimination at the top of the list of what blacks deserved, this writer believed that the lack of equal job opportunities perhaps was the most important factor in the riot. Many black leaders believed the frustration blacks felt over job discrimination had contributed to the Harlem Riot.

²²³ The foremost book on the topic of the Harlem Riot of 1943 is Dominic Capeci's *The Harlem Riot of 1943* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1977.)

²²⁴ "Nothing Solved – But Much Needed," *Amsterdam News*, August 7, 1943, 10.

Whether they were right or wrong, black leaders in New York used the new attention to advance their ideas for racial uplift.

BKUL Industrial Secretary Lorenzo Davis similarly linked the discrimination against blacks in the war industries and the riots that swept the country in the summer of 1943.²²⁵ In the 1943 semi-annual report of the Brooklyn Urban League Davis expressed his belief that the disturbance in Harlem was in part caused by the failure to integrate black workers into America's war-time economy. He emphasized the role of the Negro worker because all the major disturbances took place in centers of concentrated war activity where the status of black workers had been a controversial issue – Mobile, Alabama; Detroit, Michigan; Beaumont, Texas; Chester, Pennsylvania; Baltimore, Maryland; and Brooklyn and Harlem, New York. In all of those instances injustices to black workers contributed to the conditions which made these violent outbreaks possible. The denial of employment opportunity, discrimination in the work place, segregation of blacks after employment, wage differentials favoring white workers, and the denial of promotion of black workers consistent with their skills were routine practices for war industries. Davis believed that the government's solutions had not been adequate and challenged it to treat these companies with a democratic firmness ensuring an end to discrimination.²²⁶

Like Davis other black leaders urged the city, state, and federal governments to find solutions to the conditions that caused the Harlem Riot. A. Philip Randolph called on Mayor La Guardia to create a Commission on Race to study the reasons for the riot. Randolph himself was convinced that the inequality of opportunity for black economic advancement had contributed to the riot. Though Randolph did not condone the actions of those who perpetrated the property

²²⁵ "Challenges U.S. to Decide: 'Is Negro Worker Asset or Liability?,' *Amsterdam News*, September 4, 1943, 5.

²²⁶ "Negro War Worker Asset or Liability? America Must Decide," Semi Annual Report of the Brooklyn Urban League's Industrial Department, New York State War Council COD, Box 7, Folder 340 – Brooklyn Urban League.

damage, he did urge blacks to “stand up and fight for their constitutional and economic rights with the ballot, constructive agitation, education through moral, religious and labor organizations, and all means lawful and orderly, of social protest.”²²⁷ In response to the unrest, and at the prompting of black leaders and the New York City Council, Mayor La Guardia created a commission dedicated to the study of race relations in the city called the Mayor’s Committee on Unity. This new committee was significant as it was the first of its type and because it was made into a permanent institution.²²⁸

In the wake of the riot, labor activist Frank Crosswaith called a meeting of the members of the Negro Labor Committee to consider the need for a worker education program to combat racism within unions. Crosswaith believed educating workers about black contributions to American life was one way to foster better relations between workers of all races and ethnicities. Elmer Carter, a NLC representative from the COD, felt that unions themselves should improve conditions between black and white workers. In his opinion, members of unions affiliated with the CIO needed to be acquainted with what their union constitutions stood for – the inclusion of workers of all races and the solidarity of all workers regardless of race. Crosswaith suggested using Education Committees in unions affiliated with the AFL and CIO to educate their white members. The committee resolved to focus on using the existing union machinery to make workers recognize that blacks were human beings and should be treated as such. Their hope was that this education would allow white union member to accept black workers. In the NLC’s estimation this was the only way to avoid continued racial upheaval and bloodshed.²²⁹

²²⁷ “Randolph Views Riot with Sorrow and Distress,” *Amsterdam News*, August 7, 1943, 13.

²²⁸ Dominic Capeci, *The Harlem Riot of 1943*. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1977), 160-167.

²²⁹ Minutes of Conference called by Negro Labor Committee at the Harlem Labor Center, September 24, 1943, NLC Papers, Box 3, Folder a 34 – Race Relations Committee 1943-1944.

The NLC created a Committee on Race Relations in October of 1943 to survey union practices and identify unions that discriminated against black members. They would then campaign for an end to these racist practices. The committee was also focused on teaching workers about the problems black workers faced. The Committee looked to achieve this through collaboration with the FEPC, the COD, the National Urban League, the Young Men's Christian Association., the Young Women's Christian Association, and the Labor Committee of the NAACP.²³⁰ Racial tolerance among workers became the primary focus of the NLC after the Harlem Riot.

The riot also prompted black organizations to increase the pressure on federal offices to investigate discrimination by major war industries in the area. The National Negro Congress and Brooklyn Urban League continued their efforts to end racial bias in New York's war industries focusing in particular on the Brooklyn Navy Yard, one of the largest employers in the city. By 1943 the Navy Yard, which experienced an acute labor shortage, had begun hiring black workers, so many of these cases were not about discriminatory hiring practices but alleged inequitable treatment of black workers. Many black women working in the yard filed discrimination complaints with the NNC alleging that black workers were forced to labor under conditions detrimental to their health and assigned menial work that was beneath their job classifications and abilities. Moreover, these women reported that when workers complained about the practices to managers, they were given low efficiency ratings and assigned to undesirable jobs. Rear Admiral Kelly, the Commandant of the Brooklyn Navy Yard, categorically denied the existence of any racial discrimination toward black workers. The

²³⁰ Memo, October 1943, NLC Papers, Box 3, Folder a34 – Race Relations Committee 1943-1944.

National Negro Congress, with the cooperation of the Brooklyn Urban League, began a drive to get the complaints of black workers in the Navy Yard registered with the FEPC.²³¹

Blacks' discontent with unequal employment opportunities led leaders of government fair employment agencies to renew their efforts to end racial prejudice in war industries. Joseph O'Connor, WMC Deputy Regional Director, promised a clear cut procedure to put teeth into the anti-discrimination policy of the USES in New York. He did however defend the activities of the USES using its record and cooperative relationship with the State Committee on Discrimination as evidence of its commitment to ending discriminatory hiring practices.²³²

The new state governor Thomas Dewey, in an effort to win public support took on the issue of discrimination in employment but did not use the COD as his main instrument to do so. In May, 1943 Dewey publicly expressed his deep dissatisfaction with the committee and he slashed²³³ the COD's budget by 25 percent in June, a move that New York's black activists feared would cripple the agency.²³⁴ As the allies' victory in Europe became more probable, perhaps the agency seemed less necessary. After all the mandate of the COD would vanish with the end of the war as would the war contracts over which it had jurisdiction, and even if the agency survived it had no independent authority to enforce the law. Fearing that the COD would end, Alvin Johnson, the new president of the Committee worked with committee members to draft a legislative proposal creating a permanent, independent commission with centralized

²³¹ "Scores Navy Yard Racial Bias," *Amsterdam News*, Brooklyn Edition, September 25, 1943, 5B.

²³² "USES Drafts New Plan to Fight Discrimination," *New York P. M.*, August 29, 1943, New York State War Council COD, Box 5, Folder 217 Organizations Other Than NYSCOD.

²³³ "New Board Named on Discrimination," *New York Times*, August 4, 1943, New York State War Council COD, Box 4, Folder - 210 Newspaper Clippings.

²³⁴ "Labor Assails Dewey Bias War Fund Slash," *New York Post*, June 4, 1943, New York State War Council COD, Box 4, Folders 210 - Newspaper Clippings.

jurisdiction over public and private employment.²³⁵ The COD also used public reaction over the Harlem Riot and revulsion against Anti-Semitism and the lobbying activities of the American Jewish Committee and the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith to argue for the creation of a permanent Committee. In response Dewey appointed an ad hoc commission against discrimination.²³⁶

By the end of 1943 the activities of the Committee on Discrimination and other fair employment agencies would be even more important. The scope of the activities of the COD and FEPC expanded after 1943. Not only did the organization try to integrate war industries, but it also began to eradicate unfair and discriminatory treatment of blacks hired by war industries. Moreover, as the end of the war loomed so did the prospect of reconversion. The competition over jobs would increase as soldiers returned from the war and war industries reconverted to consumer production, losing lucrative government contracts and perhaps cutting jobs. This caused the COD to undertake efforts to prevent of a return to lily-white industrial factories. The violent outburst in Harlem the previous August increased fears that reconversion and the loss of jobs for blacks would result in another burst of violence as it had after World War I.

Anxiety and Action: Government Agencies' Increased Efforts for Black Employment

In 1944 the Committee on Discrimination, renamed the New York State Committee Against Discrimination (CAD), stated that racial and religious tensions in the state had reached serious proportions. The critical need for increased war production coupled with the necessity to fully utilize manpower resources gave the committee a sense of urgency which was reflected in

²³⁵ Anthony Chen, "The Hitlerian Rule of Quotas': Racial Conservatism and the Politics of Fair Employment Legislation in New York State, 1941-1945."

²³⁶ Joel Scheartz, "New York State Commission Against Discrimination" *Organizing Black America: an encyclopedia of African American associations*, ed. Nina Mjagkij (New York: Garland Publishing Inc. 2005), 454-455.

the increased number of investigations it conducted in 1944. Various factors contributed to the increase in racial antagonisms in the city. Prospects for an early peace brought with it cutbacks in production, talk of reconversion, and mass layoffs. Perhaps most importantly there was fear of post-war unemployment, which much like the unemployment in the wake of World War I, would more adversely affect African Americans and women as they were the first ousted from jobs in war industries. All of these factors played a part in creating a climate of fear, which the CAD considered conducive to the growth of racial and religious tensions. For these reasons, the work of the Committee increased considerably in volume.²³⁷

The field representatives of the committee conducted more investigations during 1944 than in either of the two previous years. The CAD investigated war plants, employment agencies, labor unions, defense training schools, and some public utilities. Field representatives followed the Committee's established practice of persuasion and conciliation with companies with discriminatory practices rather than compulsion to comply with the law.²³⁸ Fifty percent of the 505 companies investigated by the CAD in 1944 involved war plants, employment agencies, labor unions and miscellaneous organizations in the New York City metropolitan area. Because this area was the country's largest industrial center and the center of the state's black population, most of the Committee's efforts were concentrated there.²³⁹

The CAD found that though more blacks were being hired by war production plants, in 1944 African Americans were still underrepresented in war industries throughout the state. Blacks constituted less than 2 percent of the New York State work force in war plants but made up 4 percent of the state's population. Furthermore, the CAD found that blacks had not been

²³⁷ New York State Committee Against Discrimination, Annual Report, 1944, New York State War Council COD, Box 6 Folder 262, 1.

²³⁸ *Ibid.*, 1-3.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*, 60-61.

upgraded to the highest positions for which many were qualified, a situation that the committee considered important to understanding why there were critical shortages of skilled labor in many occupation categories.²⁴⁰

Continued discrimination caused the disparity in employment levels. Employers blamed their white workers for low levels of black employment claiming that they could not hire African Americans because white employees refused to work with them. In addition companies used the “failure to apply” excuse for not hiring black workers. They argued that there was a “total absence of Negroes” from the employment rolls because no African Americans applied for jobs. CAD field representatives however found evidence to the contrary. African Americans frequently did not seek employment in positions where blacks were not typically hired. CAD therefore pointed out to employers that a negative policy of waiting for blacks to apply for jobs would not bring positive results. To overcome blacks’ belief that they would not be hired, the committee suggested that the companies send letters to organizations responsible for placing black workers in positions – like the USES and the Urban League – explaining that they would hire blacks. These companies were required to send copies of such letters to the CAD. The refusal of an employer to take such action was considered evidence of discrimination and would subject the company to other compliance measures.²⁴¹

Obtaining employment was not the only challenge black workers faced. Members of the CAD field staff also found that some war industries refused to integrate minority groups after hiring. The discrimination against employed African Americans included failure to pay equal wages for equal work, failure to upgrade, segregation, isolation, and use of separate dressing rooms, sanitary and toilet facilities. Some employers discriminated by assigning black workers

²⁴⁰ Ibid., 4.

²⁴¹ Ibid., 9-13.

to menial, janitorial, or other low-paying laboring jobs. According to the CAD, segregation of black workers created in the collective minds of the white workers “attitudes of racial exclusiveness and fosters a myth of race superiority.”²⁴² These attitudes, therefore contributed to employers’ excuses that they did not hire black workers because white workers refused to work with them. CAD itself was pessimistic about the gains blacks had made, cautioning against conflating employers’ increased willingness to employ blacks with an end to racism. In fact the organization claimed the relaxation of discriminatory practices may have been an effect of the increased need for labor.²⁴³

Despite the Committee’s pessimism, CAD statistics showed that the news was not completely bleak for blacks looking for war-time employment. Towards the end of 1944 24,900 blacks were employed in 270 leading New York City war plants constituting 8.4 percent of the total staff.²⁴⁴ This was due, in part, to continued improvements in the labor market of the war industries. In the first quarter of 1944 it was not difficult for either a white or black worker to secure a job. It was easier however for a white worker to secure certain types of work, namely skilled positions. Despite this difference, it was less difficult for African Americans to secure more desirable, higher paying kinds of jobs than in the previous three years.²⁴⁵ Statistics demonstrated these trends. The ratio of all black workers to total personnel in these same 270 war firms a year earlier in November of 1943 had been only 6 percent. Moreover despite an overall decrease of 6,400 workers in the plants between September and November, nearly 1,300 blacks were hired during the same period. In addition, there were above average percentages of

²⁴² Ibid., 9-13.

²⁴³ Labor Market Report, October – November 1944, New York State War Council COD, Box 7, Folder 319 – War Manpower Commission.

²⁴⁴ Labor Market Developments Report, New York Metropolitan Region, October – November 1944, New York State War Council COD, Box 7, Folder 319 – War Manpower Commission.

²⁴⁵ Labor Market Developments Report, New York Metropolitan Region, February – March 1944, New York State War Council COD, Box 7, Folder 319 – War Manpower Commission.

black employment reported in plants producing steel products (16.3 percent), electrical machinery (11.4 percent), and nonferrous metals (11.1 percent). In terms of absolute numbers, the shipbuilding industry remained the largest employer of blacks (8,969), followed by electrical machinery (5,696), ordnance plants (2,230), and factories making scientific instruments (2,028).²⁴⁶

Other encouraging black employment trends were recorded by the United States Employment Service. There were fewer reports of discriminatory hiring practices filed against firms serviced by USES and local offices reported that employers seemed to be more receptive to relaxing their job specifications once they were investigated. Placements of blacks in manufacturing firms increased during 1944. In February of 1945 blacks constituted 30 percent of USES placement activity in manufacturing plants as opposed to 23 percent one year prior. Outside of household placements USES placed black workers in apparel, shipbuilding, and electrical machinery plants, all manufacturing industries which employed above-average proportions of black workers.²⁴⁷

The Next Step: The Question of Upgrading in 1944

Like the CAD, the regional office of the FEPC continued its activities to alleviate discrimination. And like the CAD the FEPC began to investigate discrimination against blacks employed in war industries. One of the industries under FEPC scrutiny in 1944 was the Brooklyn Navy Yard. In 1944 and 1945, pressured by the complaints of black workers and the National Negro Congress, the New York office of the FEPC investigated and helped arbitrate

²⁴⁶ Labor Market Developments Report, New York Metropolitan Region, October – November 1944, New York State War Council COD, Box 7, Folder 319 – War Manpower Commission.

²⁴⁷ Labor Market Report, New York Metropolitan Region, February – March 1945, New York State War Council COD, Box 7, Folder 319 – War Manpower Commission.

fifty-one cases charging discrimination against African American workers at the Navy Yard. Many of these cases were brought to the Navy Yard with the help of the Brooklyn Urban League.²⁴⁸

By that time the Brooklyn Navy Yard had become the largest employer of African Americans in New York City, employing 6,250 black workers.²⁴⁹ Therefore, most of the complainants were skilled or semi-skilled workers who claimed they were denied requests for upgrades and promotions because of racial discrimination (22 cases). The second largest amount of cases brought to the FEPC involved accusations that the Navy Yard dismissed or suspended them unfairly due to race (11 cases). Discriminatory hiring was the third most common complaint brought to the FEPC about the Navy Yard (5 cases). There were various other complaints filed with the FEPC including denials of transfers and unjust efficiency ratings due to racism, refusals to train Negro workers, and several instances of mistreatment because of race.²⁵⁰

Of the twenty-two cases brought before the FEPC claiming denials of promotions and upgrades, half of those (11) were “satisfactorily adjusted.” That is, in half of the cases the plaintiffs were awarded promotions after FEPC investigations. The FEPC dismissed all of the complaints on unfair dismissals and suspensions and all but one of the complaints of discriminatory hiring practices.²⁵¹ The FEPC had its most important and effective role in helping Negro workers already hired by the Brooklyn Navy Yard achieve higher status and pay in the company. The campaign of the NNC and BKUL had a large part in facilitating the adjustment and eradication of discriminatory employment practices.

²⁴⁸ Entry 70 – Closed Cases, Box 562 (B - Brooklyn Navy Yards), FEPC Papers.

²⁴⁹ Labor Market Development Report, New York Metropolitan Region, February – March 1945. New York State War Council COD, Box 7, Folder 319 – War Manpower Commission.

²⁵⁰ Entry 70 – Closed Cases, Box 562 (B - Brooklyn Navy Yards), FEPC Papers.

²⁵¹ Entry 70 – Closed Cases, Box 562 (B - Brooklyn Navy Yards), FEPC Papers.

Even in cases where the FEPC did not officially record a satisfactory adjustment, it is clear its investigations still had positive effects. George DeYounge, a recent migrant, had worked as a mechanical and architectural draftsman and filed a complaint with the FEPC on February 1, 1945 alleging that he was denied a transfer to a position for which he was better qualified. He also wanted to contest the efficiency rating he was given, as it was the reason the Navy Yard denied his request for a transfer.²⁵² DeYounge had originally been assigned work as a Junior Engineering Draftsman with a SP-3 rating in April of 1942 after being transferred from Washington, D. C. to the New York Navy Yard in Brooklyn. In October of that year he was promoted to Assistant Engineering Draftsman with an SP-4 rating and in December he was made an Engineering Draftsman with a SP-5 rating. DeYounge requested a transfer from the General Arrangements Section in November of 1944 to the Diesel Section.²⁵³

DeYounge's application for a transfer was denied because of a severe shortage of personnel in the section in which he was already working. Furthermore, DeYounge had been given an efficiency rating of "Fair" which did not warrant his transfer to a more skilled position. DeYounge appealed his efficiency rating. Because of his persistent appeals, the Diesel Section granted DeYounge's request for an interview and though he had no previous experience was given a job in that area. DeYounge however declined and chose to remain in the General Arrangements department.²⁵⁴

Part of the reason DeYounge declined the position in the Diesel Department may have been that the General Assignments department began giving him tasks that better utilized his skills. Between January 30 (two days before his complaint was officially filed with the FEPC)

²⁵² Complaint filed February 1, 1945, Entry 68 – Open Cases, Box 556 (Box I, A-N), FEPC Papers.

²⁵³ Memo F. A. Daubin to the Office of Regional Director, received June 4, 1945, Fair Employment Practices Committee Papers, Entry 68 – Open Cases, Box 556 (Box I, A-N).

²⁵⁴ Ibid.

and July, 1945, DeYounge had been assigned work involving docking plans and data required for the dry docking of ships, such as checking and designating on drawings the appropriate locations for openings below the water line on ships which were placed in drydock. It was estimated that these duties constituted about 25 percent of his assigned responsibilities.

DeYounge, as of July of 1945, was interested and satisfied with his new duties and on July 2, 1945 received an unofficial rating of good.²⁵⁵ Though the Navy Yard did not officially record a satisfactory adjustment for this case because Mr. DeYounge was never transferred to the Diesel Department, the fact that the FEPC investigated and workers had a place to voice their complaints affected the working conditions and tasks black employees were given.

From the Factory to the Office: Black Employment in White Collar Positions

While African Americans were increasingly being employed in New York war plants, no corresponding progress was noted with respect to employment of blacks in positions connected with the administration of business, such as office or white collar workers. Resistance to employment of blacks as stenographers, typists, or filing clerks was greater than in factory work. Some progress was noted though. The Sperry and Arma Corporations were included in a list of establishments using black workers in office positions, not surprising since they had been investigated by the FEPC and WMC. Of the twenty-nine companies listed as using blacks as office workers, twenty-eight were in New York City.²⁵⁶

Though many white collar office jobs were not open to black workers, employment advances were made for black workers in telephone companies. After complaints of

²⁵⁵ Letter from F.A. Daubin, Rear Admiral of the US Navy Commandant to Edward Lawson, Regional Director of the FEPC, July 18, 1945, FEPC Papers, Entry 68 – Open Cases, Box 556 (Box I, A-N).

²⁵⁶ New York State Committee Against Discrimination Annual Report, 1944, New York State War Council COD, Box 6, Folder 262.

discrimination were filed against Bell Telephone Laboratories by well-qualified black women in October 1943, the USES suspended service to the firm while it investigated its hiring practices. Upon completion of the probe USES revealed that the charges of discrimination were justified. In a conference at the FEPC's New York office, company officials stated that supervisors in local USES offices had not been complying with the company's anti-discrimination measures which had been put into place in conformity with Executive Order 9346 which eliminated discrimination in regard to hire, tenure, terms or conditions of employment, or union membership in war industries. The FEPC sent instructions to remedy the situation. At the time Bell Telephone Laboratories employed only sixty-seven black workers. By August 1944 the number had risen to 186, and many of these workers held professional and clerical jobs, as well as skilled positions in shop and maintenance departments.²⁵⁷

In December, a new occupation opened for black women at the New York Telephone Company. Management hired twenty-six women as its first black operators. Though the company had a stated policy of non-discrimination, black women who were denied jobs proved that statement untrue. A young black woman filed a complaint with the regional FEPC the previous summer alleging that New York Telephone had refused her employment as a switchboard operator because of her race. Although her specific complaint was dismissed, the FEPC investigated the general complaint that blacks had not been hired for such jobs. The company was ordered to advise the Committee of any progress it made in hiring minorities. Thirty days after the conference New York Telephone announced that it had found and accepted twenty-six African American women for training and employment as operators, four of whom

²⁵⁷ John Davis and Carol Loan, "Ten Best Cases," September 13, 1944, FEPC Papers, Entry 75, Box 546, Folder – Statistics.

went to work the following Monday.²⁵⁸ Though the company claimed that the “employment of Negro girls ... was in line with company policy” it is clear that the FEPC investigation was the stimulus for the company’s action since it hired them soon after FEPC proceedings.²⁵⁹

Though there was slow and incomplete success in integrating companies, there were tangible achievements through legislation and the courts. The New York State Court of Appeals in July 1944, for the first time brought unions within the purview of the antidiscrimination law. In an effort to comply with Section 43 of the state Civil Rights Law which prohibited labor organizations “from denying membership to persons by reason of race, color, creed or national origin”, the New York locals of the Railway Mail Association admitted seven black members. When the national union ordered the New York local to oust them, the New York locals referred the issue to the Committee Against Discrimination, which referred the case to the Industrial Commissioner for a hearing. The New York Supreme Court found in favor of the national union which argued that the Railway Mail Association was a fraternal, beneficiary association and not a labor organization and therefore not subject to the state’s anti-discrimination law. When the local appealed the decision to the state Court of Appeals, the ruling was overturned in a unanimous opinion therefore upholding the anti-discrimination law preventing labor unions from denying membership to minority groups.²⁶⁰

Ives-Quinn Law: Anti-Discrimination after the War

Another major victory in the fight against discrimination in employment came in 1945.

The New York State assembly, for the first time anywhere in the country, created a permanent

²⁵⁸ “New York Telephone Company (2-BR-900),” FEPC Papers, Entry 75, Box 546, Folder – FEPC Appropriation Material 1944.

²⁵⁹ “Negro Phone Girls Hired,” *NYT*, December 2, 1944, 8.

²⁶⁰ New York State Committee Against Discrimination Annual Report, 1944, New York State War Council COD, Box 6, Folder 262, 21-22.

fair employment practice commission. In June of 1944 Governor Dewey created a committee to study discrimination in the state. Irving Ives, a Republican assemblyman from central New York chaired the committee. Ives was known for his consistent liberalism on civil rights and became the central legislative figure supporting the Ives-Quinn bill which would outlaw discrimination in employment on the basis of race, creed, color, or national origin.²⁶¹

Governor Dewey's study group advised the state government to create of a permanent State Committee Against Discrimination (SCAD) in the Executive Office of the State. The SCAD would consist of five members, with the power to formulate policies; adopt rules and regulations; and receive, investigate and pass on complaints alleging discrimination in employment. It could also hold hearings, subpoena witnesses and compel the production of records. This new committee would also be able to create agencies and councils necessary to uphold the laws. One significant feature of the proposed law was that it declared the opportunity to obtain employment without discrimination a civil right.²⁶²

As expected organized labor (particularly the CIO-affiliated unions), the NAACP, NUL, and American Jewish Congress all rallied behind the bill. Black leaders, organizations, and press in New York publicly rallied whole heartedly in support of the law which categorically barred employment discrimination based on race, creed, religion, or ethnicity in all industries. Frank Crosswaith of the Negro Labor Committee sent telegrams to Governor Dewey, Senator Quinn, and Assemblyman Ives urging the necessity of the bill's passage.²⁶³ African American leaders,

²⁶¹ Anthony Chen, Hitlerian "Rule of Quotas"; Gunnar Myrdal, *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy* (New York: Harper & Row, 1994.)

²⁶² New York State Committee Against Discrimination Annual Report, 1944, New York State War Council COD, Box 6, Folder 262, 36, 39-40.

²⁶³ Telegram sent to Gov. Dewey, Senator Quinn, and Assemblyman Ives from Frank Crosswaith, February 16, 1945, Meeting Minutes March 9, 1945 Negro Labor Assembly, NLC Papers, Folder b85, Minutes 1945-47.

organizations and press publicly advocated the passage of this anti-discrimination law as a way to finally end racial bias and the treatment of black New Yorkers as second-class citizens.

Ives promoted the law by explaining that discrimination was a threat to American democracy just as fascism was overseas.²⁶⁴ Republican Party leaders who held or aspired to state offices such as Dewey and Ives took a liberal stance on fair employment, supporting the bill because they needed to compete for minority votes in statewide elections. However most rank and file Republican representatives from upstate, rural areas, where few racial and religious minorities resided strongly opposed the bill. Their stance largely reflected that of their constituents. There was also opposition from some residents of New York City's suburbs – Westchester, parts of Queens, and Long Island – who disagreed with what they believed would be preferential treatment to black citizens.²⁶⁵

Though many politicians opposed the law, most would not openly criticize its aims especially as intellectuals, liberal politicians, and minorities increasingly equated the war as a fight against the Nazis and racism. Gunnar Myrdal's *An American Dilemma*, one of the most influential writings on race relations of the time, argued that the oppressive treatment of blacks in this country undermined the American creed which emphasizes liberty, equality, justice, and fair treatment of all people. White racism, and not any biological, innate inferiority, had produced African American inequality. Myrdal argued that discrimination forced blacks into lowly social positions, which in turn confirmed beliefs of African American inferiority.²⁶⁶ In this changing intellectual climate there was an increasing sentiment that discrimination was no longer

²⁶⁴ Anthony Chen, "The Hitlerian Rule of Quotas": Racial Conservatism and the Politics of Fair Employment Legislation in New York State, 1941-1945."

²⁶⁵ Anthony Chen, "The Hitlerian Rule of Quotas": Racial Conservatism and the Politics of Fair Employment Legislation in New York State, 1941-1945."

²⁶⁶ Anthony Chen, "The Hitlerian Rule of Quotas": Racial Conservatism and the Politics of Fair Employment Legislation in New York State, 1941-1945."; Gunnar Myrdal, *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy*.

acceptable. Therefore diverse segments of the business community – manufacturers, merchants, and the corporate bar – joined to praise the intent of the bill, but warned that if it was passed jobs would flee the state, discrimination would intensify, and disgruntled employees would unfairly threaten their employers with work stoppages. Those opposing the bill also claimed the law would cause resentment that could spark race riots. Conservatives compared Ives-Quinn with the Wagner Act which they claimed prevented employers from firing incompetent and insubordinate workers.²⁶⁷

In February, 1945 Republicans, in an attempt to garner support opposing the legislation, called for a hearing on the bill in the Assembly. Robert Moses inflamed matters by claiming that the proposed Ives-Quinn would force companies to use hiring quotas and would therefore prevent them from hiring workers based on merit. Mayor La Guardia did not testify but sent a statement of support for the legislation, challenging Moses' criticism. At the hearings, supporters for the law outnumbered opponents by an eight to one margin, and the proceedings backfired against the racially conservative Republicans who had called for it. Within weeks the Assembly and the Senate passed the bill. The Ives-Quinn Act mandated equal treatment in public and private employment and allowed the newly reformed State Commission Against Discrimination (SCAD) to enforce the law. If the committee determined that discrimination had occurred, it could direct the company to stop such action and take affirmative action measures such as hiring, reinstatement, or upgrading employees. The orders handed down by the commission would be subject to judicial review.²⁶⁸

²⁶⁷ Anthony Chen, "The Hitlerian Rule of Quotas": Racial Conservatism and the Politics of Fair Employment Legislation in New York State, 1941-1945."

²⁶⁸ Anthony Chen, "The Hitlerian Rule of Quotas": Racial Conservatism and the Politics of Fair Employment Legislation in New York State, 1941-1945."

As Robert Weaver, former head of the Negro Manpower Service of the War Manpower Commission, explained, at the end of the war in 1945 there was no adequate national legislative program for reconversion.²⁶⁹ Therefore there was no legal way for the national government to protect the employment gains blacks achieved during the war. The FEPC remained a temporary agency and was deprived of federal funds. New York was one of only three states in the nation to pass fair employment legislation.²⁷⁰ This was an important development to not only protect African Americans but to also prevent the racial problems that emerged in the wake of World War I.

There were many advances in black employment during 1944 and 1945. First, major war industries employed more black workers. This was due to continued labor shortages as well as the activities of government agencies especially since the state was equipped with new weapons to fight employment discrimination. The State Committee Against Discrimination was able to use new laws barring discriminatory hiring practices in war industries to continue to investigate and prosecute companies discriminating against black employees. Their actions were aided by the activities of the regional FEPC who cooperated closely with SCAD and the local offices of the United States Employment Service.

New York's black civil rights activists scored a major victory in the fight for equal employment with the passage of the Ives-Quinn Law. The law was the result of mobilizations by community organizations. The violence of August 1943 was in the forefront of the minds of numerous black leaders as many worried about how African Americans would fare as the nation's economy reconverted after the war. Many feared that if African Americans were ousted

²⁶⁹ Robert Weaver, *Negro Labor: A National Problem*. (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Co. 1946), xi.

²⁷⁰ Anthony Chen, "The Hitlerian Rule of Quotas": Racial Conservatism and the Politics of Fair Employment Legislation in New York State, 1941-1945."

from industrial positions as they were after World War I violence would again erupt, an especially troubling prospect in the wake of the Harlem Riot.

New York was the first state to pass a fair employment practices law. This law set the precedent for other states to follow suit. The passage of the Ives-Quinn Act and the activities it allowed the FEPC and SCAD to undertake made the situation in New York unique in the national story of black employment during the Second World War.

Inclusive Representation: Unionizing Black Workers

As the war was coming to a close, black leaders and organizations also focused their efforts on increasing black union membership in an effort to secure black employment during reconversion. In Detroit, where reconversion and subsequent cutbacks began earlier than in New York, those fired were almost exclusively black men and black and white women. Because many industrial plants did not hire black workers until the war began, according to seniority rules cutbacks and layoffs disproportionately affected black workers. A 50 percent cutback would mean a 60 to 100 percent loss of black workers.²⁷¹ Black leaders feared this would be the case for black workers in New York as well. Black organizations focused on integrating labor unions as a way to open training programs, and thus industrial jobs, to black workers; and as reconversion loomed hoped these unions would protect the progress they made during the war. The Negro Labor Committee and the NNC's Negro Labor Victory Committee were the principle organizations to focus their activities on cooperating with unions during the war years.

The Negro Labor Committee found measured success mostly in the unions of textile, clothing and shoe making industries. The garment, textile and shoemaking industries supported

²⁷¹ National Negro Congress, "Negro Workers After the War" (New York: National Negro Congress, April 1945.)

the Negro Labor Committee from its earliest days. The New York Joint Board of Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America, the Textile Workers of America, and more than twenty locals of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union gave financial donations to the NLC.²⁷² In 1946 David Dubinsky, president of the ILGWU lauded the organization's support of trade unionism and its fostering of solidarity among black and white workers. According to Dubinsky the union and its affiliates in the Greater New York area recognized the equality of black workers and applied the principle of the equality of workers in its organization and factories. In 1945 Dubinsky celebrated the progress the garment industry had made in the last decade as black workers entered shops, made better wages and attained a higher standard of living. This, in his estimation, was accomplished through the union's work with the NLC. The progress blacks made in the garment industry went beyond union membership; black workers sat on the ILGWU executive board, belonged to shop committees, and represented their locals at union conventions.²⁷³

The NLC made great strides in collaborating with unions in the garment trades to secure jobs for African Americans. However as the war prompted more conversion and industrial positions became available black workers looked to get jobs in other industries with better paying positions. This was particularly true for black women. Though the garment industry was one of the only industrial sectors open to black employment before the war, black women preferred other industries during the war because they paid more than the needle trades by 1943 when the labor shortage began. Perhaps this was why the NLC was not as successful in placing blacks in new industries. Their major collaborators were with unions representing the garment trades which were not where the majority of workers looking for war employment sought jobs.

²⁷² 5th Anniversary National Labor Committee, December 6, 1941, NLC Papers, Folder b67, microfilm.

²⁷³ "Negro Labor Committee: 10 Years of Struggle – 10 Years of Progress," NLC Papers, folder b67, microfilm.

The NLC's rival, the Negro Labor Victory Committee, was more successful at reaching out to unions to place African Americans in jobs not previously open to them and eradicating discrimination against blacks employed in war industries.

The NLVC was successful in attracting unions to support their efforts. In 1943 fifty-seven unions in Greater New York with a combined membership of over 200,000 were affiliated with the NLVC.²⁷⁴ By 1944 the number of unions affiliated with the NLVC increased to 107 with a membership exceeding 300,000. The organization later established branches in Newark, Buffalo, Baltimore, Philadelphia, Washington DC, and St. Louis.²⁷⁵

The NLVC cooperated with affiliated unions to defend and advocate for black workers who had been hired by war industries. In April of 1943 Sarah Williams, a messenger for the Brooklyn Navy Yard and member of the Federation of Architects, Engineers, Chemists and Technicians (a Navy Yard Civil Service association and CIO union), alleged that she was unfairly dismissed the previous month. The Commander in charge of the Supply Department for which she was a messenger complained that Williams walked too slowly on errands and was dismissed for that reason a week after she was hired. The Federation of Architects, Engineers, Chemists and Technicians (FAECT) notified the National Negro Congress of the accusation and asked for a member of the NLVC to sit in on the conference between the union and the Navy Yard. The hope was that the NLVC would be an additional advocate for Williams at this meeting. Though P.T. Roberts, Commander of the United States Navy found the dismissal to be

²⁷⁴ Negro Labor Victory Committee, "Correspondence, Fact Sheet and List of Offices," NNC Papers, Part IV, Box 73, Folder 1 – Correspondence, Fact Sheet, and List of Officers.

²⁷⁵ C, Alvin Hughes claims that the NLVC opened the door of employment to 6,000 workers in industrial positions in its first year. This assertion is quite vague as the author does not make it clear if 6,000 black workers were actually placed in jobs. Moreover if the workers were placed in jobs it is unclear whether they were placed in war industries and whether those placed were in skilled or unskilled positions. The figures cited are inconclusive.

fair, this case illustrates the way in which member unions and the NLVC cooperated to try to end bias against black workers in industries making war goods.²⁷⁶

One year later the NLVC again collaborated with the Federation of Architects, Engineers, Chemists, and Technicians (FAECT) to try and redress black workers' claims of discrimination. In April 1944 Local 137 of the United Federal Workers of America, the local representing Navy Yard workers, embarked on a letter writing campaign and asked the NLVC to join them in pressuring the government to make the Brooklyn Navy Yard, a government agency, cease discrimination.²⁷⁷ It seems that the NLVC was good at protesting discriminatory hiring, but those protests by and large did not open job opportunities in war industries for blacks.

The NLVC was more effective in fighting hiring discrimination when it functioned as an employment placement service. Known for its activism on behalf of black workers and its good relationship with various unions, the New York State Committee on Discrimination asked the NLVC to refer qualified workers for jobs in war industries. Often the NLVC sent workers from unions affiliated with the NLVC.²⁷⁸ In one such situation Charles Berkley, the director of the COD, asked the committee to refer five qualified black applicants to Acme Backing Corporation in Brooklyn which manufactured rubberized fabric. Acme had placed ads in newspapers announcing available jobs for males and the COD asked the NLVC to send black males to apply for the jobs. The NLVC would then make a report of Acme's treatment of the men when they applied for the position in order to ascertain whether or not they were victims of

²⁷⁶ Federation of Architects, Engineers, Chemists and Technicians to Edward Strong, April 6, 1943; Emma Lipowsky, President of the Navy Yard Civil Service Association to Dorothy Funn, Administrative Secretary of the NLVC, April 26, 1943; Letter from PT Roberts to Negro Labor Victory Committee, April 13, 1943, N NC Papers, Part IV, Box 73, Folder 16 – Brooklyn Navy Yard.

²⁷⁷ Thomas Nolan, President of the United Federal Workers of America, Local 137 (CIO) to the NLVC, April 5, 1944, NNC Papers, Part IV, Box 78, Folder - Navy Department 1944.

²⁷⁸ M. Moran Weston, Field Secretary to J. Reddick of Local 269 of the United Auto Workers (CIO), January 14, 1944, N NC Papers, Part IV, Box 77, Folder 60 – Job Referrals 1943/1944.

discrimination.²⁷⁹ In these instances the NLVC worked to refer qualified applicants for jobs in an effort to identify companies who discriminated against black workers. In this instance, when the NLVC worked alongside the COD, their efforts at expanding employment opportunities for blacks in New York were most successful.

As the war ended, the Negro Labor Victory Committee and its parent organization the National Negro Congress worked to minimize the loss of black industrial positions. The NLVC continued to expand its education programs to foster racial tolerance and acceptance. Both organizations called for unions to adjust their seniority policies to avoid the complete lay-off of newly hired black workers and a return to the exclusionary pre-war labor practices.

One of the main purposes of the NLVC was to establish anti-discrimination committees in many of the unions affiliated with the organization. In the fall of 1944 M. Moran Weston, Field Secretary for the NLVC, reported that both the CIO and AFL had broadly accepted the Committee's aims to protect the gains of black workers and had undertaken this task through national, regional, and local conferences on post-war problems all over the United States.²⁸⁰ In addition to this national education program, Weston believed that unions had the responsibility to organize workers effectively for political action and to see that the program was adopted and supported by industry. He urged industry and government to maintain war-time levels of production and provisions for the maximum employment of all workers.²⁸¹

Thomas Richardson, Executive Vice-President of the United Federal Workers of America (CIO) and member of the NLVC, urged organized labor and progressive industrialists to support a proportional lay-off plan as a solution to impending black unemployment after the war. The

²⁷⁹ Charles Berkley to Negro Labor Victory Committee, June 29, 1943, NNC Papers, Part IV, Box 77, Folder 60 - Job Referrals 1943/1944.

²⁸⁰ Statement by M. Moran Weston at National Urban League Conference, Fall 1944. NNC Papers, Part IV, Box 80, Folder 122a - Weston, Moran.

²⁸¹ Ibid.

program would not eliminate wide-spread lay-offs of black or white workers, but would protect the rights of blacks to hold certain jobs in certain industries which had opened to black workers during the war.²⁸² The NLVC argued that seniority rules protecting arbitrary termination and the drive to protect the new employment status of black workers came from the same goal – the protection of workers. The organization thus urged unions to reconcile those two aims. At a March 1945 conference attended by 300 representatives of CIO, AFL, and Independent unions Thomas Richardson proposed a proportional layoff plan which would “protect the rights of Negroes to hold certain jobs in certain industries which they have been able to win since the beginning of the war.”²⁸³

Later that year the Executive Board of the NLVC designed a seven point program to protect the jobs of black workers during reconversion. The plan urged unions to ensure maximum employment for all workers and maximum employment of blacks during large-scale layoffs. The NLVC plan accepted seniority rules, but implemented special formulae and procedures to avoid the firing of recently hired black workers. The Committee wanted full participation of blacks in all programs for re-employment, training, re-training, relocation, re-settlement, and compensation. In essence the measures would prevent blacks from being relegated to service and unskilled employment which would have effectively rolled back the advances black laborers had made during the war.²⁸⁴

The modification of seniority rules was a very complex proposition for unions that did not discriminate on racial or any other terms. Many union officers believed it would be an unfair privilege to black workers and a slight to long-time union members. Moreover there was fear

²⁸² NLVC Press Release, March 24, 1945, NNC Papers, Part IV, Box 79, Folder 101 – Press Releases 1944-1945.

²⁸³ “Full Employment, Seniority Discussed at Union Parley,” *People’s Voice*, March 31, 1945, 12.

²⁸⁴ Press Release September 5, 1945, National Negro Congress Papers, Part IV, Box 79, Folder 99 - Post-War Reconversion, 1945.

among union members that any change in the system of seniority would undermine the union's role as a safeguard to the rights of workers. The NNC countered that because blacks were so unjustly treated in the past, special measures had to be taken to ensure equal treatment in the future. The organization warned that if new measures were not adopted, blacks would disappear from industrial positions returning to the same situation before World War II. The NNC said that the special provisions the CIO made for war veterans is an example of what could be done to ensure continued employment of blacks.²⁸⁵

Under the rules of many CIO unions time away from the job was not counted towards seniority. Strict application of this rule to veterans amounted to an unfair punishment for those who had served our nation. Therefore the CIO made an agreement with the Veterans of Foreign Wars under which returning veterans are granted "accrued seniority" in which time spent in the service counts as time spent on the job. At its national convention the CIO recommended to its affiliated unions that in the case of veterans in a given plant or industry, the same rule apply. In this way a special provision was made to protect the jobs of war veterans. The NNC argued that similar provisions to protect African American workers could be adopted as well.²⁸⁶

Pressured by the NNC and NLVC the CIO made a statement reaffirming the organization's anti-discrimination stance. Organization leaders believed the advances made by African Americans through the FEPC and the enlistment of thousands of minorities in war production, were basically due to the anti-discrimination policy of the CIO which had brought those questions to the fore. The CIO wanted to protect the gains black workers made during the war and urged affiliated unions to prohibit all forms of racial discrimination. To those ends, the CIO also recommended the government make the FEPC a permanent institution and abolish Jim

²⁸⁵ National Negro Congress, "Negro Workers After the War" (New York: National Negro Congress, April 1945.)

²⁸⁶ National Negro Congress, "Negro Workers After the War" (New York: National Negro Congress, April 1945.)

Crow laws and poll-taxes.²⁸⁷ This position withstanding for the vast majority of unions in the CIO the prospect of changing seniority rules in unions was quite intimidating for union leaders and management alike. There was very little support amongst rank and file workers for changes in seniority laws, even if failure to do so would end black employment and integrated factories. Even progressive unions like the United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America, which had accepted black members and worked to integrate companies where it represented workers, did not amend its seniority laws.²⁸⁸

Black workers found expanded employment opportunities in war industries with the help of some labor unions. African Americans were accepted into labor unions, most readily into locals affiliated with the Congress of Industrial Organizations; and those labor unions therefore pushed for black workers to be employed in industries in which they represented workers. They also used educational programs to teach white workers about working with African Americans, thus dealing with the major problem employers cited for not using black workers. However, the advances black workers made through unions were constrained in the post-war era. Veterans returning from the war came home looking to reclaim the factory jobs they left. Unions, which had always been champions of equal and fair treatment of members, could not easily adjust seniority rules in a way to protect black workers while maintaining seniority privileges of veterans. To favor African American workers over returning veterans was an untenable solution. Therefore immediately after the war many black workers were laid-off from the manufacturing positions they procured during the war. The loss of black jobs in the industrial sector was African Americans' and Civil Rights organizations' main concern for the rest of the decade.

²⁸⁷ National Negro Congress, "Negro Workers After the War" (New York: National Negro Congress, April 1945.)

²⁸⁸ Martha Biondi, *To Stand and Fight*, 23-24.

The Fight to Hold On: The Process of Reconversion

The prospect of reconversion unsettled African Americans. By March of 1945 there were a total of 21,200 blacks working in the city's war industries.²⁸⁹ Many worried that the gains blacks made in employment during the war would be lost and unemployment levels would rise as soldiers returned to reclaim their jobs. The prospect of another round of violence like that which occurred in Chicago, Washington, and numerous other cities after World War I was worrisome to black leaders, government offices, and organizations looking for equality of employment opportunities for the city's blacks. But there was no major outbreak of violence or unrest in the period after World War II even though black employment levels in the city's industries generally took a setback.

Faced with declining prospects in skilled and semi-skilled positions, the New York Urban League attempted to do what it could to stem the loss of black jobs in 1944. The Industrial Department of the Urban League of Greater New York had an employment service with branches in Brooklyn and Manhattan.²⁹⁰ They also launched a Vocational Opportunity Campaign to encourage youths to plan and train for trades.²⁹¹ Despite these measures, the New York Urban League's job placement rate dropped; only 25 percent of applicants were placed in jobs by the Service Operation.²⁹²

The Brooklyn Urban League's Acting Industrial Secretary Theresa Parker thus warned blacks against seeking war-jobs in 1944 and encouraged them to take lower paying jobs "with a

²⁸⁹ "Labor Market Development Report, NY Metro Region, February – March 1945," New York State War Council COD, Box 7, Folder 319 – War Manpower Commission.

²⁹⁰ The New York (Manhattan) and Brooklyn Urban League branches were consolidated into the Urban League of Greater New York in 1944. I will use its proper name interchangeably with the New York Urban League.

²⁹¹ "Expansion in Industrial Relations," *Urban League of New York Reports to Its Friends*, 4-5, Olivia Frost Papers, New York Public Library, Box 2, Folder 11.

²⁹² "Expansion in Industrial Relations," *Urban League of New York Reports to Its Friends*, 4-5, Olivia Frost Papers, Box 2, Folder 11.

post war future” outside of the war industries. Parker argued that there were plenty of war jobs for blacks but very few high salaried skilled positions. She encouraged black Brooklynites to take lower paying jobs outside of war industries that would not be affected by the return of the troops and reconversion.²⁹³

Her fears of black displacement from war industries were well founded. In the year after the war ended some of the advances black workers made during the conflict were eroded. In June, 1945 the labor market in New York City was tight. Lay-offs from war firms in the area increased during the summer of 1945 due to contract cutbacks and curtailments. Government cuts in the wire, fragmentation bomb, and aircraft programs resulted in layoffs in firms producing parts for these industrial sectors. Termination and rescheduling of contracts by the army’s Signal Corps and Ordnance branches accounted for the majority of the dismissals.²⁹⁴ Blacks would have been among the first fired from these firms since they had been among the most recent hires.

By 1947 the affects of the return of thousands of soldiers from World War II was apparent as many black workers were ousted from skilled and semi-skilled industrial positions. According to the Urban League of Greater New York the problem was no longer whether blacks could get jobs, but rather if they could get jobs using the skills they acquired during the war. In 1947 NYUL officials wondered “How can the gains that have been made in skilled and professional employment during the war be consolidated?”²⁹⁵ Most of the applicants to the

²⁹³ Theresa Parker, Draft of “Keep Post-War Era in Mind When Seeking a Job,” July 1944, New York State War Council COD, Box 7, Folder 340 – Brooklyn Urban League.

²⁹⁴ “Field Operating Report New York Metropolitan Area, NYS, June 1945,” WMC Papers, Series 277, Box No 10-154, Folder “NYC January 1944 317.2”.

²⁹⁵ “Placement in New Openings, Training Get Greater Emphasis,” *Report to the Community*, Olivia Frost Papers, Box 2, Folder 11.

organization's job placement program were from Manhattan and Brooklyn (94 percent) where the majority of the city's blacks lived.²⁹⁶

Despite cuts in these areas the city's shipyards continued to experience a labor shortage. The number of vessels in the port being constructed or repaired was larger than at any other previous time.²⁹⁷ The recruitment program for Navy Yard workers continued. The Brooklyn Navy Yard had become the largest industrial employers of blacks in the city. Continued productivity in the shipyards proved to serve as a safeguard for black jobs in that sector.

The Urban League of Greater New York tried to find solutions for the hiring problems blacks faced in the post-war years by providing preparatory classes for the civil service exams for social investigators in the Department of Welfare. These courses were taught by instructors from other social agencies, government offices, and the United Public Workers of America, an organization affiliated with the Congress of Industrial Organizations. Civil service employment became another option for black job seekers.²⁹⁸

Table 7: NYUL Employment placement statistics, 1947.

	Total	Manhattan	Brooklyn	Queens
Applicants	7240	5236	1603	401
Placements	1782	1198	516	68

²⁹⁶ "Placement in New Openings, Training Get Greater Emphasis," *Report to the Community*, Olivia Frost Papers, Box 2, Folder 11.

²⁹⁷ "Field Operating Report New York Metropolitan Area, NYS, June 1945," WMC Papers, Series 277, Box No 10-154, Folder "NYC January 1944 317.2".

²⁹⁸ "Placement in New Openings, Training Get Greater Emphasis," *Report to the Community*, Olivia Frost Papers, Box 2, Folder 11.

Due to the changing labor market after reconversion the New York Urban League's placement rate was low in 1947. Only a quarter of applicants were placed in jobs by the Service Operation. A third of those placed in jobs by the Urban League's Employment Service worked in the clerical and sales areas and 10 percent were in professional, managerial and skilled positions.²⁹⁹ These placements constitute a significant shift in the types of jobs available to blacks after the war.

The Industrial Relations Department of the NYUL focused on steering blacks into clerical and sales positions because the training required was relatively little in comparison to skilled industrial positions. They also believed that blacks would be employed in greater numbers in firms that were sensitive to public opinion and patronage – for example retail stores. Furthermore the League said that most of these retail and clerical positions were characterized by high turnover rates, which made integration easier since there was less sustained resistance from white employees.³⁰⁰

Retail, an expanding area of employment, seemed to provide the primary job opportunities available for black New Yorkers seeking jobs in the post-war era. The report revealed that in Manhattan and Brooklyn the most important placement contacts were Gimbel Brothers and Franklin Simon which were both department stores. Several placements in Brooklyn were in Brooklyn Safeway stores. Therefore the League held meetings for black women interested in department store employment. With the help of certain department stores in

²⁹⁹ "Placement in New Openings, Training Get Greater Emphasis," *Report to the Community*, Olivia Frost Papers, Box 2, Folder 11.

³⁰⁰ "Placement in New Openings, Training Get Greater Emphasis," *Report to the Community*, Olivia Frost Papers, Box 2, Folder 11.

Brooklyn, and the unions of the retail trade, job opportunities and requirements were discussed.³⁰¹

Black women were also increasingly finding employment in white-collar office jobs and in clerical positions. The New York Telephone Company had hired five hundred additional black operators in all borough offices. Black secretaries and stenographers, both female occupations, were introduced in many businesses and professional offices. Many of these placements were significant because they were firsts. Successful placement of black women in white collar jobs was significant because of the general tightening of hiring specifications and increased competition for jobs after the war.³⁰² These continued, though small, advances in clerical and sales occupations was due in part to general relaxation of personnel practices and the activities of the State Commission Against Discrimination.

Because of the collaborative relationship the Urban League and SCAD had fostered and the positive results achieved Olivia Frost the Research Secretary of the Urban League of Greater New York encouraged the organization to use the machinery in place and trusted tactics to achieve further economic gains for the city's black residents. Frost wanted the Urban League to increase the number of complaints filed with SCAD.³⁰³ This tactic however was hampered by the Urban League's lack of financial resources which adversely affected its activities and therefore stemmed the opening of new job opportunities for black workers.

In a self-assessment of its activities, achievements, and failures, Dr. Lloyd Bailer, the new Director of the Industrial Relations Department of the Urban League of Greater New York,

³⁰¹ "Placement in New Openings, Training Get Greater Emphasis," *Report to the Community*, Olivia Frost Papers, Box 2, Folder 11.

³⁰² "Placement in New Openings, Training Get Greater Emphasis," *Report to the Community*, Olivia Frost Papers, Box 2, Folder 11.

³⁰³ Olivia Frost, "Annual Report of the Research Department, Urban League of Greater New York," Olivia Frost Papers, Box 2, Folder 11.

recognized the organization's inability to continue the full arc of activities it had undertaken during the war due to a shortage of funds. Bailer, former field examiner for the National Labor Relations Board, believed that the ULGNY needed more staff but had no money to hire additional personnel. The industrial departments of most other cities' Urban League branches expanded black employment opportunities, provided vocational guidance and training, had a labor consultant service, provided worker education, and conducted research into labor markets. Recent operations of the Industrial Department of the ULGNY were confined largely to employment service activity – interviewing job applicants, accepting job orders, and making referrals. In 1948 the office was not geared towards obtaining new employment opportunities according to Bailer.³⁰⁴

The lack of field staff and personnel prevented the Urban League of Greater New York from performing one of its essential duties – enforcing the Ives-Quinn law. Perhaps this was because the New York Urban League focused more of its financial and personnel resources now on expanding the scope of its activities to address the issue of integrated education. One of the NYUL's major campaigns centered on eradicating discrimination in higher education through the passage of the Austin-Mahoney Act in the New York State legislature. The League also engaged heavily in fund-raising efforts to expand the breadth of its activities in its Harlem, Brooklyn, and Queens offices as well as the creation of an office in the Bronx in response to the demographic changes in the city.³⁰⁵ It seems as if the priorities of the New York Urban League shifted away from employment. Though there is no evidence directly saying so, this may be

³⁰⁴ Lloyd Bailer, "Proposed Industrial Relations Program," NUL Papers, Part I, Box D41, Urban League Industrial Relations Department Affiliates File, New York Monthly Reports 1947; "Dr. Bailer Joins N.Y. Urban League," *New York Amsterdam News*, June 7, 1947, 3.

³⁰⁵ "Anti-Education Bias Group is Organized," *New York Amsterdam News*, March 1, 1947, 5; "Backers See Passage of Education Bill in 1948," *New York Amsterdam News*, April 19, 1947, 13; "Outstanding Personalities Pushing League Campaign: Urban League Meeting Waldorf Astoria," *New York Amsterdam News*, April 5, 1947, 4; "League to Open Branch Office in Soon in Bronx," *New York Amsterdam News*, February 7, 1948, 5.

attributed to the achievements in opening new areas of employment to African Americans. Perhaps the passage of the Ives-Quinn Act signaled an important legal triumph over employment discrimination and Urban League leaders felt they should use the majority of their limited resources to tackle new issues.

The Urban League saw itself as bearing a heavy responsibility to contribute to the enforcement of the Ives-Quinn Law, but was derelict in this duty by the end of the decade. In fact the League stated that enforcing the law “represents the most important single function we can perform. It cuts across all occupational and industrial lines, affects males and females, veterans and non-veterans. If full compliance with the letter and spirit of the Law could be effected the bulk of the Department’s job would disappear.”³⁰⁶ Bailer wanted the Industrial Department to return to the activities it had undertaken during the war - to seek out instances of employment discrimination, file complaints for aggrieved individuals, follow the progress of cases turned over to SCAD, and insist the Commission effectively handle such cases. He also wanted to educate blacks on the importance of using the Ives-Quinn law to widen employment opportunities. The League had begun to set up machinery for filing complaints, but implementation had hardly begun in 1947 when the report was written.³⁰⁷ Instead it focused on increasing the number of blacks placed in clerical and sales positions believing those that were employed were token hires because the number of blacks in sales and clerical positions remained extremely small.³⁰⁸

³⁰⁶ Lloyd Bailer, “Proposed Industrial Relations Program,” NUL Papers, Part I, Box D41, Urban League Industrial Relations Department Affiliates File, New York Monthly Reports 1947, 9.

³⁰⁷ Lloyd Bailer, “Proposed Industrial Relations Program,” NUL Papers, Part I, Box D41, Urban League Industrial Relations Department Affiliates File, New York Monthly Reports 1947.

³⁰⁸ Lloyd Bailer, “Proposed Industrial Relations Program,” NUL Papers, Part I, Box D41, Urban League Industrial Relations Department Affiliates File, New York Monthly Reports 1947.

Despite the Urban League's decrease in placements of black men in skilled and semi-skilled positions, this did not indicate a loss of all the war-time employment gains black men won. Between 1940 and 1947 the percentage of employed black men working in service occupations declined from 40 percent to 23 percent, while the proportion of black men in the crafts increased by 25 percent and those in semiskilled work increased by 50 percent. The ratio of employed blacks in salesman and clerk positions also increased by over 27 percent; and that of proprietors, managers and officials by 40 percent.³⁰⁹ These changes represented the entry of thousands of black workers into industrial plants and into new white collar positions. Therefore though many black men were ousted from industrial jobs at the end of the war, many others retained their positions or found industrial and white collar jobs after reconversion.

These gains are also evident in the employment figures at the end of the decade. In 1950 40 percent of working black men remained employed as service workers and laborers (51,716 and 39,293 respectively) which were typically unskilled positions. However significant numbers of African Americans remained in skilled and semi-skilled occupations. More than a quarter of the 234,349 employed black men in the city worked as Operatives and Kindred workers (63,774); a class of workers which encompassed occupations that typically required some training in a skill. Also significant numbers of black men worked in the Clerical and Sales sector (27,646), and as skilled craftsmen and foremen (24,954). Moreover about 7,000 were employed in occupations classified as professional or technical.³¹⁰ These figures show that in the five years following the war black men in New York City had access to white collar, skilled and

³⁰⁹ Robert Weaver, "Economic Status of the Negro in the United States," *The Journal of Negro Education*, Vol. 19, No. 3, The Negro Child in the American Social Order, (Summer, 1950), 232-2431.; "Negroes in New York City: Occupational Distribution, 1940-47," *Monthly Labor Review*, January 1949, 57.

³¹⁰ Table 20: Social and Economic Characteristics of the Negro Population, For Selected States, Urban and Rural, and for selected Standard Metropolitan Areas, 1950 United States Census of Population, Volume IV, Part III, Special Report Nativity and Parentage, Special Reports on Nonwhite Population by Race.

semi-skilled jobs. Therefore the employment gains made during World War II were not completely lost when the war ended. New, better-paying occupations remained open to blacks in the post-war period.³¹¹

The changes in occupation distribution were even more striking for black women. In New York City in 1940 three quarters of employed black females had been in domestic service. Only one half were in domestic service in 1947. The proportion of black women workers

³¹¹ The 1950 United States Census of Population defines the various classes of workers as the following:

Professional technical and kindred workers includes - Accountants; Actors; Airplane pilots and navigators; Architects; Artists; Athletes; Auditors; Authors; Chemists; Chiropractors; Clergymen; College presidents, professors and instructors; Conservationists; Dancers; Dentists; Designers; Dietitians; Draftsmen; Editors; Embalmers; Entertainers; Farm management advisors; Foresters; Funeral directors; Healers; Home management advisors; Judges; Lawyers; Librarians; Musicians; Natural scientists; Nutritionists; Optometrists; Osteopaths; Personnel workers; Pharmacists; Photographers; Physicians; Professional nurses; Radio operators; Recreation workers; Religious workers; Reporters; Social scientists; Social workers; Sports instructors and officials; Student professional nurses; Surgeons; Surveyors; Teachers; Technical engineers; Therapists; Veterinarians.

Clerical and kindred workers includes - Bank tellers; Bill and account collectors; Bookkeepers; Cashiers; Dentist's office attendants; Express agents; Express messengers; Library assistants and attendants; Mail carriers; Messengers; Office boys; Office machine operators; Physician's office attendants; Railway mail clerks; Receiving clerks; Secretaries; Shipping clerks; Receiving clerks; Secretaries; Shipping clerks; Station agents; Stenographers; Telegraph messengers; Telegraph operators; Telephone operators; Ticket agents; Typists.

Operatives and Kindred workers Includes - Apprentices; Asbestos workers, Auto service attendants; Blasters; Boatmen; Bus conductors and drivers; Canalmen; Chauffeurs; Deck hands; Deliverymen; Dressmakers; Dry cleaning operatives; Dyers; Fruit nut and vegetable graders and packers; Furnacemen; Insulation workers; Laundry operatives; Meat cutters; Metal filers, grinders and polishers; Metal heaters; Milliners; Mine operatives and laborers; Motormen; Painters (except construction and maintenance); Parking lot attendants; Photographic process workers; Powdermen; Power station operators; Railroad brakemen and switchmen; Routemen; Sailors; Sawyers; Seamstresses; Smeltermen; Stationary firemen; Street railway conductors; Surveying chainmen, rodmen and axmen; Taxicab drivers; Textile spinners; Textile weavers; Tractor drivers; Truck drivers; welders.

Service workers includes - Attendants and ushers in amusement places; Bailiffs, Barbers; Bartenders; Beauticians; Boarding house keepers; Bootblacks; Bridge tenders; Charwomen; cooks, except in private households; Detectives; Doorkeepers; Elevator operators; Firemen (Fire protection); Fountain workers; Guards; Hospital attendants; Janitors; Lodginghouse keepers; Manicurists; Marshals, Midwives; Policemen; Porters; Practical nurses; Sextons; Sheriffs; Stewards; Waiters; Watchmen.

Craftsmen, foremen, and kindred workers includes - Annealers; Bakers; Blacksmiths; Boilermakers; Bookbinders; Brickmasons; Cabinetmakers; Carpenters; Cement finishers; Compositors; Concrete finishers; Coppersmiths; Cranemen; Derrickmen; Die makers; Die setters; Electricians; Electrotypers; Engravers; Excavating machinery operators; Forgemen; Glaziers; Goldsmiths; Grading machinery operators; Heat treaters; Hoistmen; Lens grinders and polishers; Lithographers; Locomotive engineers; Locomotive firemen' Log and lumber scalars and graders; Loom fixers; Machinists; Mechanics; Metal molders; Metal rollers; Metal roll hands; Millers; Millwrights; Motion picture projectionists; Opticians; Organ tuners; Painters (Construction and maintenance); Paperhangers; Photoengravers; Piano tuners; Pipe fitters; Plasterers; Plate printers; Plumbers; Power linemen and servicemen; Printing pressmen; Road machinery operators; Roofers; Sheet metal workers; Shoemakers except in factories; Silversmiths; Slaters; Stationary engineers; Stereotypers; Stone carvers; Stone cutters; Stonemasons; Structural metal workers; Tailors; Telegraph and telephone linemen and servicemen; Tile setters; Tinsmiths; Tool makers; Typesetters; Upholsterers; Watchmakers; Window dressers.

Laborers, except farm and mine includes - Car washers; Fishermen; Garage laborers; Groundskeepers; Longshoremen; Oystermen; Raftsmen; Stevedores; Teamsters; Woodchoppers.

employed in retail and clerical occupations quadrupled. The proportion of African American women in semi-skilled jobs, particularly laundries and manufacturing establishments, increased from 16 to 31 percent of black females in the labor market.³¹² In 1940 64 percent of all black women workers were in domestic service compared to only 8 percent of white working women. By 1947, only 36 percent of black women were in domestic work and 3 percent of white women worked in this area. The wide discrepancy between black and white women workers was cut almost in half. The sales and clerical field showed a striking disparity in 1940. Only 3 percent of black women were working in these occupations in comparison to 41 percent of white women. By 1947, there were 13 percent black women in that field compared with 45 percent white women.³¹³

By the beginning of the next decade black women continued to find employment other than domestic work. In 1950 of all the employed black women in New York City (193,402) less than 40 percent (71,442) labored as private household (domestic) workers. A significant number of black women were operatives (61,207) and service workers (24,651). There was also a marked increase in the number of black women in clerical positions; 17,716 black women or 9 percent of employed black women worked in clerical positions. Almost 9,000 black women were employed in professional or technical positions in the decade after the war.³¹⁴

³¹² Robert Weaver, "Economic Status of the Negro in the United States," *The Journal of Negro Education*, Vol. 19, No. 3, The Negro Child in the American Social Order, (Summer, 1950): 232-2431.; "Negroes in New York City: Occupational Distribution, 1940-47," *Monthly Labor Review* (January 1949): 57.

³¹³ Urban League of Greater New York, Draft of Press Release, 1947, NUL Papers, Part I, Box F92 – Research Department Affiliates File NY 1948-49, 51-53.

³¹⁴ The 1950 United States Census of Population defines the various classes of workers as the following: Professional technical and kindred workers includes - Accountants; Actors; Airplane pilots and navigators; Architects; Artists; Athletes; Auditors; Authors; Chemists; Chiropractors; Clergymen; College presidents, professors and instructors; Conservationists; Dancers; Dentists; Designers; Dietitians; Draftsmen; Editors; Embalmers; Entertainers; Farm management advisors; Foresters; Funeral directors; Healers; Home management advisors; Judges; Lawyers; Librarians; Musicians; Natural scientists; Nutritionists; Optometrists; Osteopaths; Personnel workers; Pharmacists; Photographers; Physicians; Professional nurses; Radio operators; Recreation workers;

Despite the fear blacks felt at the prospect of the loss of jobs during reconversion, the post-war employment situation for blacks was not nearly as bleak as it was after the First World War. Even though many African Americans were displaced from skilled and semi-skilled industrial positions after the war, many were able to maintain jobs paying higher salaries than they had before. Black men found jobs in crafts and semi-skilled positions and black women moved into retail, restaurant, and other service positions. Due to the new types of jobs open to blacks, many of which were better paying than the service and unskilled positions they were relegated to before the war, the gap between the earnings of blacks and whites in New York

Religious workers; Reporters; Social scientists; Social workers; Sports instructors and officials; Student professional nurses; Surgeons; Surveyors; Teachers; Technical engineers; Therapists; Veterinarians.

Clerical and kindred workers includes - Bank tellers; Bill and account collectors; Bookkeepers; Cashiers; Dentist's office attendants; Express agents; Express messengers; Library assistants and attendants; Mail carriers; Messengers; Office boys; Office machine operators; Physician's office attendants; Railway mail clerks; Receiving clerks; Secretaries; Shipping clerks; Receiving clerks; Secretaries; Shipping clerks; Station agents; Stenographers; Telegraph messengers; Telegraph operators; Telephone operators; Ticket agents; Typists.

Operatives and Kindred workers Includes - Apprentices; Asbestos workers, Auto service attendants; Blasters; Boatmen; Bus conductors and drivers; Canalmen; Chauffeurs; Deck hands; Deliverymen; Dressmakers; Dry cleaning operatives; Dyers; Fruit nut and vegetable graders and packers; Furnacemen; Insulation workers; Laundry operatives; Meat cutters; Metal filers, grinders and polishers; Metal heaters; Milliners; Mine operatives and laborers; Motormen; Painters (except construction and maintenance); Parking lot attendants; Photographic process workers; Powdermen; Power station operators; Railroad brakemen and switchmen; Routemen; Sailors; Sawyers; Seamstresses; Smeltermen; Stationary firemen; Street railway conductors; Surveying chainmen, rodmen and axmen; Taxicab drivers; Textile spinners; Textile weavers; Tractor drivers; Truck drivers; welders.

Service workers includes - Attendants and ushers in amusement places; Bailiffs, Barbers; Bartenders; Beauticians; Boarding house keepers; Bootblacks; Bridge tenders; Charwomen; cooks, except in private households; Detectives; Doorkeepers; Elevator operators; Firemen (Fire protection); Fountain workers; Guards; Hospital attendants; Janitors; Lodginghouse keepers; Manicurists; Marshals, Midwives; Policemen; Porters; Practical nurses; Sextons; Sheriffs; Stewards; Waiters; Watchmen.

Craftsmen, foremen, and kindred workers includes - Annealers; Bakers; Blacksmiths; Boilermakers; Bookbinders; Brickmasons; Cabinetmakers; Carpenters; Cement finishers; Compositors; Concrete finishers; Coppersmiths; Cranemen; Derrickmen; Die makers; Die setters; Electricians; Electrotypers; Engravers; Excavating machinery operators; Forgemen; Glaziers; Goldsmiths; Grading machinery operators; Heat treaters; Hoistmen; Lens grinders and polishers; Lithographers; Locomotive engineers; Locomotive firemen' Log and lumber scalars and graders; Loom fixers; Machinists; Mechanics; Metal molders; Metal rollers; Metal roll hands; Millers; Millwrights; Motion picture projectionists; Opticians; Organ tuners; Painters (Construction and maintenance); Paperhangers; Photoengravers; Piano tuners; Pipe fitters; Plasterers; Plate printers; Plumbers; Power linemen and servicemen; Printing pressmen; Road machinery operators; Roofers; Sheet metal workers; Shoemakers except in factories; Silversmiths; Slaters; Stationary engineers; Stereotypers; Stone carvers; Stone cutters; Stonemasons; Structural metal workers; Tailors; Telegraph and telephone linemen and servicemen; Tile setters; Tinsmiths; Tool makers; Typesetters; Upholsterers; Watchmakers; Window dressers.

Laborers, except farm and mine includes - Car washers; Fishermen; Garage laborers; Groundskeepers; Longshoremen; Oystermen; Raftsmen; Stevedores; Teamsters; Woodchoppers.

decreased over the course of the 1940s.³¹⁵ The Urban League, though not as successful at placing black workers in industrial jobs, found jobs for black workers in white collar, clerical, and sales positions. The NNC and NLVC found less success in preserving black jobs and union membership after the war. Though many CIO unions accepted black members, when veterans returned from war seniority rules necessitated the laying off of many black workers who had been recently hired.

Conclusion

1943 proved to be a pivotal moment for black employment in war industries. The labor shortage along with black activism and fair employment agencies led to the integration of some war industries. African Americans who were previously relegated to domestic, janitorial and unskilled jobs found industrial jobs in the war-time economy.

There were a number of factors that contributed to these industries agreeing to hire black workers. One was a labor shortage that took hold of some industries in New York beginning in July of 1943. The shortage prompted companies to seek black employees, subsequently offering more training for black workers. The Harlem Riot in August of that year was another factor that prompted black employment by war industries. The disturbance also caused the COD and other government agencies to intensify their investigations of war industries. Moreover the riot prompted New York City mayor Fiorello LaGuardia and New York governor Thomas Dewey to more closely examine race relations in the city and state. As a result more black workers were trained for and placed in skilled and semi-skilled industrial positions. Moreover, the New York State assembly passed legislation outlawing racial discrimination by any employer.

³¹⁵ Robert Weaver, "Economic Status of the Negro in the United States," *The Journal of Negro Education*, Vol. 19, No. 3, "The Negro Child in the American Social Order" (Summer, 1950), 232-243; "Negroes in New York City: Occupational Distribution, 1940-47," *Monthly Labor Review*, January 1949, 57.

It was in this opening and shifting labor market that black migrants from the south were able to find more and better paying employment opportunities. Though most employers seemed not to make any difference in their treatment of black workers from New York and those who had recently migrated from the south, the migrants were no doubt in the pool of black applicants for jobs in war industries, as better employment opportunities was a major reason for their migration. There is very little evidence that the migrant experience was different from those of native born black New Yorkers. Neither the companies nor the Urban League or the newspapers distinguished between the two groups, which indicates that unlike World War I there was less conflict between longtime residents and the new migrants.

Integration of the workforce did not happen wholesale in any one industry or geographic area in the city. It tended to happen in larger companies with war production contracts that experienced labor shortages and were targeted by the Fair Employment Practices Committee and the Committee on Discrimination (later SCAD) for ignoring fair employment legislation. Factories in the scientific instruments, electronic instruments, and shipbuilding industries hired black workers, especially after 1943.

Integration of these industries also did not mean an end to discrimination. Hiring discrimination persisted in many industries. Even in the war industries that integrated, black workers were treated unfairly. Therefore black organizations continued to pressure for fair employment after 1943. The Brooklyn Urban League and the National Negro Congress continued to pressure war industries to hire blacks and fair employment agencies to continue their investigations of discrimination by war industries. They also brought cases of racial discrimination against blacks employed by war industries to the FEPC and COD as well. Other groups such as the Negro Labor Victory Committee and Negro Labor Committee targeted unions

to achieve black employment. They pressured New York City locals to accept black workers and cooperated with those that did to pressure industries to treat black workers fairly.

The most significant and effective tactic used to secure black employment, specifically in war industries, was the cooperative relationships forged by the Brooklyn Urban League, the National Negro Congress and the Negro Labor Victory Committee with government offices dedicated to protecting the rights of African Americans. The National Negro Congress and the Industrial Department of the Brooklyn Urban League acted as liaisons between black workers and these government agencies.

The Brooklyn Urban League proved to be the most effective agency for the placement of black workers in war industries. Federal government offices like the Fair Employment Practices Committee and United States Employment Service considered the Urban League the premier organization for the placement of black workers. Therefore when these agencies needed information on the situation of black workers and wanted to place black workers in war industries they worked with the local Urban League offices. The Brooklyn Urban League took on a role of particular importance in that many of the war industries in New York were located in Brooklyn, therefore the BKUL worked with state and federal fair employment agencies to facilitate the hiring of black workers. Moreover the relationship between the Brooklyn Urban League and the New York State Committee on Discrimination was further strengthened by the personnel ties between the two organizations. There was a great deal of communication and partnership between Lorenzo Davis, the industrial secretary of the Brooklyn Urban League and COD head Charles Berkley who was the former BKUL industrial secretary as the two organizations collaborated to end discrimination in war industries and place black workers in

higher paying industrial jobs. The BKUL was successful in opening new areas of industrial employment to African American New Yorkers.

The activities of the Brooklyn Urban League, the National Negro Congress, the Negro Labor Victory Committee, and Negro Labor Committee indicate that civil rights organizations focused on achieving economic parity in the 1940s. A continuation of their activism in the 1930s, the civil rights struggle of the war years was one centered on employment. As historians Nelson Lichtenstein and David Korstad have argued employment was the major civil rights issue in the 1940s.³¹⁶ The activities of the city's civil rights organizations in the 1940s were focused on opening employment in war industries to black New Yorkers. These black organizations, particularly the Urban League, viewed the passage of the Ives-Quinn Law prohibiting hiring and employment discrimination as a major victory in their struggle for equal employment opportunities and weapon for future battles against employment discrimination.

As reconversion approached African Americans, local politicians, and agencies against discriminatory practices in war industries took actions to maintain black industrial employment. They feared that widespread black lay-offs would result in the racial violence that broke out in cities after World War I. Despite their efforts many industries let black employees go as they reconverted. Violence however did not accompany black dismissals because the type of jobs open to black workers had expanded.

Though many African Americans men were ousted from skilled and semi-skilled positions as soldiers returned from battle and industries reconverted, black men were not completely displaced by returning veterans. By the end of the decade a larger number of black men worked in skilled and semi-skilled industrial positions than had before the war. Black

³¹⁶ Robert Korstad and Nelson Lichtenstein, "Opportunities Found and Lost: Labor, Radicals, and the Early Civil Rights Movement," *Journal of American History*, Vol. 75, No. 3 (Dec., 1988), 786-811.

women in particular benefitted from expanded employment opportunities as they found jobs as sales women, clerks, and phone operators. The jobs open to African Americans during the war were better paying than the jobs they had previous to the conflict. These new employment opportunities opened to African Americans helped expand the black middle class in the next decade.

Chapter 4

The Sperry Gyroscope Corporation: A Case Study

During World War II access to better-paying employment in war industries was a major reason for black migration to cities across the nation. Many blacks found expanded opportunities for employment in war industries as well as in non-essential areas of the New York economy. War industries hired blacks for skilled and semi-skilled positions allowing many black New Yorkers to find jobs other than the service positions to which they were relegated before the war. However, not all industries opened their doors to black workers. A combination of factors prompted management in some industries to hire African Americans.

The passage of state and federal anti-discrimination legislation, black activism which forced state and federal agencies to enforce laws barring hiring discrimination, as well as labor shortages combined to pressure many companies to hire black workers. The Harlem Riot in 1943 and the problems it made apparent also prompted further action. Still not all New York City industries and factories employed African Americans in skilled and semi-skilled positions during the war. The Sperry Corporation was one of the war production plants that opened its doors to black workers. Examination of the process by which Sperry Gyroscope hired black workers illustrates how some of the larger trends discussed in Chapters 2 and 3 worked with regard to one company. Through a study of Sperry's hiring process it is also clear that unions and individuals in management also affected the process by which industries integrated their war-time workforce.

Employing no black workers before the war, Sperry management hired more than a thousand African Americans during the course of the war. Black leaders and organizations publicized Sperry's discriminatory hiring practices which pressured the company to hire its first

African American employees. These organizations emphasized the hypocrisy of discrimination against blacks at the time when the nation was waging a war against fascism and xenophobia. African American leaders pressured state and federal government agencies to investigate allegations of hiring discrimination by Sperry and its affiliates. The Fair Employment Practices Committee and the New York State Committee on Discrimination investigated and monitored the employment policies of the Sperry Corporation, forcing company management to adjust their hiring procedures. Moreover the workers at Sperry were represented by the United Electrical, Radio, and Machine Workers of America (UE), a union that actively advocated equal employment for all workers. The activities of the UE also pushed Sperry's management to hire black workers. A labor shortage in 1943 further drove Sperry to employ more African Americans.

As the war wound down African Americans, black organizations, and United Electrical were anxious about what would happen to black jobs at Sperry during reconversion. As government contracts dried up, production slowed causing factories to cut jobs. Black organizations appealed to war industries to maintain their levels of black employment. The National Negro Congress and the Negro Labor Victory Committee along with the UE urged Sperry management to adapt seniority laws to keep blacks in skilled and semi-skilled positions. Though members of upper level management had changed their attitude about the capability of black workers, they and the UE were unwilling to adjust seniority laws and displace workers to keep blacks employed in the positions they held during the war. Therefore black employment levels dipped immediately after the war.

Due to economic forces and war demands many New York factories turned to blacks for labor. Though each company had a very specific story behind why and how it employed African

Americans, there were similarities in the process. By examining the employment trends at Sperry as a case study, the reasons for black employment and the process by which New York companies hired African Americans will be made clear. Though Sperry was exceptional because its management reversed its policies on black employment in a short amount of time, Sperry's history illustrates the profound effects World War II had on hiring policy of New York firms and the employment of blacks in the city.

Black Pressure for Negro Hires

The Sperry Company mainly produced precision instruments for navigating airplanes and ships. When Sperry Company was founded in 1910 it produced gyroscopes for aviation and maritime industries. The company had a decades-long relationship producing instruments for the military before World War II. During World War I Sperry worked closely with the Navy to provide steering and navigation instruments in their vessels. By the 1920's the Sperry Corporation had become known as the "Brain Mill" for the United States military because the corporation developed and produced goods for military use. In 1933 Elmer Sperry sold his company to Curtiss Aero and Motor which was absorbed by General Motors. The Sperry Corporation was created as a larger holding company. In the years between the wars, Sperry developed the automatic pilot, the first airplane stabilizer, gyro-stabilized bomb sight and other instruments.³¹⁷ This close manufacturing relationship between the Sperry Corporation and the military continued during World War II. Sperry Gyroscope produced highly technical precision instruments for the military during World War II.

³¹⁷ Richard K. Fleishman and R. Penny Marquette, "The Impact of World War II on Cost Accounting at the Sperry Corporation," *Accounting Historians Journal* Vol. 30, No. 2 (December 2003), 77-78.

Before the war Sperry was a comparatively small company that produced small quantities of goods and mostly employed very skilled workers.³¹⁸ Sperry Company workers were initially represented by a company controlled union the Brotherhood of Scientific Instrument Makers. While the workers at the Sperry Corporation's subsidiary company Ford Instruments were represented by the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, a union affiliated with the American Federation of Labor.³¹⁹ The skilled nature of the work Sperry employees did combined with discrimination in training programs and exclusion of blacks from trade unions barred blacks from jobs at Sperry.

Sperry Gyroscope's employment policies reflect common employment trends among New York companies during the early years of the war. Sperry's management, like many other employers in the city, refused to hire black workers in skilled and semi-skilled positions when the war broke out. Though the company converted to war-time production earlier than most other industries in the city, management did not consider black workers for employment in jobs in areas other than service positions. Few African Americans had the training to work in these skilled positions because of prejudice in trade unions and training facilities as well as discriminatory hiring practices.³²⁰ As a result it is no surprise that the company did not employ a single African American prior to the war.

³¹⁸ In its earliest days Sperry built large gyroscopes which are spinning wheels used in ship stabilizers to counteract rolling. The gyroscope is the nucleus of most automatic steering systems, such as those used in airplanes, missiles, and torpedoes. It is also produced gyrocompasses, directional instruments used on ships. In the 1930s and 1940s Sperry Gyroscope worked with Stanford and MIT to develop the microwave technology that was necessary for modern radar systems. During the Second World War the company grew more than ten-fold as it produced computer-controlled and stabilized bomb sights for the B-17 and B-32 bombers, automatic pilots, fire control systems, airborne radar equipment, and automated take-off-and-landing systems. Information from the Hagley Museum and Library online research catalogue – Sperry Corporation History Accessed July 20, 2011. <http://digital.hagley.org/u/?p268001coll1.1091>

³¹⁹ Raymond Steven Patnode, "Labor's Love Lost: The Influence of Gender, Race, and Class on the Workplace in Post-war America," Ph.D. dissertation Stony Brook University, 2008.

³²⁰ R. E. Gillmor, "How Can the Negro Hold His Job?" (1945) Sperry Gyroscope Company Records, Series II, Public Information and Advertising Department Records, Box 18, Folder 4.

During the war the Sperry Company became one of the most important factories in the state. Sperry, unlike many other industries in the city, received large government contracts during the first two years of the war. The company was paid large sums of federal money to produce sound locaters, anti-aircraft searchlights, fire control equipment and other instruments for the nation's armed forces. In July of 1941 the war department requested thirty-one companies begin work on Air Corps orders, pending an award of formal contracts. Sperry received the largest allotment of federal money, \$80,000,000. In the following three months the company received more contracts worth an additional \$22,000,000.³²¹ In November of 1941 the War Department announced that the Sperry Gyroscope Company had been awarded additional contracts totaling \$56,403,980.³²² In total, over a period of just four months, Sperry received more than \$100,000,000 in defense contracts. Around the same time Sperry Corporation, Sperry Gyroscope's parent company, was building a new facility in Nassau County, Long Island in which 7,000 people would be employed.³²³ For those employees homes were developed by the company in New Hyde Park, Long Island.³²⁴ It is clear by Sperry's expansion that the company was making large profits from government contracts in 1941.

Despite these large contracts African Americans did not readily find jobs at Sperry in the early years of the war. Though there are no statistics on black employment in 1940 and 1941, hiring statistics do show that in early 1942 the Sperry Corporation had only 86 black employees of a total 19,260, therefore blacks comprised a mere .45 percent of company workers. The racial disparity in employment levels was even more evident in the Sperry Gyroscope Company. Only

³²¹ "\$150,734,088 in Intent Letters," *NYT*, July 9, 1941, 29; "Army Contracts in Day \$58,794,402," *NYT*, July 19, 1941, 18; "Army Contracts in a Day \$39,627,376," *NYT*, August 6, 1941, 26; "Army Contracts in Day \$167,403,208," *NYT*, October 28, 1941, C42; "Army Contracts in a Day \$154,440,241," *NYT*, October 31, 1941, 32.

³²² "Sperry Gets Big Army Contract," *NYT*, November 7, 1941, 34.

³²³ "New Defense Plant for Sperry Started," *NYT*, July 9, 1941, 16.

³²⁴ "Building Workers Homes," *NYT*, July 13, 1941, RE8.

21 of the company's 14,184 workers were black. Blacks comprised a mere 0.1 percent of the plant's workers.³²⁵ Therefore, black organizations and other groups representing the interests of blacks targeted Sperry to protest racial discrimination in employment. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the National Negro Congress (NNC) used rallies, press releases, and investigations to publicly call attention to the company's racist hiring practices.

In January of 1941 the Brooklyn Joint Committee on Employment (BJCE), which included representatives of the Urban League, NAACP, YMCA, YWCA, and members of Brooklyn's black clergy, asked Executive Secretary of the NAACP Walter White to head a delegation from the Joint committee to the Flatbush Avenue extension of the Sperry Gyroscope Company.³²⁶ White agreed to head this delegation and in February of 1941 went to the Sperry plant to try and attain employment for black workers.³²⁷ Sperry ignored communications from the committee, ignored requests for interviews, and refused to admit the delegation. Company management did speak with a second delegation in March but would not commit to hiring black workers. Following this unsuccessful and unproductive meeting, the BJCE began picketing the plant and organized letter writing and telephone campaigns.³²⁸ Picketers from the NAACP also rallied outside of the company headquarters in Manhattan.³²⁹

³²⁵ Table 3 – Total and Non-White Workers Employed in 8 Firms Appearing Before the FEPC at New York Hearings, February 16th and 17th, 1942, "Compliance Data for Firms Involved in Old Committee Hearings," FEPC Papers, Entry 75, Box 546, Statistics Folder.

³²⁶ Note from secretary to Walter White, January 29, 1941, Postal Telegraph from Dorothy Funn, Vice Chairman and Kenneth Neilson, Secretary Treasurer of the Joint Committee on Unemployment to Walter White, January 30, 1941, Legal Papers of the NAACP, Part 15: Series A: Legal Department Complaints and Responses, 1940-1955. Series A: Legal Department Files. Discrimination Sperry, 1941-1943 Folder. Microfilm 10786, Reel 7 of 19.

³²⁷ "Boro NAACP Conference Assails Discrimination," *Amsterdam News*, February 1, 1941, 6.

³²⁸ "Negro Workers After the War," (New York: National Negro Congress, April 1945.)

³²⁹ "Boro NAACP Conference Assails Discrimination," *Amsterdam News*, February 1, 1941, 6; "Firms Admit Ban on Negro," *Amsterdam News*, March 15, 1941, 1; "Sperry Gyroscope and Curits-Wright Aircraft Firms Picketed by NAACP," *Amsterdam News*, April 3, 1941, 2.

These efforts to pressure Sperry to hire black workers failed. In March, after several protests at Sperry's offices, an official from the company admitted to a National Negro Congress delegation that Sperry management was not interested in hiring Negroes. A company representative used the standard industrial excuse for refusing to hire black workers – that having blacks and whites working together would be problematic. The spokesman insisted that he had no racial prejudice himself, however he claimed that the large government contracts Sperry received necessitated that the company have the “very best machinery, the very best tools, the very best techniques, the very best morale, and the very best men.” Apparently the “very best” did not include black workers. R. E. Gillmor, General Manager of the Sperry Gyroscope Company did however promise to bring the question of hiring black labor up to the firm's executives.³³⁰

In the meanwhile black organizations continued to protest. The New York branch of the NAACP, led by Chairman of the Committee on Labor and Industry Eardlie John, picketed Sperry's Manhattan offices at 30 Rockefeller Plaza in April.³³¹ In the summer of 1941 these efforts found measured success. In July the Brooklyn Council of the National Negro Congress pressured Sperry into allowing a black Cooper Union College graduate take an employment placement exam.³³² Though the NNC achieved this symbolic victory, its effect was small as blacks remained largely absent from the Sperry workforce. Another tactic would prove to be more successful in the long term. In addition to pressuring industrial management to hire African Americans, black activists and organizations focused their efforts on the government as they looked to both state and federal agencies to stamp out discrimination at Sperry.

³³⁰ “Firms Admit Ban on Negro,” *Amsterdam News*, March 15, 1941, 1.

³³¹ “Sperry Gyroscope and Curtis-Wright Aircraft Firms Picketed by NAACP,” *Amsterdam News*, April 3, 1941, 2; “Sperry Corp. Nets \$7,854,176 in Year,” *NYT*, March, 27, 1941, 33.

³³² “Brooklyn Negro Congress Is Victor in Defense Job Fight,” *Amsterdam News*, July 19, 1941, 16.

Black organizations pushed the federal government to outlaw discriminatory hiring practices in all companies with government contracts including Sperry Gyroscope. In January of 1941 the NAACP sought to introduce a resolution in Congress asking for an investigation of the status and treatment of African Americans in the defense program. The resolution called for public hearings with testimony from Army, Navy and Air Corps officials, employers, leaders of trade unions, and those who had gathered information for the association.³³³ Brooklyn was a focal point for the NAACP's campaign because of the large number of plants with government contracts in the area.³³⁴ Sperry one of the largest and most lucrative companies in the borough was naturally a subject for investigation, especially after Walter White's failed talks with Sperry's management in February.

In preparation for the hearing the NAACP and NUL gathered all available material on discrimination.³³⁵ Walter White contacted Lieutenant Governor Charles Poletti who served on the State Defense Council with Thomas Morgan, president of the Sperry Corporation and chairman of the Sperry Gyroscope Company, to inquire about Sperry's hiring policies.³³⁶ Poletti denied having any personal knowledge of Sperry's hiring policies as he had spoken with Morgan only in his capacity as a fellow member of the State Defense Council. According to Poletti the two had never discussed Morgan's activities as president of Sperry Corporation. The Lieutenant Governor explained to White that he had brought the issue of discriminatory hiring practices in war industries to the Defense Council as it related to the efficiency of war production, but was

³³³ "Defense Bias Will be Aired," *Amsterdam News*, January 25, 1941, 5.

³³⁴ E. Frederic Morrow to Fred Turner, February 3, 1941, Legal Papers of the NAACP, Part 15: Series A: Legal Department Complaints and Responses, 1940-1955, Series A: Legal Department Files. Discrimination Sperry, 1941-1943 Folder, Microfilm 10786, Reel 7 of 19.

³³⁵ "Resolution for Senate Probe of Defense Bias Delayed by Sen. Wagner's Illness," *Amsterdam News*, February 15, 1941, 6.

³³⁶ Walter White to Charles Poletti, February 17, 1941, Legal Papers of the NAACP, Part 15: Series A: Legal Department Complaints and Responses, 1940-1955. Series A: Legal Department Files. Discrimination Sperry, 1941-1943 Folder, Microfilm 10786, Reel 7 of 19.

given the general arguments for refusing to hire blacks used by most employers – foremen in these factories advise managers that employment of Negro workers would disrupt production indicating that white workers did not want to work with blacks.³³⁷

White did not believe Sperry managements' claims that they could not hire black workers and made his position clear to Lieutenant Governor Poletti. White cited the garment industry as an example of factories in which blacks and whites worked together and were in the same unions without incident. He also noted that blacks and whites worked together peacefully in the steel, automobile, rubber, and mining industries throughout the country, even in the south. White further argued that companies with government contracts, which were by extension funded by taxpayer dollars, did not have the right to discriminate against black workers who were taxpayers.³³⁸ These arguments were part of the organization's tactics to achieve integration of war industries. Walter White and the NAACP hoped to dispel the myth that blacks and whites could not work together peacefully and productively, therefore undercutting the justifications many employers used for refusing to hire black workers. The NAACP planned to use examples of companies with integrated work forces as evidence of the falseness of management's claims at the Senate hearing.³³⁹

A Senate investigation into the discriminatory hiring practices of companies with government contracts never happened. Introduction of the resolution for the investigation into discrimination in the armed forces and war industries was postponed because Senator Robert

³³⁷ Charles Poletti to Walter White, February 21, 1941, Legal Papers of the NAACP, Part 15: Series A: Legal Department Complaints and Responses, 1940-1955, Series A: Legal Department Files. Discrimination Sperry, 1941-1943 Folder, Microfilm 10786, Reel 7 of 19.

³³⁸ Walter White to Charles Poletti, March 5, 1941, Legal Papers of the NAACP, Part 15: Series A: Legal Department Complaints and Responses, 1940-1955, Series A: Legal Department Files. Discrimination Sperry, 1941-1943 Folder, Microfilm 10786, Reel 7 of 19.

³³⁹ James Carey to Walter White, March 5, 1941, Legal Papers of the NAACP, Part 15: Series A: Legal Department Complaints and Responses, 1940-1955, Series A: Legal Department Files. Discrimination Sperry, 1941-1943 Folder, Microfilm 10786, Reel 7 of 19.

Wagner, who with Senator W Warren Barbour had taken the lead in plans for the probe, was ill.³⁴⁰ After Senator Wagner's illness, the NAACP seemed to abandon its campaign for the Senate hearings. It is not clear what caused the organization to desert this particular drive. Perhaps the passage of the Mahoney Act outlawing discrimination in New York State war industries in April and the success of the March on Washington Movement in pressuring President Roosevelt to issue Executive Order 8802 outlawing hiring discrimination in June prompted the NAACP to shift its focus. Since the organization's main approach to alleviate racial discrimination was the passage of legislation, when the Executive Order and Mahoney Act were issued NAACP leadership felt that battle had been won and moved on to try to pressure the state and federal governments to enforce those laws.

It was difficult for black leaders and organizations to push employers into hiring blacks. This was especially true in the case of Sperry management because the interests of the company and the New York State government were intertwined. The Sperry Corporation's president was a member of the New York State Defense Council. Though it is unclear what effect this relationship had on Sperry's hiring practices, White worried that this connection would afford the company protection from state prosecution for discrimination.³⁴¹ Despite White's fears, the initial protests of the NAACP, the Brooklyn Joint Committee on Employment, and the NUL did have some positive results. Sperry first hired African Americans in May 1941, a month after the passage of the Mahoney Act.³⁴² By July, 1941 the Sperry Gyroscope Company had hired its first crew of skilled black production workers. Five black workers were hired by the company, and

³⁴⁰ "Resolution for Senate Probe of Defense Bias Delayed by Sen. Wagner's Illness," *Amsterdam News*, February 15, 1941, 6.

³⁴¹ Walter White to Walter Brown, Secretary to the Governor, March 21, 1941, Legal Papers of the NAACP, Part 15: Series A: Legal Department Complaints and Responses, 1940-1955, Series A: Legal Department Files, Discrimination Sperry, 1941-1943 Folder. Microfilm 10786, Reel 7 of 19.

³⁴² R. E Gilmore, "How Can the Negro Hold His Job," Sperry Gyroscope Company Papers, Box 18, Folder F.4.

the four who accepted were put to work assembling sound locator horns. The company also instituted an upgrading program for unskilled black workers already employed as shipping clerks, platform workers, and maintenance men. Skilled work was to be offered to a number of shipping clerks and loading platform workers employed in the plant. Some of these workers were already skilled in the trades needed, while others would be trained for skilled positions. The new policy extended to Sperry's subsidiary company Ford Instruments whose management had hired its first black workers - an elevator operator and five maintenance workers - a week earlier, and would hire its first black skilled workers within the next two weeks.³⁴³

These first black hires seem to have been a result of the campaigns and public protests waged by black leaders and organizations. Years later General Manager R. E. Gilmore stated that though there was no labor shortage at the time, top management believed that more workers were needed and the most logical people to employ were qualified African Americans. Gilmore also attributed management's change of heart to the work of Negro organizations which had "much to do with convincing us of the logic and ethics of this policy."³⁴⁴ Considering the small number of blacks hired by Sperry in the summer of 1941 it is unlikely that management hired them because of any need for new workers but more likely to alleviate the pressure for integration coming from black organizations.

If Sperry management hired their first black workers to alleviate public pressure, the tactic did not work. Leaders in the NAACP at the time did not believe Sperry's new black hires constituted full integration of the work force and the organization continued its efforts to pressure the company to hire more African Americans. The NAACP embarked on new tactics

³⁴³ Press Release, July 26, 1941, Office of Production Management, Labor Division, Legal Papers of the NAACP, Part 15: Series A: Legal Department Complaints and Responses, 1940-1955, Series A: Legal Department Files, Discrimination Sperry, 1941-1943 Folder, Microfilm 10786, Reel 7 of 19.

³⁴⁴ R. E. Gilmore, "How Can the Negro Hold His Job," Sperry Gyroscope Company Papers, Box 18, Folder 4.

after Franklin Roosevelt issued Executive Order 8802 in June of 1941. The organization aimed to bring a suit against Sperry that would use the new state law outlawing discrimination in war industries to force the company to end its discriminatory employment practices. Sperry in effect would be a NAACP test case of the new anti-discrimination law.

William Johnston Jones, an African American man, applied for a position in the development laboratories at Sperry in March of 1941. He was very well qualified as he had been trained in scientific coursework in high school and attained a Bachelor of Science in Electrical Engineering from Tufts College in Medford, Massachusetts. Besides formal training, Jones also had work experience as a radio service man and sound recording technician.³⁴⁵ Sperry granted Jones an interview which he could not make because he was in school in Massachusetts at the time, therefore Sperry conducted a phone interview.³⁴⁶ The personnel department was sufficiently impressed with Jones' qualifications that they offered him a position in the engineering department for which he would receive onsite training by the Engineering Training Committee. Upon completion of his training, Mr. Jones was to be placed in the Research, Design, Product, or Service Engineering Departments.³⁴⁷ William Johnston Jones gladly accepted the position and was to report to work on June 2. But when Jones reported for his eight week training he was told that the company could not employ him because he was a Negro. On the following day Jones accepted a civil service job at Signal Corps Laboratories in New Jersey.

³⁴⁵ Letter of application from William Walter Johnson to the Personnel Supervisor of Sperry Gyroscope Company, March 22, 1941, Legal Papers of the NAACP, Part 15: Series A: Legal Department Complaints and Responses, 1940-1955, Series A: Legal Department Files, Discrimination Sperry, 1941-1943 Folder, Microfilm 10786, Reel 7 of 19.

³⁴⁶ William Johnson to D. L. Click, Assistant Personnel Director for Sperry Gyroscope Company, March 24, 1941; Thurgood Marshall to William Hastie and Robert Weaver, August 4, 1941, Legal Papers of the NAACP, Part 15: Series A: Legal Department Complaints and Responses, 1940-1955, Series A: Legal Department Files, Discrimination Sperry, 1941-1943 Folder, Microfilm 10786, Reel 7 of 19.

³⁴⁷ D. I. Robinson on behalf of Sperry Gyroscope, Inc. to William Walter Johnson, April 17, 1941, Legal Papers of the NAACP, Part 15: Series A: Legal Department Complaints and Responses, 1940-1955, Series A: Legal Department Files, Discrimination Sperry, 1941-1943 Folder, Microfilm 10786, Reel 7 of 19.

It was generally easier for blacks to find skilled positions in government agencies such as the Signal Corps Laboratories which was part of the US Army Signal Corps. He worked as a regular engineer there with ten to twenty white men under him, making more money than he would have at Sperry. Though happy at his current place of employment and with no reason to leave, Jones still wanted Sperry prosecuted for their discriminatory practices.³⁴⁸

The NAACP and the Harlem YMCA tried to bring William Jones' case to court in order to prosecute Sperry for breach of contract. Henry Craft, Executive Director of the Harlem Branch of the YMCA approached White about using Jones' situation to bring attention to the bigoted employment practices of Sperry. Craft hoped that the publicity and embarrassment of a court case would "help them to realize that they can not with impunity snap their fingers in the face of the entire Negro group."³⁴⁹ White turned over the case to Thurgood Marshall, Chief Counsel for the NAACP, for legal consultation.³⁵⁰

Thurgood Marshall never pursued Jones' case. William Hastie, civilian aide to Secretary of War Henry Stimson, believed that Jones' case would be an ineffective test case because Jones was no longer willing to take the job at Sperry. Moreover Hastie argued that Sperry could very well use the defense that their hiring policies had changed since Johnston applied for employment. In addition if the case was won there would be no way to test Sperry's sincerity in employing Jones because he no longer wanted the position. Hastie believed the resources of the

³⁴⁸ Thurgood Marshall to William Hastie and Robert Weaver, August 4, 1941, Legal Papers of the NAACP, Part 15: Series A: Legal Department Complaints and Responses, 1940-1955, Series A: Legal Department Files, Discrimination Sperry, 1941-1943 Folder, Microfilm 10786, Reel 7 of 19.

³⁴⁹ Henry Craft to Walter White, July 11, 1941, Legal Papers of the NAACP, Part 15: Series A: Legal Department Complaints and Responses, 1940-1955, Series A: Legal Department Files, Discrimination Sperry, 1941-1943 Folder, Microfilm 10786, Reel 7 of 19.

³⁵⁰ Walter White to Thurgood Marshall, July 15, 1941, Legal Papers of the NAACP, Part 15: Series A: Legal Department Complaints and Responses, 1940-1955, Series A: Legal Department Files, Discrimination Sperry, 1941-1943 Folder. Microfilm 10786, Reel 7 of 19.

NAACP, the FEPC, and the Office of Production Management would be wasted on this case.³⁵¹ Robert Weaver, the Chief of Negro Employment and Training for the Labor Division of the OPM, agreed with Hastie's opinion, telling Marshall it was important to find a better case to test the company's new stated policy of hiring all qualified black workers without discrimination. He suggested finding a qualified applicant available for work to use to test for hiring discrimination.³⁵² No such case against Sperry was brought to the court but the NAACP began to bring cases to the FEPC.

In August of 1941 Walter White notified the FEPC of discriminatory hiring practices by Sperry in violation of Executive Order 8802. Though the company had hired some new black workers, White argued Sperry was in violation of the President's orders to fully utilize available local labor before recruiting elsewhere. He alleged that Sperry recruited white workers from Mississippi, Alabama and Georgia to fill the labor shortage. White asserted that these practices are bringing white laborers into Brooklyn creating a housing shortage.³⁵³ These claims were investigated by the FEPC and placed on the agenda for the FEPC's August 28 meeting.³⁵⁴ The FEPC received corroborating information about Sperry's hiring practices from the New York

³⁵¹ William Hastie to Thurgood Marshall, August 8, 1941, Legal Papers of the NAACP, Part 15: Series A: Legal Department Complaints and Responses, 1940-1955, Series A: Legal Department Files. Discrimination Sperry, 1941-1943 Folder, Microfilm 10786, Reel 7 of 19.

³⁵² Robert Weaver to Thurgood Marshall, August 7, 1941, Legal Papers of the NAACP, Part 15: Series A: Legal Department Complaints and Responses, 1940-1955, Series A: Legal Department Files. Discrimination Sperry, 1941-1943 Folder, Microfilm 10786, Reel 7 of 19.

³⁵³ Walter White to Laurence Cramer, Executive Secretary of the FEPC, August 15, 1941, Legal Papers of the NAACP, Part 15: Series A: Legal Department Complaints and Responses, 1940-1955, Series A: Legal Department Files, Discrimination Sperry, 1941-1943 Folder, Microfilm 10786, Reel 7 of 19.

³⁵⁴ Laurence Cramer to Walter White, August 21, 1941, Legal Papers of the NAACP, Part 15: Series A: Legal Department Complaints and Responses, 1940-1955, Series A: Legal Department Files, Discrimination Sperry, 1941-1943 Folder, Microfilm 10786, Reel 7 of 19.

State Committee on Discrimination and Robert Weaver but the organization at that time did not have enough field staff to investigate.³⁵⁵ The FECP investigation would wait until the next year.

By September of 1941 the Sperry Company had hired 4 black assemblers. It also published advertisements for help, pledging that there would be no discrimination in employment.³⁵⁶ The decision to hire black workers, some in skilled positions, was very significant given the level of discrimination exercised by the company's management. Despite the fact that Sperry changed its hiring policy by integrating its workforce, the actual number of blacks hired was less than one percent of the corporation's total workforce. These initial black hires seemed to be an attempt by Sperry management to satisfy those advocating equal employment in hopes that token hires would end the protests and bad publicity. The company in fact did not hire blacks in any significant number until later in the year. The most important outcome of black protests surrounding Sperry's hiring practices was that they led to government investigations into allegations of discrimination against blacks seeking skilled and semi-skilled jobs. By mid-1941 the NAACP had changed its tactics to pressure government agencies to eradicate discrimination at Sperry. Other organizations aimed at racial uplift joined in this effort. The NAACP, NNC, and NUL brought discrimination cases to the FEPC in hopes that they would investigate and eradicate discriminatory hiring practices using the new anti-discrimination laws.

³⁵⁵ Laurence Cramer to Walter White, August 23, 1941, Legal Papers of the NAACP, Part 15: Series A: Legal Department Complaints and Responses, 1940-1955, Series A: Legal Department Files, Discrimination Sperry, 1941-1943 Folder. Microfilm 10786, Reel 7 of 19.

³⁵⁶ "Negro Workers After the War," (New York: National Negro Congress, April 1945.)

The UE Fights for Black Rights at Sperry

The actions of black organizations like the NAACP, Urban League, and NNC brought public attention to Sperry's discriminatory hiring practices which created pressure on company management to hire black workers. The organizations also helped workers file complaints with the New York State Committee on Discrimination and local offices of the Fair Employment Practices Committee which eventually launched investigations into Sperry's hiring policies. Black organizations however were not the only groups aimed at opening employment in war industries to African Americans. Unions, especially those affiliated with the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), worked towards that aim as well. The activities of the United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America (UE) contributed to the employment of black workers at Sperry. When the UE, a racially inclusive union, became the bargaining agent for workers at subsidiaries of the Sperry Corporation the prospect of union membership, and therefore employment, became available to blacks.

The United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America, an affiliate of the CIO, strongly advocated for the membership and employment of black workers. From its founding in 1936 the UE's policy was to admit to membership all workers in the industry "regardless of skill, age, sex, nationality, color, religion, or political belief or affiliation." The union rejected discrimination in any form under the premise that "it is only by uniting all workers in the industry that it is possible to defend effectively the interests and improve the working conditions of the membership."³⁵⁷ These policies were reflected in the union's constitution as well as the

³⁵⁷ Untitled Document - October 20, 1949, UE Papers, Record Group 2- 2.2NFPC – National Fair Practices Committee, Box 1, Folder 7 - UE: NO-NFPC – Federal FEPC – UE Activity 1945-66.

constitution of UE's District 4 which included the greater New York metropolitan area and Northern New Jersey.³⁵⁸

United Electrical first won the right to represent workers at the Sperry Corporation's subsidiary Ford Instrument Company in 1939. Ford Instrument workers had been formerly represented by the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) an affiliate of the American Federation of Labor. Local 425 of the UE came to represent workers at Ford Instrument Company.³⁵⁹ The relationship between the UE and the IBEW was quite contentious with conflict between the New York locals stemming from the decision of 1200 workers at the Air-King Radio Company in Brooklyn to leave IBEW local B-1010 and affiliate instead with Local 430 of the United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America.³⁶⁰ The UE and IBEW competed to organize the workers of the radio and electrical instruments industry.

The conflict between the UE and IBEW originated from events that led to the establishment of the UE. James Carey, a professional labor organizer and one of the founders of the UE, was a young radio worker who organized a group of employees interested in union membership at Philadelphia's Philco Radio. Originally an AFL staff member, Carey had initially attempted to organize the local electrical workers in Philadelphia under the IBEW, but IBEW leadership, afraid that electrical workers would take over the union, offered them "Class B" non-voting membership. Carey rejected the IBEW offer, instead collaborating with

³⁵⁸ Constitution and By Laws District 4, adopted 1942 and revised in 1944, UE Papers, Record Group 4, General Office Files, Box 1374, Folder 2: District 4 Constitutions 1944.

³⁵⁹ Contract between Ford Instruments and UE Local 425, October 7, 1940, UE Papers, Record Group 6.3 – 1940s-50s Labor Disputes with Companies, Box Washington Office – Research – Companies E-G (1641 y.d. 111), Ford Instrument 1942-1945 Folder.

³⁶⁰ James Carey General President (of the EU) to Adolph Germer Regional Director of the CIO June 10, 1940, Stipulation 8-16-40, UE Papers, Record Group 4, General Office Files Box 1380, Folder 619: Local 430 Inter-Union Rivalry: IBEW.

independent local unions to form the UE.³⁶¹ Carey founded the UE in response to the policies of the IBEW and subsequently worked to supplant the IBEW as the main union organizing electrical workers.

Though the IBEW had a closed shop agreement with Sperry, United Electrical had developed tactics to organize workers in companies with closed contracts. The UE had been founded to improve benefits for electrical workers during the Depression when company unions were cutting back. However the founding of the UE coincided with increasing production levels and recovery in the electrical industry and as prosperity returned, electrical workers had less incentive to join the new union. In response, UE leadership devised a strategy to convince company workers to vote for UE representation. The union infiltrated the existing electrical industry unions by getting UE supporters elected to positions within the unions. Once those UE supporters were elected they would win over workers support for the UE by illustrating that their tactics were more effective at getting acquisitions than the negotiations of the unions currently representing the workers. These gains would persuade electrical workers to vote for UE representation when company elections were held.³⁶² Using this strategy United Electrical challenged the IBEW and company run unions for the right to represent the electrical industry's workers.

These challenges were not always successful. Air-King's manager, who was also the chair of the Employers' Association, locked out about 320 company employees who had voted

³⁶¹ Ronald Schatz, *The Electrical Workers: A History of Labor at General Electric and Westinghouse, 1923-60*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press), 63, 97.

³⁶² Schatz, *The Electrical Workers: A History of Labor at General Electric and Westinghouse, 1923-60*, 46, 53-79. Though Schatz mainly studies UE locals and tactics at General Electric and Westinghouse factories, it seems reasonable that the national leadership used these tactics, which were successful, to open other shops to UE organizing.

for UE representation.³⁶³ The matter went to arbitration by the US Conciliation Service of the US Department of Labor.³⁶⁴ Though the UE argued that they represented the company's workers when the majority voted for UE representation, the arbitrators decided differently.³⁶⁵ Arbitrators sided with the IBEW, declaring the labor contract between the Air King Corp and IBEW local B-1010 a closed shop agreement. This meant that workers had to unanimously agree to change union representation which had not happened. On that basis the arbitrators ruled that the UE local did not represent Air King Radio Corp workers.³⁶⁶ Despite this loss United Electrical continued their efforts to organize workers formerly represented by IBEW local B-1010 and later that year won a similar case involving workers at the Fada Radio and Electric Company, Inc. In that case an arbiter found in favor of the UE reasoning that the agreement the IBEW had made with Fada was not a closed shop agreement therefore allowing those represented by other unions to work in the plant.³⁶⁷ In this way United Electrical began representing the workers in electrical machinery industries.

African Americans had a stake in the competition between the IBEW and the UE as their access to jobs in the industry was affected by which union represented the industry's workers.

Years earlier James Hubert, Executive Director of the New York Urban League had charged that

³⁶³ James Carey General President (of the UE) to Adolph Germer Regional Director of the CIO June 10, 1940, Stipulation August 16, 1940, UE Papers. Record Group 4, General Office Files Box 1380, Folder 619: Local 430 Inter-Union Rivalry: IBEW.

³⁶⁴ James Carey General President (of the UE) to Adolph Germer Regional Director of the CIO June 10, 1940, Stipulation August 16, 1940, UE Papers. Record Group 4, General Office Files Box 1380, Folder 619: Local 430 Inter-Union Rivalry: IBEW.

³⁶⁵ "Decision of the Arbitrator in Air King Radio Case Between the IBEW and the UERMWA," September 3, 1940, UE Papers, Record Group 4, General Office Files, Box 1380, Folder 620: Local 430 Inter-Union rivalry: IBEW Sept 1940 – March, 1941.

³⁶⁶ "Decision of the Arbitrator in Air King Radio Case Between the IBEW and the UERMWA," September 3, 1940, UE Papers, Record Group 4, General Office Files Box 1380, Folder 620: Local 430 Inter-Union rivalry: IBEW Sept 1940 – March, 1941.

³⁶⁷ Findings of Arbitrator Moses Shapiro in the Matter of the Arbitration between Fada Radio and Electric Company, Inc., Employer and International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, Local B-1010, Union. December 9, 1940, UE Papers, Record Group 4, General Office Files, Box 1380, Folder 620: Local 430 Inter-Union rivalry: IBEW Sept 1940 – March, 1941.

Local 3 of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers discriminated against black workers. Hubert cited a case in which twenty-five black workers were fired from Standard Electrical Equipment Corp. in Long Island City because the union had denied them membership. These blacks who had been employed for many years lost their jobs when the IBEW unionized the shop where they worked.³⁶⁸ The IBEW's exclusion of African Americans was symptomatic of its affiliation with the American Federation of Labor. The AFL and its affiliate unions excluded African Americans from membership and therefore employment at the companies whose workers they represented. For African Americans the United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America, with its inclusive ethos and constitution, offered them a much better chance of employment than the racially exclusive IBEW.

When United Electrical took over representation of workers at Ford Instruments in 1940, those workers' bargaining position was strengthened. The UE was able to negotiate higher wages for the workers at Ford Instruments despite the fact that both Ford Instruments and Sperry Gyroscope were controlled by the same interests.³⁶⁹ The union representing Sperry Company's workers was a company union, one unaffiliated with the AFL or the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO).³⁷⁰ Subsequently, the UE then set its sights on organizing the workers at Sperry Gyroscope.³⁷¹ Union organizers regularly distributed leaflets, held outdoor meetings, and visited contacts.³⁷² By early 1941, the UE had taken the Brotherhood of Scientific Instrument Makers of America (BSIM), also formerly known as Sperry Hourly Employees Association, and

³⁶⁸ "Union Held Biased Against Negroes," *NYT*, October 18, 1936.

³⁶⁹ "Report of District 4 to the 6th Annual Convention of the UERMWA held in Cleveland – Sept 3-6, 1940" UE Papers, Record Group 4, General Office Files, Box 1375, Folder 145: District 4 Reports to UE 1938-1943.

³⁷⁰ Walter White to James Carey, February 17, 1941, James Carey to Walter White, March 4, 1941. Legal Papers of the NAACP, Part 15: Series A: Legal Department Complaints and Responses, 1940-1955. Series A: Legal Department Files. Discrimination Sperry, 1941-1943 Folder. Microfilm 10786, Reel 7 of 19.

³⁷¹ "Report of District 4 to the 6th Annual Convention of the UERMWA held in Cleveland – September 3-6, 1940," UE Papers, Record Group 4, General Office Files, Box 1375, Folder 145: District 4 Reports to UE 1938-1943.

³⁷² Organizers Report, New York, July 23, 1941, UE Papers, Record Group 4, General Office Files, Box 1374, Folder 27: District Organizers Meeting Minutes July 23 1941- October 12, 1941.

the Independent Instrument and Mechanical Workers Union, to the Labor Board a number of times to have them disbanded.³⁷³ The UE charged that the Sperry Company dominated the BSIM prohibiting the union from effectively advocating for the workers.³⁷⁴

Prompted by the UE's claims, the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) investigated whether the Brotherhood of Scientific Instruments Makers of America should represent Sperry workers. The NLRB issued a complaint against the union on February 19, 1941 and hearings began on March 24, closing on April 12. The NLRB issued its intermediate report on July 24, recommending disestablishment of the Brotherhood of Scientific Instruments Workers.³⁷⁵ The report provided United Electrical with a chance to move in.³⁷⁶

The UE focused on establishing effective committees in the various departments at Sperry to persuade workers to support a change in union representation. With the possibility of the NLRB ruling against the BSIM, the UE needed to persuade workers to vote for the union to represent them. In an attempt to garner worker support the UE organizing committee prepared and distributed 4,500 cards with a petition to the Labor Board to hold an election and give the UE authorization to bargain on the behalf of Sperry's workers. In July 1941 the UE distributed the cards in pre-paid, self-addressed envelopes, which also contained an explanatory leaflet. According to some UE representatives Sperry workers received the petitions well, only a very small number were thrown away within their sights.³⁷⁷

³⁷³ Walter White to James Carey, February 17, 1941; James Carey to Walter White, March 4, 1941, Legal Papers of the NAACP, Part 15: Series A: Legal Department Complaints and Responses, 1940-1955, Series A: Legal Department Files, Discrimination Sperry, 1941-1943 Folder. Microfilm 10786, Reel 7 of 19.

³⁷⁴ Raymond Steven Patnode, "Labor's Love Lost: The Influence of Gender, Race, and Class on the Workplace in Post-war America," Ph.D. dissertation Stony Brook University, 2008, 75-76.

³⁷⁵ Organizers Report, New York, July 23, 1941, UE Records, Record Group 4, General Office Files, Box 1374, Folder 27: District Organizers Meeting Minutes July 23 1941- Oct 12, 1941.

³⁷⁶ Organizers Report, New York, July 23, 1941, UE Records, Record Group 4, General Office Files, Box 1374, Folder 27: District Organizers Meeting Minutes July 23 1941- Oct 12, 1941.

³⁷⁷ Organizers Report, New York, July 23, 1941, UE Records, Record Group 4, General Office Files, Box 1374, Folder 27: District Organizers Meeting Minutes July 23 1941- Oct 12, 1941.

By the end of 1941 United Electrical was poised for victory. In November the NLRB handed down its ruling on the case. The Board found that the company dominated the employee organization and directed the Sperry Gyroscope Company to disestablish the Brotherhood of Scientific Instrument Makers as the bargaining agent of its employees at its Brooklyn plant. The NLRB also directed Sperry to stop discouraging membership in Local 1202 of the UE or engaging in any other form of employee interference.³⁷⁸ After an appeal of the decision The NLRB conducted elections to determine who would represent Sperry workers. In December of 1942 the majority of workers at the Sperry Gyroscope company's plants in Brooklyn and Nassau County, Long Island chose the UE to be their collective bargaining agent.³⁷⁹ In light of the NLRB ruling it is not surprising that the BSIM did not make headway towards black hiring. The union had been controlled by the Sperry Company whose management had demonstrated in no uncertain terms that they had little interest in employing black workers. Therefore when the UE became the bargaining agent for workers at Sperry, it signaled a better chance for black employment at Sperry as well.

Though blacks were not in leadership positions in the UE and black involvement was not that important to the union's victory because of the small number of blacks working in the factory; the change in union representation was important in facilitating black employment. It opened up jobs to blacks and contributed to the shift in the company policy on hiring black workers. This belief was held by black leaders and activists in the city as black organizations lobbied for black inclusion in labor unions. In 1942 the New York Urban League accused the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, among other unions, of discriminating against

³⁷⁸ "Sperry Union Ruled Out," *NYT*, November 29, 1941, 8.

³⁷⁹ "C.I.O Wins in Poll," *NYT*, December 24, 1942, 11.

black workers and brought these charges of discrimination to the FEPC.³⁸⁰ The idea that union membership was important to black employment was shared by other black organizations, which cultivated good relations with unions open to black membership. The UE developed a reputation for being one of the premier labor organizations dedicated to equality of opportunity of all workers including African Americans. Thomas Jasper, the Chairman of the Labor Committee for the National Conference on Negro Youth expressed his gratitude to James Fitzgerald, the new President of the UE, for the work of the union in advocating unionism for blacks. Jasper invited Fitzgerald to participate in the organization's National Conference in 1941.³⁸¹ The late 1942 change in union representation to the UE was significant in that Sperry's workers were now represented by a union that was not only open to African Americans but actively advocated black employment.

Black support for the UE was predicated on the work the union did in fostering equal rights for all workers including African Americans. During the war years the national leadership of United Electrical openly criticized employers and unions that did not accept African American workers. In June 1942 the leaders of the UE stated that World War II was waged for equality and freedom for all, a principle that had not been recognized or practiced by war-time employers. The union published an official statement underscoring the need for companies to mobilize all Americans including African Americans for full support of the war. The union asserted that blacks did not have the full equality in "all endeavors, political, economic and cultural" promised by the Constitution as they could not get jobs in skilled occupations and were segregated in the armed forces. The UE condemned labor unions that did not treat Blacks equally and resolved to

³⁸⁰ "A.F. of L. Threatens to Drop Union Said to Bark Working With Negroes," *NYT*, February 18, 1942, 21.

³⁸¹ Thomas Jasper Chairman of the Labor Committee for National Conference of Negro Youth to James Fitzgerald, President UE October 16, 1941, UE Papers, Record Group 4, General Office Files, Box 1376, Folder 209: District 4 Pamphlets.

speak up on the question of racial discrimination and put an end to the unfair treatment of blacks.³⁸² That same year the UE conducted a concerted drive for the employment and upgrading of black workers in organized plants in Pennsylvania, New York and Connecticut. The union designed specific steps to speed integration. In New York City Local 1227 announced that 20 percent of all union trainees placed in jobs since January were Negroes. In announcing this development the president of that local Carl Geiser declared that to win the war, all-out production was necessary and that could only be achieved by utilizing all available manpower. Believing that Negroes must be given equal opportunity not only to fight, but to work for this country, Local 1227 focused on breaking down the barrier of discrimination in their shops.³⁸³

With the outbreak of war the UE conducted special campaigns to integrate war industries. UE leadership seemed to want to uphold the tenets of the union's constitution which advocated unity and solidarity of workers regardless of race or religion. There was also a more practical reason for the UE's inclusive stance. Union leaders believed that if blacks were not brought into the union, blacks would be paid lower wages and would therefore depress the wages of workers in the industry as a whole. Several locals worked out agreements with management guaranteeing that there would be blacks among all new people hired. In some instances this required discussion among the workers, as well as community activity, which invoked the support of black organizations. According to the UE the best example of the union successfully integrating a company was the Sperry Corporation, where the Negro organizations and the UE cooperated to pressure management to hire black workers.³⁸⁴

³⁸² "Convening of the 'Win the War Conference' is an Immediate and Urgent Necessity (6-2-42) by District 4, UE," UE Papers, Record Group 4, General Office Files, Box 1375, Folder 189: District 4 Miscellaneous Special Topics, Jan 1942 – April, 1945.

³⁸³ War Manpower Commission Press Release, July 11, 1942. New York State War Council COD, Box 7, Folder 320 – War Manpower Commission.

³⁸⁴ UE District 4, "The Negro People – Our Nation and Our Industry," April 1945, UE Papers, Record Group 4, General Office Files, Box 1375, Folder 190 - District 4 Miscellaneous Special topics April 1945-Sept 1946.

Though there is insufficient direct evidence with which to quantify the exact influence the UE had on the hiring of black workers, it is clear they had an important role in facilitating integration of Sperry's workforce. When United Electrical became the union representing workers at Sperry the doors opened for black employment at the Sperry Corporation's subsidiaries. Prior to UE representation the unions bargaining for workers in the company did not advocate black membership or employment. The IBEW did not admit black members and the company dominated BSIM did not effectively advocate for the inclusion of black workers. The UE promoted equal employment opportunities for workers of all races, creeds, religions, and ethnicities, a factor that eliminated Sperry management's argument that white workers would not work side by side with African Americans. The FEPC, the NYS War Council's Committee on Discrimination, and a 1943 labor shortage dealt the final blows to Sperry's discriminatory hiring policies.

Full integration in 1943: Government Activity for Fair Employment

Under increasing pressure from black organizations like the NAACP, the National Urban League, and the National Negro Congress the federal government began to take a stand against the discriminatory hiring practices of war industries. As Sperry's business boomed, both the federal and state government used Executive Order 8802 and the Mahoney Act to monitor and combat the company's biased employment policies. Both the Fair Employment Practices Committee and the New York State War Council's Committee on Discrimination investigated Sperry for discrimination against African Americans.

In February of 1942 the FEPC investigated complaints of discrimination against black workers in the Sperry Gyroscope Company and the Ford Instrument Company. In the complaint against Sperry, black workers represented by the Urban League accused company management

of discouraging Negro applicants, maintaining a separate file for black's applications, and considering Negroes only for certain jobs. According to the complaint, the company employed only 21 black workers out of a total 11,212 employees. African Americans filed a separate complaint of discrimination against the Ford Instrument Company.³⁸⁵

The FEPC held a public hearing in New York City on February 17 and 18, 1942 where complaints against both Sperry and Ford were heard. At the hearing complainants, company representatives, and government officials testified. Edward Lawson, field employment agent of the War Production Board, stated that while he had been assured that the company would employ blacks and give them equal opportunities, it had failed to do so. Lawson declared that although the company had hired black trainees, they had not been given equal opportunities with white trainees for advancement. A worker from General Agency, an employment agency used by Sperry, also supported allegations of discrimination when he testified that Sperry had specified to the agency that no Jewish or black workers were wanted. All accusations were denied by the company's counsel.³⁸⁶

The FEPC found that neither company was in violation of Executive Order 8802 because each had hired black and Jewish workers in the time between the complaint and the hearing. The committee ordered the case be held in abeyance for possible further action if the circumstances changed. The FEPC did direct Sperry to instruct its labor supply sources and others responsible for administration of its employment policy to comply with the Executive Order.³⁸⁷ Though the FEPC did not directly instruct Sperry to hire black workers, it required the corporation's subsidiaries to periodically submit its hiring statistics to the FEPC to ensure compliance with the

³⁸⁵ "A. F. of L. Threatens to Drop Union Said to Bar Working With Negroes," *NYT*, February 18, 1942, 21.

³⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁸⁷ Memorandum from Daniel Donovan to Edward Lawson, Regional Director of FEPC re. Field Visit Report on Sperry Gyroscope Co., Great Neck, Long Island, June 12, 1945. FEPC Papers, Closed Cases – S Box 575, Folder Sperry Gyroscope 2-BR-935.

Executive Order.³⁸⁸ Though Sperry was not found to be violating fair employment mandates, government oversight of hiring practices prevented Sperry from firing the blacks it had hired and prompted the company to hire even more African American workers.

After the hearings the company hired seventy-five African American employees by June with the new Long Island facility employing twenty-eight black workers.³⁸⁹ By mid-1942 Sperry reported further progress in black employment increasing the number of black workers from 35 to 300.³⁹⁰ By August of 1942, six months after Sperry's FEPC hearing, the Sperry Company employed 395 African Americans of a total 21,752 workers.³⁹¹ Management at Ford Instruments also increased black hires. In March of 1942 Ford employed only seventy-five blacks but by July had added forty more African American workers.³⁹²

The increase of black workers at Sperry coincided with an increase of the number of blacks working in war industries in the city and state. Though levels of African American employment by war industries remained low, in August 1942 Committee on Discrimination Chairman Frieda Miller declared that Negro employment rates were steadily rising and thousands more would be employed by the end of the year.³⁹³ Despite war industries increased employment of African Americans, this did not always indicate a change in the occupations blacks held. Many of the blacks hired by war industries worked in positions traditionally open to

³⁸⁸ This is evidenced by FEPC reports chronicling levels of black employment reported periodically from the investigated companies to the local FEPC offices. Compliance Tables, Documents Compliance Data for Firms Involved in Old Committee Hearings, FEPC Papers, Entry 75, Box 546, Statistics Folder.

³⁸⁹ NYS COD Monthly Reports for July and September 1942, New York State War Council COD, Box 6, Folder 265 Committee Reports, March-December 1942.

³⁹⁰ NYS COD Monthly Report September 1942, New York State War Council COD, Box 6, Folder 265 - Committee Reports, March - December 1942.

³⁹¹ Table 3 - Total and Non-White Workers Employed in 8 Firms Appearing Before FEPC and New York Hearings February 16th and 17th, 1942, FEPC Papers, Entry 75, Box 546, Statistics Folder.

³⁹² NYS COD Monthly Reports for July and September 1942, New York State War Council COD, Box 6, Folder 265 - Committee Reports, March-December 1942

³⁹³ NYS COD press release August 2, 1942, New York State War Council COD, Box 6, Folder 265 - Committee Reports, March-December 1942.

African Americans. This was the case at the companies of the Sperry Corporation. Of the 115 blacks working for Ford Instruments, 65 were porters indicating that the company, though hiring black workers, was hiring them for the unskilled service positions blacks had traditionally occupied.³⁹⁴

Black women were also placed in jobs at Sperry, however these women seemed to be token hires. The COD placed eleven Negro women in training for war work by August of 1942 and eventually the company hired twelve black women.³⁹⁵ But that same month the company turned down approximately forty female black job applicants in its new Long Island City plant. Given a tip that they would be hiring women John Singleton, the head of the Jamaica, Queens branch of the NAACP referred the women there. Sperry employment officials made these women wait for three hours for an interview, while white women were promptly called in for their interviews. After the wait a single interviewer impatiently called in all of the black women and interviewed them at the same time. The interviewer was not shy about expressing his reservations about employing the women greeting one woman by saying, "Oh you are from South Carolina too." as if migrant workers were not acceptable. Moreover, an American born woman of West Indian parents was denied a job because the interviewer said she was an alien though she had a proof of her American citizenship. The interviewer asked all of the black applicants if they had experience working with precision instruments, although white women without experience were being hired without previous training or experience.³⁹⁶ Though Sperry

³⁹⁴ NYS COD Monthly Reports for July and September 1942, New York State War Council COD, Box 6, Folder 265 - Committee Reports, March-December 1942.

³⁹⁵ NYS COD Monthly Reports for July and September 1942, New York State War Council COD, Box 6, Folder 265 - Committee Reports, March-December 1942.

³⁹⁶ "Sperry Company Turns Down Negro Girls," August 14, 1942, Legal Papers of the NAACP, Part 15: Series A: Legal Department Complaints and Responses, 1940-1955, Series A: Legal Department Files. Discrimination Sperry, 1941-1943 Folder. Microfilm 10786, Reel 7 of 19.

Gyroscope hired small numbers black women after their FEPC hearing, black female job applicants did not receive equal consideration as their white counterparts.

Full acceptance and integration of black workers at Sperry began in the latter half of 1942 with black employment peaking in 1943. During that period there was a vast increase in black employment at the corporation as well as a diversification of the types of positions open to blacks at the company. The continued scrutiny by the FEPC and a labor shortage in 1943 caused Sperry Corporation management to change their hiring policy. In May of 1942 of 24,361 employees, only 586 (2.41 percent) were African American.³⁹⁷ However one year later, in May of 1943 there were a total 1,024 blacks employed out of 39,087 total employees (2.61 percent).³⁹⁸ Though the change in the percentage of African Americans hired was minimal, the number of blacks nearly doubled.

Even more significant than the increased number of blacks hired by the company, was the shift in the types of work for which black were hired. Employment statistics submitted to the FEPC show that the number of skilled and semi-skilled blacks employed by Sperry increased as well. In May of 1942 there were no African Americans in skilled positions throughout Sperry Company Inc., nor were there any blacks in jobs categorized as “other” (a category that usually included clerical help). In fact the vast majority of those African Americans employed by Sperry were unskilled workers (83 percent). Only 100 of the 586 (17 percent) black workers at the corporation worked in semi-skilled positions.³⁹⁹

³⁹⁷ All figures include stats for both Sperry Company and its subsidiary Ford Instruments.

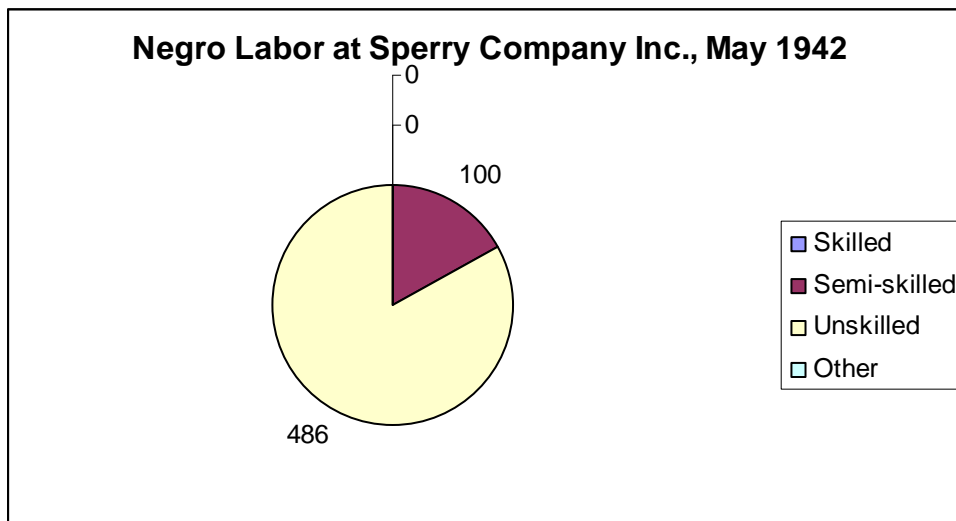
³⁹⁸ Table 3 – Total and Non-White Workers Employed in 8 Firms Appearing Before the FEPC at New York Hearings, February 16th and 17th, 1942,” Compliance Data for Firms Involved in Old Committee Hearings, FEPC Papers, Entry 75, Box 546, Statistics Folder.

See Table 4.2 in Appendix.

³⁹⁹ “Table 7 – Total and Non-White Workers Employed in Skilled, Semi-Skilled, Unskilled, and “Other” Categories for Six Firms Appearing Before the FEPC at New York Hearings,” Compliance Data for Firms Involved in Old Committee Hearings, FEPC Papers, Entry 75, Box 546, Statistics Folder.

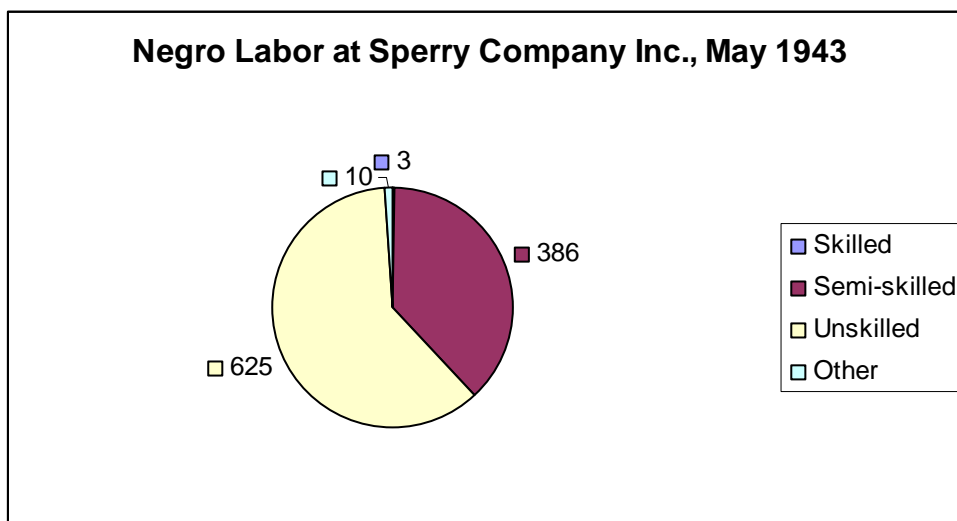
See Table 4.1 in Appendix.

Chart 1



This changed significantly by May of 1943. According to FEPC records small numbers of African Americans were employed in both skilled positions and in jobs categorized as “other”. More significantly the number of blacks employed in semi-skilled positions dramatically increased. Of 1,024 black employees, 386 (nearly 38 percent) were in semi-skilled positions. As the chart below illustrates, the percentage of black workers in semi-skilled positions more than doubled over a twelve month period. Moreover, the percentage of black workers in unskilled positions decreased to 61 percent.

Chart 2



A labor shortage in 1943 contributed to Sperry's increased employment of black workers. Thomas Morgan, President of the Sperry Corporation, contacted John Coleman, Chairman of Selective Service Board #5, about the labor problem at Sperry. The company needed more workers because the draft was taking so many employees abroad to fight the war. After a study of the metropolitan area revealed the best possible source of additional labor was available in Harlem, Mr. Morgan, upon Coleman's recommendation, requested a conference with Roy Wilkins of the NAACP hoping to recruit black workers to fill open positions. At this meeting Morgan said that the necessity of war had convinced him of the need to use all available labor, and to therefore make it easier to secure more Negro workers. Morgan admitted that there was a lot of "red tape" that had to be negotiated when getting a job through the usual channels. After conversations with black workers at Sperry Morgan also admitted that it was even more difficult for Negroes to obtain jobs with the company and expressed interest in making the process easier. To that end Morgan considered opening an employment office training center in Harlem to

attract black workers.⁴⁰⁰ Morgan assured Wilkins that the Harlem office would not be used to create a segregated unit in the factory, although a considerable number of black workers might work in certain departments. He also pledged that the company was not hiring blacks to work for lower wages as a scheme to weaken the union as African American workers were accepted for membership by the UE.⁴⁰¹ A few weeks later Morgan took steps to put his plan for black employment into action.

On February 19, 1943 Sperry executives held a meeting to discuss the details involved in creating the Harlem employment office. Roy Wilkins, Elmer Carter, member of the NYS Unemployment Insurance Appeals Board, Thomas Morgan, and other Sperry officials attended. At the meeting the men decided that black job applicants would be given one week training at the Harlem office, and then two weeks of training in the plant. When one Sperry official expressed concern with black applicants' lack of experience with machine precision work, Morgan replied that many men with no formal education had mechanical aptitude and that these applicants would be considered with that in mind. Wilkins observed that though there were discussions about preparedness of Negro workers for industrial work, all those present supported the hiring of black workers and the creation of a Harlem employment office to facilitate this.⁴⁰²

⁴⁰⁰ Memorandum from Roy Wilkins, January 29, 1943, Legal Papers of the NAACP, Part 15: Series A: Legal Department Complaints and Responses, 1940-1955, Series A: Legal Department Files. Discrimination Sperry, 1941-1943 Folder, Microfilm 10786, Reel 7 of 19; "Sperry to Open Office in Harlem," *Brooklyn Eagle*, April 3, 1943, Brooklyn Collection, Sperry Gyroscope Envelope 1 of 2.

⁴⁰¹ Memorandum from Roy Wilkins, January 29, 1943, Legal Papers of the NAACP, Part 15: Series A: Legal Department Complaints and Responses, 1940-1955, Series A: Legal Department Files. Discrimination Sperry, 1941-1943 Folder, Microfilm 10786, Reel 7 of 19.

⁴⁰² Memorandum for files from Roy Wilkins, February 20, 1943, Legal Papers of the NAACP, Part 15: Series A: Legal Department Complaints and Responses, 1940-1955, Series A: Legal Department Files, Discrimination Sperry, 1941-1943 Folder, Microfilm 10786, Reel 7 of 19.

Consequently in April, the Sperry Corporation opened an employment office in Harlem to recruit black workers for its subsidiary companies to fill those shortages.⁴⁰³ Frank Thomas, the Employment Supervisor of the Harlem office, promised that those who met minimum educational and vocational requirements would be trained for skilled and semi-skilled work.⁴⁰⁴

The creation of Sperry's Harlem office was just one tactic used by the company to recruit black workers. The company also continued to accept applications through the United States Employment Service and the Urban League.⁴⁰⁵ Sperry management applied to the USES for assistance in finding black workers.⁴⁰⁶ The labor shortage further motivated Sperry's efforts to expand black employment in 1943 and amplified the FEPC's efforts to prompt company management to hire African Americans.

Not only did Sperry begin to employ black workers in skilled positions, they also altered the methods of production in order to hire fewer skilled trade workers and more general workers with less training. Prior to the war, the Sperry Company, according to Morgan, employed about 3,500 highly skilled workers. In early 1943 the company was hiring 46,000 workers and expected to hire an additional 14,000 by the end of the year. Because of the necessity for more workers and faster production Morgan explained the company had broken down the skilled production processes so that they could employ workers whom they never would have employed

⁴⁰³ Untitled clipping, *Herald Tribune*, April 3, 1943, New York State War Council COD, Box 5, Folder 212 - Newspaper Clippings Relative to Negroes.

⁴⁰⁴ Frank Thomas to Eardlie Johnson of the New York NAACP, April 15, 1943, Legal Papers of the NAACP, Part 15: Series A: Legal Department Complaints and Responses, 1940-1955, Series A: Legal Department Files, Discrimination Sperry, 1941-1943 Folder. Microfilm 10786, Reel 7 of 19.

⁴⁰⁵ "Sperry to Open Office in Harlem," *Brooklyn Eagle*, April 4, 1943, Brooklyn Collection, Sperry Gyroscope Envelope 1 of 2.

⁴⁰⁶ Labor Market and Developments Report, April 15-May 31, 1943, New York Metropolitan Region, United States Employment Service of the War Manpower Commission, June 1943, New York State War Council COD, Box 6, Folder 271.

before the war.⁴⁰⁷ Those workers included more African Americans. This process was not unique at Sperry. A host of war industries all over the country similarly deskilled skilled jobs to hire more workers.

In 1943 Sperry's management had significantly increased the number of African American hires. By January of 1944 the number of blacks employed by the company had nearly doubled from the number employed in December of 1942, increasing from 650 to 1,316.⁴⁰⁸ By early 1944 black workers comprised 3.7 percent of the total workers in the corporation, up from 2 percent the previous year. The corporation had added 658 black workers to their work force during 1943. The most marked increase of black workers took place in the Sperry Gyroscope factory, as the number of black employees more than doubled from December of 1942 to January of 1944. This is even more significant because this increase occurred after a four month period of declining black employment.⁴⁰⁹ In fact in 1944 the Sperry Corporation had achieved levels of black employment well above the 1.5 percent the FEPC declared was necessary for companies to be classified as having a "good or fair" number of Negro employees.⁴¹⁰

According to historian Martha Biondi, the employment of blacks during the war had prompted the Sperry management to change its philosophy about hiring black workers. In 1944 the company's president, a new proponent of racial brotherhood, gave a speech about the benefits of industrial integration at the NAACP's national convention in Chicago.⁴¹¹ In August

⁴⁰⁷ Memorandum from Roy Wilkins, January 29, 1943, Legal Papers of the NAACP, Part 15: Series A: Legal Department Complaints and Responses, 1940-1955, Series A: Legal Department Files, Discrimination Sperry, 1941-1943 Folder, Microfilm 10786, Reel 7 of 19.

⁴⁰⁸ These statistics include numbers for both the Sperry Company and its subsidiary Ford Instruments.

⁴⁰⁹ Table 3 – Total and Non-White Workers Employed in 8 Firms Appearing Before the FEPC at New York Hearings February 16 and February 17, 1942, Compliance Data for Firms Involved in Old Committee Hearings, FEPC Papers, Entry 75, Box 546, Statistics Folder.
See Table 4.2 in Appendix.

⁴¹⁰ Compliance Data for Firms Involved in Old Committee Hearings, FEPC Papers, Entry 75, Box 546, Statistics Folder.

⁴¹¹ Martha Biondi, *To Stand and Fight*, 9.

1944 Sperry Company General Manager R.E. Gilmore paid high tribute to the company's black workers. Gilmore said that black workers' industrial efficiency equaled that of white workers and their habits were often superior. In an extensive statement reviewing three years of experience in the employment of African Americans Gilmore said they were neither so prone to absenteeism as other workers nor did they change their jobs as frequently.⁴¹² This change in philosophy is evident in the attitudes of Sperry's leaders.

At the top levels of Sperry management discrimination would no longer be tolerated. The corporation's president personally dealt with hiring discrimination at the employment offices of his company. Thomas Morgan tried to recruit an African American worker for a better position in the building where the corporate offices of Sperry were located. Morgan had observed the man's work and deemed him a good mechanical worker who would be an asset to Sperry, however when the man applied and passed a preliminary test for a job at Sperry's employment offices, he was offered a job as a porter. Mr. Morgan intervened on the man's behalf, calling the employment office and "gave them hell." The man was subsequently employed in a skilled position at Sperry and proved to be a good mechanic.⁴¹³

Robert Weaver who served as the leader of the War Manpower Commission's Negro Labor Service, pointed to the labor shortage as being the primary reason discriminatory bars to black hiring were relaxed after 1943.⁴¹⁴ It should be noted however that the investigations conducted by the FEPC and the State Committee on Discrimination and subsequent supervision of the Sperry Corporation's hiring practices also played a significant role in achieving increased

⁴¹² "Praises Sperry's Negro Employees" *Brooklyn Eagle*, August 6, 1944, Brooklyn Collection, Sperry Gyroscope envelope 2 of 2.

⁴¹³ Memorandum from Roy Wilkins, January 29, 1943, Legal Papers of the NAACP, Part 15: Series A: Legal Department Complaints and Responses, 1940-1955, Series A: Legal Department Files, Discrimination Sperry, 1941-1943 Folder, Microfilm 10786, Reel 7 of 19.

⁴¹⁴ Robert Weaver, *Negro Labor: A National Problem*, (New York: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1946.)

black employment. FEPC statistics show that the hiring levels in all Sperry subsidiaries during 1942 in the wake of the initial FEPC investigations were comparable to those made in 1943 after the labor shortage. From February to December of 1942, 564 blacks were hired by the corporation. This was only 100 less than the number of blacks hired during 1943, despite the labor shortage. Moreover by August of 1942 both Sperry and Ford Instruments had reached “fair” levels of black employment according to the FEPC’s standards.⁴¹⁵ According to the FEPC in January of 1944 all plants with non-white workers comprising 1.5 and 4.99 percent of their employees had a “good or fair number of Negroes.” The FEPC rightly contended that though these percentages seemed low, considering that Sperry had very few black workers before the investigations, these small increases were appreciable.⁴¹⁶ Therefore it seems that the FEPC, in conjunction with the New York State’s COD which had the power to prosecute state industries discriminating against black workers, had made an important impact on the hiring practices of the Sperry Gyroscope Company. The hiring of blacks begun in the wake of the FEPC and COD investigations was expanded due to the labor shortage of 1943, allowing blacks access to jobs previously closed to them at Sperry.

Preserving Victory: Retaining Black Jobs in the Race of Reconversion

As of 1944 Sperry employed African Americans in twenty-eight different occupations. A third of black workers were in highly skilled positions, another third in semi-skilled occupations, and the last third in other jobs. A small number of African American workers occupied office positions and there were three black engineers. A considerable number of African Americans

⁴¹⁵ The “fair level” of employment referred to is that which was deemed by the FEPC in 1944. This point is significant because Sperry had reached those levels by 1942, before blacks were being hired more willingly because of the labor shortage. How the FEPC decided on “fair levels” was not disclosed in this document.

⁴¹⁶ Table 3 – Total and Non-White Workers Employed in 8 Firms Appearing Before the FEPC at New York Hearings February 16 and February 17, 1942, Compliance Data for Firms Involved in Old Committee Hearings, FEPC Papers, Entry 75, Box 546, Statistics Folder. See Table 4.2 in the Appendix.

acted as leaders (Sperry's designation for people who were instructors and tool setters for groups of ten to twenty) and another was a foreman in charge of all internal transportation in one of the corporation's plants. White workers' threats to refuse to work with blacks were just threats as few racially motivated conflicts were reported. White workers' doubts about the preparedness and ability of black workers disappeared as well. Out of 300 shop stewards, 22 were black. In fact an all white department had chosen an African American to represent them as shop steward.⁴¹⁷

Not only did blacks attain positions in the company which were once closed to them, black workers participated in the social activities sponsored by the company as well. According to Sperry General Manager R. E. Gilmore, African Americans participated in many of the company's social and recreation activities. Sperry's symphony orchestra had several black musicians. African Americans also participated in the company's choral society. White workers in other recreational societies at Sperry including the ball teams, bowling teams, and the camera club accepted the company's black workers as well.⁴¹⁸ The social integration at the factory proved wrong management's earlier claims that white workers would not accept and could not get along with black workers.

The hiring wave at Sperry in 1943 allowed African Americans to fully integrate the company's workforce. The continued efforts of organizations advocating fair employment practices facilitated this integration. In 1943 and 1944 the National Negro Congress, its offshoot the Negro Labor Victory Committee (NLVC), and the United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America worked independently and cooperatively to continue the gains blacks won at Sperry. One major hurdle to their efforts was reconversion. As war production slowed and

⁴¹⁷ "Negro Workers After the War," (New York: National Negro Congress, April 1945.)

⁴¹⁸ R. E. Gilmore, "How Can the Negro Hold His Job?," 1945, Sperry Gyroscope Company Papers, Box 18, Folder 4.

soldiers returned from Europe at the end of World War I, industrial management laid-off black workers en masse and labor unions lost their influence over the government and factory owners. The NNC, NLVC, and UE worked to prevent the same from happening at Sperry at the end of World War II.

United Electrical considered its efforts at Sperry a prime example of its achievements on the civil rights front and towards the end of the war actively worked to maintain black employment. In a 1945 District 4 report to its locals the UE cited integration at Sperry as a prime example of how “we were able to secure jobs for Negroes, assure them equal pay, and win promotions and upgrading.” The New York district sent this statement out to their locals to encourage them to keep up the efforts towards this end and for discussion with the membership. Victories such as the one the UE achieved at Sperry fostered black support for the union.⁴¹⁹

The work of the UE in integrating war industries and their focus in extending industrial employment to African Americans and other minorities is not a story that is limited to Sperry. The national office of the United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America sent memos to all General Vice Presidents and International Representatives expressing national union support for proposed legislation for a permanent FEPC. National UE leadership urged locals to pressure state senators to vote in support of a full FEPC budget to support full mobilization for the war.⁴²⁰ The work of this particular union in integrating war industries is apparent in other major factories in the New York area. It is not a coincidence that UE also organized workers at Babcock and Wilcox, a company that was investigated by the FEPC and subsequently changed their hiring policy. The UE also organized workers at Becton and

⁴¹⁹ UE District 4, “The Negro People – Our Nation and Our Industry,” April 1945, UE Papers, Record Group 4: General Office Files, Box 1375, Folder 190: District 4 Miscellaneous Special topics April 1945-Sept 1946.

⁴²⁰ Wire sent from Julius Emspak, General Secretary-Treasurer of the National Office of United Electrical Radio and Machine Workers of America, CIO to all General Vice-Presidents and International Representatives, FEPC Papers, Entry 75, Box 546, Folder – FEPC Appropriation Material 1944.

Dickinson which was investigated by the FEPC, as well as Bulova which was investigated by the New York State War Council's Committee on Discrimination.⁴²¹ Representation by the racially inclusive UE helped facilitate integration of these war industries.

With the prospect of reconversion looming on the horizon the UE worked to preserve the employment advances blacks made during the war. This was an especially difficult task in the face of reduced demand, decreased production, and returning workers who had served in the war. In an effort to continue integrating war industries the UE signed an agreement with the FEPC to cooperate with the agency in investigations of discrimination complaints and adjustments of valid grievances. After the war the UE formalized its existing fair employment practices by establishing a National Fair Practices Committee and directing Districts and Locals to follow suit.⁴²²

With the end of the war in sight, in April of 1945 the UE began to consider what effect reconversion would have on black employment levels. Officials of UE District 4 knew reconversion would bring the most severe cutbacks in the areas where its black union members had made their greatest advances – semi-skilled work. Moreover, black workers made their biggest advances in industries which the union feared would experience the greatest post-war declines. If that were the case, blacks were more likely to be laid off than the average worker in these occupations. The UE acknowledged the “grave and immediate responsibility” of the union to address these issues.⁴²³ UE Local 1225, the local representing electrical workers in many Brooklyn and Queens factories, actively advocated equal employment opportunities for African

⁴²¹Work of Organizers in New Jersey September 8, 1941, and September 18, 1941, UE Papers, Record Group 4, General Office Files, Box 1374, Folder 27: District Organizers Meeting Minutes, July 23 1941- Oct 12, 1941.

⁴²² *UE Fights for Negro Rights*, March 20, 1950, UE Papers, Record Group 2- 2.2NFPC – National Fair Practices Committee, Box 1, Folder 14 – Miscellaneous, 1949-55.

⁴²³ UE District 4, “The Negro People – Our Nation and Our Industry” April 1945, UE Papers, Record Group 4, General Office Files, Box 1375, Folder 190: District 4 Miscellaneous Special topics April 1945-Sept 1946.

Americans. In their annual “State of the Union” report, leadership of Local 1225 said they were nearing complete victory in all of their shops in the struggle against discrimination in hiring, upgrading and equal pay. The major concern of the union moving forward was layoffs of black workers during reconversion. They were grappling with the idea of making special applications of seniority laws to prevent the total ousting of recently hired black workers. Their biggest goal was full employment but they were also looking to guarantee blacks the right to work in the industry.⁴²⁴

The NLVC looked to collaborate with United Electrical in ensuring black employment in war industries during reconversion. In September of 1944 Charles Collins, Secretary of the NLVC, asked Julius Emspak, Secretary Treasurer of UE, to gather a group of UE members to attend a conference to discuss job security for black workers during reconversion and after the war. The meeting, sponsored by the NLVC, was to be conducted with various unions who included black workers. The NLVC was quite worried about the ousting of new black hires because of seniority rules and the organization leadership wanted to begin discussing how reconversion may affect black employment.⁴²⁵

The Negro Labor Victory Committee, its parent organization the National Negro Congress, and United Electrical worked to maintain integration of the work force of the Sperry Corporation. At Sperry, the problem was particularly acute, as a return to the pre-war employment policies without adjustments to seniority laws and lay-off rules would mean the ousting of nearly all black employees. In order to ascertain if employment opportunities would still be open to blacks at Sperry after the war, the NNC sent an investigator to the company’s

⁴²⁴ UE Local 1225, “Report on the State of the Union,” October 15, 1944, UE Papers, Record Group 4, General Office Files, Box 1384, Folder 1216: Local 1225 Officer Reports.

⁴²⁵ Charles Collins to Julius Emspak, September 30, 1944, NNC Papers, Part IV, Folder 63: Labor 1942-1945, NNC Box 77.

Long Island firm which by late 1944 had the highest percentage of black workers. Local 450 of the United Electrical, Radio, and Machine Workers of America, the union representing Sperry's workers, cooperated with the NNC on this study. At the plant seniority was based on occupation, and operated plant-wide and company-wide, therefore employees who changed from one occupation to another within the company carried their seniority with them making it cumulative.⁴²⁶ This meant that blacks who had been employed as porters or janitors and then upgraded to skilled or semi-skilled positions would have cumulative seniority. This fact withstanding, the company had not hired its first black employee until 1941 and the majority of those working at that moment had been hired within the past four years. Consequently cumulative seniority or not African Americans would be the first workers laid-off if Sperry did not adjust its seniority rules.

This reality was borne out in the NNC's study. According to the National Negro Congress African Americans comprised 7 percent of the 549 filers and burrs at Sperry's Long Island plant. In the case of a 50 percent layoff with unmodified seniority policies, the number of African Americans working in this capacity would drop from thirty-six to nine, comprising only 3 percent of the workers in this occupation. Negroes comprised 2 percent of the assemblers at Sperry's Long Island plant. If there were a 50 percent layoff with the same seniority rules practiced by management there would only be one of the thirty-seven Negro workers left. The percentage of Negro workers in that occupation would drop from 2 to 0.1 percent. There were 23 black operators out of a total 973 (2 percent) working at Sperry. If there were a 50 percent lay-off without changes to the seniority policy, no blacks would be employed as operators. These findings were similar to what would happen in many other plants, illustrating the need for

⁴²⁶ "Negro Workers After the War," (New York: National Negro Congress, April 1945.)

a modification of seniority rules in order to protect the gains blacks made in industrial companies.⁴²⁷

The New York District of the UE supported the position of the National CIO protecting the gains blacks achieved by preventing anti-union employers from taking steps designed to discriminate against black workers. The district urged UE locals to find a compromise between sticking rigidly to seniority laws and retaining black workers who would all be lost under strict adherence to seniority. The union's objective was to maintain the gains won for blacks and the present levels of black employment.⁴²⁸

To keep companies from returning to their discriminatory hiring practices, the District Executive Board developed a campaign for a permanent FEPC in New Jersey, for the appointment of trusted personnel of New York's State Commission Against Discrimination, and the creation of a permanent federal FEPC. The UE also advocated close cooperation between the union and the FEPC to eliminate any and all forms of discriminatory employment practices in plants where UE locals or organizing committees were in existence. To minimize black unemployment and prevent blacks from being relegated to unskilled jobs the district was to work closely with the WMC to make sure that where lay-offs were unavoidable, black workers be given job referrals for jobs that utilized their highest talents and maintained their current pay rates. In addition leaders of District 4 wanted the WMC to furnish lists of critical plants with manpower shortages, so that the UE could refer laid-off members there and work with black communities to man these shortages with black workers. The district also pushed locals to concentrate on filling vacancies as far as possible with black workers and to push upgrading of black workers to help break through the still-existing practice of discriminatory hiring. To

⁴²⁷ "Negro Workers After the Wa," (New York: National Negro Congress, April 1945.)

⁴²⁸ UE District 4, "The Negro People – Our Nation and Our Industry," April 1945, UE Papers, Record Group 4, General Office Files, Box 1375, Folder 190: District 4 Miscellaneous Special topics April 1945-Sept 1946.

accomplish this, the locals were to provide special training courses to local blacks. The District also wanted locals to include black members in leadership roles in shops, in locals, and within the district. Perhaps most importantly, the UE urged locals to continue to engage in the tactics that had successfully secured jobs for African Americans – to initiate campaigns with the FEPC and black organizations to pressure companies with discriminatory hiring practices to hire black workers.⁴²⁹

Though many locals of the UE supported the larger goal of maintaining black employment, changing the seniority laws was a hard prospect. Labor unions had at all costs worked to implement and follow seniority laws as a way to protect workers from arbitrary abuses and firings by factory management. Union leaders feared that tampering with seniority laws might mean the destabilization of the entire seniority system. Moreover it would be indefensible to the public for unions to protect black employment at the expense of veterans returning from war who may lose their jobs if seniority laws were adjusted. The UE recognized the problem of maintaining black employment during reconversion and acted boldly, stopping just short of altering seniority policies.

Fulfilling the Vision: Black Employment after the War

In 1945 the government had begun terminating some of Sperry's production contracts and the company had reduced production levels. The company did however continue to produce goods for the military as it had done before the war.⁴³⁰ In compliance with FEPC orders to continually send information on the race and religion of its workers in order to prevent

⁴²⁹ UE District 4, "The Negro People – Our Nation and Our Industry" April 1945, UE Papers, Record Group 4, General Office Files, Box 1375, Folder 190: District 4 Miscellaneous Special topics April 1945-Sept 1946.

⁴³⁰ The Sperry Corporation, *Thirteenth Annual Report for the year Ended December 31, 1945*, 1945, United States: ProQuest Annual Reports, Accessed February 28, 2012, Retrieved from <http://ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/88182927?accountid=10226>

discrimination, the FEPC arranged a meeting with Sperry officials on May 4, 1945 to get information on current employment practices and indications of compliance with FEPC directives.⁴³¹ At that time the number of black employees had declined to 852. Though the number of black workers decreased, they comprised 7.5 percent of 11,321 employees at Sperry Gyroscope were non-whites.⁴³² Even as the company's black employment began to decline in 1945, the black employment levels at Sperry were higher than the average percentage of blacks comprising the workforce of other state war industries. According to 1944 COD investigations conducted all over the state, in almost every type of war industry the average percentage Negroes made of the workforce was 2 percent. The rate of black employment at Sperry was also more than that of the 4-plus percent of the state population African Americans comprised according to the 1940 census.⁴³³ There is no exact way to tell what proportion of the city's residents were African American in 1945 but the 7.5 percent black workers comprised of the Sperry Company's employees was in the range between what the 1940 and 1950 percentage of the black population was in the city (6 percent in 1940 and 9.5 percent in 1950).⁴³⁴ Sperry unlike many companies employed a percentage of black workers comparable to their population in the city.

Not only had black employment levels increased at Sperry but blacks continued to work in higher-paid, trained positions. Of the 713 black workers at Sperry the majority (almost 60 percent) were in skilled or semi-skilled positions. Another 37 percent of black Sperry employees were unskilled workers and under 4 percent of African American workers were in skilled positions. Though blacks made advances in semi-skilled positions, clerical and engineer posts

⁴³¹ Memorandum from Daniel Donovan to Edward Lawson, Regional Director of FEPC re. Field Visit Report on Sperry Gyroscope Co., Great Neck, Long Island, June 12, 1945, FEPC Papers, Closed Cases – S Box 575, Folder Sperry Gyroscope 2-BR-935.

⁴³² Memorandum from Daniel Donovan to Edward Lawson, Regional Director of FEPC re. Field Visit Report on Sperry Gyroscope Co., Great Neck, Long Island, June 12, 1945, FEPC Papers, Closed Cases – S Box 575, Folder Sperry Gyroscope 2-BR-935.

⁴³³ "Annual Report," 1944, New York State War Council COD, Box 6, Folder 262.

⁴³⁴ For NYC population statistics see Chapter 1.

remained closed to them at the end of the war.⁴³⁵ In looking at the 1945 figures it was clear that Sperry, in response to FEPC directives and manpower needs, had changed its hiring policy resulting in a substantial increase of non-white employees in a wide range of categories.⁴³⁶

Table 8: Classification of African American and other Non-White workers at Sperry Gyroscope, 1945⁴³⁷

Job Classification		Negro	Other Non-White	Totals
Skilled		28	1	29
Semi-Skilled		424	4	428
Unskilled		261	1	262
	totals	713	6	719
Other				
Clerical		3	0	3
Guards		1	0	1
Jr. Product Engineers		0	1	1
	Totals	4	1	5
	Grand totals	717	7	724

Sperry's president, Thomas Morgan, had accepted the value of black workers and advocated equality for blacks at Sperry and beyond. Morgan unequivocally maintained his belief in equal opportunity – that skilled workers of any race, creed, or religion should be able to work where they are qualified. He believed the major reason for prejudice was economic and that division between the races would vanish as opportunity was equalized. Key in this process

⁴³⁵ Memorandum from Daniel Donovan to Edward Lawson, Regional Director of FEPC re. Field Visit Report on Sperry Gyroscope Co., Great Neck, Long Island, June 12, 1945, FEPC Papers, Closed Cases – S Box 575, Folder Sperry Gyroscope 2-BR-935.

⁴³⁶ Memorandum from Daniel Donovan to Edward Lawson, Regional Director of FEPC re. Field Visit Report on Sperry Gyroscope Co., Great Neck, Long Island, June 12, 1945, FEPC Papers, Closed Cases – S Box 575, Folder Sperry Gyroscope 2-BR-935.

⁴³⁷ Memorandum from Daniel Donovan to Edward Lawson, Regional Director of FEPC re. Field Visit Report on Sperry Gyroscope Co., Great Neck, Long Island, June 12, 1945, FEPC Papers, Closed Cases – S Box 575, Folder Sperry Gyroscope 2-BR-935.

according to Morgan was access to education for blacks.⁴³⁸ Morgan became national chairman of the second annual campaign to raise funds for the United Negro College Fund in 1945.⁴³⁹ Morgan pointed out the economic potentials of an educated black population and emphasized the importance of granting African Americans all the benefits of citizenship as “the Negro would play a large role in the welfare of this country.” The institutions the fund was raising money for would also, he argued, have a major role in educating the quarter million blacks in the Army who planned to return to school and college.⁴⁴⁰ Norman Pickering, musician and engineer, conducted the Sperry Symphony Orchestra in a benefit Concert at Carnegie Hall which raised almost 10,000 dollars for the United Negro College Fund. The seventy piece orchestra was composed of Brooklyn and Long Island company workers.⁴⁴¹ Black newspapers celebrated Thomas Morgan’s acceptance of black workers and activism to improve black access to education, training, and ultimately jobs. Both the *Amsterdam News* and *Chicago Defender* ran articles chronicling Morgan’s activities and achievements in 1945.⁴⁴² Many black editorialists hoped Sperry would remain a bastion of integration through the reconversion process.

As reconversion began Sperry’s management attempted to find ways to maintain high production levels in order to maintain their employment rolls. In an effort to expand its production capacity during the post-war slow-down Sperry Corporation purchased a one-half interest in Wright’s Automatic Machinery Company a producer of packing machines. Sperry did so with the belief that “American industry will need and use more labor-saving machines in order that American working-men can continue to receive high wages and short working hours

⁴³⁸ Earl Conrad, “Capitalist With A Conscience,” *The Chicago Defender*, June 2, 1945, 11.

⁴³⁹ “To Aid Negro Colleges,” *NYT*, February 28, 1945, 19.

⁴⁴⁰ “Business Leaders Stress Negro Aid,” *NYT*, March 6, 1945, 38.

⁴⁴¹ “Sperry Concert Aids Negro College Fund,” *NYT*, June 11, 1945, 12.

⁴⁴² A M Wendell Malliet, “Corporation President Sees Bright Future Ahead For Equality In Jobs: Sperry Prexy States Views on Post-War Era Points Out Industry's New Attitude; Says Our Workers Have Made Excellent Record,” *New York Amsterdam News* (City Edition), May 26, 1945, 1A ; Earl Conrad, “Capitalist With A Conscience,” *The Chicago Defender*, June 2, 1945. 11

and at the same time meet world competition.”⁴⁴³ Sperry also continued a large program of research on military projects and focused on producing and developing new products for commercial sale. The company tested its radio communication system for use in railroad applications, tested its long range location devices for use in navigating ships, and tested its automatic pilot navigation instruments.⁴⁴⁴ This was all done in the hopes of applying technology developed during the war to commercial items which would keep the factories producing and employing workers.

Morgan was optimistic on the prospects of post-war black employment, believing blacks would maintain their industrial positions after the war. He explained that there would be high demand for consumer goods that had not been manufactured during the war. He also said that factories could put the new techniques learned producing war goods to good use producing civil goods for consumption, therefore maintaining and improving production capacity and preserving jobs. The changed methods of production also created a situation in which production jobs needed less training.⁴⁴⁵ Be this as it was Sperry Gyroscope laid off a significant number of black workers (1,500) by the end of the summer.⁴⁴⁶ The reality of the employment situation at Sperry was that both black and white employees were being laid-off as the company ended war production.

The United Electrical, Radio, and Machine Workers of America, was the only major labor union for a company employing large numbers of black workers to enact affirmative action reconversion policy. UE locals in District 4 proposed a very limited affirmative action plan at

⁴⁴³ “25 percent Increase Seen For Meat Canning,” *NYT*, September 5, 1945, 29.

⁴⁴⁴ Annual Report, Sperry Corporation, 1945, Science, Industry and Business Library, New York Public Library.

⁴⁴⁵ A M Wendell Malliet, “Corporation President Sees Bright Future Ahead For Equality In Jobs: Sperry Prexy States Views on Post-War Era Points Out Industry's New Attitude; Says Our Workers Have Made Excellent Record,” *New York Amsterdam News* (City Edition), May 26, 1945, 1A.

⁴⁴⁶ R.J. Thomas, “N.Y. Optimistic On Job Outlook: New State FEPC Law To Help Keep Jobs,” *The Chicago Defender* (National Edition), August 25, 1945, 5.

Sperry. According to the seniority policies of the company the newest hired, which would include virtually all black workers in the company, were the first fired.⁴⁴⁷ Under this policy the numbers of black workers employed in the company began to dwindle during 1945 as the war ended and former soldiers reclaimed their jobs.⁴⁴⁸ As Sperry laid-off workers both black and white, the number of black Sperry workers represented by the UE fell from a high of 600 in 1944, to 100 in December of 1945.⁴⁴⁹ In December of 1945 Sperry Local 450 voted unanimously to press for a new seniority plan designed to prevent the number of skilled black employees from dipping even further. That local representing 5,000 Sperry workers, voted to make a maintenance of black employment clause a major part of the contract negotiations with the company. Sperry Local 450 proposed a plan designed to prevent the number of skilled black employees from dropping below the level employed as of November 15, 1945. The proposed plan created a black to white worker ratio that was to be maintained regardless of length of service. Within the ratios seniority rules would still be observed. This would allow some black workers to remain in skilled positions at Sperry.⁴⁵⁰

The union was largely unsuccessful in convincing Sperry's management to alter their seniority policies to allow skilled and semi-skilled black workers to retain their positions. Management agreed to adjust seniority rules for veterans but not for African Americans. In some cases Local 450 found jobs for laid-off workers in other departments and in at least one other case "white workers in a department 'unanimously agreed to allow a skilled Negro worker

⁴⁴⁷ Martha Biondi, *To Stand and Fight*, 23-24.

⁴⁴⁸ Martha Biondi, *To Stand and Fight*, 23-24.

⁴⁴⁹ "Labor Forum," *New York Amsterdam News* (City Edition), December 29, 1945, 8.

⁴⁵⁰ Martha Biondi, *To Stand and Fight*, 23-24; Biondi, "The struggle for Black Equality in New York City, 1945-1955", 54-56; M. Moran Weston, "Labor Forum," *New York Amsterdam News* (City Edition), December 29, 1945, 8; "White CIO Workers Fight Layoff Of Negroes," *The Chicago Defender* (National edition), December 29, 1945, 2.

to stay instead of one of them.’’⁴⁵¹ These instances withstanding not even the racially progressive United Electrical, Radio, and Machine Workers of America could implement policies that would protect the jobs of skilled and semi-skilled black workers in the wake of conversion.⁴⁵² Though Sperry President Thomas Morgan advocated and actively worked for black employment, company management was not willing to change seniority laws which had been enacted to protect the fundamental rights of workers. The loss of black skilled and semi-skilled positions at a racially integrated and tolerant company like Sperry illustrates the fate of many black workers in former war industries.

The story was not completely bleak however for blacks in the post-war period. Though blacks were laid off from Sperry, not every black worker was ousted from his job with the company. In line with the larger employment trends of New York City black men at Sperry experienced displacement from their industrial jobs in the wake of the war. Though doors closed to some black men at Sperry many gained valuable training and experience that allowed them to find jobs in industries elsewhere.

⁴⁵¹ Martha Biondi, *To Stand and Fight*, 23-24.

⁴⁵² Sperry continued its efforts to fight for civil rights of African Americans for the rest of the decade and beyond. In 1945 the UE made an agreement with the FEPC to investigate complaints of discrimination in employment on account of race, creed, color or national origin and adjusting valid grievances. When the federal government failed to create a permanent FEPC, the union worked with state fair employment agencies. In 1946 the UE formalized its existing fair employment practices activities by establishing a National Fair Practices Committee and directing Districts and Locals to do likewise. Bill Cahn the publicity director for the UE urged the union to publicly advocate for desegregation of national baseball. In response to the Dodgers’ statement saying it would sway to public opinion in the issue of integration, Cahn suggested that the union mobilize a campaign in BK urging Branch Rickey (owner) and Leo Durocher (manager) of the Dodgers to treat Robinson as a player no matter his color. Cahn wanted to set up a demonstration at the first game in which Robinson appears to support his placement in the regular line-up. By the end of the decade the District 4 Fair Practices Committee set out to systematically ascertain the information on the number and job categories of black employees from companies it represented. The Union became one of the earliest bastions for Civil Rights activism in the 1950s.

Untitled Document, October 20, 1949, UE Papers, Record Group 2- 2.2NFPC – National Fair Practices Committee, Box 1, Folder 7 UE: NO-NFPC – Federal FEPC – UE Activity 1945-66; Memo from Bill Cahn (Publicity director) March 24, 1947 and Bill Cahn to James McLeish GVP of UE March 24, 1947, UE Papers, Record Group 4, General Office Files, Box 1375, Folder 192: District 4 Miscellaneous Special Topics, Dec. 1946 – Oct 1948; *UE Fights for Negro Rights*, March 20, 1950, UE Papers, Record Group 2- 2.2NFPC – National Fair Practices Committee, Box 1, Folder 14 – Miscellaneous, 1949-55.

More importantly Sperry, unlike many other companies, increased the number of black workers it employed in the wake of reconversion. In 1950 the Defense Production Act prohibited discrimination against any employee or applicant for employment on the basis of race, color, creed, or national origin. To enforce this law President Truman issued Executive Order 10308 in 1951 establishing a temporary Committee on Government Contract Compliance (CGCC). The CGCC was to examine and study the rules, procedures, and practices of the contracting agencies of the government to ensure the companies were complying with Government contract provisions prohibiting discrimination.⁴⁵³ Sperry retained its government contracts for production of weapons and technology for the armed forces after World War II and as the Cold War intensified the company expanded and diversified its manufactures. Therefore the company was under the purview of the Defense Production Act as well as the CGCC and was expected to treat black applicants and employees equally despite their race. This fact, along with the racially progressive attitude of the company's President Thomas Morgan, and perhaps the fair employment laws in New York State, facilitated Sperry's employment of black workers at a time when many other industries around the country did not.

After President Truman issued the Executive Order the National Urban League did a survey of thirty industrial cities to ascertain if blacks were being discriminated against by industries. The study, which the NUL sent to the CGCC, revealed that war industries embarked in widespread discrimination against black workers especially those applying for skilled and white collar positions. Black women were generally excluded from industrial positions and few black men were included in in-plant training courses. The study, which was funded in part by grants from the Marshall Field Fund, the United Community Defense Services and the Rosenstiel

⁴⁵³ Truman, Harry S. Executive Order 1038 – Improving the Means for Obtaining Compliance with the Non-Discrimination Provision of Federal Contracts, December 3, 1951. Accessed March 13, 2009. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=78360>

Foundation, concluded that the discrimination appeared to depend on local conditions. The Urban League described discriminatory employment practices in the South and Southwestern airplane industries; in Columbus, Ohio where forty plants with defense contracts did not employ blacks in clerical or technical jobs; and in Baltimore factories where blacks were excluded from most production jobs and all technical and clerical positions. The report found that two defense employers in New York, unlike industries in other areas of the country, were employing black workers. One of these New York plants was Sperry. In fact the Urban League proclaimed that “the Sperry Corporation was employing Negroes in substantial numbers.”⁴⁵⁴ Despite the fact that this article does not give hard numbers on black employees, it is significant that the National Urban League deemed Sperry’s number of black hires substantial given that the organization had targeted the company just a decade prior for refusing to hire blacks. Though the company had laid-off workers of all races at the end of the war and the lay-off of black workers was disproportionately high because of seniority regulations; company management hired black workers when production picked up after reconversion a practice that was not common among factories in the rest of the nation.

The change in black employment at Sperry from the beginning of the war to the end is an example of how jobs opened to blacks at industries during World War II. In just three years a company that had virtually no black workers, employed African Americans in skilled and semi-skilled positions. In this case, as in many other factories, it was a combination of factors that prompted Sperry’s management to do this. Black activism for employment brought public attention to the discriminatory practices of the company and prompted the State Committee on Discrimination and local offices of the FEPC to investigate the corporation’s hiring policies. Moreover the radical United Electrical, Radio, and Machine Workers of America advocated for

⁴⁵⁴ “Job Bias Reported Against Negroes,” *NYT*, February 5, 1952, 18.

black employment as they organized workers at Sperry's plants. Black employment steadily increased after the FEPC hearings and was amplified by a labor shortage in 1943 which prompted the company to actively recruit black workers. Though these factors did not work exactly the same way in all war industries, in many of those industries that did hire black workers a combination of these events occurred. Sperry continued its war-time policy of racial integration after reconversion as the company provided technology and produced weapons for the growing Cold War military industrial complex. Part of this had to do with the nature of goods produced by the company, but it also can be traced to its racially liberal president, as well as the anti-discriminatory employment regulations imposed at the federal and state levels. In these ways, Sperry represents both the larger trends and particularities of black employment during the 1940s and early 1950s and exemplifies the opportunities attracting blacks to migrate to New York City and other war production centers.

Chapter 5 Busting Out: Black New York in the 1940s

For the African Americans who left the Jim Crow south to find better paying jobs in the North and West a primary concern was finding a place to live. Blacks could not live wherever they pleased in northern cities. Most cities had a black district. In cities like Detroit, Los Angeles and Chicago, traditional black neighborhoods became overcrowded, crime increased, and social services were never able to keep up with the influx of new residents. At the same time, many whites moved out of cities to the suburbs during and especially after the war as higher wages created an expanding middle class and the GI Bill provided white Americans home loans to purchase houses in areas not open to black settlement. As whites left the city, housing opened for African Americans.⁴⁵⁵

As in other cities the World War II migration indelibly changed the face of New York, sparking trends that continued for the rest of the 1940s. More than 200,000 African Americans moved to New York in the 1940s. As in other urban areas, larger numbers of city whites began moving to the suburbs as home loans became more available to them after the war. In addition the areas of black settlement in the city had many of the same problems as black areas in other cities - namely overcrowding, high rents, and insufficient social services. The effects of the migration in New York however differed in some ways from other cities. Most significantly, African Americans began moving outside the primary area of black settlement in the city –

⁴⁵⁵ See Nicholas Lemann's *The Promised Land: The Great Black Migration and How It Changed America* (New York: Albert A. Knopf, 1991); Hollis Lynch's *The black urban condition: a documentary history, 1866-1971* (New York, N.Y., 1973); Kenneth L Kussmer's "African Americans in the City Since World War II: From the Industrial to the Post-Industrial Era" *Journal of Urban History*, Vol. 21, No. 4 (May 1995): 458-504.; Thomas Sugrue's *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton.: Princeton University Press, 1996); Shirley Ann Moore's *To Place our Deeds: The African American Community in Richmond California. 1910-1963* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005); Marylenn S Johnson's *The Second Gold Rush: Oakland and the East Bay in World War II* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996.); Josh Sides' *LA City Limits: African American Los Angeles from the Great Depression to the Present* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003.)

Harlem – to other boroughs, creating by 1950 a second major area of black settlement in the city as well as integrated neighborhoods in other boroughs. The dispersal of the city's blacks into several neighborhoods created varying and complex dynamics in race relations in the city.

Blacks began moving outside of Harlem in the 1940s due to the lack of housing and overcrowding in the neighborhood. The vast increase of blacks moving to New York during the war years coupled with the lack of available housing exacerbated problems present in Harlem since the 1930s. In 1940 there were nearly 300,000 blacks living in Manhattan and over the course of a decade an additional 100,000 came to the borough. Overcrowding intensified, already high rents rose, and mortality rates worsened causing the living conditions of Harlem's residents to further decline.

Blacks reacted to this decline in living conditions in varied ways. Some black leaders in the city advocated rent reductions and stabilization. Many black New Yorkers took a different approach - they looked to live elsewhere in the city. As blacks migrated to New York during the 1940s Harlemites were moving to the Bronx, Brooklyn, Long Island, and Westchester. Moreover, some of the newly arriving, black southern migrants chose to make Brooklyn their home instead of Harlem. It is no surprise then that over the course of the decade Harlem experienced less growth in comparison to other sections of the city.⁴⁵⁶

Harlem's blacks paid an inordinate amount of their income for rent. On average Harlem residents paid 60 percent of their earnings to rent apartments that landlords neglected to maintain.⁴⁵⁷ Harlem building owners charged residents exorbitant rents because discrimination prevented blacks from moving elsewhere in the borough.⁴⁵⁸ Harlem proprietors claimed they were charging blacks higher rents to make back the money they lost due to the vacancies caused

⁴⁵⁶ S W Garlington, "Pointed Points," *Amsterdam News*, December 10, 1949, 2.

⁴⁵⁷ S W Garlington, "Pointed Points," *Amsterdam News*, December 10, 1949, 2.

⁴⁵⁸ "Million Dollar Kickback Due in Harlem in Rent Control," *Amsterdam News*, May 2, 1942, 1.

by white flight.⁴⁵⁹ The high rents landlords charged blacks coupled with the low wages blacks earned caused economic hardship for blacks in Harlem.

Many black leaders and organizations advocated rent control laws to ease the financial burden of Harlem residents. African American leaders tried to use the newly created Office of Price Administration (OPA) to exact rent control in the city. Due to the nationwide decline in housing construction, which was exacerbated by a surge in the number of blacks migrating from the South, the housing market rapidly tightened in many urban areas. The federal government responded to the housing shortage (and the shortage of other consumer commodities) by passing the Emergency Price Control Act of 1942 and establishing an Office of Price Administration (OPA). The OPA had the power to freeze rents and prices in designated localities. The United Tenants League, a Communist influenced tenant organization, the Citizens Housing Council a high-powered housing reform organization founded in 1937, and other consumer organizations pressed Mayor La Guardia to have the OPA immediately freeze rents in New York City. La Guardia made the request, but the OPA refused action claiming the city's vacancy rate (7.5 percent in 1940) was too high for mandatory controls. Instead the OPA declared the city a "defense rental area," and called for a voluntary limit on rent increases, monitored by the mayor's office.⁴⁶⁰ This refusal angered many African American leaders and prompted them to take action to ensure that New York City rents would be regulated by the OPA.

The failure of the OPA to impose rent controls became the rallying point for some black activists; and the fact that New York was one of the last major cities to come under rent control during the war prompted a concerted movement to influence the OPA to declare New York a

⁴⁵⁹ Adell Glasgow, "Harlem Faces Higher Rents," *Amsterdam News*, October 17, 1942, 1.

⁴⁶⁰ Mark Naison, "The Wartime Tenants Movement and the Struggle for Rent Control: Organizational Diffusion and Political Success," From Chapter 3: Eviction Resistance to Rent Control Tenant Activism in the Great Depression, *The Tenant Movement in New York City, 1904-1984*. Accessed April 27, 2009. <http://www.tenant.net/Community/history/hist03h.html>

defense area subject to price control. Activists from other cities came to New York to participate in the campaign for lower rents. Edgar Brown, a leader in the National Negro Council, an organization aimed at uniting civil rights organizations and the labor movement, came to New York to conduct a similar campaign. Brown, who had waged successful fights for rent control in Chicago and other major cities, wrote President Roosevelt a letter in August of 1942 protesting the discrimination directed against African Americans in the government's administration of price control and rationing. He urged the President to include Harlem as an OPA rent-controlled area since "half a million Negro residents are paying exorbitant and disproportionately high rents and suffer intolerable congestion and diminishing services."⁴⁶¹ The following month Brown held mass meetings in Abyssinian, Metropolitan, and Union Baptist Churches to recruit supporters for the fight for rent control. Meeting attendees signed petitions that were sent to Leon Henderson, head of the Office of Price Administration, demanding he designate Harlem a war area in which rents could be controlled.⁴⁶²

In addition, Brown and Donelan Phillips, President of the Consolidated Tenants' League, opened a ten-day drive to get 100,000 Harlemites to sign a petition calling on the Federal Price Administration to designate New York City a defense area and to set a rent ceiling. To continue the drive the March on Washington Movement and representatives from most of the city's black churches formed a permanent committee under the leadership of the Consolidated Tenants' League.⁴⁶³ The Tenant's League partnered with other organizations in the city to up the pressure on the OPA to cap rents in the city. Newly-elected Harlem city councilman Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., mobilized his People's Committee to support the petition to have Harlem declared a

⁴⁶¹ "Brown Protests Rents in Harlem," *Amsterdam News*, August 29, 1942, 5.

⁴⁶² "Rent Fight Opens Here: Campaign Will Ask Harlem Be Designated As a 'War Area,'" *Amsterdam News*, September 12, 1942, 1; Ramona Lowe, "Harlem Rents Checked," *Amsterdam News*, November 20, 1943, 1.

⁴⁶³ "Open Ten Day Tenant Drive," *Amsterdam News*, September 19, 1942, 4.

"war emergency area." The National Negro Congress joined the drive by collecting petitions among its followers and even organizing rent strikes in individual buildings. In other parts of the city the American Labor party made the struggle for rent control a major political priority. Congressman Vito Marcantonio, an advocate of rent control and public housing, pressed the issue on a federal level, as did American Labor Party councilmen Michael Quill, (Bronx), Benjamin Davis, Jr. (Harlem), and Peter Cacchione (Brooklyn).⁴⁶⁴ The campaign for the OPA to enact rent control did not achieve immediate success but would in November of 1943 when the OPA finally declared New York City a War Rental Area.

Though many black organizations acknowledged the migration's contribution to Harlem's social problems, the black press generally did not. While publishing articles on the troubles Harlemites faced, the *Amsterdam News* ran virtually no articles focused on the migration itself during the war years. This was a stark contrast from World War I when black publications such as the *Amsterdam News*, *New York Age*, *Crisis*, and *Opportunity* constantly published articles on the expanding black population of Harlem. Since the flow of blacks had never really stopped since World War I, perhaps black newspaper editors believed the continued trend did not warrant attention because it had become an accepted reality. Though there is no definitive answer to explain the editors' choice not to run articles on the migration, the absence of articles indicates that the migration in their opinion was not noteworthy. By the 1940s black migration to the city had been going on for more than twenty years and Southern migrants were well integrated into the native New York community. Moreover the problems Harlemites faced in the

⁴⁶⁴ Mark Naison, "The Wartime Tenants Movement and the Struggle for Rent Control: Organizational Diffusion and Political Success," From Chapter 3: Eviction Resistance to Rent Control Tenant Activism in the Great Depression, *The Tenant Movement in New York City, 1904-1984*. Accessed April 27, 2009. <http://www.tenant.net/Community/history/hist03h.html>

war years were not new problems. High rents, overcrowding, and crime were magnified with this increased wave of migrants to Harlem.

Though the black newspapers did not believe the migration was noteworthy of news coverage, the mainstream press focused on the migration and its contribution to the deterioration of living conditions in Harlem. Mainstream newspapers published articles linking the migration with the worsening conditions Harlem residents lived under. Several such articles appeared in the *New York Times*. An editorial blamed the sudden increase of blacks in the city for the inability of the New York City administration to provide the services necessary for their survival.⁴⁶⁵ Another argued that the migration of southern African Americans was the reason for overcrowding in Harlem and conditions prompting New York's blacks to move out of that neighborhood.⁴⁶⁶ Another opinion piece blamed congestion, which was worsened by the migration, for many of the social problems in Harlem and advocated the dispersal of the black population in other boroughs.⁴⁶⁷ The migration and the social problems it wrought were ever-present in the *New York Times* in late 1941 and early 1942.⁴⁶⁸

As the editorials in the *Times* indicated, the migration worsened many of the social problems in the Harlem community. Not only did the 100,000 additional African Americans who moved to Harlem intensify overcrowding and the need for housing, it also enabled landlords to continue to charge high rents because of the increased demand. Very few of the census districts immediately adjacent to Harlem became black during the 1940s and the general geography of Harlem remained the same during the war years.⁴⁶⁹ Moreover, the additional

⁴⁶⁵ "Topics of the Times," *NYT*, January 23, 1942, 18.

⁴⁶⁶ "Negro Migration To Harlem Heavy," *NYT*, November 19, 1941, 25.

⁴⁶⁷ "Topics of the Times," *NYT*, November 18, 1941, 24.

⁴⁶⁸ United States Census Bureau, Table F35 Age by Race and Sex for Manhattan Borough of New York City, 1940 & 1930, United States Population Census, 1940, 177.

⁴⁶⁹ See Appendix, Figure 1.1

residents in Harlem also taxed the already inadequate educational and social resources available to area residents. The National Urban League, which dealt specifically with the condition of blacks in cities, emphasized the migration's role in the problems plaguing Harlem in an effort to find solutions. James Hubert, Executive Director of the New York Urban League, at an annual meeting for the organization, linked the increase in Negro population with declining conditions in Harlem and the increasing crime rate.⁴⁷⁰ Likewise, Lester Granger, Assistant Secretary for the National Urban League, concluded that the social and economic problems of Harlem were in fact national problems because the horrible living conditions in the South pushed migrants to come to New York. Granger asserted that the conditions in northern cities could be improved by implementing a national program to achieve higher unemployment insurance and other social security measures, as well as better schools, hospitals, housing and judicial process for African Americans living in cities. Responses to these problems were necessary because Granger believed the migration, and the difficult living conditions it exacerbated in Harlem, would continue.⁴⁷¹

These declining living conditions caused displeasure among Harlem residents and an undercurrent of discontent that contributed to the Harlem Riot in 1943.⁴⁷² The police believed that the migrants had a direct role in causing the Riot. The New York Police Department had received a report that "organized gangs of hoodlums from certain Southern cities" had been sent to Harlem to cause trouble and had been trickling in for some time.⁴⁷³ This line of thinking, though erroneous, reveals the mind-set of the police, and other New Yorkers, about the character of the migrants and the increasing black population's negative effect on New York City.

⁴⁷⁰ "40% Gain in Negroes Found Here in Decade," *NYT*, June 22, 1942, 23.

⁴⁷¹ "Negro Migration To Harlem Heavy," *NYT*, November 19, 1941, 25.

⁴⁷² *Ibid.*

⁴⁷³ "Harlem is Orderly With Heavy Guard," *NYT*, August 3, 1943, 1.

The idea that black migration adversely affected northern cities was a belief held by some government officials. United States Attorney General Francis Biddle linked black migration to the outbreak of riots in cities during the summer of 1943. Biddle urged President Roosevelt to respond to the wave of urban race riots in various cities such as Detroit, Los Angeles, and Harlem, by forbidding the migration of African Americans to northern and western cities.⁴⁷⁴ According to reports in the black press, the suggestion came as part of a six-point “Anti-Riot Program” submitted to the White House based on a study made by the civil liberties division of the Department of Justice and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). Biddle believed overcrowding in centers of war production and increasing racial tensions could be alleviated by stemming black migration to the areas. This would be accomplished through the War Manpower Commission which would close work sources to Negroes therefore eliminating the draw of better employment that attracted blacks to urban areas.⁴⁷⁵ Biddle denied heading any program that would prohibit the movement of black workers explicitly but did note that war employers and organizations needed to more carefully consider the effects of overcrowding before advocating or facilitating the migration of large numbers of black or white war workers into urban defense production areas.⁴⁷⁶ There was little provision made for housing for black or white migrants in the new war production areas. The housing shortage in New York was indicative of a larger national problem. Though there is no direct evidence that Biddle recommended a systematic end to black migration to northern cities, it is clear that he blamed the migration of southern blacks and the subsequent pressure the increasing black population put on the limited resources in urban areas for the outbreak of violence in summer of 1943.

⁴⁷⁴ “Care in Migration of Labor is Urged,” *NYT*, August 14, 1943, 11; “Keep Negro in Southland Attorney General Urges,” *Amsterdam News*, August 14, 1943, 1.

⁴⁷⁵ “Keep Negro in Southland Attorney General Urges,” *Amsterdam News*, August 14, 1943, 1; “FDR Told to Halt Negro Migration to War Plants,” *Chicago Defender*, August 14, 1943, 1.

⁴⁷⁶ “Care in Migration of Labor is Urged,” *NYT*, August 14, 1943, 11.

New York's black press quickly criticized Attorney General Biddle's suggestion, highlighting the racism, discrimination, and social problems America's blacks endured. One author accused Biddle of colluding with "Southern plantation owners and Dixie industrial exploiters" to keep blacks in the south for cheap labor.⁴⁷⁷ The *Amsterdam News* published A. Philip Randolph's response to Biddle's proposal. In his letter to the Attorney General, Randolph argued that if the government enacted Biddle's proposal, it would in effect limit the employment opportunities of southern blacks migrating to improve their quality of life, and would therefore violate their constitutional rights. Moreover Randolph asserted this kind of policy would amount to gross segregation and discrimination. Randolph ended his letter with some suggestions about how to alleviate the racial problems facing America's cities. In Randolph's estimation the only way to avoid future disturbances was to provide equal opportunities for blacks. He wrote, "It is not the increase of the Negro population in war production centers that causes race riots, but it is the fact that Negroes have never gotten a fair break, and just and reasonable opportunities in any phase of American life, that is at the bottom of these conflicts."⁴⁷⁸ Many black activists and organizations agreed with Randolph's statement and called on Mayor La Guardia and other city officials to find solutions to the problems the city's blacks faced – problems that were only worsened by the renewed wave of migration to New York during the war.

A month after the Harlem Riot 554 delegates from religious, education, civil rights, labor, economic, and fraternal groups attended a two-session meeting at Hunter College to find ways to eliminate discrimination against African-Americans in order to prevent another riot. The resulting organization, the Citizen's Emergency Conference for Interracial Unity, demanded that Mayor La Guardia appoint an interracial committee to study conditions among African

⁴⁷⁷ "Keep Negro in Southland Attorney General Urges," *Amsterdam News*, August 14, 1943, 1.

⁴⁷⁸ "Opposes Proposed To Ban Migration," *Amsterdam News*, August 21, 1943, 10.

Americans in the city. They also wanted black representation on bodies in the City administration including the Board of Education, Board of Higher Education, Police Department, and Health Department. The conference resolved to end employment discrimination and urged the use of the FEPC and COD to fight discrimination in war industries. They also demanded that unions remove bylaws that denied admission of members by reason of race, creed, or color. Moreover the Conference advocated more rigid enforcement of OPA regulations and urged the state government to develop a consumer department to prevent price gouging in under-privileged areas. Lastly the organization wanted to take steps to end residential segregation and provide needed social services.⁴⁷⁹

Mayor La Guardia responded to the riot and the Hunter College conference by creating the Mayor's Committee on Unity (MCOU). The new organization aimed to prevent future racial disturbances by promoting interracial unity and identifying conditions that contributed to racial conflict.⁴⁸⁰ In February of 1944, Mayor La Guardia appointed members of the committee, which acted as a watchdog for racism throughout the city. Civic and social agencies also called on the organization for advice on matters concerning better integration of African Americans.⁴⁸¹ The creation of the Mayor's Committee on Unity meant that La Guardia had officially made race relations a priority and prevention of discrimination a duty of the city government.

Though no more major riots occurred in the 1940s, racial confrontations continued in Manhattan as African Americans moved into Washington Heights. In October 1943, only two months after the Harlem Riot, skirmishes between new black residents and the white residents of

⁴⁷⁹ "2 Conferences Here Seek To Relieve Racial Tension," *New York P. M.*, September 27, 1943, New York State War Council COD, Box 5, Folders 212 - Newspaper Clippings Miscellaneous; Report of the Citizen's Emergency Conference for Interracial Unity – Hunter College September 25, 1943," NNC Papers, Part IV, Box 78, Folder 78 – Membership.

⁴⁸⁰ "Report of the Citizen's Emergency Conference for Interracial Unity – Hunter College September 25, 1943," NNC Papers, Part IV, Box 78, Folder 78 – Membership.

⁴⁸¹ Mayor's Committee on Unity, "Summary of Activities during 1951 of the Mayor's Committee on Unity of New York City – March 21, 1952," Humanities and Social Sciences Library, New York Public Library.

Washington Heights broke out. Police broke up an alleged plot to run black residents out of the neighborhood, vandals damaged property recently occupied by blacks, and minor interracial clashes threatened to develop into a full-fledged race riot in the fall of 1943.⁴⁸² As black families moved into Washington Heights, vandals painted swastikas on the buildings where African Americans resided. Detectives investigating the vandalism said that white residents of the neighborhood resented the fact that Negroes had recently been moving in larger numbers.⁴⁸³ Despite these incidents of racial antagonism, a large-scale violent riot between blacks and whites did not occur. Similar racial antagonisms in other cities around the country prompted violence in 1943. Perhaps the dispersion of blacks into other areas of the city played a part in the prevention of a major race riot from erupting in New York City.

Just as the Harlem Riot of 1943 impelled organizations and city officials to seek solutions to the problems plaguing Harlem, it also prompted the government to more closely regulate rents. The upheaval of August 1943 prompted a nervous OPA to open a branch office on 135th Street and begin monitoring Harlem rents and prices. The Consolidated Tenants League, Adam Clayton Powell's People's Committee, and left wing unions and neighborhood groups began flooding the OPA office with complaints. At the same time, the city's CIO unions, especially Mike Quill's Transport Workers Union and the left-led National Maritime Union, argued that when lease renewals came up on October 1, 1943, landlords would violate voluntary restraints and institute massive rent increases. The mayor, in response to the pressure and complaints of these various groups, escalated his pressure on the OPA to control Harlem rents as well. On November 1, 1943, the OPA finally relented and declared New York City a War Rental Area with mandatory ceilings retroactive to the levels of March 1, 1943. From this point on those

⁴⁸² "Police Smash Plot to Drive Negroes from Heights," *Amsterdam News*, October 23, 1943, 1.

⁴⁸³ "Terrorize Homes in Upper Harlem," *Amsterdam News*, November 13, 1943, 1.

advocating fairer rents in Harlem focused their attention on the OPA as it became a mechanism to achieve rent control.⁴⁸⁴ The OPA ordered a freeze on rents in Harlem designed to prevent indiscriminate rent gouging by Harlem landlords but the OPA did not effectively enforce the mandate.⁴⁸⁵ Black activists and leftist groups would focus future fights for enforcement of rent control and lower rents in Harlem on the OPA.⁴⁸⁶

Despite the creation of the Mayor's Committee on Unity to improve race relations in the city and the freezing of rents by the OPA many blacks chose to settle outside of Harlem to avoid the declining living conditions there. Overcrowding in Harlem prompted new migrants from the South to settle in Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brooklyn an area of the city that had a small pocket of black settlement before the war. Black New Yorkers looking to escape the high rents and dilapidated housing in Harlem also moved to Bedford-Stuyvesant. Other Harlemites chose to move to the south Bronx, an area with very few black residents before the war. The dispersion of African Americans to different areas in the city created new black neighborhoods, allowing New York's Negroes to escape the confines of a single black ghetto. Though some whites opposed black residency outside of Harlem, whites did not mount any effective campaigns

⁴⁸⁴Mark Naison, "The Wartime Tenants Movement and the Struggle for Rent Control: Organizational Diffusion and Political Success," From Chapter 3: Eviction Resistance to Rent Control Tenant Activism in the Great Depression, *The Tenant Movement in New York City, 1904-1984*. Accessed April 27, 2009.

<http://www.tenant.net/Community/history/hist03h.html>

⁴⁸⁵Joseph Gyourko and Peter Linneman, "Equity and Efficiency Aspects of Rent Control: An Empirical Study of New York City," *Journal of Urban Economics*, Vol. 26, (1989), 54-56.

⁴⁸⁶Those advocating OPA rent control wanted to make sure the bureau could enforce its rulings. Councilman Quill proposed a bill to the city council giving local courts the power to enforce the price ceilings and rent control regulations of the OPA. Quill argued that if the bill was passed it would greatly strengthen the efforts to keep prices and rents down. M Moran Weston, Field Secretary of the Negro Labor Victory Committee, also noted the ineffectiveness of the Office of Price Administration in New York and suggested solutions for enacting real price regulation by stores and realtors in black neighborhoods. NLVC leaders believed the OPA and its administrators needed to develop a more comprehensive program to effectively enforce price regulations in black communities especially Harlem. The Negro Labor Victory Committee welcomed the OPA's plans to open a War Price and Rationing Board in Harlem but suggested additional measures. They suggested the OPA appoint black administrative officers on regional, district, and local staffs who could advise generally in matters affecting policy and administration in African American communities. The NLVC believed these black administrators would have a deep appreciation of community problems and broad experience in helping to solve them.

preventing black settlement in Bedford-Stuyvesant or Morrisania as was done in Detroit. Perhaps this was the primary reason there was no major race riot in the city.

The dispersal of the black population into other areas of the city relieved some of the pressure building up in black New York. Though African Americans in the city still faced job discrimination, overcrowded neighborhoods, higher rents and substandard living conditions, the problems were not as acute as they surely would have been if all the city's blacks were confined in one neighborhood. In 1943 riots broke out in cities all over the country – the most notably in Detroit, Los Angeles, Beaumont, Texas, and New York. In Detroit and Los Angeles the conflicts involved violence between whites and minorities and the violence was widespread. In Detroit, where the worst violence occurred, rioting took place in districts covering approximately 75 percent of city. Thirty-four people were killed and more than 700 were injured.⁴⁸⁷ The dispersal of blacks into Bedford-Stuyvesant and Morrisania may well have prevented this level of violence and destruction in New York City.

Brooklyn's Little Harlem: Bedford-Stuyvesant in the 1940s

The migration of blacks to New York City and the declining living conditions blacks experienced in Harlem ushered in significant demographic changes in Brooklyn during the 1940s. The racial composition of some Brooklyn neighborhoods – most notably Bedford-Stuyvesant and Brownsville – changed. There had been a small number of blacks living in Brooklyn since the turn of the century, however the creation of a single predominately black area of settlement in the borough occurred as a result of the large influx of blacks into central

⁴⁸⁷ Harvard Sitkoff, "Racial Militancy and Interracial Violence in the Second World War," *Journal of American History*, Vol. 58, No. 3 (Dec., 1971), 661-81.

Brooklyn and subsequent white flight in the World War II era. Bedford-Stuyveant became the second major area of black settlement in the city during the 1940s.

Brooklyn from its establishment had black residents. In the eighteenth century Brooklyn, like Manhattan had many slaves.⁴⁸⁸ Throughout the nineteenth century the population of blacks in Brooklyn increased, however the white population did as well, and by 1870 blacks comprised only 1.2 percent of Brooklyn's population. Brooklyn's blacks did not live in one concentrated area of the borough, but were instead disbursed over various neighborhoods.⁴⁸⁹ The elite black community in Brooklyn formed in the wake of the Draft Riots during the Civil War as Manhattan blacks moved to escape the violence.⁴⁹⁰ The most distinct black district emerged in the Weeksville-Carrsville community in present day Crown Heights.⁴⁹¹ Brooklyn's black population increased at a modest rate during the first two decades of the twentieth century. As tens of thousands of blacks moved to New York during the Great Migration, the increase in the black population in Brooklyn lagged well behind the skyrocketing black population of Manhattan. Subsequently Harlem became the center of black settlement in New York City and obscured the much smaller black communities in Brooklyn until the significant influx of black residents to Bedford Stuyvesant in the 1940s.⁴⁹²

Though Bedford-Stuyvesant would not become a predominately black neighborhood until the end of the decade, blacks had lived in the Bedford area as slaves since its earliest development and by the turn of the twentieth century blacks resided along Atlantic Avenue from the western border of Bedford-Stuyvesant to Weeksville and beyond. This settlement of blacks

⁴⁸⁸ Harold Connolly, "Blacks in Brooklyn from 1900-1960." PhD. Diss., New York University, 1972, 7.

⁴⁸⁹ Ibid, 13-16.

⁴⁹⁰ Brooklyn Public Library, "Brooklyn and the New York City Draft Riots," Brooklynology website. Accessed February 28, 2012. <http://brooklynology.brooklynpubliclibrary.org/post/2010/07/14/Three-Days-in-July.aspx>

⁴⁹¹ Ibid., 14-16.

⁴⁹² Ibid., 82.

in Bedford Stuyvesant was connected to the urbanization of the area in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Between 1875 and 1900 the black population in the wards constituting the greater Bedford Stuyvesant area increased from 1,540 to over 7,000, accounting for over 40 percent of Brooklyn's black population by 1900. Blacks lived in the homes along Atlantic Avenue and Fulton Street but did not find housing on the residential streets adjoining those major thoroughfares. Despite the increase of black residents, Bedford-Stuyvesant remained overwhelmingly white in 1900.⁴⁹³

Though most of Brooklyn's black residents worked in unskilled low-paying jobs as domestics, janitors, common laborers, and servants; some blacks moved to the borough for better living conditions. Brooklyn became known for its post-Civil War "aristocratic" Negro settlement as the *Brooklyn Eagle* noted the existence of a black elite they referred to as the "Negro 400." Better housing and less overt racism attracted a group of black leaders and intellectuals to the borough. Affluent black residents founded institutions such as the Brooklyn Literary Union of the Siloam Presbyterian Church, the Concord Literary Circle, the Turner Lyceum and the Progressive Literary Union which engaged in concerts, lectures, and discussions in addition to running lending libraries. Despite the absence of overt racism, whites in Brooklyn did not readily welcome African Americans into their neighborhoods. The primary reason for white resistance to black residency was the anticipation of the devaluation of their property.⁴⁹⁴

World War I stimulated increased black migration as war production and deployment of soldiers served as pull factors attracting blacks to the North, and the boll weevil infestation and dropping cotton prices pushed southern farmers and sharecroppers out. The flow of black southerners continued through the 1920s a decade in which the black communities in northern

⁴⁹³ Ibid, 37-38.

⁴⁹⁴ Ibid, 51-53, 63-63.

urban centers were created. In this period Brooklyn's black population more than doubled from 31,912 to 68,921. Most of these migrants came from the South, and to a lesser degree the West Indies. Brooklyn's black population continued to be confined to the narrow axis extending along Fulton Street and Atlantic Avenue from the downtown and Fort Greene areas through the Bedford and Stuyvesant sections.⁴⁹⁵ Beyond these streets the districts of Bedford, Stuyvesant, and Crown Heights remained primarily white.⁴⁹⁶

During the 1930s, the general northward migration of blacks slowed, but Brooklyn's black population expanded at a more rapid rate than most northern urban centers. Blacks moved into parts of Bedford-Stuyvesant adjoining the major avenues that were already dominated by blacks.⁴⁹⁷ The construction of the IND subway in the 1930s connected Harlem to Bedford-Stuyvesant. This new train line helped to promote the movement of blacks from Harlem into the area. The new black residents lived mostly above stores on Fulton Street and Sumner Avenue.⁴⁹⁸ This small community of black residents provided an alternative neighborhood for blacks who did not want to live in Harlem. In the next decade Bedford-Stuyvesant became a black neighborhood. 61 percent of the borough's black population resided in Bedford-Stuyvesant and as blacks moved in white residents moved to other neighborhoods.⁴⁹⁹

Apartments became available for black settlement as whites left Bedford-Stuyvesant. Bedford-Stuyvesant was one of the older areas of Brooklyn that had emerged before extensive expansion of rapid transit. Most of the housing had been constructed before 1900 and was growing old by 1930. Newer more attractive housing was being built in areas such as Bay

⁴⁹⁵ Ibid, 82-83.

⁴⁹⁶ Harold X. Connelly, *A Ghetto Grows in Brooklyn*, (New York: New York University Press, 1977), 52-55

⁴⁹⁷ Ibid, 52-55.

⁴⁹⁸ Henry Etzkowitz and Gerald M. Schaflander, *Ghetto Crisis: Riots or Reconciliation?* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company 1969), 3.

⁴⁹⁹ Harold X. Connelly, *A Ghetto Grows in Brooklyn*, 129-130.

Ridge, Coney Island, and Flatbush and new train lines were being constructed to these outlying areas.⁵⁰⁰ The availability of newer, affordable housing prompted white residents to leave Bedford-Stuyvesant, opening up space for black residents. The actions of local real estate developers also contributed to the process of white flight.

Real estate developers in the mid 1930s looked to recreate white middle class Bedford-Stuyvesant, but their actions in the end facilitated black settlement. Developers renovated area brownstones, believing that property values would increase with the construction of the Fulton Avenue subway line which would provide rapid transit to the area from Manhattan making the area attractive to white collar workers. They also expected the subsequent dismantling of the el to raise property values. These developers looked to renovate older one and two-family brownstones into more modern multifamily dwellings that would make more money for building owners therefore increasing property values as well. These real estate developers mistakenly thought the higher rents they would charge for renovated apartments would discourage blacks from purchasing or renting homes in Bedford-Stuyvesant. Their plans backfired. The subway construction and the temporary blight it brought to the neighborhood, as well as delayed dismantling of the el, contributed to decline in property values in Bedford-Stuyvesant precipitating white flight. Moreover when the Fulton Avenue subway was finally completed it linked Bedford-Stuyvesant directly to Harlem while cutting the time of the commute nearly in half. Therefore, blacks could live in the less crowded atmosphere of Bedford-Stuyvesant and yet be reasonably proximate to the entertainment of Harlem.⁵⁰¹ The very changes white realtors believed would return Bedford-Stuyvesant to being a middle class white neighborhood actually encouraged black settlement.

⁵⁰⁰ Harold X. Connolly, "Blacks in Brooklyn from 1900-1960", 88.

⁵⁰¹ Ibid, 160-165.

White flight was further precipitated by New Deal policies of the 1930s. New Deal era Federal Loan agencies began red-lining districts in an expanding New York City. Subsequently, banks and loan agencies, most significantly the Home Owners Loan Corporation, began giving ratings to communities which were used to determine the property value as well as the ability of its residents to obtain loans for buying and renting homes. Federal loan agencies gave the lowest ratings to areas with African American residents, causing property values to decline in these areas. Moreover the agency steered federal funding for development away from these areas because of the low ratings, concentrating funding for new housing in outlying, middle class areas of Brooklyn. As blacks moved into neighborhoods, whites moved to areas with better ratings which caused property values in black communities to decline. White North Brooklyn residents were forced to choose between holding on to devalued property in declining areas and selling their homes and moving to perimeter districts with government guaranteed mortgages. The red-lining caused blacks to be trapped in the communities where they settled. In New York those areas were Harlem and after the 1940s North-central Brooklyn. In Brooklyn blacks had, prior to red-lining, been the least segregated ethnic group in the borough but were increasingly being relegated to a handful of neighborhoods.⁵⁰²

The growing numbers of black defense workers in Brooklyn industries such as the Brooklyn Navy Yard (BNY) solidified the African-American presence in Bedford-Stuyvesant. Many black navy yard workers moved into the hundreds of rooming establishments that landlords subdivided out of the older houses in the neighborhood. The Navy Yard, one of the largest war time employers in the city, was at the western end of the Bedford-Stuyvesant district and for some within walking distance. As the population of blacks in Bedford-Stuyvesant grew so too did the number of blacks and minority workers employed by the Brooklyn Navy Yard.

⁵⁰² Craig Steven Wilder, *Covenant with Color*, 185-192.

During the war the Navy Yard employed approximately 5,500 people. Many of these workers were temporary and most were let go at the war's end. However, because of the large presence of blacks in Bedford-Stuyvesant the Navy Yard again hired black workers after reconversion. By the time the Navy announced the closing of the Brooklyn yard in 1964 non-whites composed about 19 percent of the workforce (more than 1,900 employees).⁵⁰³

The migration of blacks to Bedford-Stuyvesant ushered in some of the same problems that plagued Harlem. One of the most pressing problems for Bedford-Stuyvesant's black residents was high rents. Landlords in the area charged the new black tenants higher rents to increase their profit. In 1944 Louis Pink, the rent director of the New York City defense area, accused landlords of exploiting black residents by spending less money to maintain their rental properties while charging black residents higher rents than their former white tenants. Bedford-Stuyvesant proprietors looked to optimize their profit as they assumed that property values would depreciate rapidly as blacks moved into the neighborhood. Moreover financial institutions were unwilling to make loans in these areas which also diminished property prices in Bedford-Stuyvesant.⁵⁰⁴

Rents were so high in black areas of Brooklyn, that writer Richard Wright took the roll of aggrieved tenant when he led sixty-four families of a Brooklyn apartment building on a rent strike. The Bedford-Stuyvesant building was converted for black tenancy and the building management increased rents by as much as \$25 per month. The Fansirene Realty Corporation, owner of the building, contended that it had made building improvements and on those grounds

⁵⁰³John Stobo, *The Brooklyn Navy Yard: Civil Servants Building Warships* The BNY in the Inter-War Era "Preparing For War, 1937-1941, Part 4." Accessed December 11, 2011. <http://www.columbia.edu/~jrs9/BNY-Hist-Prep-War-4.html>.

Stobo acknowledges though that much of the evidence supporting this view remains anecdotal. At the time of the announcement of the Navy Yard's closing in November of 1964 the facility had a workforce of more than 10,000 employees according to John Stobo's figures. <http://www.columbia.edu/~jrs9/Navy-Yard-views.html>

⁵⁰⁴Eunace Woodson, "Assail Bedford Housing," *New York Amsterdam News*, March 4, 1944, 1B.

petitioned the Office of Price Administration for the right to maintain the higher rents. Wright and members of the building's Tenant's League, which he organized in the summer of 1943 soon after he moved into the building, were prepared to take the case to court. They vowed not to pay a cent in rent until the corporation "puts the rent back ... as the OPA ruled."⁵⁰⁵ Though there is no evidence to point to the success of Wright and the tenant council's initiative, the call to action by such a prominent figure points to the hardship the high rents placed on black tenants and the importance of the issue.

Coinciding with the growth of the black population in Bedford-Stuyvesant was deterioration of the housing in that area. As blacks moved into the neighborhood in greater numbers in the 1930s, realtors saw an opportunity to make profits by dividing homes into apartments and rooms for rent. These realtors bought brownstones and homes and converted them into apartments for the new black residents. Many of these homebuyers were absentee landlords who failed to maintain their properties, causing overcrowding and bad living conditions for the blacks who moved into their buildings.⁵⁰⁶ Despite the efforts of community groups to get federal authorities to take action against banks who made loans to these speculators, nothing was done. This process continued through the 1930s and 1940s. Homes continued to be subdivided and rented as apartments and private rooms.⁵⁰⁷ The living conditions got so bad that in 1941 tenants living in a tenement of Myrtle Avenue launched a rent strike to protest their living conditions. There was no central heating in the building, and it had loose wiring, and gas and oil leaks. Moreover the building was infested with roaches and rodents.⁵⁰⁸ This was not the only building in the area with these kinds of sub-standard living conditions.

⁵⁰⁵ "Richard Wright Leads Brooklyn Rent Strike," *The Chicago Defender*, March 4, 1944, 11.

⁵⁰⁶ Clarence Taylor, *The Black Churches of Brooklyn* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 103.

⁵⁰⁷ *Ibid*, 103-104.

⁵⁰⁸ *Ibid*, 254.

As blacks continued to move into the area, Bedford-Stuyvesant became overcrowded and residents clamored for the construction of quality housing to alleviate some of the congestion. The result was the Kingsborough Houses, a public housing project located at Rochester Avenue and Bergen Street which opened in 1941. Construction of the housing project was the direct result of a three-year fight by local civic and welfare organizations to better the conditions of the people living in the Bedford-Stuyvesant section. Leading the campaign for this project was Albert Clarke, director of research for the Brooklyn Federation for Better Housing. Clarke made a statistical survey of the conditions of blacks and whites in the uptown section of the neighborhood and submitted it to the New York City Housing Authority. This report showed that congestion, juvenile delinquency, automobile accidents, lack of playground and recreational facilities, and overcrowding were the main contributors to the troubles arising in the vicinity. With the belief that better housing would eliminate these problems, Clarke with the aid of Congressmen Emanuel Celler and Andrew Sommers, kept the pressure on NYCHA until some effort was made to build better housing in the Bedford-Stuyvesant area.⁵⁰⁹ In 1941 just outside of Bedford Stuyvesant, the New York City Housing Authority opened the Kingsborough houses. The complex consisted of over 1,100 units just blocks from Atlantic Avenue the center of black settlement in Bedford-Stuyvesant. Situated on the then border of Bedford-Stuyvesant and Crown Heights near Weeksville the city intended to admit both black and white residents to the new housing complex. Blacks occupied less than half the units and NYCHA remained committed to keeping the project open to white residents as well. Though NYCHA had finally constructed a housing project that was integrated, this very integration decreased the number of units available to black residents in the Bedford-Stuyvesant and Crown Heights neighborhoods. The complex

⁵⁰⁹ "First Tenants Occupy Kingsboro," *New York Amsterdam Star-News*, August 23, 1941, 17.

provided better quality housing units for blacks in the area, but not as many as advocates for better housing for Bedford-Stuyvesant's blacks wanted.⁵¹⁰

Another problem blacks in Bedford-Stuyvesant faced was school segregation. As the black population of Brooklyn became increasingly concentrated in Bedford-Stuyvesant, de-facto segregation and the neighborhood school system prompted segregation in public schools as well. The Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) of PS 35 on McDonough Street, in Bedford-Stuyvesant charged that the Board of Education's zoning fostered segregation and needed to be corrected. Board of Education zoning directed black children to PS 35 because it was located in a black neighborhood and its students overwhelmingly were black. Even when there was a closer neighborhood school, black children were sent to School 35 because the school board wanted to keep black children in one school. Black students residing just four blocks from PS 210 at Rochester Avenue and Park Place would have to travel approximately twelve blocks to attend PS 35 while there were almost 1200 vacancies in PS 210. The result was substandard conditions in School 35. PS 35 was overcrowded and antiquated with lower grades holding classes in the dark, inadequate basement.⁵¹¹ These early efforts to desegregate public schools in Brooklyn were not successful. Perhaps the focus of black civil rights organizations on equal employment caused them to delay activism on this issue. School segregation remained a problem Brooklyn's black leadership would confront in the 1960s.

Social service agencies grew concerned that there were not enough recreational and community programs for the growing number of black residents in Bedford-Stuyvesant. The Greater New York Fund asked the Riis House, a non-profit community organization in Manhattan aimed at ameliorating the living conditions of poor New Yorkers, to make a survey of

⁵¹⁰ Nicholas Dagen Bloom, *Public housing that worked: New York in the twentieth century*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008) 87-91.

⁵¹¹ "Brooklyn Parents Protest," *New York Amsterdam Star-News*, August 16, 1941, 14.

conditions in the area. The November 1941 Riis House report showed bad economic, social, and health conditions and a high delinquency rate; an almost total lack of cultural and recreational facilities; and inadequate social agency activity, particularly among the black population, which resulted in “acute need for social service.” The Board of Education (BOE), in cooperation with Riis House, offered after-school use of Public School 3 on Jefferson Avenue in Bedford Stuyvesant to serve as a part-time community center. The BOE offered free custodial care and maintenance six days a week with boys’ and girls’ gymnasiums, game rooms, club rooms, stage and auditorium, health and dental clinics, and rooms for other activities, as well as several Works Progress Administration workers as assistants to the regular staff. The Board of Education approved the idea and offered its cooperation while the Greater New York Fund promised money to implement Riis House’s recommendations.⁵¹²

As more and more African Americans moved to Bedford-Stuyvesant, the area increasingly became the subject of newspaper articles on black crime. The *New York Times* printed articles highlighting the crimes committed in the sections of Brooklyn inhabited mainly by African Americans. In the article on Harlem crime, complaints about crimes in the Bedford-Stuyvesant section of Brooklyn were reported. A rector at a Catholic church in the area complained that he cancelled evening services because parishioners were afraid to venture out at night.⁵¹³ Crime in Brooklyn was again brought up in “Curbs on Crime in Kings Sought” in which the author suggested keeping Negro schools open during the evening hours for recreation so that black youths would be occupied instead of committing crime on the streets.⁵¹⁴ White Brooklynites and publications linked the increase in black residency with increase in crime in the

⁵¹² “Center Will Help Brooklyn ‘Harlem,’” *NYT*, November 15, 1941, 34.

⁵¹³ “250 More Police in Harlem To Stamp Out Crime Wave,” *NYT*, November 8, 1941 1.

⁵¹⁴ “Curbs on Crime in Kings Sought,” *NYT*, November 25, 1941, 27.

Bedford-Stuyvesant district. Whites in opposition to blacks living in the area cited increased crime as the reason for their antipathy.

Crime and juvenile delinquency rates were indeed higher in Bedford Stuyvesant than in other areas of Brooklyn during the 1940s and beyond. According to the 1943 crime statistics for Brooklyn the ratio of Negro defendants was far higher than white defendants. The crime rate for the Bedford Stuyvesant and Ft Greene Health Districts where many blacks lived was the highest in the borough. Furthermore residents from these two areas committed 42 percent of all crimes in the borough.⁵¹⁵ White opposition to black settlement in Bedford-Stuyvesant coalesced around the issues of black crime and juvenile delinquency to protest increasing black residency.

The foundations for organized white opposition to black settlement in Bedford-Stuyvesant during the 1940s were laid in the 1920s and 1930s. One of the earliest leaders of white opposition to black residency in Bedford-Stuyvesant was Monsignor John Belford, the white pastor of the Roman Catholic Church of the Nativity. He overtly advocated separate houses of prayer for each race. Belford had come to the church in 1905 and as his parish faced the rising black population of Bedford-Stuyvesant and declining parish resources in 1922 he supported the erection of a separate Catholic church, St Peter Claver's Church, for blacks in the neighborhood. In his monthly parish newsletter Belford stated, "'our people do not want the Negroes in their church, in their homes or their neighborhood.'" ⁵¹⁶

Belford continued his public campaign against black settlement in Bedford-Stuyvesant. In a 1939 letter to the *Brooklyn Eagle*, the Monsignor characterized the blacks moving into the area as ignorant, uncivilized, dirty, and destructive. This was especially true of those coming from the south as "The South has kept the Negro in ignorance, superstition and vice." Belford

⁵¹⁵ Harold X. Connolly, "Blacks in Brooklyn from 1900-1960", 236.

⁵¹⁶ Harold X. Connolly, "Blacks in Brooklyn from 1900-1960", 141.

charged that assaults and crime committed by blacks in the area kept his parishioners from coming to service because they were afraid. In his view the increasing black population adversely affected the quality of life for others living in the area.⁵¹⁷

White residents also organized to protest the decline in the property values in Bedford-Stuyvesant. Area whites formed the Midtown Civil League in 1938 to protect their interests in the neighborhood. As stated by its president Sumner Sirtl, the organization's primary purposes were to better conditions in the vicinity and stabilize declining real estate values, which was a direct result of the reluctance of mortgage companies to loan money to homeowners in the area due to the influx of Negro residents.⁵¹⁸ Several leaders of the Civic League were prominent men in the Bedford-Stuyvesant community. Sirtl was also the president of the board of directors of the Bedford YMCA, which would not allow black to use their pool. Edward E Fay, a member of the League's board of directors, was a United States Commissioner for the Eastern District of New York.⁵¹⁹ Father Belford, Monsignor of the Roman Catholic Church of the Nativity in the neighborhoods cooperated and publicly supported the league.⁵²⁰

The Civic League therefore focused on stopping black settlement in Bedford-Stuyvesant. Sirtl and other whites in the community proposed several ideas to keep blacks out of their neighborhood. Sirtl urged that relief recipients, many of whom were black, be returned to their original townships. He later joined with local realtors in advocating a segregated black community removed from direct contact with whites.⁵²¹

⁵¹⁷ "Crime Wave in Brooklyn Harlem?," *New York PM*, n.d., New York State War Council COD, Box 5, Folder 215 - Newspaper Clippings Relative to Negroes.

⁵¹⁸ Harold X. Connolly, "Blacks in Brooklyn from 1900-1960," 158-159.

⁵¹⁹ "Candidate for Assembly Reveals Odd Information," *Amsterdam News*, September 17, 1938, A1.

⁵²⁰ "Race Baiting of Negroes in Bedford-Stuyvesant Section Continuing," *New York Age*, November 27, 1943, 1.

⁵²¹ Harold X. Connolly, "Blacks in Brooklyn from 1900-1960," 158-159.

African Americans accused the Civic League of even more nefarious activity to prevent black settlement. According to the black press Sirtl led a group of the League's members to the police department for pistol permits in an effort to threaten blacks living in the area. Blacks also charged that when whites vacated houses in the Negro area, members of the League boarded them up to discourage blacks from moving in.⁵²² According to Reverend Theophilus Alcantara, an area minister and aspiring black politician in Brooklyn, the Civic League aimed to prevent blacks from holding property in the Bedford-Stuyvesant section by cooperating with area bankers who pressed the few black property owners in the area for early payment of the interest on their mortgages in an effort to make them default on their loans and lose their homes. Alcantara also accused white Brooklyn politicians of cooperating with the Midtown Civic and supporting their efforts to drive blacks out of Bedford Stuyvesant.⁵²³ Black community leaders also accused the civic league of circulating incendiary "propaganda calculated to stir up feelings against blacks."⁵²⁴

Racial tensions in Bedford Stuyvesant came to the fore in both the community and the press in the wake of the Harlem Riot. In August 1943 the Midtown Civic League pressured the King's County Grand Jury to study the condition of blacks living in Brooklyn, particularly the Bedford-Stuyvesant area.⁵²⁵ The Kings County Grand Jury charged the La Guardia administration with failure to check the crime in Bedford-Stuyvesant. These charges, according to the NAACP, was a political attack on Mayor La Guardia who they thought was soft on Negroes and a racial attack on Bedford-Stuyvesant's African Americans.⁵²⁶ After hearing more

⁵²² "Cops Itch to Mop Up Brooklyn," *New York Amsterdam News*, November 20, 1943, 1.

⁵²³ "Candidate for Assembly Reveals Odd Information," *Amsterdam News*, September 17, 1938, A1.

⁵²⁴ "Reporter Quizzes Sirtl on Crime Problem," *Amsterdam News*, March 18, 1939, 13.

⁵²⁵ "Brooklyn Crime Smear Unearths Grave Neglect," *Amsterdam News*, November 27, 1943, 2A; Marylinn Johnson, *Street Justice: A History of Police Violence in New York City* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2003): 201.

⁵²⁶ "Brooklyn Crime Smear" Along the NAACP Battlefront," *The Crisis*. January 1944, 19.

than 100 witnesses, most of whom were white, the Grand Jury presented a grim picture of the living conditions in Bedford-Stuyvesant. The jury claimed that lawlessness pervaded the area, that school children had been robbed and mistreated, and that the area was too dangerous for residents to travel after dark.⁵²⁷ According to the report gangs of hoodlums had assaulted, robbed, insulted and murdered innocent, law abiding people and prostitution marred a section of the area. It also alleged that many of the area residents were on relief illegally.

In a scathing condemnation of the La Guardia administration, the grand jury attributed these conditions to the insufficient number of police in the area. They recommended that the city flood the area with law enforcement to solve the problem. In addition, the jurors suggested the mayor add special auxiliary patrolmen drawn from the law-abiding citizens of the area. The presentment also stated that a lack of spiritual training for area youth and lack of parental supervision also contributed to the lawlessness. The Grand Jury demanded city and state regulatory and administrative agencies fix conditions in the area.⁵²⁸

The recommendations of the Grand Jury were never pursued, but there was an enduring legacy that left negative popular perceptions of the area. Perhaps in an attempt to downplay the role of race in their findings, the changing racial character of the area only received passing notice in the report. However, if whites did not consciously do so already, they now increasingly identified Bedford-Stuyvesant as a Negro slum.⁵²⁹

For well over a month the investigation, report, and reactions produced front-page headlines in the local press so that few citizens were likely to remain unaware of the area's evolving demographics and problems.⁵³⁰ In the face of the World War II migration other whites

⁵²⁷ "Mayor Denounced by Jury for Crime in Brooklyn Area," *NYT*, November 16, 1943, 1.

⁵²⁸ Harold X. Connolly, *A Ghetto Grows in Brooklyn*, 136-138.

⁵²⁹ Harold X. Connolly, *A Ghetto Grows in Brooklyn*, 136-138.

⁵³⁰ *Ibid*, 136.

believed the area crime and vice was an outgrowth of black migration to the city. In 1943 some whites voiced these feelings at a meeting held by the Midtown Civic League which was attended by both black and white Brooklynites. At the meeting many whites called on Governor Dewey to fire Mayor La Guardia. A white off-duty police officer from Brooklyn blamed black migrants for the social problems in Bedford-Stuyvesant, attributing the crime wave to “the influx of sunburned citizens who come up from the deep South mistaking liberty for license.”⁵³¹ In his, and countless others’, view black migrants from the south were one of the major causes of crime and delinquency throughout the city. Sirtl’s arguments against black settlement belied a racist undertone expressed by others.

Father Belford, like Sirtl, continued to place the blame for increased crime and vice in the area squarely on the shoulders of black residents. Belford was not shy in expressing this belief not only to whites in the area but to blacks as well. In an interview with the *Amsterdam News* Belford said that he believed one way to make matters better in the area was to “Quit teaching Negroes biology and instead teach them how to use modern home conveniences, how to live in a civilized community.” Belford claimed that was not a “Negro hater” and said that he did not want to punish anyone but also admitted that he believed the majority of Negroes who have moved into Bedford-Stuyvesant were destructive, and that they further wrecked property that was already partially dilapidated. In his estimation, the perhaps the best remedy was to colonize blacks in an agricultural area of the state where “they could learn how to live and act like other people.”⁵³² Clearly in these statements Belford laid blame to conditions in Bedford-Stuyvesant not just to the presence of blacks but to their depraved character.

⁵³¹ “Brooklyn Meeting Calls on Governor to Remove Mayor,” *NYT*, November 22, 1943, 1.

⁵³² “Catholic Priest Wants N.Y. Negroes Colonized,” *Amsterdam News*, November 27, 1943, 1A

The Grand Jury's report was also tinged with racist undertones, although it never explicitly named race as the reason for the crime in Bedford-Stuyvesant. Despite the fact that the report claimed it was not a race problem, the authors were sure to point out that the area was predominately inhabited by Negroes.⁵³³ Algernon Black, the chairman of the City-Wide Citizen's Committee on Harlem, acknowledged the racial assumptions and implications within the report. Black issued a statement saying that the Kings County grand jury statement "on the face of it [is] a severe indictment of the Negro community in the Bedford-Stuyvesant area. However the grand jury has apparently failed to take into consideration the underlying social and economic causes giving rise to such conditions." Black specifically pointed out the restricted economic opportunities as a major reason for conditions in Bedford-Stuyvesant.⁵³⁴ Though disagreeing with the causes of the situation in Brooklyn, Algernon Black agreed that social services provided by the city administration would be the best solution.

Given the racism underlying the arguments made in the Grand Jury's findings it is no surprise that African American leaders, organizations, and press condemned the report. Walter White acknowledged that social problems did exist in Bedford-Stuyvesant, but argued that the jury's report ignored the great number of law-abiding, church-going, home-owning black citizens who have been calling for remedial action on the conditions which produced the crime plaguing the Bedford-Stuyvesant area. In his view the report criminalized the entire black population in the area when in fact those committing crimes comprised only a portion of the blacks living in the area.⁵³⁵ The National Negro Congress and the Bedford-Stuyvesant Congress of Industrial Organizations Community Council held a meeting to protest against the Kings

⁵³³ "Mayor Denounced by Jury for Crime in Brooklyn Area," *NYT*, November 16, 1943, 1.

⁵³⁴ "Mayor Denounced by Jury for Crime in Brooklyn Area," *NYT*, November 16, 1943, 1.

⁵³⁵ "Police Survey Hits Snag in Brooklyn as Residents Balk," *NYT*, November 18, 1943, 1.

County grand jury report.⁵³⁶ Herbert Miller, Executive secretary of the Carlton Avenue YMCA appointed a committee of seven to conduct its own investigation of conditions in the Bedford-Stuyvesant area to repudiate any statement which was falsely made by the Grand Jury. They were also to prepare and make recommendations as to how residents of the community could better conditions.⁵³⁷

The *Amsterdam News* criticized the Grand Jury for having no black jurors and only one black witness, George Wibecan, during the investigation. The author of that article complained that the Grand Jury gave no credence to the testimony of Wibecan who pointed out the underlying reasons for crime in Bedford-Stuyvesant. Wibecan, a postal employee and former assistant to the late borough President Raymond Ingersoll, was a longtime resident and home owner in the area. He was also a community activist and local political leader. In his testimony Wibecan recounted the history of Brooklyn's blacks blaming relegation of blacks into the Bedford-Stuyvesant ghetto with high rents and dilapidated living conditions as one reason for crime in the area. Wibecan also criticized blacks for not working together to ameliorate the situation.⁵³⁸ The Grand Jury's findings ignored Wibecan's views and the structural and social causes contributing to crime in Bedford-Stuyvesant.

Black newspapers published articles that proposed solutions to the underlying problems that fostered crime in Bedford-Stuyvesant. Acknowledging the crime in the Bedford-Stuyvesant section, the editors of the *Amsterdam News* ran an article laying out eight ways to resolve the issue. The editors believed that if the city made provisions to lower over-crowding in schools to

⁵³⁶ "Grand Jury Charges Scored in Brooklyn," *NYT*, November 24, 1943, 13.

⁵³⁷ "Brooklyn Crime Smear Unearths Grave Neglect," *New York Amsterdam News*, November 27, 1943, 2A.

⁵³⁸ "Crime Wave in Brooklyn Harlem?," *New York PM*, n.d., New York State War Council COD, Box 5, Folder 215 - Newspaper Clippings Relative to Negroes; "Brooklyn Crime Smear Unearths Grave Neglect," *New York Amsterdam News*, November 27, 1943, 2A.; "Race Smear Won't Halt Crime!," *Amsterdam News*, November 27, 1943, 1B.

improve education and constructed more play areas and recreation centers, and to supervise children better; juvenile delinquency would decline. They also suggested the city disband the Midtown Civic League or make it operate as an interracial organization in order to better race relations in the area. Editors believed the police department should hire more black patrolmen and detectives familiar with the area to precincts in the uptown (Bedford-Stuyvesant) area in order to improve relations between black residents and law enforcement and prevent police brutality. The newspaper also recommended rent regulation to deal with the problem of inflated rents in Bedford-Stuyvesant. The newspaper editors also suggested the uptown groups unify to create a plan to remedy the problems of Bedford-Stuyvesant for the majority of those decent, law-abiding people living there.⁵³⁹

Like the black newspapers, Father S. J. Campion a priest at St. Peter Claver's Church, the only Roman Catholic Church serving African Americans in the borough, believed structural social and economic problems were the main causes of delinquency and crime in the area. He was quoted in the *Amsterdam News* as saying that until blacks were treated better in this country, given better economic opportunities, access to better living conditions and recreation facilities, they were bound to protest through crime and delinquency. Campion believed the "so called outbreak of lawlessness in this area is but a symptom of the alarming growth of delinquency in every city of the country... due to war conditions." An opponent of the actions and ideology of Monsignor Belford, he believed it was unfair to put the blame for increasing crime and delinquency in the area solely on African Americans.⁵⁴⁰

The social service solutions proposed by local African American leaders and Father Campion were also proposed by social welfare organizations. The Brooklyn Council For Social

⁵³⁹ "8 Big Points Leading to Solving of Local Crime," *New York Amsterdam News*, November 27, 1943, 1B.

⁵⁴⁰ "Catholic Priest Wants N.Y. Negroes Colonized," *Amsterdam News*, November 27, 1943, 1A.

Planning, a consultative body whose membership was comprised of approximately eighty welfare agencies, recommended creation of a constructive social welfare program to alleviate crime and deteriorating social conditions in Bedford-Stuyvesant. Shortages in the field of family welfare and the lack of a health center within the district were among the worst problems. The council suggested better housing, construction of a health center building, additional public playgrounds and parks, school community centers, new and modern school buildings and more services from voluntary social agencies for the area.⁵⁴¹ .

As social service agencies, the black press, and Father Campion proposed solutions addressing the structural problems causing crime and delinquency in Bedford-Stuyvesant, they also attempted to debunk ideas that these conditions were caused by the inherent nature of African Americans. These ideas which were expressed by Sumner Sirtl, Father Belford, and other whites in Brooklyn helped sour race relations in Bedford-Stuyvesant. The New York City Urban League increasingly focused its efforts on alleviating the racial tensions in the neighborhood. In a 1945 fundraising pamphlet the New York Urban League asserted that they were working towards the alleviation of racial tensions through cooperation with the War Manpower Commission, police, industry owners and war agencies to improve employment opportunities, working conditions, and housing for blacks. In its projected budget for the coming year almost half of the regional budget of \$55,285 was allocated to Brooklyn, with Manhattan having the second largest allocation followed by Queens, the Bronx and Staten Island.⁵⁴² As it had since its founding, the New York Urban League in 1945 focused its efforts on helping southern migrants adjust to their new surroundings in Bedford-Stuyvesant. Clearly the Urban League clearly believed the increasing black population of Brooklyn required their

⁵⁴¹ "Wide Program of Social Welfare Urged to Ease Crime in Brooklyn," *NYT*, November 27, 1943, 26.

⁵⁴² New York Urban League. "On the Same Team," (New York, 1945).

attention to alleviate the problems of African Americans in the developing black communities of Brooklyn.

Despite the heightened racial tension in Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brooklyn remained an attractive place for African Americans to settle. According to Brooklyn Urban League Executive Secretary Robert Elzy, Brooklyn was not such a bad place for blacks in the latter half of the war. In 1944 Brooklyn was showing a sharp and increasingly steady decline in unemployed blacks and an increase in the numbers and types of jobs available to them. Housing conditions for blacks in Brooklyn were like those available in other centers of black concentration.⁵⁴³ Elzy articulated the view of many of the blacks moving into Bedford-Stuyvesant.

Despite the many problems plaguing Bedford-Stuyvesant's residents, in the perspective of blacks it was a better alternative than Harlem in the 1940s. Though blacks paid higher rents than whites to live in Bedford-Stuyvesant and the housing there was beginning to deteriorate, blacks moving to New York believed they could make a better life in Brooklyn than they could in Harlem. According to an article published in the *Amsterdam News* the housing available in Brooklyn was better than that in Harlem and that the "homes are rated high" in the Bedford-Stuyvesant area making that community one of the best rated in the city. Though landlords aimed to make a profit from the higher rents they could get from black tenants, the *Amsterdam News* commended realtors in the area for finding apartments for black tenants, thus making the migration of blacks to Brooklyn possible. In 1940 African Americans considered the Bedford-Stuyvesant sector a prominent area with middle class black residents living there with buildings "remodeled on numerous occasions, and clean, modern homes were made available for boroughites." The article made clear that there was a vast difference between the flourishing

⁵⁴³ William U. Kelly, "Race Tension at Minimum in Milwaukee, Brooklyn," *The Chicago Defender*, February 12, 1944, 11.

Bedford-Stuyvesant and Brownsville, the “sore spot in Brooklyn.”⁵⁴⁴ The author of this article made it plain that the blacks who migrated to Bedford-Stuyvesant could make a good life for themselves there.

During the 1920s and 1930s Bedford-Stuyvesant emerged as the center of black Brooklyn and by the start of the 1940s Bedford-Stuyvesant had become the center of the borough’s black middle class. The Brooklyn branches of the NAACP and Urban League, bastions of the black middle class, were located in Bedford Stuyvesant. The Brooklyn NAACP was controlled by the borough’s black elite and did not focus on grassroots organization. Its activities were generally non-confrontational, taking the form of voter registration drives, political lobbying, and campaigns against police brutality. The local branch avoided movements supporting working-class blacks. Neither of these organizations was active in the Brownsville community where many of the borough’s lower class blacks lived. Many Bedford-Stuyvesant residents perceived black Brownsville as low-class, and the area’s crime did nothing to decrease these prejudices.⁵⁴⁵

Brownsville had been a working class community from its early years. The area was full of low-lying marshes that were prone to flooding and had few aesthetic attractions and industrial development in the area discouraged middle and upper class settlement. Though the neighborhood’s housing was shoddily constructed, in the mid nineteenth century living there was still a better alternative than living in the congested conditions of the Lower East Side of Manhattan. By the turn of the twentieth century Brownsville was primarily inhabited by working-class Jewish immigrants who worked in textile factories. Brownsville was home to working class blacks since the 1910s. In the 1910s Brownsville expanded to the west and south, and many residents moved to buildings in the new sections. Working-class blacks, desperate for

⁵⁴⁴ “Realtors Aid Progress: Homes Here Rated High,” *New York Amsterdam News*, August 10, 1940, 6.

⁵⁴⁵ Wendell Pritchett, *Brownsville, Brooklyn: Blacks, Jews, and the Changing Face of the Ghetto* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 40-43, 88-89.

housing in a crowded Harlem, moved into these ageing and deteriorating buildings.⁵⁴⁶ As in other urban areas, the black population of Brownsville exploded during the 1940s as an effect of the World War II migration of blacks to the area. Race relations in Brownsville were tranquil in comparison to other cities as black and white activists successfully fostered interracial acceptance and coexistence there.⁵⁴⁷ Despite the good race relations the shoddy and dilapidated housing in Brownsville prompted blacks with the financial means to settle in Bedford-Stuyvesant instead.

Even those blacks who lived in older black enclaves in other areas of Brooklyn moved to Bedford-Stuyvesant to improve their living conditions. Some of Brooklyn's black residents moved to Bedford Stuyvesant to escape the poor quality housing they inhabited in the downtown area of Brooklyn. Many buildings downtown had been converted into furnished rooms occupied by more than two persons with the cooking done in the same room. In some houses toilet facilities were in the yard, though generally they were in the hall with had as many as four families sharing one toilet. Given the poor quality of housing in the downtown area, it is not surprising that blacks fled to new neighborhoods when they could. The buildings in Bedford-Stuyvesant offered more substantial construction and better living conditions.⁵⁴⁸

Many of the migrants moving to Bedford Stuyvesant were middle-class and stable working-class blacks while poorer working class blacks moving to Brooklyn settled in Brownsville in the 1940s. This created a more homogenous black population in Bedford-Stuyvesant. Little discussion appeared in black publications about class conflict between working and middle class black residents in Bedford-Stuyvesant. Perhaps Bedford-Stuyvesant's blacks suppressed class differences as they faced organized white protests to black settlement. In

⁵⁴⁶ Wendell Pritchett, *Brownsville, Brooklyn*, 9-14, 38-40.

⁵⁴⁷ Wendell Pritchett, *Brownsville, Brooklyn*, 81-87,

⁵⁴⁸ Harold X. Connolly, "Blacks in Brooklyn from 1900-1960", 120-122

their indictments of the character of African Americans, whites residents like Sumner Sirtl and Father Belford did not make a distinction between middle and working class blacks; therefore it is conceivable that blacks did not either.

The influx of blacks into Bedford-Stuyvesant allowed African Americans in the borough to have more political power at the local level. As Brooklyn's blacks were more concentrated into a few districts in the borough, they could elect African Americans to local offices. Before the 1940s local politicians rarely solicited the black vote because it would not make a difference in the election. The black population for the most part was not big enough to vote in a bloc and therefore rarely determined the outcome of local contests.⁵⁴⁹ Given the geographic segregation in Brooklyn and the relatively small size of assembly districts which rendered racial gerrymandering more difficult, black candidates were successful in local elections by the late 1940s. Bertram Baker led the breakthrough of blacks into borough politics when he was elected to the State Assembly in 1948. Electoral victories in contests for municipal judgeships and City Council followed in the 1950s and as blacks took over local party machinery political patronage added more blacks to government positions.⁵⁵⁰ Therefore the migration and the concentration of blacks into Bedford-Stuyvesant increased their local blacks' political power in the years to come.

The demographic shifts of the 1940s indelibly changed the face of black Brooklyn. The influx of African Americans into the Bedford-Stuyvesant area had soured race relations, prompted an unsuccessful attempt by white organizations to bar black settlement, and had precipitated white flight. By 1950 blacks no longer lived in dispersed communities throughout the borough and the black population of Brooklyn had become concentrated in Bedford-Stuyvesant. Three quarters of the 200,000 residents in this formerly all white area were black.

⁵⁴⁹ Harold X. Connolly, *A Ghetto Grows in Brooklyn* 126-141.

⁵⁵⁰ Harold X. Connolly, "Blacks in Brooklyn from 1900-1960", 304.

Despite emerging social problems like high crime and delinquency rates, inadequate community recreation and resources, high rents and dilapidated housing, Bedford-Stuyvesant remained a better alternative to Harlem and Brownsville for middle and working class blacks in the city. The new demographic trends begun in the 1940s solidified during the 1950s resulting in the area becoming “solidly black as Central Harlem.”⁵⁵¹ By 1960 Bedford-Stuyvesant like Harlem had become a code word for everything black.⁵⁵²

Movin’ on Up: Morrisania in the 1940s

Though the largest number of blacks settling outside of Harlem chose to make Bedford-Stuyvesant their home, some looked northward to the Bronx for reprieve from Harlem’s overcrowding and high rents. Hundreds of Harlem’s black families began moving out of the historic center of black settlement and into the southwest Bronx in the hopes of finding cheaper rents and better living conditions. To many Harlem residents the Bronx provided nicer apartments for less money, as well as better schools and more fresh air. An area in the southwestern Bronx, a section referred to today as Morrisania, became home to thousands of new black residents as families relocated from Harlem. During the 1940s most African Americans moving to the Bronx settled in the area from 161st Street to 169th Street and from Franklin to Prospect Avenues. African Americans also lived in the blocks adjacent to the area of heaviest black settlement.⁵⁵³ These new residents significantly changed the demographics of Morrisania.

⁵⁵¹ Henry Etzkowitz and Gerald M. Schaflander, *Ghetto Crisis: Riots or Reconciliation?* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1969), 3-4.

⁵⁵² Harold X. Connolly, “Blacks in Brooklyn from 1900-1960”, 155.

⁵⁵³ See Appendix, Figure 1.4.

African Americans and Puerto Ricans joined, and in some instances displaced, the German, Jewish, Italian, and Eastern European residents of the area.⁵⁵⁴

The Boulevard-Prospect area, located directly east of today's Morrisania, exemplified the demographic changes that occurred in the south Bronx during the 1940s.⁵⁵⁵ This area, which had been overwhelmingly white at the start of the decade, became an interracial neighborhood by the end of the decade. Boulevard-Prospect, also called East Morrisania and Crotona Park, was 95 percent white in 1940. More than a third of the area's white residents were foreign born, mostly from Russia, Poland and other areas of southeastern Europe. The majority of Boulevard-Prospect residents were wage earners employed in skilled trades, crafts, clerical, and sales jobs. Generally, those living in the area were not as affluent as the general populations of the Bronx or New York City. In 1940 the black population in the area was only 4 percent. Despite the small black population at the start of the decade, there was evidence of a higher concentration of black residents in Boulevard-Prospect than in other Bronx neighborhoods.⁵⁵⁶ It was into this neighborhood that middle-class blacks moved in the early 1940s causing the number and concentration of African Americans to increase throughout the decade.

African Americans were joined by Puerto Ricans, who also moved into East Morrisania. At that time, when school enrollment was indicative of the racial composition of neighborhoods, both African American and Puerto Rican school enrollment increased in area public schools. By mid-decade 40 percent of school children were from these new groups. This was a substantial change. Just seven years earlier in 1938 only 3 percent of the total school population

⁵⁵⁴ "Inside Story on How Bronx Rivals Harlem," *Amsterdam News*, July 24, 1943, 3.

⁵⁵⁵ The Boulevard Prospect area was bound by 149th street on the south, Prospect Avenue on the west, Tremont Avenue on the north and the Bronx River to the east. Though the sector is just outside and adjacent the area of heaviest black settlement, some of the census tracts that experienced heavy black settlement were in this area and are reflective of the trends examined in the Handshuh study.

⁵⁵⁶ P. Handshuh, "Boulevard Prospect Area: A Survey by Hunter College Students for the Mayor's Committee on Unity," 1946, New York Public Library.

in the Boulevard Prospect area had been black. East Morrisania transformed from an area that was racially homogenous into one that was “racially diverse.”⁵⁵⁷

Most of the blacks moving to the area in the 1940s were from Harlem. Many of those black families who moved in the late 1930s and early 1940s were relatively well-off black workers. According to occupation classifications these workers would have been classified as working class, but they held steady jobs in occupations other than service jobs or unskilled labor, the traditional areas of black employment. Many of the black men moving to Morrisania were postal workers or building superintendents. Historian Mark Naison observed that there were two general paths African American families took in coming to the Bronx. The first was that the man of the household got a job as a Pullman porter or postal worker in the borough. The other was that black families moved into apartments in the Bronx because the man of the household worked as the superintendent of the building.⁵⁵⁸ In these ways many blacks found the economic means and available housing to relocate to Morrisania.

Evelyn Melrose’s family exemplified the process by which Morrisania’s early black residents came to the area. The family moved to 1618 Washington Avenue in the 1930s. Evelyn’s father worked as a mail handler in the post office on Tremont Avenue and took a second job as the building superintendent in a mainly Jewish building. Her mother who was originally from the south did not work. According to Evelyn there had been a nation-wide drive to recruit postal workers prompting many of her fathers’ male friends to come to New York to work for the post office. The post office required that workers live in the neighborhood in which they worked, so those African Americans assigned to post offices in the south Bronx found that

⁵⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁸ Ronald and Gloria Marshall interview, conducted by Mark Naison May 2, 2005, Bronx African American History Project. Historian Mark Naison made the observation to Ronald and Gloria Marshall in the interview. His analysis was embedded in the interview transcriptions.

acting as the super in buildings was the only way they could obtain apartments in the area. Evelyn's father took the superintendent job as a means to get an apartment in the neighborhood because at that time most landlords were not renting to black tenants.⁵⁵⁹ It was, in part, through the position of building super that black residency in the Bronx became possible.

Many other black families used similar means to facilitate their move to the Bronx. Ronald Marshall's parents who were born in Savannah, Georgia, had moved to Connecticut during the 1930s. His father took the civil service exam to work in the post office, and upon passing the test moved to 3rd Avenue in the Bronx in the late 1930s. The family moved again to a building on Franklin Avenue between 166th and 167th Streets in 1941. Ronald's father also took a part time job as a superintendent of two buildings in the neighborhood. Ronald's paternal uncle also moved to the Bronx and took a civil service exam to be a sanitation worker.⁵⁶⁰ The draw of better paying employment through government offices and civil service jobs drew blacks to New York and the Bronx in particular.

Like Ronald Marshall, his wife Gloria was a childhood resident of the Bronx. She moved there with her family in the early 1940s. Her family had lived in an apartment in Harlem but moved to the Bronx when her father was offered a position as a building superintendent. So the family moved to the building her father worked in on Franklin Avenue between 167th and 168th Street. In addition to his duties as building super, Gloria's father also worked as a security guard for First National City Bank (which later became Citibank). Gloria's mother was a housewife who sometimes took part time jobs at the supermarket if the family needed extra money.⁵⁶¹

⁵⁵⁹ Thessalonia Interview, conducted by Mark Naison and Mark Chapman June 24, 2003, Bronx African American History Project.

⁵⁶⁰ Ronald and Gloria Marshall interview, conducted by Mark Naison, May 2, 2005, Bronx African American History Project.

⁵⁶¹ Ibid.

Having a father with a stable blue collar job and a housewife mother signified that Gloria Marshall's family was of middle class status.

Elias Karmon, a Morrisania store owner at the time, observed that black women in the neighborhood had desk jobs, were teachers, and worked in the garment factories on nearby Westchester Avenue. He also recalled that the men were mostly blue collar workers – many worked for the railroad and in the post office. According to Karman, whose store had a large black clientele, many of Morrisania's black residents had good stable jobs earning respectable and reliable wages.⁵⁶² Many of the jobs his black patrons held were well paying union jobs not widely available to blacks prior to this time.

Several of the areas longest black residents were professionals. They included physicians Lowell Wormley and Athelstone Giddens; the president of the Bronx Women's Council, Dr. Martha Seabrook; prominent realtors George James, James Johnson and Marcell Owens; and New York State auditor Alvin Morris.⁵⁶³ Long-time Morrisania resident Robert Gumbs' father worked as an operating engineer for the US government taking care of internal maintenance of buildings.⁵⁶⁴ Gumbs' father, like many other black men living in Morrisania, worked in an occupation uncommon for most African Americans in the 1940s.⁵⁶⁵

The hundreds of African American families who moved to the Bronx in the 1940s considered Morrisania a better alternative to Harlem and believed settling in the area was an opportunity to improve their living conditions. This was not just an opinion held by blacks in the 1940s. Many earlier residents of the vicinity viewed the area in a similar fashion. Morrisania

⁵⁶² Interview of Elias Karmon, conducted by Mark Naison March 25, 2004, Bronx African American History Project.

⁵⁶³ Pete Richardson, "Thousands from Harlem In Exodus to the Bronx" *Amsterdam News*, September 12, 1942, 1 & 19; "Inside Story on How Bronx Rivals Harlem," *Amsterdam News*, July 24, 1943, 3.

⁵⁶⁴ Interview of Robert Gumbs by Mark Naison, Mark Smith, and Rachel Donaldson, n.d., Bronx African American History Project.

⁵⁶⁵ Interview of William and Margery Nichols by Mark Naison, October 21, 2004, Bronx African American History Project.

was one of the earliest developed sections of the Bronx and after the turn of the twentieth century was ethnically and economically diverse. It was a well-established area with homes, stores, and businesses and eventually developed into an area with diverse types of housing such as tenements, frame row houses, and brick flats. At the turn of the twentieth century the construction of the Third Avenue el provided rapid and reliable transportation to the area which enticed developers to construct residential housing and attracted Manhattanites to settle in East Morrisania. This increase in population prompted construction of new apartment buildings. Therefore in the early 1900s housing in the Bronx was plentiful, and of relatively high quality. Bronx apartments were usually newer, cleaner, and less expensive than those in Manhattan; conditions that attracted residents to the area.⁵⁶⁶

In the first half of the twentieth century, the Bronx came to represent upward mobility for various ethnic, racial, and socio-economic groups in New York City. The new demand for housing and a postwar construction boom prompted developers to construct new buildings in the 1920s. These new buildings and complexes were geared towards the middle class. New middle class neighborhoods sprang up along University, Morris, Bainbridge and Sedgwick Avenues and along the Pelham and Mosholu Parkways. This spate of construction continued into the 1930s and 1940s. The new apartments attracted an upwardly mobile, status-conscious group to the area.⁵⁶⁷ Since housing was a reflection of social standing for status-conscious New Yorkers, as Bronxites became more prosperous they moved to better neighborhoods within the borough and eventually out of the Bronx to Westchester. As the residents of the South Bronx moved to newer apartments in emerging middle class neighborhoods, those of lower social standing and economic means took the opportunity to move into the apartments the upwardly mobile left

⁵⁶⁶Evelyn Diaz Gonzalez, *The Bronx: A History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 65-68, 74-75, 86.

⁵⁶⁷ For maps of the Bronx neighborhoods and streets see Appendix Figures 5.1 and 5.2.

vacant. As a result lower income groups found housing vacated by those who had moved up in status allowing better living conditions to trickle down to lower-income Bronx residents.

African Americans from Harlem took the opportunity to move into newly available apartments in South Bronx buildings.⁵⁶⁸ The Bronx “had become one of the places to which one moved in order to improve living standards,” a fact that prompted some important demographic shifts in both the borough and the city.⁵⁶⁹

While many of the new middle class neighborhoods in the borough were growing, the South Bronx was not because none of the new construction took place there. In fact in the 1920s the population in Morrisania’s oldest sections declined as residents moved into the borough’s newer neighborhoods. After the 1920s only the Hunts Point-Crotona Park East area experienced increases in population as a result of the expansion of the Lexington Avenue subway line. Some residents of the South Bronx moved out of the neighborhood and across the Bronx River as transportation became available with the extension of the subway. The steady loss of residents was only reversed on the blocks where African Americans seeking better living conditions moved.⁵⁷⁰ Despite the multifamily housing, the constant residential mobility, aging housing, and the urban density; to many New Yorkers including African Americans the Bronx was an attractive place to live. To black New Yorkers the South Bronx represented an opportunity to live better.

The availability of better quality housing in the Bronx motivated many blacks to move out of Harlem. Though there were sections of Boulevard-Prospect which were blighted and others on the downgrade in the 1940s, the housing there was generally better than that in many sections of Manhattan. Most buildings in the South Bronx were built after the Tenement

⁵⁶⁸ Evelyn Diaz Gonzalez, 86-87.

⁵⁶⁹ Ibid., 91.

⁵⁷⁰ Ibid., 88-92, 95-99.

Housing Laws of 1901, and thus constructed according to those standards of light, air, sanitation, and safety regulations. Though the buildings were relatively new, lack of structural repairs impaired the soundness of the edifices and created safety hazards. Statistics indicated widespread neglect of structures in the Boulevard-Prospect area. Most residents of the area, black and white, rented apartments. Only 2 percent of area residents owned homes and less than one percent of those owner occupied homes were owned by blacks.⁵⁷¹ Even though the buildings and houses of the South Bronx were in various states of disrepair, the living conditions they provided were better than those available to blacks living in Harlem.

The majority of black families moving into Morrisania came from Harlem. Contemporary reports of real estate brokers in the Bronx estimated that 200 to 300 black families were moving into Morrisania each month during 1942. The homes into which most of these families moved were private houses and apartments formerly occupied by Jewish, Italian, and Irish families who moved out as blacks moved in. According to long-time black residents of the area, the buildings blacks moved into were in fairly good condition, some in excellent condition. There were a few tall apartment buildings and numerous private houses which afforded black residents more air and sunlight than the apartments in Harlem. When several families new to the area were asked why they had moved from Harlem, they replied cheaper rents, a better environment and better schools.⁵⁷² One such family was Cyril DeGrasse Tyson's family who moved to Morrisania in the late 1930s in search of better living conditions.

Cyril DeGrasse Tyson's family immigrated from the West Indies during the First World War. Originally settling in the San Juan Hill neighborhood in midtown Manhattan, Tyson's

⁵⁷¹ P. Handshuh "Boulevard Prospect Area: A Survey by Hunter College Students for the Mayor's Committee on Unity," N.d., New York Public Library.

⁵⁷² Pete Richardson, "Thousands from Harlem In Exodus to the Bronx," *Amsterdam News*, September 12, 1942, 1 & 19.

family moved to Harlem in 1934 and again to Morrisania in 1938. Tyson recalls his family moving often in search of better housing, better quality schools, and a nicer community. Many of the Jews living at the nexus of Prospect and Westchester Avenues in Morrisania were moving northward towards Pelham Park. According to Tyson, some of those leaving the neighborhood kept their buildings and began renting to blacks. Initially these landlords were very selective in choosing their tenants. His family moved to a building on Longwood Avenue between Prospect and Westchester Avenues. When they arrived the inhabitants of the area were mostly Jewish and the janitors were Irish and German. As more and more blacks moved into the building the landlords stopped maintaining it and the Tyson family moved after three years to a building on Kelly Street between Intervale and Longwood Streets. At that time Kelly Street was inhabited by mostly white residents but they had begun moving out.⁵⁷³

Rosemary Brown's family also moved to the Bronx to improve their quality of day to day life. The Browns moved to the Bronx in 1940, because Rosemary's father felt Morrisania would provide a safer environment to raise his large family of nine, "And, at the time the Bronx was the place for African American families." Upwardly mobile black families looked to the Bronx as a place to find better schools, nicer apartments, and safer conditions. Her parents decided to move there after hearing testimonies from a family they knew who had moved to Morrisania. The Brown family moved to a three-bedroom apartment on Prospect Avenue and 168th Street.⁵⁷⁴

The availability of parks and other green spaces in Morrisania also attracted upwardly mobile Harlemites to the area. Hetty Fox, a Morrisania resident, remembered her neighborhood as being lovely with trees lining Prospect Avenue – the main thoroughfare and shopping district

⁵⁷³ Interview of Cyril DeGrasse Tyson by Mark Naison, June 28, 2004, Bronx African American History Project.

⁵⁷⁴ Interview of Rosemary Brown by Mark Naison, April 21, 2005, Bronx African American History Project.

at the time.⁵⁷⁵ Many of Morrisania's early black residents recall Crotona Park as a beautiful area where they enjoyed various types of recreation. Of particular note among several Morrisania residents was the swimming pool in the park where they learned to swim.⁵⁷⁶ In fact Rosemary Brown's most vivid memory of her childhood neighborhood was of the trees.⁵⁷⁷ Robert Gumbs' family moved from Harlem to Morrisania in 1941 after a doctor advised his mother to do so because the "air was cleaner" in the Bronx. Robert remembered the Bronx, and his street Lyman Place, as being very quiet. He described his childhood as "comfortable" as children played stickball in the street and he went to the after-school centers to play basketball.⁵⁷⁸ The parents of these and many other families moved from Harlem to Morrisania to improve their family's quality of life.

As more and more blacks moved from Harlem to the Bronx, the new African American population began to build the bastions of community, none of which was more important than the church. One indication that a black community was developing in Morrisania was the opening of the Russell Institutional Christian Methodist Episcopal Church in December 1942. The church which had a black congregation was purchased from the white Fulton Avenue Baptist Church. Speaking at a service at the church Frederick A Wurtzback, president of the Bronx County Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, told the audience that the church was sold because it could no longer render a service to its members who had moved out

⁵⁷⁵ Interview of Hetty Fox, conducted by Mark Naison, Mark Smith, and Richard Richardson. N.d. Bronx African American History Project.

⁵⁷⁶ Interview of Hetty Fox, conducted by Mark Naison, Mark Smith, and Richard Richardson and Ronald and Gloria Marshall interview, conducted by Mark Naison May 2, 2005. Bronx African American History Project.

⁵⁷⁷ Interview of Rosemary Brown by Mark Naison, April 21, 2005. Bronx African American History Project.

⁵⁷⁸ Interview of Robert Gumbs by Mark Naison, Mark Smith, and Rachel Donaldson, n.d., Bronx African American History Project.

of the area. Wurtzback believed that the new church would provide great services to what had become in his view a black community.⁵⁷⁹

Morrisania's early black residents do not recall racial tensions upon moving to the area. When she moved with her family in the mid-1930s, Margery Nichols felt the neighborhood was safe and never feared walking around even at night. She did not remember experiencing racial tensions living there.⁵⁸⁰ Hetty Fox, another childhood resident, remembered that when her family moved into the neighborhood, two white girls teased her by telling her she didn't belong in the neighborhood. However Mrs. Fox explained that after that initial incident the girls didn't give her any more trouble and eventually became friends.⁵⁸¹ Ronald Marshall recalled that people of different ethnicities lived in his neighborhood but did not remember much racial tension. Jewish, Italian, and German families lived on his block, but because each ethnic group pretty much stayed to themselves there was no racial tension that he could remember. Ronald Marshall's wife, Gloria Marshall also described her multi-racial block on Franklin Avenue. She explained that Germans, Irish, and Poles, lived with African Americans in the neighborhood and most were friendly.⁵⁸²

Many local blacks were proud to live in a multi-racial neighborhood. In 1942 Mr. and Mrs. Edward Macy, who as sixty-two year residents of the area claimed to be the Bronx's oldest black family, proudly noted in a 1942 newspaper interview that there were often interracial multi-dwelling buildings in the Bronx.⁵⁸³ The *Amsterdam News* also praised Morrisania in 1943

⁵⁷⁹ "Church Opens Doors in Bronx," *New York Amsterdam News*, December 19, 1942, 6.

⁵⁸⁰ Interview of William and Margery Nichols by Mark Naison, October 21, 2004, Bronx African American History Project.

⁵⁸¹ Interview of Hetty Fox, conducted by Mark Naison, Mark Smith, and Richard Richardson. N.d., Bronx African American History Project.

⁵⁸² Interview of Ronald and Gloria Marshall conducted by Mark Naison May 2, 2005, Bronx African American History Project.

⁵⁸³ Pete Richardson, "Thousands from Harlem In Exodus to the Bronx," *Amsterdam News*, September 12, 1942, 1 & 19.

because the residents of this interracial community got along remarkably well. Though there were some racial incidents and confrontations, many residents interviewed by *Amsterdam News* reporters found it hard to believe that any racially motivated conflicts or violence occurred between black and white residents.⁵⁸⁴

White Morrisania residents also valued the interracial unity of the neighborhood. More than 6,000 people representing every racial group in the Bronx gathered in a patriotic rally to support the war during a summer of intense racial antagonism across the country. Revered Elder Hawkens, pastor of the St. Augustin's Presbyterian Church said at the rally, "We will defeat the Axis only through unity."⁵⁸⁵ The meeting tried to evoke solidarity among Morrisania's residents as racial tensions escalated in cities all over the nation in the summer of 1943. The integration and relative unity among of the residents of Morrisania may have been connected to the fact that many of the early black residents were middle-class families who shared many of the same middle-class values and the social norms as those whites already living in Morrisania.

Though African Americans found better living conditions in the South Bronx, the migration of blacks to the area produced some negative effects. As the complexion of Morrisania changed, many residents of the area became unhappy with their neighborhood. A major concern for the Morrisania community in the 1940s was the lack of recreational facilities for the expanding population of black youth. Several also complained of inefficient police protection at night. A 1946 report commissioned by the Mayor's Committee on Unity (MCOU) attributed the higher rates of delinquency among Puerto Rican and black adolescents in Morrisania, in part, to the lack of adequate recreation facilities for the increasing number of youths in the South Bronx. According to the recognized contemporary standards of the National

⁵⁸⁴ "Inside Story on How Bronx Rivals Harlem," *Amsterdam News*, July 24, 1943, 3.

⁵⁸⁵ "Inter-racial Rally Held in Bronx," *Amsterdam News*, July 31, 1943, 2.

Recreation Association, East Morrisania's recreation facilities met the needs of only 7,500 youths instead of the 51,000 children and adolescents living in the area. Though other contributing factors to juvenile delinquency were difficult to eradicate and required complex solutions, the authors of the report urged the city to provide more recreation programs for youth. They also urged area churches and synagogues to provide recreation space and activities in community centers.⁵⁸⁶

Gang violence no doubt contributed to increased juvenile delinquency in Morrisania. Fights between black, white, and Puerto Rican gangs concerned area residents. Community leaders met this problem head on by creating the Bronx Youth Council, a community recreation organization for adolescents. The association established offices throughout the South Bronx and workers contacted and collaborated with the gangs to gradually interest members in participating in council projects, thus diverting their attention away from gang activity.⁵⁸⁷

Only a third of the residents interviewed by the authors of the MCOU study were satisfied living in Morrisania. In addition to the rising levels of juvenile delinquency, some of these residents interviewed for the report complained about the condition of the housing in the area. Area residents criticized landlords' poor maintenance of area houses and buildings and complained that the Department of Sanitation neglected their neighborhood. Many whites were anxious to move out of Morrisania into better apartments but were held back by a housing shortage that limited their options. For these folks integration was neither a reason to leave nor

⁵⁸⁶ P. Handshuh, "Boulevard Prospect Area: A Survey by Hunter College Students for the Mayor's Committee on Unity." N.d., New York Public Library.

⁵⁸⁷ Chollie Herndon, "Up and Coming Bronx Points with Pride to Progress of Residents in Racial Attitudes," *New York Amsterdam News*, April 15, 1950, 32; Obituary – George Gregory, *NYT*, May 21, 1994, 1.11.

an effect of a desire to live with African Americans, but a result of the unavailability of better housing.⁵⁸⁸

Whites were not the only people concerned about the effects of increased black residency. Some African American residents of Morrisania were also alarmed at the social changes accompanying black migration to the area. A number of the more affluent black residents complained about the social effects of working class blacks moving from Harlem. A candy store owner and former Harlem resident believed that though the Bronx offered better living conditions and had less crime than Harlem, things in the Bronx were getting worse as more blacks from Harlem moved to the neighborhood. According to her, Harlem transplants brought bad habits with them as some youth were snatching pocketbooks, shooting dice on sidewalks, and using profane language in public.⁵⁸⁹ A class rift developed between longer-term middle-class residents of Morrisania and those who had recently moved to the area from Harlem. Many of the more established black Morrisania residents saw a need for social service organizations and recreation facilities to alleviate these conditions.

Longtime black residents of Morrisania also complained about rising rents in the area. Residents of Morrisania paid higher rents as more African Americans moved into the neighborhood. Because black residents paid higher rents in Harlem landlords charged more to lease apartments in Morrisania as blacks from Manhattan moved to the Bronx. The Bronx Council of Social Agencies through a committee headed by Revered Elder Hawkins, pastor of St. Augustine's Church the largest black Catholic church in Morrisania at the time, embarked on a campaign to stop landlords from raising rental prices in the neighborhood.⁵⁹⁰ A dressmaker who

⁵⁸⁸ P. Handshuh, "Boulevard Prospect Area: A Survey by Hunter College Students for the Mayor's Committee on Unity," N.d., New York Public Library.

⁵⁸⁹ "Bronxites Boast 'En Up a Plenty," *Amsterdam News, Second Edition*, July 31, 1943, 1.

⁵⁹⁰ Pete Richardson, "Thousands from Harlem In Exodus to the Bronx" *Amsterdam News*, September 12, 1942, 1, 19.

had lived in the Bronx for years worried about the new trends. She complained that Harlmeites, who were used to paying exorbitant rents, were moving into Morrisania and paying higher rents than they should. Older residents of the area believed these new black residents should have consulted them to find out rental rates for an apartment in the neighborhood. This would have prevented these new residents from agreeing to pay higher rents which allowed building owners to begin charging more to lease apartments in the area.⁵⁹¹

Despite the concerns older residents had about the effects of blacks moving into Morrisania, African Americans continued to consider the Bronx a better alternative to Harlem and most were not looking to leave the area. Despite her complaints about the changes the migration from Harlem caused in the neighborhood, the candy store owner interviewed by the *Amsterdam News* still believed a better life was available for blacks in the Bronx. She highlighted the superior living conditions in Morrisania by pointing out that “living in the Bronx is one thing” while merely “existing in Harlem is another.” Similarly though she complained about the recent changes in the neighborhood, the dressmaker also interviewed by the *Amsterdam News* still believed the Bronx to be a better alternative than Harlem, as there was ample playground space, parks and other places to go for relaxation.⁵⁹² Though the movement of blacks into the area sparked some undesirable conditions, living conditions were better in Morrisania and residing in the Bronx continued to be a better option than living in Harlem.

To address some of the problems caused by black settlement in the neighborhood the churches that served the blacks in Morrisania provided recreation activities for area youth. St. Augustine’s church hosted many different activities and housed clubs. The church held plays, basketball games, roller skating, choir rehearsals, cooking classes, and Girl Scout meetings and

⁵⁹¹ “The Bronx Too has it Problems,” *Amsterdam News*, August 7, 1943, 13.

⁵⁹² Pete Richardson, “Thousands from Harlem In Exodus to the Bronx,” *Amsterdam News*, September 12, 1942, 19; “The Bronx Too has it Problems,” *Amsterdam News*, August 7, 1943, 13.

parties. It provided someplace for the neighborhood youth to congregate after school.⁵⁹³

Thessalonia Baptist Church, the largest church for blacks in Morrisania, also provided many of the recreational activities for new black families living in the area.⁵⁹⁴ Thessalonia was first founded in 1892 by migrants from Flavanah County, Virginia and had moved to several different locations in the Bronx. In 1942 the newly ordained pastor of the church James Polite, led the congregation to its present building at 951 Stebbins Avenue (now Rev. James A. Polite Avenue) in Morrisania.⁵⁹⁵ Thessalonia provided many activities for the neighborhood youth, sponsoring a youth choir, plays, lectures, and field trips in the summer.⁵⁹⁶ The church's focus on community activism in the 1940s was an extension of the interests of Revered Polite who was an activist in the black community and involved with the Civil Rights movement.⁵⁹⁷

Despite the activities of the churches and community organizations there were still instances of discrimination in Morrisania, but racial antagonisms were sporadic and did not usually involve violence. In one instance a landlord of a Jackson Avenue building mistakenly rented an apartment to Mr. Earle, an African American man whose skin complexion was fair enough to pass for white. After paying for the apartment and receiving the keys, the Earles were scheduled to move in and arranged for the gas and electricity to be turned on in the new apartment and put in new flooring. When Mr. Earle arrived at his new apartment he could not enter because the property owners had changed the lock on the door. The landlords of the building insisted that they already had tenants renting that apartment and that their father, who

⁵⁹³ Interview of William and Margery Nichols by Mark Naison, October 21, 2004 and Interview of Rosemary Brown by Mark Naison, April 21, 2005, Bronx African American History Project.

⁵⁹⁴ Interview of Ronald and Gloria Marshall conducted by Mark Naison May 2, 2005, Bronx African American History Project.

⁵⁹⁵ Thessalonia Worship Center website, Church History page. Accessed November 28, 2010.

<http://thessaloniabaptistchurch.org/325342.ihtml>

⁵⁹⁶ Interview of Ronald and Gloria Marshall conducted by Mark Naison, May 2, 2005, Bronx African American History Project.

⁵⁹⁷ Thessalonia Interview, conducted by Mark Naison and Mark Chapman June 24, 2003, Bronx African American History Project for.

had made the rental agreement with Earle, had made a mistake. They told the Earles that they did not want Negroes renting their property.⁵⁹⁸ Despite a general lack of racial tensions in the area, not all landlords in Morrisania were open to black tenancy or integrated neighborhoods. But the discrimination in Morrisania was nowhere near as systematic as in other areas of the Bronx.

In Morrisania's adjacent sections integration was not as welcome. In fact the neighborhoods surrounding Morrisania remained off limits to blacks. As a youth Rosemary Brown remembers not being able to go down the hill to Southern Boulevard or Intervale Avenue which were mostly Jewish areas. She remembers being chased there as a youth. By the late 1940s, as more blacks moved into the area, those restrictions lifted and black children could go to Southern Boulevard; but there were still areas in the South Bronx where blacks could not go. Blacks were not welcome on Bathgate Avenue or in the Hunts Point, Melrose and Mott Haven sections.⁵⁹⁹ Despite the integration in Morrisania much of the rest of the South Bronx remained closed to black residency. The discrimination against black residents was even more acute in the burgeoning white middle-class neighborhoods of Bronx.

When a black family, the Blocksons, tried to lease a house in Baychester, a middle class neighborhood in the north Bronx, whites resorted to violence to prevent the family from moving in. In July 1945 unidentified whites burned down a six bedroom bungalow in a residential section of Baychester to prevent the Blocksons from occupying the dwelling. Not only did they destroy the house but they wrote racial slurs and messages on the ruined interior walls. The vandals scribbled "It stinks, I hate Niggers. I'm glad it burnt. I hope Niggers don't move in here." on the walls. The residents of Baychester were clearly not ready to welcome black

⁵⁹⁸ "Landlord in Bronx Bars Negro Tenant," *New York Amsterdam News*, May 20, 1944, 3A.

⁵⁹⁹ Interview of Rosemary Brown by Mark Naison, April 21, 2005, Bronx African American History Project.

neighbors even if they were the most respectable of black families. The Blocksons, were educated and affluent African Americans. Mr. Blockson, who was born in Canada and had grown up in an affluent section of Providence, had studied pharmacy in Rhode Island, specialized in perfumes and cosmetics at Columbia University, and worked as an assistant manufacturer for D'Arsay Perfumes. Racism and discrimination towards blacks were much more pronounced in more affluent sections of the Bronx than in Morrisania.⁶⁰⁰

Even though discrimination and racial antagonisms were relatively minor in Morrisania, community leaders, activists, and organizations aimed to stop race tensions, preserve the interracial and multi-ethnic character of the neighborhood, and prevent white flight as part of a larger effort to prevent the South Bronx from becoming a ghetto. Some focused their work on preventing segregation of neighborhood schools to prevent white flight. This was one of the main goals of Dr. Jacob Bernstein, principal of Morris High School, and advisor to the Bronx Youth Council, a group of Bronx students who met to organize recreation activities for borough youth. As whites moved out of the Morrisania area Bernstein appealed to the Board of Education for a re-zoning of school districts to prevent white students from fleeing. Though there was considerable support for rezoning from many parent and community groups, opponents threatened race riots and one white politician obtained a doctor's note claiming his son was unable to psychologically deal with Negroes. Despite the opposition, the Board approved the re-zoning and a subsequent redrawing of the district lines. The result was an integrated Morris High with blacks comprising 40 percent of the student population, down from 70 percent. Moreover black students entered Taft and Evander Childs High Schools which were previously predominately white. The rezoning efforts successfully as the integrated schools and provided equitable education for black students. The re-zoning had racial implications beyond

⁶⁰⁰S W Garlington, "Burn House to Black Negroes," *New York Amsterdam News*, July 14, 1945, A1.

the classroom. White students after associating with their black schoolmates during the day went home and told their parents that their ideas about blacks were wrong. This would be another way to ease racial tensions in the area.⁶⁰¹ There seemed to be a concerted effort on the part of Bernstein and other Bronx educators to avoid in the Bronx the white flight and segregation that plagued Harlem and Bedford Stuyvesant.⁶⁰²

With the increase in black students at Morris High School Dr. Bernstein looked for information on where to send his African American students for guidance and job information. Dr Bernstein's request indicated the growing need for social service agencies and community organizations in Morrisania. The Urban League answered Bernstein's call. The Urban League of Greater New York (ULGNY) believed the organization's services must be extended to the Bronx. According to Edward Lewis, the Executive Secretary of the New York Urban League, there were far more employment opportunities available in the Bronx than most people realized, but fair employment practices agencies had not made much headway in dealing with Bronx industries. Therefore the League focused more of its job placement resources in that borough. The increase of the African American population in the Bronx prompted the ULGNY to open its first office in the Bronx. In response to the World War II migration of blacks to New York, in 1947 the New York Urban League's leaders appealed to the public to support its drive to raise \$450,000 in funds which would be used to expand its facilities and to hire more staff and professionally trained experts to work in the employment, vocational guidance, health, and housing departments. League leaders also said that part of the funds raised in the drive would

⁶⁰¹Chollie Herndon, "Up and Coming Bronx Points with Pride to Progress of Residents in Racial Attitudes," *New York Amsterdam News*, April 15, 1950, 32; Martha Bodi, *To Stand and Fight*, 243.

⁶⁰²"Bronx High School Students Form Council to Plan Recreation for 40,000 Teen-Agers," *NYT*, May 20, 1947, 27.

also be used to open the Bronx branch to meet the demands of the borough's new black community.⁶⁰³

The Bronx branch of the Urban League opened in 1948. Its creation was funded by a \$10,000 grant from the Nathan Hofheimer Foundation which was to be supplemented by gifts from Bronx sources and philanthropist Winthrop Rockefeller, a National Urban League board member. The new branch provided job aid and council to blacks in the Bronx, services that were increasingly necessary as more and more blacks settled in Morrisania.⁶⁰⁴ As the 1940s came to a close, the Urban League of Greater New York worked to provide and expand employment opportunities to those who lived in this new area of black settlement.

As the black population in the borough increased, William S Jackson, Executive Secretary of the newly formed Bronx Branch of the ULGNY, tried to prevent the South Bronx from becoming a black and Puerto Rican ghetto. Like Dr. Bernstein, Jackson believed the key to preventing the ghettoization of the Bronx was to prevent white flight which would preserve the interracial and multi-ethnic character of Morrisania. Jackson, the Norma and Murra Hearn Award recipient for distinguished social service from the New York School of Social Work at Columbia University, said that it was his aim "to see that the people of the Bronx all worked together to bring about an integrated population rather than isolation of the different racial groups."⁶⁰⁵ The Bronx office of the ULGNY worked to maintain integrated housing in Morrisania in an effort to prevent white flight.

In part the Bronx Urban League looked to maintain a racially balanced community. Leaders in the Bronx branch wanted to maintain a community in which 40 percent of the

⁶⁰³ "Negroes in City Increase 67% in 15 Years, Urban League Shows in Plea for Funds," *NYT*, July 1, 1947, 27.

⁶⁰⁴ "Urban League Unit Planned for Bronx," *NYT*, February 10, 1948, 11.

⁶⁰⁵ "Racial Tolerance For Bronx Urged." *NYT*, March 9, 1952, 72.

residents were white, 40 percent black, and the remaining 20 percent other races.⁶⁰⁶ League officials set up a committee to lobby for a balanced racial population in the proposed Forest Housing Development being constructed in Morrisania. Jackson wanted to keep the Forest Houses from being an all black housing project. At the time the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) usually admitted tenants of only one race to public housing projects. The League's plan was to prevent segregation of housing projects in the Bronx by having blacks apply for housing outside of the areas where they lived and educating whites to move into the "so-called Negro housing areas." The League pushed NYCHA to address this problem.⁶⁰⁷ League leaders also wanted the Cooperative Woodstock Terrace, a middle class complex, to choose residents according to these quotas as well. Neither initiative succeeded - the Forrester Houses and Woodstock Terrace both became predominately black complexes.⁶⁰⁸ The failure of the ULGNY's attempts to integrate new housing projects proved to be a disturbing trend signaling the eventual segregation and ghettoization of the south Bronx over the next twenty years. The fears of Jackson and Dr. Bernstein proved to be well founded.⁶⁰⁹

Conclusion

World War II was a period of mobility and opportunity for many African Americans. The employment opportunities in the nation's war industries, along with Jim Crow laws discrimination in the south, prompted millions of African Americans to migrate to urban areas

⁶⁰⁶ Interview of Elias Karman, conducted by Mark Naison March 25, 2004, Bronx African American History Project.

⁶⁰⁷ "Racial Tolerance For Bronx Urged," *NYT*, March 9, 1952, 72.

⁶⁰⁸ Interview of Elias Karman, conducted by Mark Naison March 25, 2004, Bronx African American History Project.

⁶⁰⁹ For more on the development of the South Bronx in the 1950s and 1960s see Evelyn Gonzalez's book *The Bronx*.

throughout the country. These demographic shifts caused many social changes in this nation's cities including New York.

In Detroit and Chicago new black migrants resided in the already extant centers of black settlement, increasing the population in already overcrowded "Paradise Valley" and the South Side respectively. The migration worsened overcrowding and strained the social services available in those cities. This was also the case in Harlem. As southern blacks migrated to New York, the extant center of black settlement became overcrowded and social service resources inadequate. Landlords increased rents and living conditions declined, prompting Harlemites and new migrants alike to seek housing outside of the so-called "Black Mecca."

In the 1940s thousands of southern black migrants moved to the Bedford-Stuyvesant section of Brooklyn, creating a second area of black settlement in the city. The availability of better-paying jobs in war industries and the construction of a subway line directly connecting Harlem and Bedford-Stuyvesant attracted middle and working-class blacks to the area. Apartments opened for black residency as whites moved to newly available housing in Queens and Long Island. As the black population of Bedford-Stuyvesant increased, the area suffered problems similar to in Harlem. Overcrowding, higher rents, deteriorating housing, and lack of adequate social service and health facilities accompanied the growing black population. In response to these changes some area whites organized to protest.

Many white Brooklynites linked the problems in Bedford-Stuyvesant to the migration of southern blacks to the area. Organizations like the Midtown Civic League led campaigns to oust black residents and prevent further settlement by blacks. They specifically linked black residence with declining property values and increased crime in the area. The organization worked to prevent black settlement in Bedford-Stuyvesant and pressured the Kings County

Grand Jury to hold hearings on the condition of blacks in the area. The *New York Times* coverage of the investigation and findings of the grand jury kept public attention on the negative effects of black residency in Bedford-Stuyvesant. Therefore the migration played a much larger public role in Brooklyn than it did in Manhattan in the 1940s, as public interest was focused on the steadily increasing black population from the south.

The organized white opposition to black settlement for the most part united the black community in Brooklyn against the activities of organizations like the Midtown Civil League. Black organizations attempted to provide community programs to decrease crime and juvenile delinquency in the area. Despite the activities of the Midtown Civic League, black migrants to the city continued to view Bedford-Stuyvesant as an attractive place to settle. Blacks moved to Brooklyn by the thousands and the increase in the African American population resulted in increased political power at the local level for Brooklyn's blacks by 1950. Increasing numbers of Bedford-Stuyvesant's white residents left the neighborhood in response to the migration. By the end of the decade blacks no longer lived in dispersed communities throughout the borough. Black residence instead became concentrated in Bedford-Stuyvesant and the area became known as "Little Harlem."

A significant number of blacks looking to settle outside of Harlem chose to put down roots in the Bronx. Thousands of Harlemites moved to Morrisania during the 1940s. The availability of better housing, lower rents, fewer people, fresher air, and better schools prompted thousands of African Americans to move from Harlem to the South Bronx. Though African Americans moved to the Bronx, Morrisania did not become a "Little Harlem" in the 1940s. While some whites did leave the neighborhood for better housing and in response to black residency, white flight did not occur in Morrisania in the 1940s. Some of the working class

white residents of the area did not have the financial capacity to move to the newly constructed middle class housing in the upper Bronx.

Despite the movement of many blacks into Morrisania, relatively little racial tension resulted. This was in part due to the fact that many of those moving to Morrisania, specifically in the first few years of the decade, were black middle class families that shared white residents' values and social outlook. Evidence of a class rift within the black community emerged in the early 1940s as long-time black Morrisanians complained about the lower-class Harlemites moving into the neighborhood. Therefore black and white residents alike worried about the effects of the influx of residents from Harlem on their community. There was a concerted effort among community organizations and activists to prevent crime and juvenile delinquency especially as black working-class residents moved there from Harlem. They worked to keep Morrisania a safe and desirable neighborhood. Others worked to keep Morrisania from becoming a "Little Harlem" like Bedford-Stuyvesant. Activists like Dr. Jacob Bernstein and organizations like the Bronx branch of the Urban League of Greater New York aimed to do this by promoting unity among the races in Morrisania and preventing white flight. Though it is hard to pinpoint whether or not these actions were the cause, Morrisania remained integrated. This was a major accomplishment during the 1940s as many other cities, and parts of New York City, became racially segregated.

The dispersion of New York City's blacks to different pockets of settlement is one thing that set the city apart from others during the 1940s. The spread of black settlement outside of Harlem provided a valve for the racial discontent building in New York City. It changed the character and focus of the Harlem Riot of 1943 and ultimately may have prevented a major race riot from breaking out in 1943 as it did in Detroit, Los Angeles, and Beaumont, Texas.

Conclusion

The Second Wave of the Great Migration and the demographic shifts it precipitated in New York City constitute significant events in the city's history. The World War II migration had important effects on the demographics of the city and the formation of black communities in New York especially in the outer boroughs. Moreover, African Americans in New York found better paying skilled and semi-skilled employment in some war industries. Blacks were able to find these jobs because of the passage of federal and state legislation prohibiting discriminatory employment practices by war industries. Government agencies, prompted by the activism of black organizations and groups working for racial uplift, investigated these companies and in some cases forced them to comply with fair employment legislation. The advances blacks made in employment lasted well beyond the war years.

Chapter 1 demonstrated that most black migrants came from Virginia, North Carolina, and South Carolina. Black women in their 20s were the largest group to migrate. Harlem, the existing center of black settlement in the city, and Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brooklyn were the primary areas where black migrants settled. In fact Bedford-Stuyvesant, which in the 1930s was an overwhelmingly white area, became a black neighborhood during the war years. The black population already living in New York City also moved to other boroughs during the war. Black middle class families moved from Harlem to the Morrisania section of the Bronx creating integrated neighborhoods there.

One of the reasons for black migration to urban areas during the war was the availability of better-paying jobs in war industries. Industrial work had been largely closed to black workers before the war and had remained closed to blacks in the first two years of the conflict. Although many scholars describe employment discrimination in this era, none of them explain exactly

which jobs were open and which were closed to blacks, the rationale used by employers for refusing to hire them, or the process that led employers to, for the first time, offer jobs to black workers. This is the focus of Chapter 2.

Chapter 2 elucidates how the passage of state anti-discrimination legislation and Executive Order 8802 outlawing discriminatory hiring in war industries set the stage for integration of the workforce in some of New York's factories. The New York State Committee on Discrimination (COD) and Fair Employment Practices Committee (FEPC) investigations of the hiring practices of factories with government contracts prompted some war industries in New York City to begin hiring black workers.

The FEPC and COD would not have been as effective in prompting war industries to hire blacks had it not been for the constant pressure and cooperation from organizations focused on racial uplift. Chapter 2 also describes how black organizations protested against the discriminatory hiring practices of war industries and pressured the state and federal government to prevent companies with government contracts from discriminating against African Americans. The National Urban League and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People used community meetings, direct action protests, boycotts, and press campaigns to first pressure the industries themselves to hire black workers, a tactic that was not very effective. The NAACP, NUL, and black politicians shifted their focus to towards the state and federal government, pressuring the New York State Assembly and President Roosevelt to establish fair employment measures and establish government agencies to investigate war industries accused of discrimination. The FEPC and COD continued to draw attention to war industries' discriminatory hiring practices.

Though war industries began hiring black workers in 1942 it was not until 1943 that some industries fully integrated. Chapter 3 explains how this happened. A labor shortage in 1943, further opened skilled and semi-skilled industrial jobs in the scientific instrument, electrical instrument, and shipbuilding sectors to African Americans. Black women benefitted from war-time labor shifts as they found employment in factories that paid more than the domestic work they had done before the war. The Negro Labor Committee (NLC), the Negro Labor Victory Committee (NLVC), its parent organization the National Negro Congress (NNC), and most importantly the Brooklyn Urban League (BKUL) exerted pressure on the management of war industries and unions that discriminated against black workers. These organizations cooperated with progressive labor unions and collaborated with anti-discrimination agencies to help facilitate the employment of blacks in skilled and semi-skilled positions in war industries. As war industries hired African Americans, the NNC and the Brooklyn Urban League began to use the FEPC to address cases of discrimination against black workers employed by war industries. Both organizations were involved in a campaign to register discrimination complaints from black employees of the Brooklyn Navy with local offices of the FEPC.

The civil rights organizations used different tactics to open new areas of employment for African Americans, some of which were more effective than others. The NAACP held mass meetings, letter writing campaigns, press campaigns, and meetings with companies to highlight discrimination and pressure industrial employers to hire black workers. This drew the attention of government fair employment agencies to specific cases of discrimination, but did not directly result in opening of new areas of employment to African Americans. The Negro Labor Committee and the Negro Labor Victory Committee (a subsidiary of the National Negro Congress) worked in conjunction with labor unions to secure employment for blacks in war

industries. Both organizations worked with unions to accept black members and open training programs to black workers providing them with the skills necessary for industrial jobs. Though both organizations were led by leftists and had similar goals, the Socialist led NLC and Communist Party linked NLVC often attacked each other for their political views and affiliations. Of the two organizations the NLVC was more successful at opening new areas of employment to African Americans because of their cooperation with the Committee on Discrimination and their partnership with unions representing workers in war industries.

The Brooklyn Urban League (BKUL) was most successful at opening employment opportunities in New York City's war industries to African Americans. The BKUL worked with the New York State Committee on Discrimination to identify war industries engaging in discriminatory hiring practices. The Industrial Secretary of the BKUL provided the COD with information on instances where blacks were discriminated against in order to aid the bureau in identifying war industries breaking the Mahoney Law which prohibited them from discriminating against employees on the basis of race. The COD would then conduct investigations of these companies and in some instances order them to stop their biased employment practices. The BKUL also continually published reports of this discrimination to maintain pressure on the COD to continue its investigations. In this way the Brooklyn Urban League acted as part of the state infrastructure put in place to prohibit hiring discrimination in war industries and most effectively opened new areas of employment to African Americans.

Unlike World War I, not all blacks were driven back to their jobs as domestics and unskilled service workers when World War II ended. After the war many black women found work in clerical occupations, as phone operators, and as clerks in department stores. These were better paying positions that were not open to black women before the war. The war also caused

lasting changes in the employment available to black men. Though many of the city's African American men were ousted from their skilled and semi-skilled jobs when the war ended, five years after the war the number of black men working in service positions had declined and increasing numbers of black men worked in semi-skilled industrial positions, as skilled craftsmen, and in clerical jobs.

The historical patterns facilitating black employment in New York's war industries laid out in Chapters 2 and 3 are made clearer through the examination of how one New York war industry began to hire black workers. The changing hiring practices of the Sperry Corporation are the focus of Chapter 4. The Sperry Gyroscope Company, which produced scientific instruments for the Navy, employed very few blacks before the war. By the end of the war they employed more than one thousand African Americans and more than half of those workers were employed in skilled or semi-skilled positions. This represented a stark turnaround in the company's employment practices.

Sperry became the focus of black protests for equal employment opportunities because it held large government contracts to produce scientific instruments for the war but had virtually no African American workers. The NAACP, the National Urban League, and the National Negro Congress each worked to pressure Sperry to hire black workers. The initial efforts of the NAACP in particular prompted Sperry management to hire its first black workers in 1941. But Walter White, president of the NAACP, did not believe those hires constituted full integration. He argued that the few blacks employed by Sperry were token hires to alleviate pressure from black organizations. The NAACP, the NUL, and the NNC brought blacks' allegations of racial discrimination at Sperry to the attention of the local offices of the Fair Employment Practices

Committee and the state's Committee on Discrimination prompting an investigation of Sperry's hiring practices.

It was not until local offices of the FEPC and the COD investigated Sperry's employment practices in 1942 that the company began to hire larger numbers of blacks and more importantly placed them in skilled and semi-skilled positions. A labor shortage in 1943 prompted management to make more black hires. Some historians have argued that government fair employment agencies were ineffective in prompting war industries to hire blacks, however the statistics show that this was not true at Sperry. Sperry hired comparable numbers of African-Americans in the years before and after the labor shortage. This indicates that Sperry changed their hiring policies before the labor shortage, likely in response to the FEPC and COD investigations.

Chapter 4 also highlights the importance of the United, Electrical, Radio, and Machine Workers of America (UE) in facilitating black employment. The progressive union, which advocated inclusion of black members, took over representation of Sperry workers in 1942 and pressed management to hire black workers as well. At the end of the war, the UE cooperated with the Negro Labor Victory Committee to prevent lay-offs of all black industrial workers at the end of the war. New York locals of the UE proposed to create a black to white worker ratio that was to be maintained regardless of length of service. Within the ratios seniority rules would still be observed. This would ensure that all the newly hired black workers would not be fired when veterans returned to their jobs. Though the plan was rejected by company officials because it undermined the main function of labor unions which was to protect the rights of its workers through fair labor practices; it shows the union thinking about and experimenting with a form of

affirmative action. The UE, like other unions, proposed other measures in lieu of seniority changes to preserve black employment in industries.

The employment of blacks by Sperry also changed the attitude of the company President Thomas Morgan. He became an advocate of fair employment for blacks in Sperry as well as in other war industries. Morgan also advocated for black access to higher education, extending his activism to fundraising for the United Negro College Fund. Morgan's actions as Sperry's President had profound effects on the hiring policies of the company, especially with regard to the employment of blacks after the war. His actions and their affect on company policy show how sometimes individuals matter in history.

The particularities in Sperry's case caused the company to maintain black employment after the war. Though company management laid-off most of their black workers when the war ended, when the company began producing goods for the American military after the war, company management rehired many African Americans. Though this case study presents the particular conditions that led one business to integrate their work force, Sperry's story sheds light on the complex combination of factors that prompted other war industries to hire black workers as well.

The Second Wave of the Great Migration had profound effects on the urban areas to which the migrants moved. Historians studying the effect of the World War II migration have asked important questions about the communities in which these African Americans settled. Where migrants lived and how they found housing; how whites reacted to black settlement; how this affected relations between the races; and whether class conflicts within the African American communities in these areas emerged are questions historians Thomas Sugrue and

Shirley Ann Moore asked about Detroit and Richmond during the Second World War. They are questions that this study begins to answer about New York City in Chapter 5.

The migration of thousands of African Americans to New York City strained the housing and social service organizations in Harlem. High rents and overcrowding prompted black leaders in Harlem to protest and pressure the federal government to institute rent control. Moreover the frustration blacks felt at having to endure discrimination and deteriorating living conditions fueled the Harlem Riot in 1943. The outbreak of violence in Harlem prompted black leaders and some whites to focus on the social problems in Harlem; problems that were made worse by the increasing black population. Many African American leaders used the riot to highlight the poor living conditions blacks in Harlem endured and pressed the city government to address these problems. Many African Americans took matters into their own hands and settled elsewhere in the city. New migrants and Harlemites alike moved to the Bedford-Stuyvesant section of Brooklyn creating a second area of black settlement in the city. Other Harlem residents moved to Morrisania in the Bronx.

Blacks chose to move to Bedford-Stuyvesant during the war years for several reasons. Harlemites and migrants alike looked to Bedford-Stuyvesant because of the war jobs available in close proximity. The Brooklyn Navy Yard, one of the major war-time employers of African Americans, was within walking distance of Bedford-Stuyvesant. Moreover, a small black population already lived in the area which attracted more African Americans. Bedford-Stuyvesant was less crowded than Harlem and had better housing, two of the primary reasons blacks moved there. Furthermore, the area was easily accessible from Harlem because of the new train line directly connecting the two neighborhoods. Both working class and middle class blacks moved to the area.

As the black population increased, many of the same problems that plagued Harlem developed in Bedford-Stuyvesant as well. Overcrowding and high rents were the most acute problems for blacks. Property values decreased which precipitated white flight during the 1940s. By 1941 poor health conditions, a high delinquency rate, and an almost total lack of cultural and recreational facilities and social agencies plagued Bedford-Stuyvesant. The *New York Times* reported on the higher crime and delinquency rates in Bedford Stuyvesant, linking reported crime waves in the district with black migration. Consequently, Bedford-Stuyvesant became known as “Little Harlem.”

The increasing crime rate and declining property values prompted white Bedford-Stuyvesant residents to organize to protest black settlement in the area. Monsignor John Belford, a priest at the Roman Catholic Church of the Nativity, led white protests against increased crime in the neighborhood. He embarked on a campaign against black residency by publishing articles in his parish newspaper and the *Brooklyn Eagle* highlighting the ignorant and destructive character of blacks migrating to the area. He blamed blacks, especially southern migrants, for crime. The Midtown Civil League, led by Sumner Sirtl, fought decreasing property values in Bedford-Stuyvesant by trying to prevent black settlement in the area. In 1943 the League pressured the King’s County Grand Jury to investigate the condition of blacks living in Brooklyn and allegations that Mayor La Guardia had ignored crime in the neighborhood. The Grand Jury reported a general sense of lawlessness in Bedford-Stuyvesant detailing the various types of crime and vice plaguing the area. The report did not mention any of the structural reasons for the condition of blacks in Bedford-Stuyvesant. Instead the grand jury blamed area crime on insufficient police presence.

African American leaders, organizations, and press condemned the report and worked to discredit its findings. The NAACP, NNC, YMCA, and *Amsterdam News* argued that employment discrimination, high rents, overcrowded living conditions, and the lack of recreational organizations and social service agencies were the main reasons for higher rates of crime and juvenile delinquency among African Americans.

Despite the racial tension, higher rents, deteriorating housing, and social problems in Bedford-Stuyvesant, blacks still considered the area an attractive place to live. The borough's more modern housing and industrial job opportunities continued to attract middle and working class blacks from Harlem and the South. Many of the migrants moving to Bedford-Stuyvesant were middle-class and more stable working-class blacks creating a more homogenous black population as many poorer working-class blacks moved to Brownsville. Blacks in Bedford-Stuyvesant, despite class differences, united in the face of white prejudice. The continued settlement of blacks in Bedford-Stuyvesant and the social effects it created precipitated white flight from the area and by the end of the 1940s the formerly white neighborhood was predominately inhabited by African Americans.

Black families from Harlem also moved to the Bronx in the 1940s to escape high rents and overcrowding. These families settled in present-day Morrisania in the southwest Bronx. Most of the families who moved were members of the stable working class with fathers and husbands employed in stable jobs. Very often these families had the economic means to move because black men were hired as postal workers or Pullman porters. Many of the African American men who moved to Morrisania in the early 1940s were employed in civil service or blue collar jobs, while others were professionals. Some of the earliest black residents of

Morrisania could not find apartments due to discrimination by white building owners; so black men took jobs as building superintendents to get apartments.

The majority of the families that moved to the Bronx were looking for better living conditions than in Harlem. The Bronx had better and newer housing, more parks, and better schools than Harlem. African Americans were increasingly able to find apartments in Morrisania because many of the white residents were leaving for newer and more modern housing in the upper Bronx. This left apartments vacant for blacks to occupy. However many working class whites in the neighborhood did not have the economic means to move to emerging middle-class neighborhoods. These whites stayed in Morrisania creating a racially and ethnically diverse neighborhood.

Black Morrisania residents were quite proud of the fact that they lived in an integrated neighborhood. Integrated neighborhoods were not common in cities across the country in the 1940s. In fact the growing black populations in Detroit, Los Angeles, and Chicago found themselves even more hemmed into distinct black districts as these cities became more rigidly segregated. The residents of Morrisania, both black and white, worked together to foster a sense of unity which resulted in very little racial conflict in the area. Perhaps the middle-class status, culture, and values of the blacks moving into Morrisania in the 1940s created a common outlook and fostered good relations between the different races and ethnicities living in the neighborhood.

As in Bedford-Stuyvesant some negative effects accompanied black settlement in Morrisania. Higher rents, increasing crime, and juvenile delinquency levels accompanied black settlement in the area. Moreover the social and recreational organizations in the neighborhood lacked sufficient resources to deal with the expanding black population. These affects made

some white residents of the area look for new places to live. More affluent black residents in Morrisania were also unhappy with the social effects of increasing migration from Harlem, especially towards the latter half of the 1940s. These black middle-class residents complained about higher rents, increased crime, and visible vice in the neighborhood as working-class blacks moved in from Harlem. Despite these complaints, both middle and working class blacks believed living in Morrisania was a much better alternative to living in Harlem.

Community leaders and organizations aimed at racial uplift attempted to keep Morrisania integrated by preventing white flight. Men like Jacob Bernstein, principal of Morris High School, worked to have the school district re-zoned to ensure that his school and others in the area remained integrated. Similarly the Urban League of Greater New York devoted more of its resources to address the social changes that accompanied black settlement in the borough. The organization established a Bronx branch and focused on job placement activities for blacks in the area. William S. Jackson, Executive Secretary of the newly formed Bronx Urban League, also tried to prevent white flight. He led an Urban League initiative to pressure the New York City Housing Authority to keep the Forrest Houses, a proposed housing project for Morrisania, from accepting only African American residents. Integration of the project they hoped would prevent the area from becoming all black. Jackson's plan was unsuccessful, NYCHA admitted only black tenants to the Forrest Houses. Morrisania, however, remained integrated throughout the rest of the decade. This changed in the 1950s as more and more whites fled the area leaving it to become a minority inhabited ghetto.

The study of the demographic and social effects of the Second Wave of the Great Migration in New York City provides a different lens through which to view African American history and the history of New York City. Particularities in the New York experience complicate

the story of the World War II migration of blacks to urban areas as well as the history of World War II era New York City. This wave of black migration to New York and the subsequent changes in population distribution it created in the city was the foundation for settlement patterns of the black population there for the rest of the century.

The creation of black enclaves outside of Harlem set the parameters for New York's modern ethnic and racial composition. Since the turn of the twentieth century blacks had been concentrated in Harlem, but in the 1940s a second area of black settlement emerged in Bedford-Stuyvesant. Though Brooklyn never became the intellectual and cultural center of black New York, its significant black population became a political and cultural rival to Harlem. Moreover, in the 1940s blacks began to move into the Bronx. The south Bronx, which later became the quintessential picture of urban blight, was a haven for middle and working-class blacks who were in search of better living conditions in the 1940s. Morrisania was a distinctively integrated area uncommon in New York City and other urban areas in the country at the time.

The dispersion of New York City's blacks to different pockets of settlement sets the city apart from other urban areas in the 1940s. In most cities to which blacks migrated, African Americans were relegated to distinct and rigidly defined areas of settlement. The spread of black residency outside of Harlem provided a valve for the racial discontent building in New York City. In the Harlem Riot, New York's blacks focused their disgruntlement on property – damaging and destroying neighborhood stores. Unlike the riots of Detroit and Los Angeles, the Harlem Riot in 1943 was not a traditional race riot in the sense that there was no violent confrontation between blacks and whites.

The study of black New York in the 1940s also provides an alternative view of the activities of fair employment practice agencies. The Fair Employment Practices Committee in

particular was thought by several historians to be unsuccessful in its goal of prohibiting discrimination in war industries. They argue that the FEPC did not effectively end discriminatory hiring practices in war industries because it lacked the means to enforce Executive Order 8802. Other historians argue that the COD was slow and ineffective in its investigations of companies with discriminatory hiring practices.⁶¹⁰ Examination of the activities of these agencies during the war shows that their investigations did indeed have a positive effect on the employment situation of the city's African Americans. In New York the FEPC through its work with the Committee on Discrimination successfully expanded black employment into factories producing goods for the war. The New York State legislation outlawing discriminatory hiring practices in the state war industries and the ability for the state government to enforce this legislation made the investigations of the local FEPC and COD relatively effective at desegregating the workforces of factories with government contracts.

The goal of equal employment opportunity fostered the cooperation of organizations aimed at uplifting the black race. Older civil rights organizations like the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and the National Urban League focused their activities on expanding the types of employment open to blacks in New York. Leftist-led organizations like the Negro Labor Committee, the Negro Labor Victory Committee and its parent organization the National Negro Congress focused on working with labor unions to break down employment barriers to blacks in war industries. These organizations worked separately and in collaboration to pressure company management and labor unions to accept black workers.

⁶¹⁰ Richard Polenberg in his book *War and Society: The United States 1941-1945*, Cheryl Greenberg in *Or Does it Explode?*, and Mary Dudziak in *Cold War civil rights: race and the image of American democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002) each mention the ineffectiveness of the FEPC. Martha Biondi criticizes the Committee Against Discrimination for being ineffective in her book *To Stand and Fight*.

The most effective tactic used by civil rights organizations was the exertion of pressure on government agencies aimed at ending employment discrimination in war industries to investigate companies accused of discrimination. If these agencies, in particular the COD, found war industries to have discriminatory hiring practices they would then force them to comply with state anti-discrimination legislation. State legislation made it a misdemeanor for New York war industries (and the placement agencies that served them) to exclude a citizen of the state by reason of national origin, race, or color from employment. Moreover, the State Industrial Commissioner could enforce the laws and require submission of information, records, and reports pertinent to an investigation of discriminatory hiring practices.

As Nelson Lichtenstein and Robert Korstad argued and as this dissertation has shown the main issue on the agenda of civil rights activists in the 1940s was equality of economic opportunity.⁶¹¹ Black leaders found an opportunity during World War II to pressure the government into defending blacks' economic rights. African Americans and liberal politicians in New York believed as citizens of the state and nation African Americans deserved their equal share in the nation's war-time prosperity. The activism that publicly forced companies and the government to face the hypocrisy of employment discrimination by a government fighting a war for democracy resulted in expanding employment opportunities for African Americans in the city.

Historian Eric Arnesen cites Martha Biondi among a new cadre of scholars who over the past twenty-five years have examined the contributions of grassroots campaigns for black rights. He criticizes Biondi and others for not addressing contemporary critiques and historians' questions about the effectiveness of the Communist Party affiliated civil rights activists.

⁶¹¹ Robert Korstad and Nelson Lichtenstein, "Opportunities Found and Lost: Labor, Radicals, and the Early Civil Rights Movement," *Journal of American History*, Vol. 75, No. 3 (Dec., 1988), 786-811.

Arneson says this avoidance is facilitated by revisionist historians' minimizing of the political effects of Communist Party affiliation.⁶¹² Arneson recognizes the genuine contributions Communist Party members made during wartime in building industrial unions and, within limits, supporting civil rights but also contends it was not as positive as revisionist historians contend either.⁶¹³

This dissertation falls in line with Arnesen's assessment of the effectiveness of Communist civil rights activists during the 1940s. Biondi begins her study at the end of World War II and focuses mostly on Communist affiliated organizations. In New York, the NNC and its subsidiary the NLVC, did indeed contribute to the gains in employment blacks achieved during the war years most significantly in the opening of industrial unions to black workers as a way to expand employment opportunities and occupations available to black workers. However, the NNC nor the Negro Labor Victory Committee were the most affective civil rights organizations in New York City in the 1940s. Though these organizations worked to secure employment for African Americans they were not the most important or effective actors on this front. The Brooklyn Urban League was the most successful organization to expand the employment options available to blacks during the war. By examining the activities of the Brooklyn Urban League it is clear that the Urban League, an organization often thought to be conservative in terms of its tactics by historians, was at the forefront of civil rights activism which was focused on equality of economic opportunity in the 1940s. The Brooklyn and New York Urban league were far more effective in achieving concrete goals with regard to job placement and expanding war work to blacks and facilitated the most important material gains for blacks in World War II era New York.

⁶¹² Arnesen, "No 'Graver Danger'", 19-20, 33, 37-38.

⁶¹³ Arnesen, "No 'Graver Danger'", 46-48

The 1940s was quite a unique period in the twentieth century fight for black rights. Organizations with different political and social agendas cooperated to work towards establishing equal employment opportunities for African Americans – the prevailing struggle of the day. Middle class organizations like the NAACP and NUL worked together with leftist groups like the NNC to better the economic standings of blacks in the city. It was a unique moment in which black activists across the political spectrum collaborated for a common goal. This changed at the war's end as Communist influence in the fight for equal employment for African Americans declined. Despite the end of this alliance, black protest for civil rights did not stop as Lichtenstein and Korstad have argued.⁶¹⁴ The priorities of organizations fighting for black rights shifted after the war. In the 1950s New York's black activists focused their efforts on desegregating the city's public school system. Moreover the Civil Rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s no longer focused on economic inequality, but on expanding blacks' legal rights as citizens.

In New York the opening of skilled and semi-skilled jobs to black workers, the movement of thousands of blacks into the middle-class, the creation of the FEPC, and the establishment of a permanent state agency dealing with issues of Civil Rights were important results of the World War II era. The explicit racial barriers to employment ended with the passage of the Ives-Quinn Law which outlawed discrimination by all employers in the state; that was the legacy of the 1940s. That did not mean that there were no other issues facing the black population. School desegregation, fairer distribution of government services and resources, and other challenges to structural inequality and institutional racism were issues that had taken a back seat during the 1940s but would assume prominence in the next decades.

⁶¹⁴ Robert Korstad and Nelson Lichtenstein, "Opportunities Found and Lost: Labor, Radicals, and the Early Civil Rights Movement," 786-811.

Appendix

All figures in Tables 1.1-1.15 and Figures 1.1, 1.2, and 1.4 have been taken from the 1940 and 1950 United States Population Census.

Table 1.1: New York City 1940 Statistics

Ages	all classes	total white	white males	white females	total negroes	negro males	negro females
all ages	7,454,995	6,977,501	3,455,003	3,522,498	458,444	205,727	252,717
15 to 19	606,942	571,412	284,588	286,824	34,678	15,574	19,104
20 to 24	649,153	607,184	289,049	318,135	41,099	15,251	25,848
25 to 29	697,153	644,590	301,328	343,262	50,978	20,008	30,970
30 to 34	691,027	637,687	308,050	329,637	51,180	21,924	29,256
35 to 39	669,421	614,219	304,806	309,413	52,186	23,418	28,768
40 to 44	628,714	584,118	294,594	289,524	41,789	20,299	21,490
45 to 49	550,743	518,427	266,165	252,262	30,381	14,802	15,579
50 to 54	467,020	444,170	231,787	212,383	21,468	10,251	11,217
55 to 59	346,871	331,865	170,782	161,083	14,251	6,675	7,576
60-64	267,974	258,161	127,865	130,296	9,285	4,311	4,974

Table 1.2: New York City 1950 Stats and Difference from 1940 statistics

Ages	all classes	total white	white males	white females	total negroes	negro males	negro females
all ages	7,887,380	7,110,275	3,452,480	3,657,795	749,080	336,860	412,220
	5.80%	1.90%	-0.07%	3.84%	63.40%	63.74%	63.12%
15 to 19	466,835	419,210	205,370	213,840	46,400	20,825	25,575
	-23.08%	-26.64%	-27.84%	-25.45%	33.80%	33.72%	33.87%
20 to 24	592,970	522,360	246,015	276,345	68,330	27,215	41,115
	-8.65%	-13.97%	-14.89%	-13.14%	66.26%	78.45%	59.06%
25 to 29	662,020	574,330	273,470	300,860	84,790	36,070	48,720
	-5.04%	-10.90%	-9.25%	-12.35%	66.33%	80.28%	57.31%
30 to 34	645,815	566,900	261,110	305,790	76,480	32,460	44,020
	-6.54%	-11.10%	-15.24%	-7.23%	49.43%	48.06%	50.46%
35 to 39	656,895	580,175	273,590	306,585	74,125	31,725	42,400
	-1.87%	-5.54%	-10.24%	-0.91%	42.04%	35.47%	47.39%
40 to 44	640,995	577,235	277,555	299,680	61,265	27,770	33,495
	1.95%	-1.18%	-5.78%	3.51%	46.61%	36.80%	55.86%
45 to 49	588,420	535,035	261,560	273,475	50,680	23,370	27,310
	6.84%	3.20%	-1.73%	8.41%	66.81%	57.88%	75.30%
50 to 54	553,645	513,115	253,135	259,980	38,155	18,420	19,735
	18.55%	15.52%	9.21%	22.41%	77.73%	79.69%	75.94%
55 to 59	452,330	426,360	213,670	212,690	24,405	11,665	12,740
	30.40%	28.47%	25.11%	32.04%	71.25%	74.76%	68.16%
60 to 64	365,035	346,385	174,030	172,355	17,515	7,805	9,710
	36.22%	34.17%	36.10%	32.28%	88.64%	81.05%	95.22%

NYC Difference between 1940 and 1950 as a percentage of 1940

Table 1.3: 1940 Census Statistics for Manhattan

Ages	all classes	total white	white males	white females	total negroes	negro males	negro females
all ages	1,888,942	1,577,625	780,455	797,170	298,365	133,930	164,435
15 to 19	129,209	107,957	53,271	54,686	20,718	9,430	11,288
20 to 24	158,152	132,357	61,824	70,335	25,173	9,603	15,570
25 to 29	178,462	143,463	67,070	76,393	33,814	13,335	20,479
30 to 34	181,251	144,586	69,353	75,233	35,028	14,948	20,080
35 to 39	186,173	147,564	73,637	73,927	36,292	16,281	20,011
40 to 44	174,962	143,723	73,445	70,278	29,141	14,228	14,913
45 to 49	153,273	130,767	67,421	63,346	21,057	10,229	10,828
50 to 54	132,697	116,869	61,614	55,255	14,725	6,986	7,739
55 to 59	98,996	88,574	46,136	42,438	9,818	4,598	5,220
60-64	77,105	70,514	34,773	35,741	6,175	2,816	3,359

Table 1.4: Manhattan 1950 Stats and Difference from 1940 statistics

Ages	all classes	total white	white males	white females	total negroes	negro males	negro females
all ages	1,960,101	1,556,599	750,940	805,659	403,502	186,898	216,604
	3.77%	-1.33%	-3.78%	1.06%	35.24%	39.55%	31.73%
15 to 19	98,604	76,465	36,314	40,151	22,139	10,074	12,065
	-23.69%	-29.17%	-31.83%	-26.58%	6.86%	6.83%	6.88%
20 to 24	152,300	117,393	53,133	64,260	34,907	13,990	20,917
	-3.70%	-11.31%	-14.06%	-8.64%	38.67%	45.68%	34.34%
25 to 29	181,601	135,675	64,257	71,418	45,926	19,859	26,067
	1.76%	-5.43%	-4.19%	-6.51%	35.82%	48.92%	27.29%
30 to 34	165,172	122,885	58,146	64,739	42,287	18,435	23,852
	-8.87%	-15.01%	-16.16%	-13.95%	20.72%	23.33%	18.78%
35 to 39	169,944	127,252	59,373	67,879	42,692	19,043	23,649
	-8.72%	-13.76%	-19.37%	-8.18%	17.63%	16.96%	18.18%
40 to 44	164,651	128,340	60,977	67,363	36,311	17,362	18,949
	-5.89%	-10.70%	-16.98%	-4.15%	24.60%	22.03%	27.06%
45 to 49	158,069	127,738	62,883	64,855	30,331	14,954	15,377
	3.13%	-2.32%	-6.73%	2.38%	44.04%	46.19%	42.01%
50 to 54	150,130	126,374	62,724	63,650	23,756	12,126	11,630
	13.14%	8.13%	1.80%	15.19%	61.33%	73.58%	50.28%
55 to 59	119,960	104,897	52,792	52,105	15,063	7,602	7,461
	21.18%	18.43%	14.43%	22.78%	53.42%	65.33%	42.93%
60 to 64	100,945	89,789	45,486	44,303	11,156	5,402	5,754
	30.92%	27.33%	30.81%	23.96%	80.66%	91.83%	71.30%

Manhattan Difference between 1940 and 1950 as a percentage of 1940

Red signifies increases of 90% or more.

Table 1.5: 1940 Brooklyn Census Statistics

Ages	all classes	total white	white males	white females	total negroes	negro males	negro females
all ages	2,698,285	2,587,951	1,282,485	1,305,466	107,253	47,744	59,519
15 to 19	241,176	231,806	115,414	116,392	9,186	4,093	5,093
20 to 24	250,217	239,457	114,182	125,275	10,612	3,693	6,919
25 to 29	258,285	246,250	115,542	130,708	11,824	4,545	7,297
30 to 34	241,824	230,476	111,852	118,624	11,052	4,729	6,323
35 to 39	233,449	212,368	105,305	107,062	10,622	4,729	5,893
40 to 44	209,508	200,784	100,976	99,808	8,300	3,946	4,354
45 to 49	183,759	177,542	90,768	86,774	5,940	2,901	3,039
50 to 54	157,401	153,026	79,546	73,480	4,191	1,948	2,243
55 to 59	119,469	116,603	59,764	56,839	2,780	1,280	1,500
60-64	93,761	91,744	45,634	46,109	1,961	924	1,037

Table 1.6: Brooklyn 1950 Stats and Difference from 1940 statistics

Ages	all classes	total white	white males	white females	total negroes	negro males	negro females
all ages	2,738,175	2,525,118	1,236,097	1,289,021	213,057	97,933	115,124
	1.48%	-2.43%	-3.62%	-1.26%	98.65%	105.12%	93.42%
15 to 19	173,482	159,339	78,277	81,062	14,143	6,505	7,638
	-28.07%	-31.26%	-32.18%	-30.35%	53.96%	58.93%	49.97%
20 to 24	213,318	192,726	93,335	99,391	20,592	8,188	12,404
	-14.75%	-19.52%	-18.26%	-20.66%	94.04%	121.72%	79.27%
25 to 29	231,005	205,792	99,324	106,468	25,213	10,986	14,227
	-10.56%	-16.43%	-14.04%	-18.55%	113.24%	141.72%	94.97%
30 to 34	222,460	201,311	94,445	106,866	21,149	9,196	11,953
	-8.01%	-12.65%	-15.56%	-9.91%	91.36%	94.46%	89.04%
35 to 39	230,698	210,878	98,633	112,245	19,820	8,864	10,956
	-1.18%	-0.70%	-6.34%	4.84%	86.59%	87.44%	85.92%
40 to 44	213,274	197,774	95,909	101,865	15,500	7,280	8,220
	1.80%	-1.50%	-5.02%	2.06%	86.75%	84.49%	88.79%
45 to 49	190,251	177,561	87,018	90,543	12,690	6,069	6,621
	3.53%	0.01%	-4.13%	4.34%	113.64%	109.20%	117.87%
50 to 54	179,541	170,217	84,019	86,198	9,324	4,606	4,718
	14.07%	11.23%	5.62%	17.31%	122.48%	136.45%	110.34%
55 to 59	147,326	141,356	71,229	70,127	5,970	2,920	3,050
	23.32%	21.23%	19.18%	23.38%	114.75%	128.13%	103.33%
60 to 65	119,429	115,272	57,901	57,371	4,157	1,887	2,270
	27.38%	25.65%	26.88%	24.42%	111.98%	104.22%	118.90%

Brooklyn Difference between 1940 and 1950 as a percentage of 1940

Red signifies increases of 90% or more.

Table 1.7: 1940 Bronx Census Statistics

Ages	all classes	total white	white males	white females	total negroes	negro males	negro females
all ages	1,394,711	1,370,319	677,620	692,699	23,529	11,048	12,481
15 to 19	117,378	115,052	57,342	57,710	2,268	957	1,292
20 to 24	120,681	118,211	56,483	61,728	2,423	916	1,507
25 to 29	130,082	127,798	59,118	68,680	2,212	941	1,271
30 to 34	129,525	127,175	61,488	65,687	2,253	1,037	1,216
35 to 39	124,739	122,183	60,049	62,124	2,436	1,170	1,266
40 to 44	117,451	115,391	57,745	57,646	1,924	1,002	922
45 to 49	103,925	102,329	52,628	49,701	1,495	789	706
50 to 54	86,439	85,384	44,832	40,552	1,023	568	455
55 to 59	62,367	61,660	31,765	29,895	675	326	349
60-64	46,227	45,764	22,926	22,838	444	230	214

Table 1.8: Bronx 1950 Stats and Difference from 1940 statistics

Ages	all classes	total white	white males	white females	total negroes	negro males	negro females
all ages	1,541,277	1,391,662	697,621	694,041	99,615	45,966	53,649
	10.51%	1.56%	2.95%	0.19%	323.37%	316.06%	329.85%
15 to 19	93,847	86,566	42,729	43,837	7,281	3,317	3,964
	-20.05%	-24.76%	-25.48%	-24.04%	221.03%	246.60%	206.81%
20 to 24	109,615	100,126	49,161	50,965	9,489	4,095	5,394
	-9.17%	-15.30%	-12.96%	-17.44%	291.62%	347.05%	257.93%
25 to 29	110,539	99,227	47,301	51,926	10,692	4,738	5,954
	-15.02%	-22.36%	-19.99%	-24.39%	383.36%	403.51%	368.45%
30 to 34	109,272	99,582	45,568	54,014	9,690	4,135	5,555
	-15.64%	-21.70%	-25.89%	-17.77%	330.09%	298.75%	356.83%
35 to 39	121,755	112,610	51,269	61,341	9,145	3,978	5,167
	-2.39%	-7.83%	-14.62%	-1.26%	275.41%	240.00%	308.14%
40 to 44	119,687	112,092	53,853	58,239	7,595	3,615	3,980
	1.90%	-2.86%	-6.74%	1.03%	294.75%	260.78%	331.67%
45 to 49	109,894	103,730	50,675	53,055	6,164	2,914	3,250
	5.74%	1.37%	-3.71%	6.75%	312.31%	269.33%	360.34%
50 to 54	103,287	98,541	48,471	50,070	4,746	2,341	2,405
	19.49%	15.41%	8.12%	23.47%	363.93%	312.15%	428.57%
55 to 59	84,909	81,903	40,903	41,000	3,006	1,448	1,558
	36.14%	32.83%	28.77%	37.15%	345.33%	344.17%	346.42%
60 to 64	67,617	45,509	12,799	32,710	2,088	930	1,158
	46.27%	-0.56%	-44.17%	43.23%	370.27%	304.35%	441.12%

Bronx Difference between 1940 and 1950 as a percentage of 1940

Red signifies increases of 90% or more.

Table 1.9: New York City Negro population change by Sex and Age

Ages	1940 males	1940 females	1950 males	1950 females	change in males	change in females	total change
all ages	205,727	252,717	336,860	412,220	131,133	159,503	290,636
15 to 19	15,574	19,104	20,825	25,575	5,251	6,471	11,722
20 to 24	15,251	25,848	27,215	41,115	11,964	15,267	27,231
25 to 29	20,008	30,970	36,070	48,720	16,062	17,750	33,812
30 to 34	21,924	29,256	32,460	44,020	10,536	14,764	25,300
35 to 39	23,418	28,768	31,725	42,400	8,307	13,632	21,939
40 to 44	20,299	21,490	27,770	33,495	7,471	12,005	19,476
45 to 49	14,802	15,579	23,370	27,310	8,568	11,731	20,299
50 to 54	10,251	11,217	18,420	19,735	8,169	8,518	16,687
55 to 59	6,675	7,576	11,665	12,740	4,990	5,164	10,154
60 to 64	4,311	4,974	7,805	9,710	3,494	4,736	8,230

largest population increase

second largest population increase

third largest population increase

Table 1.10: Manhattan Negro population change by Sex and Age

Ages	1940 males	1940 females	1950 males	1950 females	change in males	change in females	total change
all ages	133,930	164,435	186,898	216,604	52,968	52,169	105,137
15 to 19	9,430	11,288	10,074	12,065	644	777	1,421
20 to 24	9,603	15,570	13,990	20,917	4,387	5,347	9,734
25 to 29	13,335	20,479	19,859	26,067	6,524	5,588	12,112
30 to 34	14,948	20,080	18,435	23,852	3,487	3,772	7,259
35 to 39	16,281	20,011	19,043	23,649	2,762	3,638	6,400
40 to 44	14,228	14,913	17,362	18,949	3,134	4,036	7,170
45 to 49	10,229	10,828	14,954	15,377	4,725	4,549	9,274
50 to 54	6,986	7,739	12,126	11,630	5,140	3,891	9,031
55 to 59	4,598	5,220	7,602	7,461	3,004	2,241	5,245
60 to 64	2,816	3,359	5,402	5,754	2,586	2,395	4,981

largest population increase

second largest population increase

third largest population increase

Table 1.11: Brooklyn Negro population change by Sex and Age

Ages	1940 males	1940 females	1950 males	1950 females	change in males	change in females	total change
all ages	47,744	59,519	97,933	115,124	50,189	55,605	105,794
15 to 19	4,093	5,093	6,505	7,638	2,412	2,545	4,957
20 to 24	3,693	6,919	8,188	12,404	4,495	5,485	9,980
25 to 29	4,545	7,297	10,986	14,227	6,441	6,930	13,371
30 to 34	4,729	6,323	9,196	11,953	4,467	5,630	10,097
35 to 39	4,729	5,893	8,864	10,956	4,135	5,063	9,198
40 to 44	3,946	4,354	7,280	8,220	3,334	3,866	7,200
45 to 49	2,901	3,039	6,069	6,621	3,168	3,582	6,750
50 to 54	1,948	2,243	4,606	4,718	2,658	2,475	5,133
55 to 59	1,280	1,500	2,920	3,050	1,640	1,550	3,190
60 to 65	924	1,037	1,887	2,270	963	1,233	2,196

largest population increase

second largest population increase

third largest population increase

Table 1.12: Bronx Negro population change by Sex and Age

Ages	1940 males	1940 females	1950 males	1950 females	change in males	change in females	total change
all ages	11,048	12,481	45,966	53,649	34,918	41,168	76,086
15 to 19	957	1,292	3,317	3,964	2,360	2,672	5,032
20 to 24	916	1,507	4,095	5,394	3,179	3,887	7,066
25 to 29	941	1,271	4,738	5,954	3,797	4,683	8,480
30 to 34	1,037	1,216	4,135	5,555	3,098	4,339	7,437
35 to 39	1,170	1,266	3,978	5,167	2,808	3,901	6,709
40 to 44	1,002	922	3,615	3,980	2,613	3,058	5,671
45 to 49	789	706	2,914	3,250	2,125	2,544	4,669
50 to 54	568	455	2,341	2,405	1,773	1,950	3,723
55 to 59	326	349	1,448	1,558	1,122	1,209	2,331
60 to 65	230	214	930	1,158	700	944	1,644

largest population increase

second largest population increase

third largest population increase

Table 1.13: Manhattan Census Tract Statistics for 1940 and 1950

Census Tract Statistics, Volume III 1950 Census Chapter 37 - New York, NY Census

tract#	negro 1950	white 1950	negro 1940	white 1940
20	2,052	10,741		
133	1,099	7,921	1,405	7,129
151	1,838	3,363		
164	5,634	7,868	3,639	9,131
181	1,193	13,509	367	14,170
182	4,128	8,204	1,278	10,940
184	11,798	4,545	11,695	49,200
186	7,534	1,266		
190	9,325	495		
196	1,561	5,543	295	6,060
197	3,822	95		
198	3,727	1,628	2,814	3,405
200	6,546	220	4,990	833
201	6,935	95		
202	1,068	2,385	666	2,704
204	2,072	1,355	824	2,714
206	8,157	305		
208	13,339	143	11,877	252
210	8,315	150		
212	13,002	65	12,835	124
214	1,284	2	1	1,706
216	16,472	265	14,796	942
218	12,964	233	13,379	495
220	13,031	118	12,241	199
226	13,064	71	11,340	44
227	6,657	235		
227	2,610	15		
228	11,652	49	11,826	24
230	16,659	77	16,257	94
231	8,935	135		
231	3,790	15		
232	15,414	38	16,198	19
233	6,627	2,799	74	9,378
234	8,779	21	8,282	15
235	7,919	75		
235	3,943	12		
243	5,305	521	2,164	3,860
236	5,579	65	6,060	33
237	4,585	4,704	32	9,128
239	3,833	41	2,926	1,113
241	3,010	5,140	57	8,240
245	3,390	12,255	91	17,071

Census tracts with populations that changed from predominately white to predominately Negro.

Census tracts that were predominately Negro and remained predominately Negro.

NOTE: the above stats are for tracts with a significant Negro population (over 1000).

Those entries without stats from the 1940 census are new tracts that did not appear 10 years prior.

Table 1.14: Brooklyn Census Tract Statistics for 1940 and 1950

Census Tract Statistics, Volume III 1950 Census Chapter 37 - New York, NY Census

tract#	negro 1950	white 1950	negro 1940	white 1940
71	1,777	5,128	175	3,879
127	1,789	2,511	1,620	2,913
179	1,640	950	1,681	1,172
185	1,268	6,827	21	5,474
199	1,460	2,571	1,064	2,181
201	2,858	1,956	1,322	2,583
221	2,347	2,456	895	2,958
227	5,158	187	3,182	891
229	3,878	1,011	1,494	2,788
231	5,152	1,713	2,587	2,700
233	1,839	3,068	801	3,651
243	4,045	1,365	1,581	3,005
245	5,198	850	1,896	2,657
247	2,324	670	1,137	1,740
249	5,343	334	1,850	2,265
251	4,413	1,442	1,917	3,132
255	3,410	3,764	469	3,666
257	1,344	5,474	383	5,926
263	1,218	1,501	384	2,316
265	5,634	353	3,430	2,203
267	5,939	173	4,192	1,499
269	4,589	151	2,218	1,753
271	1,982	428	161	1,540
271	1,918	278	1,497	424
273	4,328	66	3,512	699
275	5,804	144	852	4,548
277	4,662	248	2,629	2,372
279	3,282	2,330	2,015	4,313
291	4,786	1,484	1,433	3,715
293	4,461	737	1,513	3,106
295	5,176	551	2,699	2,102
297	4,718	311	2,809	1,673
299	3,008	1,429	1,870	2,553
301	1,976	3,410	1,371	4,045
303	2,016	5,633	1,025	7,360
305	3,118	3,088	1,858	3,454
307	2,112	2,332	1,179	1,564
311	4,636	666	2,675	2,736
313	3,569	2,695	1,002	3,733
377	2,040	3,590	160	5,153
381	4,152	926	1,421	3,582
383	4,494	1,510	914	4,585
385	2,370	2,988	43	5,021
387	1,324	3,439	52	4,398
487	2,145	3,187	1,234	3,605

906	2,304	2,833	1,359	4,158
910	2,392	1,970	838	4,076

Census tracts with populations that changed from predominately white to predominately Negro.

Table 1.15: Bronx Census Tract Statistics for 1940 and 1950

Census Tract Statistics, Volume III 1950 Census Chapter 37 - New York, NY Census

tract#	negro 1950	white 1950	negro 1940	white 1940
1	1,055	1,662	1,007	2,023
75	1,653	10,633	138	11,235
77	2,270	5,230	233	6,665
79	1,139	9,216	490	8,958
85	1,462	8,654	75	9,335
87	5,769	11,210	1,706	15,730
125	2,018	5,492	73	7,721
129	3,219	7,793	1,170	9,262
131	6,061	4,930	2,719	8,743
133	6,875	2,346	1,336	7,292
135	8,513	352	994	7,122
137	9,683	1,370	134	10,049
139	2,313	3,374	596	5,211
145	3,090	3,467	52	6,779
147	5,944	2,382	1,024	8,337
149	3,535	3,438	34	7,982
151	9,536	933	1,568	8,223
153	2,805	12,513	135	17,275
155	1,149	6,026	407	7,583
169	4,659	5,929	1,346	10,064

Census tracts with populations that changed from predominately white to predominately Negro.

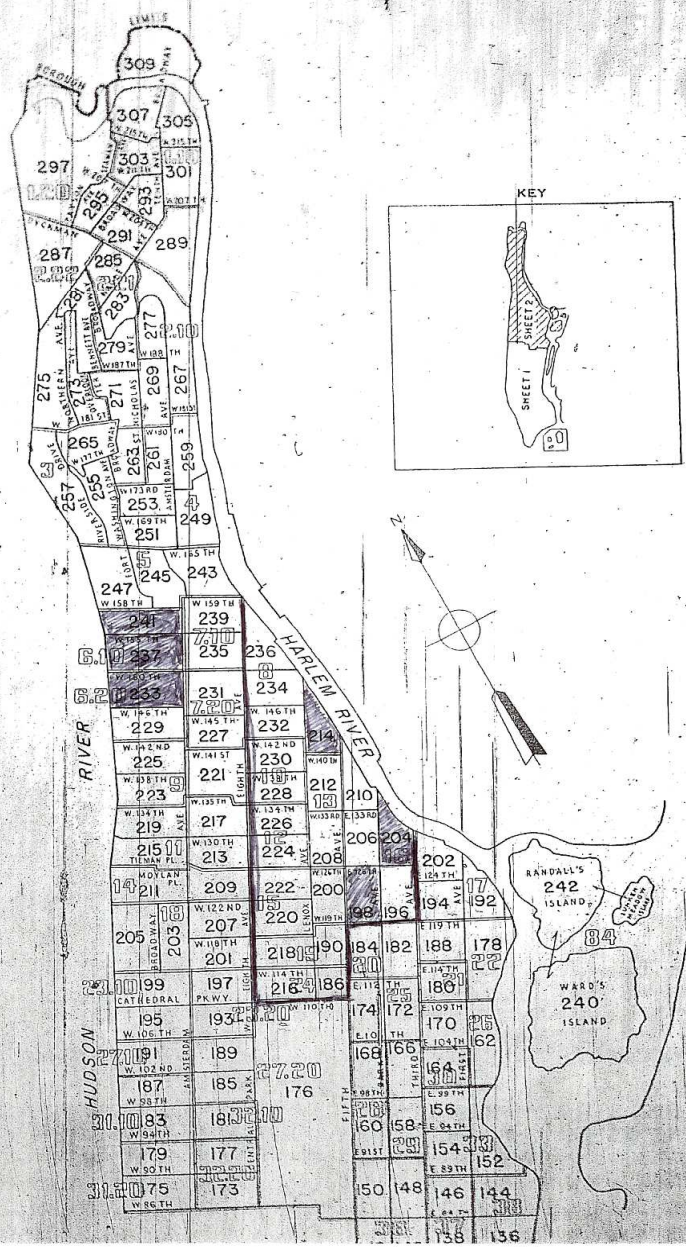
Census tracts with populations that became integrated.

Figure 1.1: 1940 Manhattan Census Tracts and Demographic Change

1940 Censuses

NEW YORK
NEW YORK CITY BY HEALTH AREAS AND CENSUS TRACTS
Manhattan Borough—Part 2

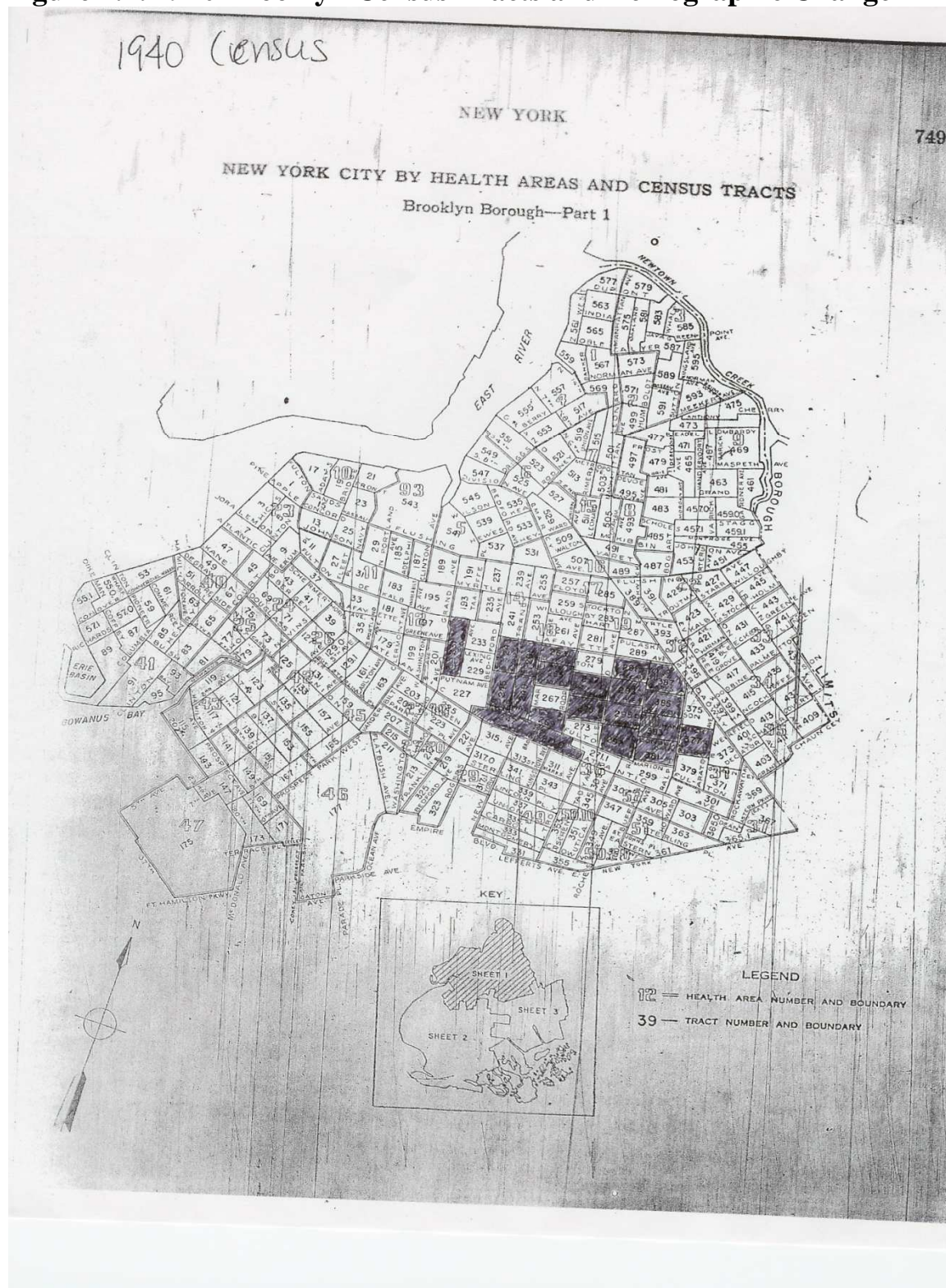
753



142 138 136

The shaded areas on this map represent census tracts that changed from having a predominately white population to having a predominately African American population. In this map the outlined area is the Central Harlem health district.

Figure 1.2: 1940 Brooklyn Census Tracts and Demographic Change



The shaded areas on this map represent census tracts that changed from having a predominately white population to having a predominately African American population.

Figure 1.3: Map of Brooklyn Neighborhoods from Kenneth Jackson , ed., *The Neighborhoods of Brooklyn* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998.)

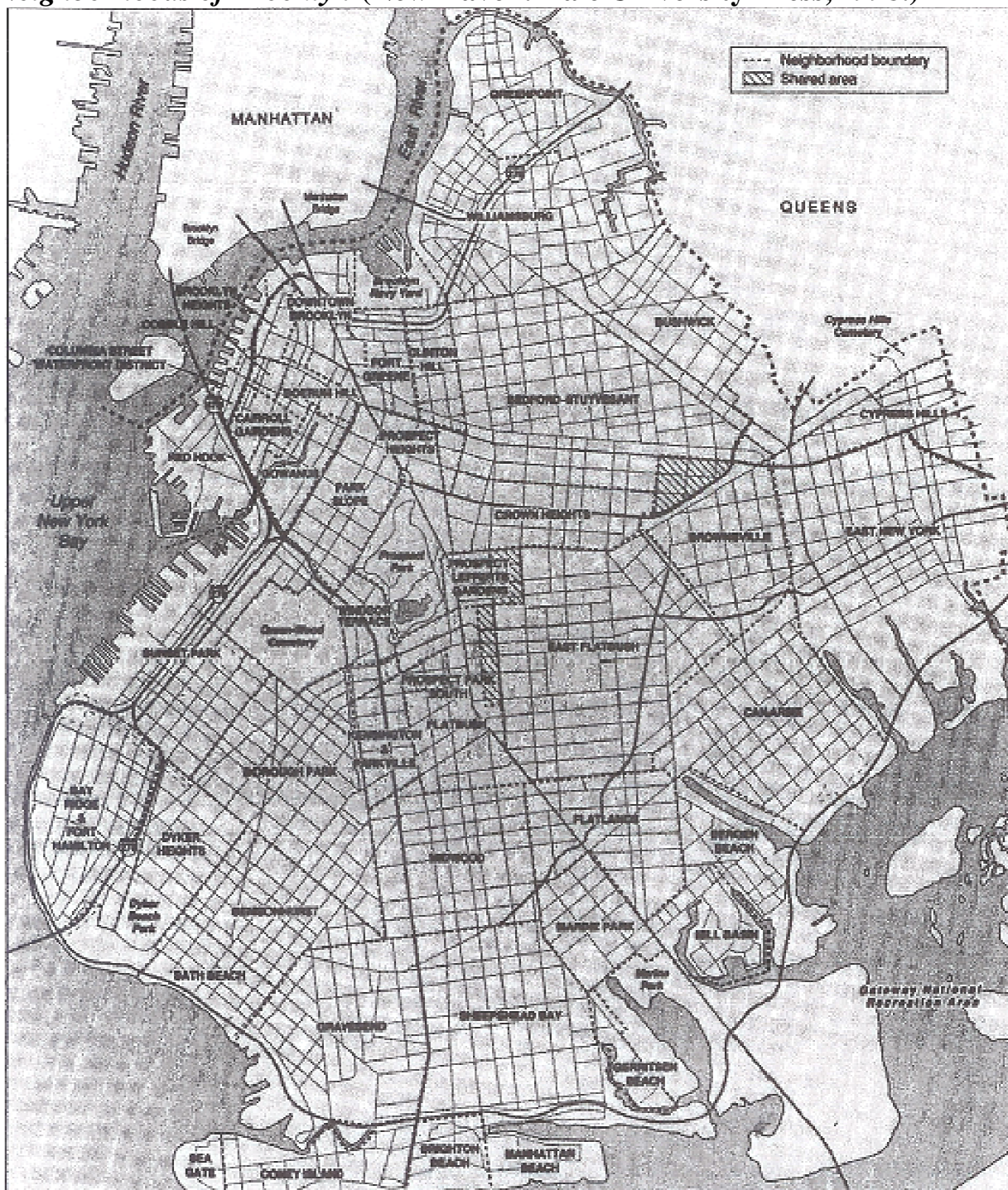
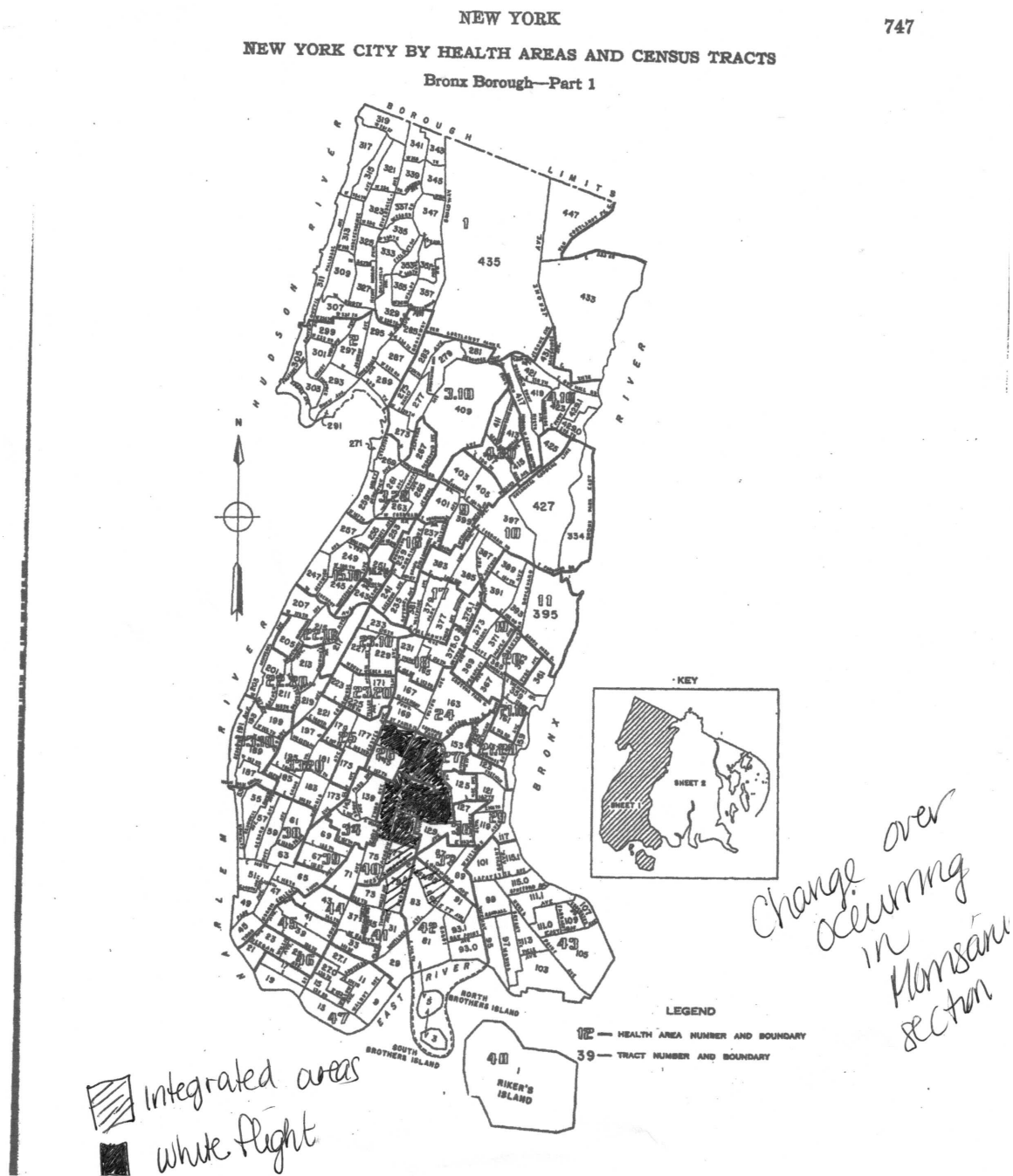


Figure 1.4: 1940 Bronx Census Tracts and Demographic Change



The shaded areas on this map represent census tracts that changed from having a predominately white population to having a predominately African American population.

Table 3.1: Summary Table⁶¹⁵

Place of Hearing	Total Employment						Non-White Employment					
	Total employment Summer, 1942	Total Employment Winter, 1943-44	Percent Increase	Number of Firms Reporting <small>42 / 43-44</small>		Number of establishments Reporting <small>42 / 43-44</small>		Non –white employment Summer, 1942	Non-white % of total, 1942	Non-white Employment Winter, 1943-44	Non-white % of total 1943-44	Percent increase
Los Angeles	419,228	618,557	47.6	6	6	48	68	15,729	3.8	44,899	7.3	185.5
Chicago	70,106	98,933	41.1	8	8	18	19	963	1.4	3,831	3.9	297.8
New York	149,087	295,291	98.1	6	6	21	21	3,754	2.5	19,215	6.5	411.9
Birmingham	37,903	59,353	56.6	4	4	4	5	3,379	8.9	9,245	15.5	173.6
Total	676,324	1,072,134	58.5	24	24	91	111	23,375	3.5	77,190	7.2	230.2

⁶¹⁵ Summary Table, "Compliance Data on All Establishments Throughout the Country of Firms Involved in Old Committee Hearings. FEPC Papers, Entry 75, Box 546, Folder – Statistics.3

Table 3.2 - Firms Appearing before FEPC at New York Hearings (all reporting establishments included)⁶¹⁶

Place of Hearing	Total Employment				Non-White Employment					
	Total employment Summer, 1942	Total Employment Winter, 1943-44	Percent Increase	Number of establishments Reporting <small>42 / 43-44</small>		Non -white employment Summer, 1942	Non-white % of total, 1942	Non-white Employment Winter, 1943-44	Non-white % of total 1943-44	Percent increase
Babcock and Wilcox Co.	544	677	22.6	1	1	0	0.0	31	4.6	3000.0
Becton-Dickinson & Co.	1,100	1,476	3.4	1	1	5	.5	14	.9	180.0
Curtiss Wright Corp.	100,216	227,020	126.5	9	9	2,995	2.6	16,155	7.1	522.5
Fairchild Aviation Corporation	9,786	14,482	48.0	3	3	17	.2	341	2.4	1905.8
Sperry Corp. (w/ Ford Instruments.)	35,776	47,581	32.9	6	6	1,083	3.2	1,874	3.9	73.0
Titeflex Metal Hose Company	1,665	4,065	144.1	1	1	54	3.2	800	19.7	1381.4
Total	149,087	295,291	98.1	21	21	3,754	2.5	19,215	6.5	411.9

⁶¹⁶ Table 3 - Firms Appearing before FEPC at New York Hearings (all reporting establishments included). "Compliance Data on All Establishments Throughout the Country of Firms Involved in Old Committee Hearings. FEPC Papers, Entry 75, Box 546, Folder - Statistics.

Table 3.3 - Workers Employed in Eight Firms Appearing before FEPC at New York hearings, February 16 and 17, 1942⁶¹⁷

Name of Plant	February 1942 (date of hearing)			August 1942 (6 months after hearing)			December 1942 (10 months after hearing)			January 1944 (23 months after hearing)		
	Total Empl.	Non-white Empl.	Non-white % of total	Total Empl	Non-white Empl.	Non-white % of total	Total Empl	Non-white Empl	Non-white % of total	Total Empl	Non-white Empl	Non-white % of total
Babcock and Wilcox Co.	525	0	0.0	544	0	0.0	599	0	0.0	667	31	4.6
Becton, Dickinson and Co.	1,002	0	0.0	1,100	5	.5	1,275	3	.2	1,476	14	.9
Fairchild Aviation Corp.	1,749	4	.2	2,411	6	.2	2,857	10	.3	4,206	102	2.4
Ford Instrument Company	5,076	65	1.3	6,681	110	1.6	7,488	261	3.5	7,385	405	5.5
Isolantite, Inc.	805	0	0.0	1,401	30	2.1				1,299	INA	
Sperry Gyroscope Inc.	14,184	21	.1	21,752	395	1.8	24,060	389	1.6	28,316	911	3.2
Titeflex Metal Hose Company	1,350	65	4.8	1,665	54	3.2	2,237	175	7.8	4,065	800	19.7
Wright Aeronautical	22,263	78	.4	26,203	273	1.0	29,405	750	2.6	40,599	3,797	6.9
Total	46,954	233	.5	61,757	873	1.4	67,921	1,588	2.3	86,714	5,060	5.8

⁶¹⁷ Table 3 - Total and Non-white Workers Employed in Eight Firms Appearing before FEPC at New York hearings, February 16 and 17, 1942 "Compliance Data on All Establishments Throughout the Country of Firms Involved in Old Committee Hearings. Papers of the Fair Employment Practices Committee, Record Group 228, , Entry 75, Box 546, Folder - Statistics.

Table 3.4 - Total and Non-White Workers Employed in Skilled, Semi-skilled, unskilled, and other categories by 6 Firms appearing before the FEPC at New York Hearings⁶¹⁸

Name of Plant		May 1942					May 1943				
		Skilled	Semi-skilled	Unskilled	Other	total	Skilled	Semi-skilled	Unskilled	other	Total
Fairchild Aviation	Non-white	0	0	5	0	5					
	Total	270	242	308	676	2,096					
Ford Instrument	Non-white	0	0	110	0	110	2	101	240	0	343
	Total	3,282	936	468	1,294	5,980	2,059	2,902	1,227	2,070	8,258
Isolantite Inc.	Non-white	0	0	0	0	0	2	7	383	1	393
	Total	65	0	819	87	971	117	725	1,073	341	2,257
Sperry Gyroscope	Non-white	0	100	376	0	476	1	285	305	10	681
	Total	701	10,560	3,120	4,000	18,381	8,620	5,247	8,587	8,375	30,829
Titeflex Metal Hose	Non-White					171	7	12	488	7	514
	Total					2,576	250	350	2,800	665	4,065
Wright Aeronautical Corp.	Non-white	16	15	241	1	273	75	816	798	14	1,703
	Total	4,000	8,000	4,000	8,441	24,441	5,890	12,210	6,214	11,073	35,387
Totals for the 6 Plants	Non-white	16	115	732	1	1,035	87	1,221	2,294	32	3,634
	Total	8,318	19,738	9,315	14,498	54,445	16,936	21,435	19,901	22,524	80,796

⁶¹⁸ Table 7 - Total and Non-White Workers Employed in Skilled, Semi-skilled, unskilled, and other categories by 6 Firms appearing before the FEPC at New York Hearings "Compliance Data on All Establishments Throughout the Country of Firms Involved in Old Committee Hearings. FEPC Papers, Entry 75, Box 546, Folder - Statistics.

Table 4.1 Non-White Workers Employed in Skilled, Semi-skilled, unskilled and other categories by Sperry Company Inc.

		May-42					May-43				
		Skilled	Semi-skilled	Unskilled	Other	Total	Skilled	Semi-skilled	Unskilled	Other	Total
Ford Instruments	Non-White	0	0	110	0	110	2	101	240	0	343
	Total	3282	936	468	1294	5980	2059	2902	1227	2070	8258
	% Non-White	0.00	0.00	23.50	0.00	1.84	0.10	3.48	19.56	0.00	4.15
Sperry Company Inc.	Non-White	0	100	376	0	476	1	285	385	10	681
	Total	701	10560	3120	4000	18381	8620	5247	8587	8375	30829
	% Non-White	0.00	0.95	12.05	0.00	2.59	0.01	5.43	4.48	0.12	2.21
Combined company figures	Non-white	0	100	486	0	586	3	386	625	10	1024
	Total	3983	11496	3588	5294	24361	10679	8149	9814	10445	39087
	% Non-White	0.00	0.87	13.55	0.00	2.41	0.03	4.74	6.37	0.10	2.62

Table 4.2 Total and Non-White Workers Employed by Sperry Company Inc. (February 1942- January 1944)

	February 1942 (Date of Hearing)			August 1942 (6 months later)			December 1942 (10 months later)			January 1944 (22 months later)		
	Total	Nonwhite	%	Total	Nonwhite	%	Total	Nonwhite	%	Total	Nonwhite	%
Ford Instruments	5076	65	1.3	6681	110	1.6	7488	261	3.5	7385	405	5.5
Sperry Company Inc.	14184	21	0.1	21752	395	1.8	24060	389	1.6	28316	911	3.2
company totals	19260	86	0.45	28433	505	1.78	31548	650	2.06	35701	1316	3.69

Information in Table 4.1 taken Table 7 – Total and Non-White Workers Employed in Skilled, Semi-Skilled, Unskilled, and “Other” Categories for Six Firms Appearing Before the FEPC at New York Hearings”. Information in Table 4.2 taken from “Table 3 – Total and Non-White Workers Employed in 8 Firms Appearing Before the FEPC at New York Hearings, February 16th and 17th, 1942”. Both documents in Compliance Data for Firms Involved in Old Committee Hearings. FEPC Papers, Entry 75, Box 546, Statistics Folder.

Figure 5.1: Neighborhood Map of the Bronx⁶¹⁹



⁶¹⁹ Map taken from “Intersections: Grand Concourse Beyond 100”, a project of The Bronx Museum of the Arts with the Design Trust for Public Space. Accessed June 24, 2011. <http://grandconcourse100.org/brief/maps>

Figure 5.2: Bronx Street Map⁶²⁰

⁶²⁰ AccessMaps.com, <http://www.aaccessmaps.com/show/map/bronx> Accessed June 24, 2011.

Selected Bibliography

Libraries, Archives, and Special Collections

Bronx African American History Project for Fordham University and the Bronx County historical Society, Bronx County Historical Society, Bronx, N.Y.

Brooklyn Collection. Brooklyn Public Library. Brooklyn, N.Y.

New York State War Council Committee on Discrimination Papers, Records of the New York State War Council. New York State Archives. Albany, N.Y.

Frank Crosswaith Papers. Schomburg Research Library, New York Public Library. New York, N.Y.

Olivia Frost Papers. Schomburg Research Library, New York Public Library. New York, N.Y.

FEPC Records (Record Group 228), National Archives and Record Administration, Northeast Region. New York, N.Y.

Edward Shakespeare Lewis Papers, Schomburg Research Library, New York Public Library, New York, N. Y.

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People Records. Library of Congress. Washington, D.C.

National Negro Congress Papers. Schomburg Research Library, New York Public Library. New York, N.Y.

National Urban League Records. Schomburg Research Library, New York Public Library. New York, N.Y.

Negro Labor Committee Papers. Schomburg Research Library, New York Public Library. New York, N.Y.

Negro Labor Victory Committee Papers. Series IV of the National Negro Congress Papers, Schomburg Research Library, New York Public Library. New York, N.Y.

New York Urban League Papers. New York Urban League. New York, N.Y.

Records of the Office of Employment Security (Record group 183), National Archives and Records Administration, Northeast Region. New York, N.Y

Sperry Corporation Papers. Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, D.E.

Papers of the United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America, United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America Archives Service Center. University of Pittsburgh Archives, Pittsburgh, P.A.

War Manpower Commission Records (Record Group 211), National Archives and Records Administration, Northeast Region. New York, N.Y

Records of the War Production Board (Record group 179), National Archives and Records Administration, Northeast Region. New York, N.Y.

Books

Binder, Frederick and David Reimers. *All Nations Under Heaven: An Ethnic and Racial History of New York City*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1995.

Biondi, Martha. *To Stand and Fight: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Postwar New York City*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003.

Bloom, Nicholas Dagen. *Public housing that worked: New York in the twentieth century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008

Blum, John. *V Was for Victory: Politics and American Culture during World War II*. San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976.

Brandt, Nat. *Harlem at War: the Black Experience in WWII*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1996.

Capeci, Dominic. *The Harlem Riot of 1943*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1977.

Chamberlain, Charles D. *Victory at Home: Manpower and Race in the American South during World War II*. Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 2003.

Connelly, Harold X. *A Ghetto Grows in Brooklyn*. New York: New York University Press, 1977.

Dudziak, Mary. *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002.

Etzkowitz, Henry and Gerald M. Schaflander. *Ghetto Crisis: Riots or Reconciliation?* Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1969.

Foner, Philip. *Organized Labor and the Black Worker*. New York: International Publishers, 1982.

Gonzalez, Evelyn Diaz. *The Bronx: A History*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2004.

Graham, Hugh Davis. *The Civil Rights Era: origins and development of national policy*. New York, Oxford University Press, 1990.

Greenberg, Cheryl Lynn. "*Or Does it Explode?*": *Black Harlem in the Great Depression*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1991.

Gregory, James. *The Southern Diaspora: How the Great Migrations of Black and White Southerners Transformed America*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005.

Grossman, James R. *Land of Hope: Chicago, Black Southerners, and the Great Migration*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989.

Hirsch, Arnold Richard. *Making the second ghetto: race and housing in Chicago, 1940-1960*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983.

Jackson, Kenneth, ed., *The Neighborhoods of Brooklyn*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998.

Johnson, Marylenn S. *The Second Gold Rush: Oakland and the East Bay in World War II*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996.

Johnson, Marylenn S. *Street Justice: A History of Police Violence in New York City*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2003.

Kryder, Daniel. *Divided Arsenal, Race and the American State During World War II*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000.

Kusmer, Kenneth L. *Black communities and urban development in America, 1720-1990*. New York: Garland Publishing, 1991.

Lemann, Nicholas. *The Promised Land: The Great Black Migration and How It Changed America*. New York: Albert A. Knopf, 1991.

Lynch, Hollis. *The black urban condition: a documentary history, 1866-1971*. New York: Crowell, 1973.

Moore, Shirley Ann. *To Place our Deeds: The African American Community in Richmond California, 1910-1963*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005.

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

Naison, Mark. *Communists in Harlem during the Depression*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2005.

Northrup, Herbert. *Negro Employment in Basic Industry: A Study of Racial Policies in Six Regional Industries*, Vol. 1 – Studies of Negro Employment. Philadelphia: Industrial Research Unit at the Wharton School of Finance, 1970.

Polenberg, Richard. *War and Society: The United States, 1941-1945*. Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1972.

Pritchett, Wendell. *Brownsville, Brooklyn: Blacks, Jews, and the Changing Face of the Ghetto*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002.

Record, Wilson. *The Negro and the Communist Party*. New York: Athenium, 1971, pp. 129-136, 191.

Reed, Toure. *Not Alms but Opportunity: The Urban League and the Politics of Racial Uplift, 1910-1950*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2008.

Ruchames, Louis. *Race, Jobs, and Politics: The Story of the FEPC*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1953.

Schatz, Ronald W. *The Electrical Workers: A History of Labor at General Electric and Westinghouse, 1923-60*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983.

Schulmann, Bruce. *From Cotton Belt to Sunbelt: Federal Policy, Economic Development, and the Transformation of the South, 1938-1980*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1994.

Selsam, Howard. *The Negro People in the United States: Facts for all Americans*. New York: The Jefferson School of Social Science, 1953.

Sides, Josh. *LA City Limits: African American Los Angeles from the Great Depression to the Present*. Berkley: University of California Press, 2003.

Sugrue, Thomas. *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996.

Taylor, Clarence. *The Black Churches of Brooklyn*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1994.

Taylor, Clarence. *Knocking at Our Own Door: Milton A. Galamison and the Struggle to Integrate New York City Schools*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1997.

Trotter, William Monroe. ed., *The Great Migration in Historical Perspective*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991.

Weaver, Robert. *Negro Labor: a National Problem*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Company, 1946.

Wilkerson, Isabel. *The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America's Great Migration*. New York: Random House, 2010.

Wilder, Craig Steven. *A Covenant with Color: Race and Social Power in Brooklyn*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2000.

Wolters, Raymond. *Negroes and the Great Depression: The Problem of Economic Recovery*. Westport: Greenwood Publishing Corporation, 1970.

Journal Articles

Anderson, Karen Tucker. "Last Hired, First Fired: Black Women Workers during World War II." *Journal of American History*, Vol. 69, No. 1 (Jun., 1982): 82-97.

Arnesen, Eric. "No 'Graver Danger': Black Anticommunism, the Communist Party, and the Race Question." *Labor: Studies in Working-Class History of the Americas*, Vol. 3, No. 4 (Winter 2006): 13-52.

Bates, Beth Tompkins. "A New Crowd Challenges the Agenda of the Old Guard in the NAACP, 1933-1941." *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 102, No. 2 (Apr., 1997): 340-377.

Chen, Anthony S. "The Hitlerian Rule of Quotas": Racial Conservatism and the Politics of Fair Employment Legislation in New York State, 1941-1945." *Journal of American History*, Vol. 92, No. 4 (Mar., 2006): 1238-64.

Critchlow, Donald T. "Communist Unions and Racism: A Comparative Study of the Responses of the United Electrical Radio and Machine Workers and the National Maritime Union to the Black Question During World War II." *Labor History*, Vol. 17, No. 2 (March 1976): 230-244.

Dalfiume, Richard. "The 'Forgotten Years' of the Negro Revolution." *Journal of American History*, Vol. 55, No. 1 (June 1968): 90-106.

Fleishman, Richard K. and R. Penny Marquette. "The Impact of World War II on Cost Accounting at the Sperry Corporation." *Accounting Historians Journal* Vol. 30, No. 2 (December 2003): 67-104.

Goldberg, Chad Alan. "Contesting the Status of Relief Workers during the New Deal: The Workers Alliance of America and the Works Progress Administration, 1935-1941." *Social Science History*, Vol. 29, No. 3 (2005): 337-371.

Gottlieb, Peter. "Rethinking the Great Migration: A Perspective from Pittsburgh." In *The Great Migration in Historical Perspective*, edited by Joe William Trotter Jr., 68-82. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991.

Green, Nancy L. "Blacks, Jews, and the "Natural Alliance": Labor Cohabitation and the ILGWU." *Jewish Social Studies*, New Series, Vol. 4, No. 1 (Autumn, 1997): 79-104.

Gyourko, Joseph and Peter Linneman. "Equity and Efficiency Aspects of Rent Control: An Empirical Study of New York City." *Journal of Urban Economics*, Vol. 26, (1989): 54-74.

Hughes, Alvin, C. "Let Us Do Our Part: The New York City Based Negro Labor Victory Committee, 1941-1945." *Afro-Americans in New York Life and History*, Vol. 10 (Jan 1986): 19-29.

Kussmer, Kenneth L. "African Americans in the City Since World War II: From the Industrial to the Post-Industrial Era." *Journal of Urban History*, Vol. 211, No. 4 (May 1995): 458-504.

Korstadt, Robert and Nelson Lichtenstein. "Opportunities Found and Lost: Labor, Radicals, and the Early Civil Rights Movement." *Journal of American History*, Vol. 75, No. 3 (Dec., 1988): 786-811.

Mayer, Ken. "Executive Orders and Civil Rights in the 20th Century" from *With a Stroke of the Pen: Presidential Power and Executive Orders*, 1999 Accessed 9/8/2008
<http://www.polisci.wisc.edu/apw/archives/mayer.pdf>.

Meier, August and Elliot Rudwick. "Communist Unions and the Black Community: The Case of the Transport Workers Union, 1934-1944." *Labor History*, Vol. 23, No. 2, (March 1982): 165-197.

Moore, Shirley Ann. "Getting There, Being There: African-American Migration to Richmond, California, 1910-1945." In *The Great Migration in Historical Perspective*. edited by Joe William Trotter Jr., 106-126. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991.

Scheartz, Joel. "New York State Commission Against Discrimination" *Organizing Black America: an encyclopedia of African American associations*, ed. Nina Mjagkij (New York: Garland Publishing Inc. 2005)

Sitkoff, Harvard. "Racial Militancy and Interracial Violence in the Second World War." *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 58, No. 3, (Dec., 1971): 661-681

Wynn, Neil A. "'The 'Good War': The Second World War and Postwar American Society.'" *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 31, No. 3 (Jul., 1996): 463-482.

Dissertations

Biondi, Martha. "The struggle for Black equality in New York City, 1945-1955." PhD Diss., Columbia University, 1997.

Connolly, Harold. "Blacks in Brooklyn from 1900-1960." PhD. Diss., New York University, 1972.

Hughes, C. Alvin. "Toward a Black United Front: The National Negro Congress Movement." Ph.D. Diss., Ohio University, 1982.

Patnode, Raymond Steven. "Labor's Love Lost: The Influence of Gender, Race, and Class on the Workplace in Post-war America." Ph.D. Diss., Stony Brook University, 2008.

Purnell, Brian. "A Movement Grows in Brooklyn: The Brooklyn Chapter of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) and the Northern Civil Rights Movement During the Early 1960s." Ph.D. Diss., New York University, 2006.

Periodicals

The Brooklyn Eagle

The Chicago Defender

Daily Worker

The New York Age

The New York Amsterdam News

The New York Times

The People's Voice

Government Documents

1940 United States Population Census

1950 United States Population Census

Internet Articles and Resources

Irving, Bernstein, "Chapter 5 Americans in Depression and War" History at the Department of Labor. Office of the Assistant Secretary for Administration and Management, United States Department of Labor. Accessed February 15, 2012.

<http://www.dol.gov/oasam/programs/history/chapter5.htm>

Naison, Mark. "The Wartime Tenants Movement and the Struggle for Rent Control: Organizational Diffusion and Political Success" From Chapter 3: Eviction Resistance to Rent Control Tenant Activism in the Great Depression. *The Tenant Movement in New York City, 1904-1984*. Accessed April 27, 2009. <http://www.tenant.net/Community/history/hist03h.html>

Sitkoff, Harvard. "Part Four: African Americans and Other Minorities on the Home Front." In *World War II and the American Homefront: A National Historic Landmarks Theme Study*, pub. National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, October 2007. 104-127. Accessed June 23, 2011. <http://www.nps.gov/nhl/themes/HomefrontStudy.pdf>

Stobo, John. *The Brooklyn Navy Yard: Civil Servants Building Warships*, 2010, Columbia University website, <http://www.columbia.edu/~jrs9/BNY.html>