

**Guardians of the Black Working Class:
Labor and Racial Politics in Postwar San Francisco**

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DISSERTATION

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AFL	American Federation of Labor
AFT	American Federation of Teachers
AOF	Apprenticeship Opportunities Foundation
ATU	Amalgamated Association of Street and Electric Railway Employees
BART	Bay Area Rapid Transit System
BMU	Baptist Ministers Union
BPP	Black Panther Party
BSU	Black Student Union
BVCC	Bayview Citizens Committee
CCNS	Citizens Committee for Neighborhood Schools
CCU	Council for Civic Unity
CIO	Congress of Industrial Organizations
CLC	Church Labor Conference
CLS	California Labor School
CMD	Concerned Muni Drivers
CONTROL	Contractors Organized to Lobby
CORE	Congress of Racial Equality
CP	Communist Party
CRU	Community Relations Unit
CSC	Civil Service Commission
CUAP	Citizens United Against Poverty
DOL	Department of Labor
EDA	Economic Development Administration

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS (Continued)

FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
FEPC	Fair Employment Practices Committee
GSCA	General and Specialty Contractors Association
ILWU	International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Unions
HRC	Human Rights Commission (San Francisco)
HUD	Department of Housing and Urban Development
IPP	Independent Progressive Party
JOBART	Jobs on BART/Justice on BART
MCS	Marine Cooks and Stewards Union
MDC	Muni Drives Caucus
MSNS	Mothers Support Neighborhood Schools
MSR	Market Street Railway
MUNI	San Francisco Municipal Railway
NAABC	National Afro-American Builders Corporation
NAACP	National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
(SF)NALC	(San Francisco) Negro American Labor Council
NAMC	National Association of Minority Contractors
NCDC	Northern California District Council (ILWU)
NNC	National Negro Congress
(SF)NNLC	(San Francisco) National Negro Labor Council
OEO	Office of Economic Opportunity
OFCC	Office of Federal Contract Compliance
OFJ	Officers for Justice

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS (Continued)

OSBDC	Oakland Small Business Development Center
PLP	Progressive Labor Party
POA	Police Officers Association
PUC	Public Utilities Commission
SBA	Small Business Administration
SFBTC	San Francisco Building Trades Council
SFCEEO	San Francisco Committee on Equal Employment Opportunity
SFMAAC	San Francisco Minority Affirmative Action Coalition
SFPD	San Francisco Police Department
SFRA	San Francisco Redevelopment Agency
TWU	Transport Workers Union
UFM	United Freedom Movement (San Francisco)
UAW	United Auto Workers
WACO	Western Addition Community Organization
WAPAC	Western Addition Project Area Committee

SUMMARY

“Guardians of the Black Working Class” tells two intersecting stories of postwar urban America. First and foremost, it examines the impact of the “Second Great Migration” on San Francisco and in particular the way in which black labor migrants experienced and transformed the city in the decades following World War II. Second, it provides a different perspective from which to view the “urban crisis” and the fate of postwar liberalism. Contrary to the dominant declension narrative that dominates the historical writing about postwar cities and liberalism, San Francisco seemed to survive the urban crisis comparatively well and represents a place where liberalism remained preeminent in the local political culture. This dissertation argues that black trade unionists, with the support of their unions and especially the International Longshoremen’s and Warehousemen’s Union (ILWU), had a lot to do with this. Arriving in a city with a weak black political and civil rights tradition, a cadre of African-American workers who settled in San Francisco during and shortly after World War II emerged as influential community and civic leaders in the 1950s and 1960s. This study suggests that these black trade unionists, who considered themselves the guardians of the city’s black working class in the postwar period, occupied a unique social, economic, and political niche from which they sought to lead the fight for racial justice and strengthen liberalism in the postwar era. Placing them at the center of the story of civil rights, urban crisis, and liberalism sheds new light on the history of race, class, radicalism, and politics in postwar urban America.

This dissertation draws upon a wide range of sources. It uses the archival records of the ILWU and Local 250 of the Transport Workers Union to uncover the activities of black trade unionists within their unions as well as in their communities. Several other manuscript collections, especially the records of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People’s western region and the mayoral papers of Joseph Alioto, figure prominently in the

SUMMARY (Continued)

dissertation's discussion of local civil rights and political history. These sources are supplemented with an array of government records, hearings, and reports, along with FBI files obtained through the Freedom of Information Act. The dissertation also draws heavily upon several daily and weekly newspapers, and especially those, such as the *Sun-Reporter*, published by African Americans. Several oral history interviews, some part of archival and published collections and others conducted by the author, help shed light where the written record is sparse while also enriching the human element to the history that unfolds on these pages.

This dissertation is organized into three sections. The first three chapters examine the experiences of black workers who migrated to San Francisco during and immediately after World War II and suggests that the ability of black labor migrants to gain entrance to strong progressive unions was central to the development of black labor, community, and political activism in San Francisco. The presence of the ILWU in particular distinguished the African-American postwar experience in San Francisco from their counterparts in other northern cities – particular those in the Northeast and Midwest. As World War II gave way to the Cold War, white leaders in the ILWU came to view the fate of their union, which had ties to the Communist Party, as intricately bound with that of the city's new (and rapidly expanding) African American population. It therefore endeavored to establish a mutually beneficial relationship in which African Americans supported the ILWU and the union helped lead the fight against discrimination in employment, housing, and policing. In doing so ILWU leaders groomed a cadre of black trade unionists who could better connect the union to the community. Chapters Four and Five comprise the second section and focus on the relationship between the ILWU, African Americans, and liberalism in San Francisco. Led in part by its African American members, the ILWU forged a strong political alliance with black voters during the 1950s and

SUMMARY (Continued)

1960s. This alliance helped provide each with political muscle, and they translated that strength into palpable political power when they joined forces with Joseph Alioto, a moderate “New Deal” liberal who was elected mayor in 1967. This alliance was significant for two reasons. First, it demonstrates how African Americans were able to obtain political influence in a city that lacked a black political tradition and anything resembling a black political leadership class. Second, it highlights the continued role that leftist veterans of the “popular front” era played within liberal politics during the 1960s and 1970s. The ILWU and the city’s black trade unionists sought to push Alioto to the left on certain issues, while Alioto tried deployed them to diffuse racial tensions and help him – with a modicum of success – guide San Francisco through the “urban crisis.” The dissertation’s final section explores the encounter between black trade unionists (along with their liberal political and labor allies) and Black Power. Chapter Six examines an attempt by the Black Panther Party to organize black members of the Transport Workers Union Local 250, which represented the bus, streetcar, and cable car operators in San Francisco. Chapter Seven then describes the efforts of black construction contractors to use liberal reformers’ concerns over community-based Black Power movements as a lever with which to place black entrepreneurs at the center of employment-based affirmative action programs. The failures of both was testament to the strength black-labor-liberal alliance in San Francisco.

Although San Francisco’s past does not always conform to the dominant Midwest-Northeast-centered postwar narrative of African American, political, and urban history, it should not be dismissed an exception or an anomaly (as is so often the case). Rather, its distinct and regional characteristics should be considered as variations, alternatives, and contingencies that existed alongside the more well-known histories of its thoroughly-studied counterparts. This

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dissertation contends that San Francisco can draw our attention to historical developments that might not be as apparent in other places.

INTRODUCTION

By the time Lee Brown arrived in San Francisco in 1960 at the age of thirty-nine, he had already established himself as a dedicated labor and civil rights activist.¹ After brief stints working on the docks in Galveston, Texas, the railroads in Arizona, and restaurants and warehouses in Los Angeles, Brown returned to his native New Orleans in 1944, where he found work unloading boxcars and barges on the city's docks and joined Local 207 of the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union (ILWU). He already had a history of standing up for the rights of other black workers in his previous jobs, and a brief stint at the Armour Packing Company in Los Angeles had introduced him to progressive trade unionism as a member of Local 12 of the United Packinghouse Workers. It was therefore not surprising that Brown became active in the ILWU, serving as a shop steward and executive board member for Local 207 as well as an organizer for the union. Around the same time he also joined the Communist Party because he "was interested in anything that would help me do something in unions and for black folks." After joining the party he became executive secretary of the Louisiana Civil Rights Congress, and from that post he participated in campaigns for racial justice across the South. Brown's membership in the Communist Party, along with his labor and civil rights activism, made him a target of anticommunists. In 1957 the House Un-American Activities Committee investigated Brown, and he gained notoriety among the communist left for defiantly standing his ground while appearing before a HUAC subcommittee. A year later he found himself in prison after a federal district court found him guilty of filing a false Taft-Hartley affidavit swearing that he was not a Communist Party member in 1952 (Brown claims that he had left the Party after the Taft-Hartley law was passed so as to avoid that very outcome).

After Brown had spent more than two years in prison, an appellate judge dismissed the

indictment against him and he regained his freedom in July 1960. Unable to find work in New Orleans, he looked west to San Francisco, which had served as a popular destination for gulf coast migrants during World War II. San Francisco also was home to ILWU headquarters, and its Bay Area locals had earned a strong reputation for racial liberalism. Brown wrote ILWU president Harry Bridges, who he had met on a few occasions, and asked for financial assistance. The response came from Bill Chester, ILWU Northern California Regional Director and the highest ranking black official in the union. He offered to help Brown secure work and sent him \$100 to help cover expenses in the meantime. Upon arriving in San Francisco a shortly thereafter, Brown visited ILWU Warehouse Local 6, where members gave him more financial assistance and aided in his search for employment. “I was treated very well by the brothers, and I appreciated it,” he recalled. It is unclear why Brown did not end up working out of an ILWU hiring hall, but he eventually found a job as a night porter at the Fairmont Hotel after visiting the culinary workers union. He soon became a shop steward – the first at a San Francisco hotel. “This was the beginning of my involvement in the trade union movement in San Francisco,” Brown recalled. He credits his subsequent advocacy on behalf of his fellow workers – most of whom were African American men and women, with costing him two jobs, first at the Fairmont and then at the Jack Tar Hotel. Following his dismissal from the Jack Tar in 1969, Brown spent three years working as a picket captain during the Hotel Service Workers’ Union Local 283 strike.

Brown also became active in San Francisco’s Civil Rights and Black Power movements. In 1964 he participated in mass civil rights demonstrations protesting employment discrimination at downtown hotels and car dealerships. Two years later, he worked for the gubernatorial campaign of Dr. Carlton Goodlett, a longtime-militant activist and newspaper publisher who

Brown had befriended shortly after moving to San Francisco. He returned to left-wing third party electoral politics in 1968, when he worked with the Peace and Freedom Party in support of Eldridge Cleaver's presidential campaign. Around this time Brown also joined the African Descendant Nationalist Independent Partition (ADNIP) Party, which called for an independent Black nation state within the United States.² Brown had met ADNIP's co-founder and leader, Al Sultan Shabazz (formerly Charles CX De Blew of the Nation of Islam),³ while working at the Jack Tar Hotel. By this time Brown had grown disillusioned with the Communist Party because it did not "care for the black liberation movement" and was using "blacks to further imprint their grip" in the United States.⁴ Brown was interested in African history, and was impressed with Shabazz as they discussed racism, Black Nationalism, and Africa. "I joined them because I liked their program of building up the economic program of black people, and I figured that was one of the solutions to the problem," Brown said of the ADNIP. "I think we should have our own community with our own stores, hotels, and whatever." Since Brown was a proud trade unionist, Shabazz appointed him ADNIP Minister of Labor. Brown also worked for one of ADNIP's businesses – the Black Security Guards, which provided security for buildings (such as housing projects) in the Western Addition, one of two major black enclaves in San Francisco. Although the relationship between ADNIP and the Black Panther Party was tense, Brown claims to have advised the San Francisco Panthers on security matters as well.⁵

Brown's career as a trade unionist and civil rights activist defies any simple classification in twentieth century African American history. "So I was involved with the Communist Party, the ADNIP Party, the Peace and Freedom Party, the Black Panther Party, and sometimes the Muslims and some other groups," he told sociologist Robert Allen, adding for good measure that he also was active within the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People

(NAACP). Seventy-eight years of age when Allen began collaborating with him in the year 2000, he continued to identify with the causes that these organizations represented. Allen noted that Brown wore several buttons on his lapels, “including Africa/Black USA unity pin, NAACP lifetime membership pin, and Local 2/HERE button (Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees Union). On his head he sports a black leather fez with a map of Africa outlined on its front in green, yellow, and red.” Inside his small Western Addition apartment, a photograph of Elijah Muhammad was displayed prominently on the living room wall. “Lee Brown saw no fundamental contradiction between being involved in black nationalist groups, trade unions, the Communist Party, and the NAACP,” Robert Allen writes. “He asserted that he was always interested in anything that would help working-class black people and, in his mind, all of these organizations offered possibilities for improving the lives of black people.”

Although Lee Brown was exceptional in many ways, this dissertation takes his life story as a prompt to further study the role of black workers, and trade unionists in particular, in the history of postwar urban America. Its central purpose is to examine the ways in which black workers shaped and responded to the “Second” Great Migration, the Civil Rights and Black Power movements, the “urban crisis”, and the course of urban liberal politics during the three decades following World War II. In recent decades, historians have used the history of African-American workers and labor activists in the period between 1865 and 1945 to further our understanding of the ways in which black Americans experienced Emancipation, the emergence of Jim Crow, the Great Migration, the Great Depression, and World War II. Such works have also explored the more abstract theme of race and class consciousness in order to explain black working-class activism. With the exception of the early Cold War period, much less has been written about black workers and trade unionists in the postwar urban history.⁶ Most of the studies

that do address some of these themes in the postwar period focus on the heavy manufacturing industries located in the midwestern and northeastern United States, particularly auto and steel. This study shifts the occupational and regional focus by examining the docks and warehouses, public transits lines, and the construction sites in San Francisco. It suggests that black trade unionists, who considered themselves the guardians of the city's black working class in the postwar period, occupied a unique social, economic, and political niche from which they sought to lead the fight for racial justice in the postwar era. Placing them at the center of the story of civil rights, urban crisis, and liberalism sheds new light on the history of race, class, and politics in postwar urban America.

Lee Brown's adopted city of San Francisco serves as the setting for this study. The "City that Knows How," as President William Howard Taft once dubbed it, has not attracted the same attention from scholars of postwar African American and urban history as have cities with larger black populations such as New York, Chicago, Detroit, and Los Angeles.⁷ Some of the scholarly aversion to San Francisco may stem from its reputation as an anomalous American city – a kooky place with a reputation for tolerance, left-wing politics, drug use, sexual permissiveness, and unrivaled natural beauty. In addition to the nickname bestowed by Taft, San Francisco has been referred to as the "Left Coast City," the "Capital of Progressivism," and "the People's Republic of San Francisco." These are not always terms of endearment. In 2012 resident Thomas Moyer published *The Conservative Survival Guide to San Francisco* to help fellow conservatives avoid the "breeding ground of liberal socialism" that he saw nefariously lurking around every corner and over each steep hillside.⁸ The writer and activist James Baldwin invoked San Francisco's unique qualities when visiting the city in 1963, noting that "San Francisco is much prettier than New York" and had the "legend" that it was "cosmopolitan and forward looking."⁹

Yet the city's numerous monikers and its "progressive" reputation – especially in terms of its racial past – are usually exaggerated if not based on altogether on myth (one need look no farther than its treatment of Chinese immigrants to puncture its reputation for racial tolerance).¹⁰ After touring the city and visiting with African Americans in the Western Addition and Hunters Point, Baldwin himself concluded that "San Francisco is just another American city."

As Baldwin pointed out in the television documentary *Take This Hammer*, the black experience in San Francisco had more in common with that of his home city of New York than he had initially thought. Yet there are four aspects of San Francisco's postwar history that make it a useful case study of black labor activism in the postwar period. First, as was the case with most other cities in the western United States, prior to the World War II the size of its black population was miniscule (less than one percent of the total population). Thus, San Francisco provides an opportunity to study the experience of black migration and its urban impact within an entirely different economic, political, and social context from that which black migrants experienced during the first Great Migration to midwestern and northeastern cities during World War I. Second, San Francisco has been home to a strong and vibrant labor movement throughout the twentieth century.¹¹ In this sense, the historian Carl Abbott has written, pre-war San Francisco, along with Oakland, were the most "Eastern" of western cities.¹² Of particular significance for this study was the presence of the International Longshore and Warehousemen's Union (ILWU), which was rivaled only by the building trades unions in its prestige, power, and influence in municipal affairs. Although not as central to the city's economy as the United Automobile Workers union was in Detroit or the United Steelworkers union in cities like Gary, Indiana, the ILWU loomed large in San Francisco since its origins in the 1934 waterfront strike. The ILWU looms large in American labor history, yet its role in postwar urban history – and in

particular in its birthplace of San Francisco, has yet to be explored.¹³ The strength of organized labor in the city's postwar political economy as well as certain social movements had far-reaching implications – some positive and some negative – for black San Franciscans. Third, San Francisco, and the Bay Area writ large, was a nerve center of New Left activism and the Black Power Movement.¹⁴ By the late 1960s organizations such as the Black Student Union at San Francisco State College and the Black Panther Party provided institutional bases for black cultural and political nationalism and commanded the attention of black and white conservatives, liberals, and leftists. And fourth, although San Francisco experienced many of the social and economic ills associated with the “urban crisis,” it did not suffer to the same degree as its counterparts in the Rust Belt. The western region of the United States as a whole was not as tied to heavy manufacturing as was the rest of the urban North, and therefore did not experience the same degree of economic dislocation resulting from deindustrialization.¹⁵ Still, San Francisco did experience economic strains as suburbanization undermined its tax base, as mechanization reduced the number of waterfront jobs, and as light manufacturing and food processing industries gave way to an expanding financial and service sector. Although San Francisco's past does not always conform to the dominant midwest-northeast postwar narrative of African American and urban history, it should not be dismissed an exception or an anomaly. Rather, its distinct and regional characteristics should be considered as variations, alternatives, and contingencies that existed alongside the more well-known histories of its thoroughly-studied counterparts. I contend that San Francisco can draw our attention to historical developments that might not be as apparent in other places.

This dissertation is organized into three sections. Part I examines the experiences of black workers who migrated to San Francisco during and immediately after World War II. In the past

few decades, historians have begun to refer to this period as a “first phase” of a “long civil rights movement” that was characterized by an alliance between left-led interracial unions and African Americans that sought to fuse civil rights and broader economic justice.¹⁶ The first two chapters reflect certain aspects of this thesis. Chapter one uses the struggle of black workers to obtain and then keep jobs in the urban transit industry to highlight the precarious and uncertain position that the approximately forty thousand black wartime migrants in San Francisco found themselves in the immediate aftermath of World War II. It argues that transit jobs, which for the first time enabled African Americans to enter the city’s civil service while also gaining a foothold in the city’s labor movement, provided a battleground on which black migrants were able to assert their claims as permanent citizens of San Francisco. In waging this fight, black workers found their strongest supporters among members of the Communist and non-communist left, as well as the Transport Workers Union Local 250, which would become a stronghold of black labor power in the postwar decades. Chapter two examines the relationship between the ILWU and black San Franciscans. As was the case inside the city’s car barns, San Francisco’s docks and warehouses became an important destination for black migrants to San Francisco, especially in the immediate postwar years. The ILWU has frequently been praised for its forthright stands on civil rights and other progressive causes. Without dismissing the union’s racial progressivism, this chapter argues that the ILWU forged such close ties with San Francisco’s black communities in part to help it survive the Cold War. Whereas the long civil rights movement thesis argues that the movement’s “first phase” was crushed by the forces of domestic anticommunism, the ILWU emerged from the height of the domestic Cold War with more social and political influence than it had at the outset. It also continued to speak out for the economic rights of black workers. An important byproduct of this era was the cadre of black trade union leaders that the union

produced. These trade unionists, along with other black trade unionists in the city, considered themselves as the true representatives of black working class interests. By focusing on the construction industry, chapter three provides a counter-narrative to the first two chapters. Unlike the transit and longshore-warehouse industries, the building trades did not provide an opportunity for black workers to gain social and political influence through a labor union. Faced with discriminatory unions, skilled black construction workers pursued a very different sort of labor activism. By becoming licensed contractors and going into business for themselves, they hoped to carve out an economic niche for themselves in the industry while also creating employment opportunities for black workers who found access to apprenticeships and jobs restricted by building trades unions. In the construction industry, these entrepreneurial craftsmen considered themselves as the guardians of the black working class, and they opportunistically attempted to convince government reformers of this as they began to develop affirmative action employment policies for skilled building trades.

Part II focuses on black trade unionists', and by extension that of the ILWU, participation in urban politics and confronting the "urban crisis." Chapter four argues that because of the small size of San Francisco's pre-war population and its lack of political organization, black trade unionists were able to make themselves into powerful political brokers. This differs from the experiences of African Americans in major Midwestern or northeastern cities, who traditionally found political opportunities opened through political parties and ward-based politics.¹⁷ The emergence of black trade unionists in municipal politics owed much to the ILWU, which came to view political action as an important part of its alliance with black San Franciscans. The ILWU sought to make itself and the city's African-American population influential partners in the city's liberal pro-growth regime. The culmination of this effort came in 1967, when the ILWU and

black labor leaders split with other progressive labor unions and black leftists to support the mayoral campaign of Joseph L. Alioto, a moderate Democrat. Although their roots had been on the political left, the ILWU hoped that it could transform Democratic party liberalism at the urban level at a time when it was being challenged from the both the left and the right. Alioto's black-labor-liberal alliance represented a watershed in San Francisco politics as the ILWU and African American trade unionists, who were instrumental in the victorious campaign, achieved unprecedented influence in municipal politics. But would they be able to exert any influence from within the liberal establishment? Chapter five explores this question by considering the degree to which ILWU leaders and black trade unionists were able to influence municipal policy on racial issues associated with the "urban crisis." It argues that their presence in positions of municipal power did help ease racial tensions somewhat and enabled Alioto to make the claim that San Francisco was beating the urban crisis in ways that other cities were not. However, when it came to some of the most divisive racial issues, such as urban redevelopment, police brutality, the use of busing to achieve school integration, they were not only less capable of exerting influence on moderate liberal city leaders, but they also were reluctant to take an ideological stand that might risk the political power that they had gained.

As Part III demonstrates, during the Alioto years the urban crisis also impacted the workplace. In the transit and construction industries, Black Power activists challenged the notion that black trade unionists represented the interests of the city's black working class while also questioning the ability of liberal policies to address the issues of racial and economic inequality in San Francisco. As chapter six details, the Black Panther Party attempted to organize black trade unionists in several Bay Area unions, including Transport Workers Union Local 250, which represented the bus, streetcar, and cable car operators in San Francisco. In doing so, the

Panthers directly called into question the ability of the union's black leaders to represent the interests of its membership as well as the city's black working class, which depended on public transit to get to their jobs. Yet as the chapter argues, the city's black transit workers felt well-taken care of by its liberal leadership, and they were turned off by the Panthers' dogmatic message and their confrontational tactics. Rank-and-file trade unionists had critiques of the way that their union was run, but they wanted to address those issues within the union's formal channels. When the San Francisco's black-liberal-labor coalition seemed incapable of solving the continued lack of minority employment in the skilled building trades in 1969 and 1970, black contractors exhibited a more conservative form of Black Power when they called upon radical activists and liberal reformers to support government-funded assistance for black businesses as a means to increase black employment. This bottom-up approach to black capitalism, which ultimately clashed with the top-down approach adopted by the Nixon administration, ended up being a path not taken as community activists called for plans that focused solely on resident employment and Department of Labor officials chose to recognize labor unions instead of black contractors as the primary employers and trainers for potential minority workers. Black contractors gained their greatest audience when the threat of violence and disorder was at its peak. Once that threat had abated, the liberal commitment to change lost its sense of urgency.

The black-labor-liberal coalition in San Francisco politics began to fray after Alioto left office in 1976. As the epilogue discusses, the city-craft worker strike in that year provided ammunition for fiscal conservatives who argued that overpaid public workers – empowered by their unions – were responsible for San Francisco's financial problems. At the same time, the crucial sacrifice that the city's predominantly black transit workers made during the strike also caused an increasing number of African Americans to question their alliance with organized

labor. But the liberal coalition that black trade unionists had comprised such a vital part of did give way to a conservative regime, nor did it resemble the economically depressed cities in which African Americans were finally able to gain the reins of in the 1970s. Rather, by the late 1970s San Francisco was still led by a liberal coalition, but one in which pro-growth liberals were far less influential as political power became more dispersed throughout the city. I suggest that the participation of the ILWU and black trade unionists in Alioto's administration, although incorporated into Alioto's pro-growth liberal coalition, helped make that possible.

Throughout these chapters, this dissertation develops three primary themes. The first concerns the significance of the labor movement to African Americans' struggle for full citizenship rights in postwar cities in the western United States. Much of the recent literature on African Americans in the West have centered more on what it has in common with the experiences of African Americans in other parts of the country.¹⁸ The two monographs on African Americans in San Francisco in the postwar decades exemplify this trend. Daniel Edward Crowe's *Prophets of Rage* (2000) and Paul T. Miller's *The Postwar Struggle for Civil Rights* (2009) each provide a framework that would be familiar to students of postwar African American history.¹⁹ Crowe's account of black San Francisco mirrors earlier works on ghetto formation in northern cities such as Chicago, New York, and Cleveland. As a result of housing and employment discrimination, Crowe describes how black San Franciscans found themselves confined to largely segregated neighborhoods and excluded from some of the best paying jobs. Miller tells a similar story, and they both then offer a narrative in which moderate civil rights organizations – namely the NAACP and the Urban League – tried to fight these conditions. The difference is that whereas Crowe argues (with a great deal of hyperbole) that by 1969 a “black revolution” had taken place in which the Black Panther Party had completely transformed the

nature of black protest in San Francisco, Miller offers a more dispassionate and less-argument driven account that devotes far less attention to the Black Power movement and suggests that while African Americans were successful in combatting racial discrimination in some areas, by the 1970s there was still work to be done. By focusing on the role of black trade unionists and organized labor, this dissertation seeks to identify what was distinct about the African American experience in this part of the country.²⁰ In fact, I suggest that this is a major party of the story that both Crowe and Miller overlook. Progressive and left-led labor unions all around the country emerged as important advocates for the rights of black workers, and African Americans more generally, during the 1940s and early 1950s. In Western cities such as San Francisco, however, where the small prewar black population had created few institutional power sources, the ability of black migrants to join, participate in, and benefit from labor unions distinguished their experience from that of World War I-era migrants who arrived in Midwestern and northeastern cities. The migrant generation's incorporation into certain segments of the labor movement shaped the African American experience in San Francisco in the decades that followed.

My focus on San Francisco also seeks to contribute to postwar scholarship on the urban crisis. The historical literature on the urban crisis has mainly focused on the midwestern and northeastern cities, where problems of racial violence and economic dislocation were the most pronounced. However, the problems that confronted urban America in the late 1960s and 1970s were not confined to one part of the country. As historian Josh Sides has written in his history of African Americans in Los Angeles, "Chicago and Detroit are not, as it turns out, synonymous with urban America."²¹ Moreover, Carl Abbott argues, "urban growth since 1940 has constituted a distinct era in which Western cities have become national and even international pacesetters."²² San Francisco, like Los Angeles and many other western cities, benefitted from a more diverse

economy than some of the major “rust belt” cities. Yet as the 1966 riot in the city’s Hunters Point district and the emergence of militant groups such as the Black Panthers makes clear, San Francisco also had to confront racial tensions that stemmed from unemployment, housing discrimination, and police brutality. My focus on black workers and trade unionists, together with their labor and political allies, moves beyond the structural causes of the urban crisis to provide insight into the ways in which liberal urbanites sought to combat the urban crisis from within and outside of municipal government.²³ From the perspective of these historical actors, the urban crisis in San Francisco was contained in some ways but, in the end, claimed the city’s black working class as a casualty. San Francisco would emerge from the 1970s with an economy poised for substantial future growth. Yet black trade unionists would find their political influence greatly diminished, and, the black working-class more generally, disappearing. Thus, whereas this dissertation begins with the migration of African-American workers to San Francisco, it concludes with the out-migration of black workers.

Another major theme of this dissertation is what historian Gary Gerstle once called the “protean character” of American liberalism.²⁴ Although he was writing about the first third of the twentieth century, Gerstle’s description of American liberalism as a malleable and flexible political philosophy applies to the period covered by this study as well.²⁵ Most accounts of American liberalism, and Democratic party liberalism in particular, suggests that it was ill-equipped to handle the social, racial, economic, and political problems of the 1960s. This was the decade, as historian Allen Matusow put it, that the postwar liberal consensus came “unraveled.”²⁶ National-level narratives of the late 1960s reinforce this idea, as liberalism came under attack from all sides – from cultural, social, and fiscal conservatives on the right and from black and white radicals on the left. Unsure of how to respond to calls for black liberation and revolution,

rising inflation, and the quagmire in Vietnam, Democrats lost the White House to the Republicans in 1968. “Today liberalism stands in apparent disarray – the word itself has become a term of widespread opprobrium,” observed historian Alan Brinkley, a leading scholar of American liberalism, in 1998.²⁷ Historians, Brinkley among them, also abandoned liberalism as a subject of study as it fell into disarray after the 1960s and 1970s, turning their attention instead to the rise of the “New Right,” which is often depicted as the dominant force in modern American politics.²⁸ Even a recent reconsideration of postwar liberalism asserts that conservative ideas have triumphed in U.S. politics.²⁹ Yet the election of Barak Obama in 2008 and his reelection in 2012, to list an obvious example, suggests that conservatism has been just as contested as liberalism was in its heyday and, moreover, that liberalism has persisted as a relevant force in American politics. It did so mainly in major cities such as San Francisco, which one young Republican, echoing many of the elders in his party, recently derided as “ground zero” for liberalism.³⁰ In fact, as the title of political scientist Richard Edward DeLeon’s book suggests, as conservatism was ascendant across the country in the 1970s and 1980s, San Francisco was emerging as a progressive “Left Coast City.”³¹ One topic of this dissertation is how African Americans and trade unionists shaped urban liberalism in San Francisco and, in doing so, contributed to the progressive evolution of its politics.³² In San Francisco, urban liberals between the late 1940s and 1970s proved to be more flexible than their national-level counterparts as they responded to the city’s racial and economic problems.³³

My treatment of urban liberalism in San Francisco also seeks to build upon recent works that explore the relationship between black radicalism and liberalism. Historians writing within the framework of the “long civil rights movement” have argued that the Cold War resulted in a sharp break between the black-labor-left popular front of the 1930s and 1940s and the more

restricted civil rights liberalism of the 1950s and 1960s. Yet as Kevin Boyle suggested nearly a decade ago, “McCarthyism may have actually broadened liberalism, as it pushed into the liberal orbit at least some radicals seeking to remain politically engaged after the destruction of the independent left.”³⁴ Chapters two and four show ways in which black and white ILWU members, who were enmeshed in the Communist left in the immediate postwar period, continued to advocate for racial and economic equality through liberal institutions and coalitions during the Cold War. The ILWU in San Francisco, and its black members in particular, represent a conspicuous continuity between these two different eras of the civil rights movement.

On the other end of the chronological spectrum, historians have often framed the Black Power movement as monolithic and diametrically opposed to liberalism.³⁵ Yet several historians have recently suggested that the relationship between the two was more complex. For one, a diverse range of movements fell under the Black Power umbrella. “Black Power activists fought for community control of schools, Black Studies programs at colleges and universities, welfare rights, prison reform, and jobs and racial justice for the poor,” Peniel Joseph writes. “Simultaneously, many activists focused on increasing black political power through conferences, community organizing, independent schools, and strategic use of electoral politics.”³⁶ Joseph also argues that Black Power did not emerge in opposition to civil rights liberalism, but rather developed alongside it.³⁷ In *American Babylon* historian Robert O. Self goes further in suggesting that “the evolution of black power and self-determination politics out of earlier liberal efforts” and that black power “calls for political representation and reform within an interest-group framework” were in fact liberal traditions.³⁸ In *Liberalism, Black Power, and the Making of American Politics*, historian Devin Fergus argues that liberalism “created an operational space for Black Power.” Whereas some historians have framed black power activists

and liberals as bitter rivals, Fergus shows that liberals and black power activists sometimes engaged one another in a manner that was hardly adversarial.³⁹ Chapters six and seven of this study show that while Black Power activists could be bitter critics of liberalism, they also sought to work and organize within liberal institutions such as labor unions and, in the case of black contractors, sought the change by appealing to liberal government reformers who were willing to entertain more conservative notions of Black Power to support black-owned businesses. This study suggests that American liberalism in the second half of the twentieth century was more dynamic and capable of producing social change than many of its contemporaries and some historians have assumed.

One final theme that runs through this dissertation is the role of self-interest and pragmatism within movements/organizations for social change. The labor activists who fill these pages claimed to represent the interests of the black working class and indeed fought on behalf of those workers for basic civic and economic rights. However, these activists were also rational actors who were looking out for themselves or the primary organizations with which they identified. Black labor leaders in the ILWU, for example, were first and foremost looking out for the interest of their union, and would compromise its social activism when it found it in the best interest in the union to do so. The same thing goes for black leaders of the Transport Workers Union and the Black Panther Party members who sought undermine those leaders and radicalize the union. Likewise, most black construction contractors were sincere in their desire to create job opportunities for black workers, however as chapters three and seven discuss, they were determined to make sure that they would profit in the process. My intention is not to criticize, disparage, or dismiss the rhetoric and actions of these historical subjects. At the same time, I do not seek to romanticize them either. Rather, it is important to consider what they hoped to

achieve and where rhetoric conflicted with reality, especially when invoking the idea that they were the guardians of the black working class. Doing so can help explain their actions.

The purpose of the case study that forms this dissertation is to provide new insights into African American urban, labor, and political history in the postwar decades. Thus while some of my findings are specific to San Francisco, others apply to the west coast and western United States more generally, while still others apply to the nation at large. Whereas previous works on African Americans in San Francisco have sought to provide a general social history that offer a broad treatment of the African-American experience, my study provides a narrower focus that is intended to offer more depth into certain issues – in particular the evolution of fair employment activism, race and labor, black politics, and urban liberalism. My cast of characters is therefore more limited than some of those other works, and the black working class, which looms large in the study, usually appears through those who claimed to represent them – even if that was not always the case.

¹ The following summary of Brown's life is drawn from Lee Brown, with Robert Allen, *Strong in the Struggle: My Life as a Black Labor Activist* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2001).

² Jeffrey O.G. Ogbar, *Black Power: Radical Politics and African American Identity* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), 132.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Rufus Byars, "Shabazz Denounces Panthers, *Sun-Reporter*, August 30, 1969.

⁵ Attempts to form a coalition between the two groups, such as a meeting that took place in August 1969, often devolved into verbal barbs. ADNIP criticized the Panthers for allying with white radicals, while the Panthers

countered that the Black Security Guards were essentially “working for the pigs.” Rufus Byars, “Shabazz Denounces Panthers,” *Sun-Reporter*, August 30, 1969.

⁶ For works on black workers that span the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, see Robert H. Zieger, *For Jobs and Freedom: Race and Labor in America Since 1865* (Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 2007); Bruce Nelson, *Divided We Stand: American Workers and the Struggle for Black Equality* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001); Eric Arnesen, *Brotherhoods of Color: Black Railroad Workers and the Struggle for Equality* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001).

On the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, see Eric Arnesen, *Waterfront Workers of New Orleans: Race, Class, and Politics, 1863-1923* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1991); Tera W. Hunter, *To ‘Joy My Freedom: Southern Black Women’s Lives and Labors After the Civil War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997); Daniel Letwin, *The Challenge of Interracial Unionism: Alabama Coal Miners, 1878-1921* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1998); William P. Jones, *The Tribe of Black Ulysses: African American Lumber Workers in the Jim Crow South* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2005).

On the World War I-era migration, see Joe William Trotter, *Black Milwaukee: The Making of an Industrial Proletariat, 1915-1945* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1985); Kimberly L. Phillips, *Alabama North: African-American Migrants, Community and Working-Class Activism in Cleveland, 1915-1945* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1999).

On the 1930s through the early Cold War, see Michael K. Honey, *Southern Labor and Black Civil Rights: Organizing Memphis Workers* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993); Beth Tompkins Bates, *Pullman Porters and the Rise of Protest Politics in Black America, 1925-1945* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001); Robin D.G. Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe: Alabama Communists During the Great Depression* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990); Erik S. Gellman, *Death Blow to Jim Crow: The National Negro Congress and the Rise of Militant Civil Rights* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012); Martha Biondi, *To Stand and Fight: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Postwar New York* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003); Robert Rodgers Korstad, *Civil Rights Unionism: Tobacco Workers and the Struggle for Democracy in the Mid-Twentieth-Century South* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2003); Ruth Needleman, *Black Freedom Fighters in Steel: The Struggle for Democratic Unionism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003);

On the three decades following World War II, see Heather Ann Thompson, *Whose Detroit? Politics, Labor, and Race in a Modern American City* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2001); David M. Lewis-Coleman, *Race Against Liberalism: Black Workers and the UAW in Detroit* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2008); Michael K. Honey, *Going Down Jericho Road: The Memphis Strike, Martin Luther King’s Last Campaign* (New York and London: W.W. Norton and Company, 2007); Laurie B. Green, *Battling the Plantation Mentality: Memphis and the Black Freedom Struggle* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2007); David Goldberg and Trevor Griffey, eds., *Black Power at Work: Community Control and Affirmative Action in the Construction Industry* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2010); Horace Huntley and David Montgomery, eds., *Black Workers’ Struggle for Equality in Birmingham* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2004); William P. Jones, *The March on Washington: Jobs, Freedom, and the Forgotten History of Civil Rights* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2013); Joseph A. McCartin, “Managing Discontent: The Life and Career of Leamon Hood, Black Public Employee Union Activist,” in Eric Arnesen, ed., *The Black Worker: A Reader* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2007).

⁷ Several strong books on the East Bay and Oakland make the dearth of work on San Francisco all the more conspicuous. See, Robert O. Self, *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003); Chris Rhomberg, *No There There: Race, Class, and Political Community in Oakland* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2004); Marilyn S. Johnson, *The Second Gold Rush: Oakland and the East Bay During World War II* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996); Shirley Ann Wilson Moore, *To Place Our Deeds: The African American Community in Richmond, California, 1910-1963* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2001); Gretchen Lemke-Santangelo, *Abiding Courage: African American Migrant Women and the East Bay Community* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996). Some of the differences between Oakland and San Francisco – urban regional partners – beg for comparison.

Two recent studies have focused on the postwar history of African Americans in San Francisco, however they each view the experiences of black San Franciscans through the lens of the dominant postwar narrative and with little attention to what the San Francisco case can teach us about this period in United States history more

generally. Both works focus on national organizations such as CORE and the NAACP, and provide the familiar tautology that traces the familiar stories of ghetto formation and the evolution of the local civil rights movement from moderate black professionals to Black Power activists and the Black Panthers in particular. Daniel Edward Crowe, *Prophets of Rage: The Black Freedom Struggle in San Francisco, 1945-1969* (New York: Garland Publishing, 2000); Paul T. Miller, *The Postwar Struggle for Civil Rights: African Americans in San Francisco, 1945-1975* (New York: Routledge, 2010).

Two recent books have used San Francisco to study other aspects of postwar urban history. William Issel examines the role of the Catholic Church in shaping the city's social movements and political culture, while Josh Sides explores the impact of the sexual revolution on urban America. William Issel, *Church and State in the City: Catholics and Politics in Twentieth-Century San Francisco* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2013); Josh Sides, *Erotic City: Sexual Revolutions and the Making of Modern San Francisco* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

In contrast to the postwar period, San Francisco has been the topic of several studies of race in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Most of these works focus on Chinese immigrants and Chinese-Americans. Judy Yung, *Unbound Feet: A Social History of Chinese Women in San Francisco* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995); Nayan Shah, *Contagious Divides: Epidemics and Race in San Francisco's Chinatown* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2001); Yong Chen, *Chinese San Francisco, 1850-1943: A Trans-Pacific Community* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000). Albert Broussard provides a comprehensive account of African Americans in San Francisco in the first half of the twentieth century in *Black San Francisco: The Struggle for Racial Equality in the West, 1900-1954* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1993).

⁸ Thomas Moyer, *Conservative Survival Guide to San Francisco: A Tale of Two Cities* (Self-Published, 2012).

⁹ James Baldwin "Take This Hammer," directed by Richard O. Moore of KQED in 1963 for National Educational Television. First aired February 4, 1964. Channel 13-PBS in New York Archive, <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/americanmasters/episodes/james-baldwin/am-archive-take-this-hammer/2332/>.

¹⁰ See Robert W. Cherny, "Patterns of Toleration and Discrimination in San Francisco: The Civil War to World War I," *California History*, Vol. LXXIII, No. 2 (Summer 1994): 131-140.

¹¹ On San Francisco's labor movement, see William Issel and Robert W. Cherny, *San Francisco, 1865-1932: Power, Politics, and Urban Development* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1986); Michael Kazin, *Barons of Labor: The San Francisco Building Trades and Union Power in the Progressive Era* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1989); Michael Kazin, "The Great Exception Revisited: Organized Labor and Politics in San Francisco and Los Angeles, 1870-1940," *Pacific Historical Review* Vol. LV, No. 3 (August 1986): 371-402; David F. Selvin, *A Terrible Anger: The 1934 Waterfront and General Strikes in San Francisco* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1996); Harvey Schwartz, *The March Inland: Origins of the ILWU Warehouse Division 1934-1938* (Institute of Industrial Relations, University of California, 1978).

¹² Carl Abbott. *The Metropolitan Frontier: Cities in the Modern American West* (Tucson and London: The University of Arizona Press, 1993), 186.

¹³ The one exception here is Jess Rigelhaupt's unpublished PhD dissertation about the California Labor School. Jess M. Rigelhaupt, "'Education for Action' The California Labor School, Radical Unionism, Civil Rights, and Progressive Coalition Building in the San Francisco Bay Area, 1934-1970." Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Michigan, 2005. The literature on the ILWU during the 1930s and 1940s, is more extensive. See, David F. Selvin, *A Terrible Anger: The 1934 Waterfront and General Strikes in San Francisco* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1996); Harvey Schwartz, *The March Inland: Origins of the ILWU warehouse Division, 1934-1938* (Los Angeles: Institute of Industrial Relations, UCLA, 1978); Howard Kimmeldorf, *Reds or Rackets: The Making of Radical and Conservative Unions on the Waterfront* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988); Bruce Nelson, *Workers on the Waterfront: Seamen, Longshoremen, and Unionism in the 1930s* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988); Nancy L. Quam-Wickham, "Who Controls the Hiring Hall? The Struggle for Job Control in the ILWU

during World War II,” in *American Labor in the Era of World War II*, ed. Daniel A. Cornford and Sally M. Miller (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1995), 125.

¹⁴ Peniel E. Joseph, *Waiting 'Til The Midnight Hour: A Narrative History of Black Power in America* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2006).

¹⁵ On the economic development of California and the West in the mid-twentieth century, see Roger W. Lotchin, *Fortress California, 1910-1961: From Warfare to Welfare* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2002); Carl Abbott, *The Metropolitan Frontier: Cities in the Modern American West* (Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 1993).

¹⁶ See Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, “The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past,” *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 91, No. 4 (March 2005): 1233-1263.

¹⁷ See, for example, Harold Foote Gosnell, *Negro Politicians: The Rise of Negro Politics in Chicago* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967); William J. Grimshaw, *Bitter Fruit: Black Politics and the Chicago Machine, 1931-1991* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

¹⁸ The purpose of many such works was to demonstrate, along with historians of cities such as New York, Detroit, Chicago, etc., that there was a civil rights movement distinct to the urban North. This notion is widely accepted. For two general works, see Jeanne F. Theoharis and Komozi Woodard, eds., *Freedom North: Black Freedom Struggles Outside the South, 1940-1980* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003); Thomas J. Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty: The Forgotten Struggle for Civil Rights in the North* (New York: Random House, 2008).

¹⁹ Daniel Edward Crowe, *Prophets of Rage: The Black Freedom Struggle in San Francisco, 1945-1969* (New York: Taylor & Francis, 2000); Paul T. Miller, *The Postwar Struggle for Civil Rights: African Americans in San Francisco, 1945-1975* (New York: Routledge, 2010). Each of these works is consciously seeking to build upon Albert Broussard’s general social history of African Americans in San Francisco in the first half of the twentieth century. Albert Broussard, *Black San Francisco: The Struggle for Racial Equality in the West, 1900-1954* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1993).

On other western cities, see Quintard Taylor, *The Forging of a Black Community: Seattle’s Central District from the 1870s Through the Civil Rights Era* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1994); Matthew Whittaker, *Race Work: The Rise of Civil Rights in the Urban West* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2005); Stuart McElderry, “Building a West Coast Ghetto: African American Housing in Portland, 1910-1960,” *The Pacific Northwest Quarterly* Vol. 92, No. 3 (Summer 2001): 137-148.

²⁰ In this sense I build upon Robert O. Self’s work on Oakland, which traces the emergence of Black Power alongside what he refers to as “homeowner populism,” which was manifest in opposition to fair housing legislation and the “revolt” against property taxes. Robert O. Self, *American Babylon: The Struggle for Postwar Oakland* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003).

²¹ Josh Sides, *L.A. City Limits: African Americans in Los Angeles from the Great Depression to the Present* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).

²² Abbott, *The Metropolitan Frontier*, xii.

²³ The best works that explain the structural causes of the urban crisis are Thomas J. Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), and Arnold Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto: Race and Housing in Chicago, 1940-1960* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

By considering African American political responses to the urban crisis, this work is building upon several recent urban histories. See, Heather Ann Thompson, *Whose Detroit: Politics, Labor, and Race in a Modern American City* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001); Self, *American Babylon*; Sides, *L.A. City Limits*; and Countryman, *Up South*.

²⁴ Gary Gerstle, "The Protean Character of American Liberalism," *The American Historical Review* Vol. 99, No. 4 (October 1994): 1043-1073.

²⁵ My definition of postwar liberalism adheres to the following four elements set forth by Robert Self: "(1) New Deal liberalism, its institutions, and its commitments to a modified welfare state; (2) moderate market regulation in the interests of the middle and working classes, largely white, in the context of continued economic growth; (3) racial liberalism, that is, racially equal opportunity in social and political life, as well as some state intervention to achieve an 'equal playing field'; and (4) individualism, the belief that society and politics, as well as reforms and government policies, should be organized around individual people rather than groups or classes." Self, *American Babylon*, 13-14.

²⁶ Allen J. Matusow, *The Unraveling of America: A History of Liberalism in the 1960s* (New York: Harper & Row, 1984).

²⁷ Alan Brinkley, *Liberalism and its Discontents* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), x.

²⁸ Brinkley, *Liberalism and its Discontents*, Chapter 16; The literature on the New Right is quite vast. See, for example, Jonathan M. Schoenwald, *A Time for Choosing: The Rise of Modern American Conservatism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001); Lisa McGirr, *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001).

²⁹ Jennifer Delton, *Rethinking the 1950s: How Anticommunism and the Cold War Made America Liberal* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 154.

³⁰ Thomas Moyer quoted in Robin Wilkey, "San Francisco Republicans: The Young GOP Experience in America's Liberal Heartland," *Huffington Post*, August 28, 2012, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/08/27/san-francisco-republicans_n_1834713.html.

³¹ Richard Edward DeLeon, *Left Coast City: Progressive Politics in San Francisco, 1975-1991* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1992).

³² Just as the historians J. Joseph Huthmacher and John D. Buenker advanced the concept of "urban liberalism" to highlight the dynamics and variations of municipal reform coalitions during the Progressive Era, I suggest that the concept of urban liberalism can do the same for the postwar decades. John D. Buenker, *Urban Liberalism and Progressive Reform* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1973); J. Joseph Huthmacher, "Urban Liberalism and the Age of Reform," *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* Vol. 49, No. 2 (September 1962): 231-242.

Urban liberalism was mostly synonymous with liberalism in state and national politics. An important aspect of urban liberals was their support for urban development, which has earned them the moniker among urban historians as "pro-growth liberals." See, for example, DeLeon, *Left Coast City*; John H. Mollenkopf, *The Contested City* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983); Chester Hartman, *City for Sale: The Transformation of San Francisco* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

³³ Jonathan Bell has recently made a similar point in his study of postwar liberalism in California politics. Jonathan Bell, *California Crucible: The Forging of Modern American Liberalism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012).

³⁴ Kevin Boyle, "Labour, the left and the long civil rights movement," *Social History* Vol. 30, No. 3 (August 2005): 370.

³⁵ For relatively recent examples, see Gary Gerstle, *American Crucible: Race and Nation in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001); Jeffrey O.G. Ogbar, *Black Power: Radical Politics and African American Identity* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004); and David M. Lewis-Coleman, *Race Against Liberalism: Black Autoworkers and the UAW in Detroit* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2008).

³⁶ Peniel Joseph, "Introduction: Toward a Historiography of the Black Power Movement," in Peniel Joseph, ed., *The Black Power Movement: Rethinking the Civil Rights-Black Power Era* (New York: Routledge, 2006).

³⁷ Ibid.; Peniel E. Joseph, *Waiting 'Til the Midnight Hour: A Narrative History of Black Power in America* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2006).

³⁸ Self, *American Babylon*, 255.

³⁹ Devin Fergus, *Liberalism, Black Power, and the Making of American Politics, 1965-1980* (Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 2009), 4-7. See also, Karen Ferguson, *Top Down: The Ford Foundation, Black Power, and the Reinvention of Racial Liberalism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013).

CHAPTER ONE

“WHAT HAVE FLAT FEET GOT TO DO WITH RUNNING A TROLLEY?” PERMANENT EMPLOYMENT AND THE FATE OF BLACK LABOR MIGRANTS IN THE POSTWAR PERIOD

“One thing is certain. The thousands of Negroes who have come west intend to remain. They are determined to stay, become integrated in their communities and attain full citizenship.”

-Revels Cayton, 1944¹

The “Great Migration” arrived in San Francisco during World War II. Whereas hundreds of thousands of African Americans had left the South for the “promised land” of Chicago, Cleveland, Detroit, New York, and other industrial cities in the Midwest and northeast during the First World War, western cities like San Francisco (with the exception of Los Angeles) remained home to small and for the most part inconspicuous black communities.² African Americans had resided in San Francisco since its earliest days, but by 1940 its black population had only grown to 4,846 and accounted for less than one percent of the total population. If San Franciscans worried about “race” problems in the early twentieth century, they were more likely to be thinking about the city’s Chinese-American population than about African Americans. As Revels Cayton suggested, World War II changed that. Between 1940 and 1945, the city’s black population increased by more than 700 percent as approximately 32,000 African Americans migrated to the city in search of jobs in the Bay Area’s booming shipyards and an overall improved quality of life.³ The demographic transition was so dramatic that in 1943 a worried Mayor Angelo Rossi referred to a “Negro invasion” and demanded that it “be halted.”⁴ Many white San Franciscans shared the mayor’s sentiments. “For the first time in the city’s history,” historian Albert Broussard has written, “white San Franciscans would have to adjust to a large black community.”⁵ And of course, black residents and migrants would have to adjust as well.

That adjustment, Broussard’s study of “black San Francisco” between 1900 and 1954

suggests, was in many ways similar to what occurred in midwestern and northeastern cities during and immediately after the World War I-era Great Migration.⁶ Residential segregation provides the most conspicuous similarity, as restrictive covenants, informal agreements, and economic forces confined most black migrants to one of two districts – both of which contained some of the worst housing conditions in the city. Black political and cultural life was based in the Western Addition, a centrally located area that had served as home for more than half of the city's black residents at the outset of the war. Known more commonly as the Fillmore district during the 1940s and 1950s because of its main business and commercial thoroughfare, the area had also been home to the city's Japanese-American community before the war. After President Roosevelt issued Executive Order #9906 ordering the removal of all Isei and Nisei from the West Coast, real estate speculators swooped in and purchased their properties at cut-rate prices and rented or sold the subdivided units to black migrants at inflated rates. Hunters Point, where temporary structures housed thousands of black and white migrants who worked at the United States Navy shipyard in the southeastern corner of the city during the war, evolved in the postwar years into the city's more desperate black ghetto. Whereas whites moved on when the shipyard jobs disappeared, many black migrants remained as the San Francisco Housing Authority took control of the shoddy wartime housing units that dotted the hilltop overlooking the San Francisco Bay. The area's cheap housing stock made it a natural entry point for many blacks who continued to migrate to the city after the war. In his 1974 study, sociologist Arthur Hippler described Hunters Point residents as "poor, mostly black tenants who are in a dependent position upon, as well as physically isolated from, the rest of the city and in only minimal contact with whites."⁷ While the "ghetto formation" narrative provides the strongest analogy to what occurred in other cities after World War I, San Francisco also witnessed a surge in racial hostility

(although no race riots), discrimination in employment and places of business, and police brutality not seen since the movement against Chinese immigrants in the second half of the nineteenth century.

Yet the timing of San Francisco's Great Migration made for notable differences when compared to the experiences of World War I-era migrants. This was particularly evident in terms of employment discrimination and economic opportunity. During the first Great Migration, black migrants had found the highest paying skilled jobs and membership to labor unions closed off to them. In the interwar period, black workers in cities across the north challenged such exclusion.⁸ In doing so they found support among white leftists in the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) as well from members of the Communist Party (CP). Although employment and trade union discrimination remained a major impediment to black economic opportunity, by the beginning of the Second World War multiple labor unions admitted black workers and supported civil rights. The Bay Area's small black population found advocates in unions such as the all-black Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters and the CP-led International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen Union (ILWU) as well as labor-oriented civil rights groups such as the National Negro Congress.⁹ The United States' involvement in World War II further advanced the cause of black workers' rights, as it, in the words of historian Robert O. Self, "elevated racial liberalism from the margins of political discourse to the center of the nation's wartime antifascism."¹⁰ Black activists appropriated U.S. war aims and rhetoric to push for full citizenship rights. The *Pittsburgh Courier* launched a "Double V" campaign to defeat fascism abroad and racism at home, and A. Philip Randolph's proposed March on Washington compelled President Roosevelt to issue Executive Order #8802 prohibiting racial discrimination in war-related industries. Black workers across the country responded to the president's order by bringing charges against

employers and unions that discriminated against them before the Committee on Fair Employment Practices (FEPC). And although companies and unions frequently defied FEPC rulings, the fact that the federal government had publicly gone on record in support of fair employment was of great significance for African Americans.¹¹

The emergence of a sizeable black population in San Francisco alongside a surge in racial liberalism and corresponding avenues to trade union membership had far reaching implications for the economic, social, and political development of the city's black community in the postwar era. Using the public transit industry as a case study, this chapter suggests that employment and trade union membership – especially in the public sector – served as a venue in which the citizenship, rights, and place of black migrants in the postwar urban economy were contested and debated.¹² San Franciscans were of different minds about what should become of the roughly forty thousand black workers who migrated to the city during the war. While some pre-war black residents and white liberals optimistically thought that the city could “assimilate” its migrants without the racial problems that beset other northern cities after World War I, many others preferred to view black migrants as guest workers who would leave as soon as the war ended and their services were no longer required.¹³ The question of whether or not black labor migrants would become permanent citizens of San Francisco played out in many arenas, but among the most conspicuous was on the city's streetcars, trolleys, buses, and cable cars. Like their counterparts in other northern cities, African Americans fought for access to these jobs during the war. Yet unlike cities that had larger and more established black communities, black transit workers would face a more difficult fight to keep these jobs in the immediate postwar period. Left-wing activists, working in conjunction with the Transport Workers Union, would play a major role their fight for civic inclusion in postwar San Francisco.

Fair Employment and Transit Work during the War

The Bay Area's best known wartime fair employment battle occurred not in the transit industry, but rather in the shipyards where most migrants first found work. The International Brotherhood of Boilermakers, which represented seventy percent of Bay Area shipyard workers, forced dues-paying black workers into segregated locals that had no actual voice in union affairs. Underscoring the precarious and unsettled position of black migrants in the Bay Area, the fight against segregation in the Boilermakers' union was fought with an eye toward the postwar period. Because the parent local and the international could dissolve the segregated local at any time, black workers feared, as did University of California professor Davis McEntire, that "the Negro members who have had to be admitted [to auxiliary unions] during the present emergency can be quietly dropped from the union when the war is over." Led by Joseph James, president of the San Francisco branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and a journeyman welder at Marinship, black workers protested the segregated auxiliary system, which James said was nothing more than a "Jim Crow fake union." They unsuccessfully appealed to the FEPC, and when black workers who withheld their dues in protest started to lose their jobs as a result, James filed a lawsuit. Ultimately, in 1944 the California Supreme Court ruled in *James v. Marinship* that black workers would have to be admitted on the same basis as white workers to the Boilermakers union, essentially banning segregated locals in the process. But it was a hollow victory since black workers had already begun to lose their shipyard jobs as production slowed in the latter years of the war. By the time Boilermakers union Local 6 – which represented San Francisco and Marin shipyard workers – was integrated in 1948, it only had 1800 members – 150 of whom were African American.¹⁴ Like many fair employment

battles ostensibly won by black workers during the war, this one was largely symbolic.

Black workers' fight to obtain and then to preserve access to public transit jobs had symbolic importance as well, yet it also had greater implications for the future of African Americans in San Francisco. In contrast to shipyard employment, the end of the war did not result in a decline in labor demand in public transit. On the contrary, the city continued to suffer from a shortage of what it considered qualified transit workers. The question of whether or not the black workers who broke through the industry's color line during the war would be among those deemed qualified spoke to a larger uncertainty concerning the fate of black labor migrants in postwar San Francisco.

The history linking black migration, protest, and public transportation in San Francisco is almost as old as the city itself. When black migrants first arrived in the 1850s and 1860s, one of their first major acts of protest was to challenge several local public conveyance companies that discriminated against black passengers.¹⁵ As migrants flooded into the Bay Area during World War II, the integrated streetcars and trolleys that transported them to and from their wartime jobs became conspicuous evidence of the region's changing racial demography.¹⁶ While working in a Bay Area shipyard, Berkeley graduate student Katherine Archibald observed firsthand the intense "rivalry for space on crowded buses and streetcars" between black and white workers as they commuted to and from the shipyards. Some white passengers found the "very crushing together of black and white flesh in the enforced intimacies of public vehicles almost unbearable," and many complained that black riders, "through roughness and crude employment of their strength," monopolized "the seats and favored places on the streetcars."¹⁷ In a more sanguine assessment, sociologist Charles S. Johnson noted in 1944 that "unsegregated transportation" was an important area of "contact and racial inter-communication" that

accelerated “accommodation and assimilation” of black migrants in San Francisco.¹⁸ For black migrants, public transit could be a symbol of new freedoms not found in the South, and they embraced their legal right to sit or stand anywhere they chose. Lily Mae McCarty, who would end up obtaining a job as a streetcar conductor in 1945, evoked a sentiment likely shared by many of her peers when she claimed that her decision to migrate to San Francisco from Houston was made in part because she “wanted to ride in buses where you could sit anywhere you pleased.”¹⁹

Riding streetcars, buses, and trolleys also contributed to migrants’ distinct “cognitive mapping” of their new urban landscape.²⁰ Comparing the experiences of black migrants in Chicago, New York, Cleveland, Detroit, and Philadelphia during the First World War, Charles Johnson’s 1944 study of San Francisco found that “a restricted housing market for Negroes and other minority racial groups” resulted in the creation of “slum areas – overcrowded ghetto districts – in large measure segregated from other sections of the city.”²¹ For black migrants who settled in the Fillmore district, taking public transportation to school or work exposed them to other parts of the city and shaped their understanding of their new environment. Acclaimed poet and civil rights activists Maya Angelou, who moved to San Francisco from Arkansas to live with her mother as a teenager just prior to the war, offers the following memory of taking the streetcar to and from high school:

Mornings as the streetcar traversed my ghetto I experienced a mixture of dread and trauma. I knew that all too soon we would be out of my familiar setting, and Blacks who were on the streetcar when I got on would all be gone and I alone would face the forty blocks of neat streets, smooth lawns, white houses and rich children. In the evenings on the way home the sensations were joy, anticipation and relief at the first sign which said BARBECUE or DO DROP INN or HOME COOKING or at the first brown faces on the streets. I recognized that I was again in my country.²²

While riding the streetcar Angelou made sense of the city’s emerging racial segregation and the

mutually reinforcing feelings of alienation and belonging as she departed and returned to her Fillmore district home. The mental and physical orientation to the city that public conveyances facilitated was shared by the thousands of black migrants who rode the streetcars and trolleys each day to and from their jobs in the region's shipyards and docks.

In San Francisco, as in nearly every other northern and western city, the conspicuous presence of the transit system's all-white work crews served as a constant source of indignation for black residents. For while the streetcars and buses were integrated, the platform jobs of conductor and operator were exclusively white. In the South, bus drivers and streetcar conductors, who were often armed, aggressively policed the color line within their rolling domains – thereby serving as powerful symbols and enforcers of Jim Crow.²³ Thus black migrants in particular might have found the presence of white drivers and conductors in cities such as San Francisco unsettling. “The discrimination is placed in front of their eyes every time a street car passes by,” an official with the FEPC observed in 1943.²⁴ Another FEPC official found it “understandable that local citizens who happen to be Negroes should resent being discriminated against, solely because of their race, when they seek employment with a public utility, the profitable operation of which results in part from their patronage.”²⁵ Such resentment was expressed by entire communities as well as individuals. In both Oakland and Los Angeles, for example, white drivers were reluctant to provide service to black districts because of the hostility those communities directed towards the transit companies.²⁶ When Maya Angelou was turned away by the Market Street Railway (MSR) upon responding to the company's employment ad in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, she could hardly contain her disdain for the white conductor who collected her fare on the ride home: “On the streetcar, I put my fare into the box and the conductorette looked at me with the usual hard eyes of white contempt ... Her Southern nasal

accent sliced my meditation and I looked deep into my thoughts ... I wouldn't move into the streetcar but stood on the ledge over the conductor, glaring."²⁷ For black residents of San Francisco, Oakland, Los Angeles, and other northern and western cities, white conductors and operators were daily reminders of the inequality and discrimination that persisted even outside of the South. In cities like San Francisco, moreover, it also served as the most conspicuous manifestation of the virtual exclusion of blacks from municipal employment.²⁸ And it did not take long for indignation to turn into protest as black San Franciscans demanded access to skilled transit jobs.

In nearly every American city, conductors and operators considered their jobs white man's work. Platform work itself required relatively little skill which could be acquired through several weeks of training. Conductors collected fares and assisted passengers while operators/motormen (which included streetcar operators, bus and trolley drivers, and cable car gripmen) maneuvered the vehicles through the city's busy streets and treacherous topography. The work could be stressful and the days long, with split-shifts stretching an eight-hour workday over a twelve- or even sixteen-hour span. By the 1940s, San Francisco's platform workers – most of who worked for either Muni or the privately-owned Market Street Railway – also had to deal with dangerously outdated and dilapidated equipment.²⁹ While their wages lagged behind those in some of the higher skilled trades, platform men fared better than many other working-class San Franciscans. By 1943, a platform worker with at least a year and a half experience on the municipal lines earned 87.5 cents per hour (\$11.65 in 2012 dollars), while his counterpart on the Market Street Railway earned 80.5 cents per hour (\$10.73).³⁰

Urban operators and conductors also valued the status that came with the job. As one study of the nation's urban transit industry explained: "Although little skill was required to

operate a bus or trolley, the responsibility was large and the platform jobs were strategic positions with high wages and attractive benefits. Since supervisory jobs were most often filled from the operators' ranks, workers also viewed platform jobs as a stepping stone."³¹ On the first day of training, instructors for the San Francisco Municipal Railway informed newly-hired operators and conductors that they had "entered into one of the most honorable professions" with immense importance and value to the community.³² The approximately 1,200 platform men who worked the municipal railway system at the outset of World War II also valued the added job security and prestige that their civil service status accorded them. "You are a member of a family of about 15,000 city and County employees," their instructors reminded them. "You work not for a private corporation but for yourself and the people."³³ Most platform workers also gained membership to the city's labor movement. Market Street Railway employees were represented by Division 1004 of the Amalgamated Association of Street and Electric Railway Employees of America while Muni workers were represented by Division 518 of the same union.

The confluence of wartime mobilization, government efforts to remove racial restrictions to war-related jobs, and black activism led to unprecedented employment gains for African Americans in vital industries such as urban transport during World War II. The nationwide surge in war production, tire and gasoline rationing, and the deployment of troops abroad contributed to a dramatic increase in commuters' reliance on public transit, leading to an acute labor shortage for transit systems in cities such as San Francisco. In the war's first few years the passenger volume on San Francisco's two major transit systems quickly swelled to unprecedented levels. Whereas Muni and the Market Street Railway combined to transport a total of 557,173,225 passengers during 1940, they carried 715,606,002 riders in 1941 and 876,743,327 in 1943.³⁴ As the number of passengers mushroomed, the two systems struggled to man their rolling stocks. In

1942 alone the Market Street Railway lost a total of 1,046 employees to the armed forces and to higher-paying defense jobs.³⁵ Between May 1942 and April 1943, Muni's daily manpower shortage ranged between 62 and 278. For the same period, the Market Street Railway was short between 72 and 111 platform workers per day.³⁶ During the first months of 1942, San Francisco's shipyard workers demanded improved transportation service and called upon Muni and the Market Street Railway officials to put additional streetcars and buses in service.³⁷

This important link between urban transit and wartime production caused the federal government to support the employment of African Americans as motormen and conductors in cities across the country. In 1943, the Office of Defense Transportation (ODT) warned that the "number of passengers carried every day by our local transit systems has reached an all-time high, and the peak of the load is not yet in sight." With employees already working long hours and buses and streetcars still remaining idle, the ODT found it imperative that local transit companies hire minorities, "principally Negroes," as well as female workers.³⁸ The strongest federal support for black employment rights came from the FEPC, the administrative body created to enforce President Roosevelt's Executive Order 8802 prohibiting racial discrimination in war-related industries. Some of the FEPC's most important and successful cases involved urban transportation, and it took on transit companies and unions in Philadelphia, Washington D.C., Chicago, Los Angeles, Oakland, and Indianapolis.³⁹ But the FEPC had yet to establish its West Coast regional office by the time the issue of racial discrimination erupted on the San Francisco Municipal Railway, and it would be several more months before the War Manpower Commission decreed that local transportation systems qualified as a "defense industry" subject to the nondiscrimination policy set forth in Executive Order 8802.⁴⁰ Instead, the FEPC watched with interest from the sidelines as events unfolded in San Francisco.

Like most campaigns against employment discrimination, the fight for Muni platform jobs was initiated by an African-American worker – in this case a man in his early twenties named Audley Cole. A native of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Cole migrated to southern California as a youth and graduated from John Muir Technical High School in Pasadena. Soon thereafter he went to work as a cook and bottle-washer for the legendary African-American prize fighter, Joe Louis. Travelling as a member of Louis's camp, Cole arrived in San Francisco in 1938, whereupon he decided to make the city his permanent home.⁴¹ Within a few years he met and married his wife, Josephine, and together they joined a cohort of young black professionals who were active in San Francisco's NAACP chapter during the war.⁴² Cole's involvement with the NAACP raises the likelihood that his attempt to become the city's first black motorman may have been an orchestrated test case. As a physically fit and well-educated young man, Cole could easily meet the qualifications to operate a streetcar. Cole's light complexion (*Sun-Reporter* columnist Thomas Fleming recalled that Cole "looked like he could have been Indian or Mexican") also made him a strong candidate to break the system's color line.⁴³ According to the recollections of Josephine Cole, who in 1944 would become the first African-American teacher to work in San Francisco's public schools, Audley only managed to sit for the Civil Service Commission (CSC) examination because officials thought that he was white.⁴⁴ Cole's own rhetoric throughout the fight echoed that of the NAACP and other civil rights organizations that sought to combat racial discrimination during the war. "It's not so much the job that matters, though I do need the work," he would explain. "It's the principle of cracking this dangerous and unpatriotic practice that's most important."⁴⁵

Compared to other cities, the campaign to integrate San Francisco's platform jobs was a relatively brief and localized affair, lasting from December 1941 through March 1942. At first,

San Francisco's white platform workers seemed to accept the arrival of a black co-worker. In fact, Cole received the first 52 of the requisite 136 hours of on-the-job training before Amalgamated Division 518 officials ordered their members to cease training him.⁴⁶ The union threatened a fine of \$100 for any member who continued to train Cole, and when Spencer Rogers, a longtime Division 518 member, proceeded to give Cole an additional fifty-six hours of instruction, he was physically assaulted and charged with drunkenness by the union.⁴⁷ Upon learning of the union's position, San Franciscans rallied behind Cole. Backed by Republican Mayor Angelo Rossi and the CSC, the Public Utilities Commission (PUC) began suspending motormen as they refused to train Cole and threatened dismissals if their recalcitrance persisted.⁴⁸ The local press also came to Cole's defense. The *San Francisco Chronicle* made the story front-page news on several occasions, featured a glowing profile of Cole, and printed a deluge of letters in which San Franciscans berated Division 518. The Communist Party's *Daily People's World* also championed Cole's cause through its detailed reporting and editorials, and African-American newspapers around the country followed the story as well.⁴⁹ In general, San Franciscans from various backgrounds were ever-critical of a union depriving someone of a job because of his race – especially with such a need for transit workers. Echoing the popular refrain among black Americans at the time, one *Chronicle* reader summed up the civic consensus that dominated public discussion of the case when she wrote: "Isn't it rather ironical that we are fighting a war to preserve democracy, yet we have an instance where union officials refuse to allow a man to work, in a free country, merely because of his color."⁵⁰

Organized labor and local civil rights organizations also intervened on Cole's behalf. San Francisco's CIO and AFL councils each condemned Division 518's actions, as did several individual unions.⁵¹ The local NAACP and the Bay Area Council Against Discrimination – a

newly formed organization – also sought to assist Cole in any way they could. Audley Cole’s own actions during the standoff were conciliatory and evoked a faith in interracial unionism. Before applying for the motorman job Cole had been a member of the Building Service Employee’s Union, and he did not wish to become an adversary of organized labor. As the suspensions of white motormen mounted in early March, Cole, who had continued to report for training throughout the ordeal, requested that Muni management temporarily not assign him for further instruction “in the interest of harmony.”⁵² Confident that he would eventually prevail, Cole sought to minimize any ill-will that white workers might harbor towards him. “I’m going to work with the others; and besides I don’t want any man fired for something he can’t help,” he explained. “I feel that in time the union will realize that a workingman, no matter what his color, must be organized if the union is going to accomplish anything, and I hope to join the union.”⁵³

The outpouring of support for Cole compelled Division 518 to negotiate an end to the conflict. San Franciscans who supported the Amalgamated’s position did so quietly, although the *Chronicle* reported that the city’s policemen and firemen worried that the precedent set by the Cole case might threaten the racial exclusivity of their professions.⁵⁴ In early March, with Cole having been idle for about a month, Division 518 President William McRobbie worked out a deal with Mayor Rossi and the PUC.⁵⁵ On March 13 Cole resumed his training, and by March 23rd he was a full-fledged Muni streetcar motorman.⁵⁶ The fact that Cole broke in as a result of a locally-negotiated compromise and not a federal order tempered white resistance to the integration of platform work and helped ensure that calm prevailed as more blacks took jobs as conductors and operators. In fact, Cole soon got his wish and became a member of Amalgamated Division 518.⁵⁷

Black Muni Workers and National Fair Employment

Audley Cole's achievement was a significant first for black San Franciscans because it paved a path to municipal employment. By the end of 1943, fifty-four African Americans had obtained jobs on the Muni system and Spencer Rogers, who had been physically assaulted for training Cole at a time when nobody else would, reported that "relations with other employees [were] mostly harmonious."⁵⁸ The city's other major transit system, the privately-owned Market Street Railway, soon followed suit. MSR officials initially rebuffed appeals to follow the municipal system's lead because it did "not have separate toilet facilities available."⁵⁹ However, by the end of 1943 the MSR had scaled back service because of a lack of operators, and at the urging of the ODT, it finally decided to recruit African Americans.⁶⁰ During the first six months of 1944 the MSR hired 225 black workers – twenty-six bus drivers, fifty-two motormen, 145 conductors (135 of who were women), one bus mechanic, and one car cleaner.⁶¹ With Amalgamated Division 518 having already accepted black operators and conductors on the Municipal Railway and accepted Audley Cole into the union, Amalgamated Division 1004, which represented MSR platform workers, offered no resistance.⁶²

By December 1944, a few months after the city took control of the Market Street Railway and incorporated it into the municipal system, the FEPC Regional Office estimated that 700 African Americans were employed as Muni platform men and women.⁶³ According to Spencer Rogers, the system also employed a few "Chinese," "Mexican Indian," and "Filipino" men and women platform workers.⁶⁴ "Why, I hate to think of the mess we'd be in if we hadn't started hiring Negroes when we did," a PUC spokesman stated in August 1944. "They have enabled us to keep the cars and buses rolling for the thousands of war workers who depend upon us for transportation. The Negroes get along in fine style with the white operators and we have had

surprisingly few complaints from southern white passengers. I don't know what we would have done without them."⁶⁵ The urgent need for transit workers, combined with the widespread local support – including from the rest of the labor movement – for the employment of African Americans by the Muni and MSR systems, helped San Francisco avoid the bitter conflicts that took place in cities such as Philadelphia, Washington, D.C. and Pittsburgh, where white transit workers went on strike to protest FEPC orders to employ black platform workers.⁶⁶ As opposed to northern cities with sizeable pre-war black populations, white San Franciscans might also have been more likely to view the employment of black transit workers as a temporary wartime measure and less likely to see it, as white Philadelphians did, as a slippery slope that could threaten the city's racial order and especially its pattern of residential segregation.⁶⁷ As one white Mississippi migrant to San Francisco put it, "I never thought I'd see the day I'd ride on a bus with a colored driver, but you get used to things with this war going on."⁶⁸ On the other hand, black writers and activists from other parts of the country, such as Horace Cayton and Langston Hughes, frequently commented on the sight of black men and women working on the city's streetcars and trolleys as a hopeful sign that black migrants might be accepted better in San Francisco than they had in Midwestern and northeastern cities during World War I.⁶⁹

For many of the black men and women who collected fares and operated the city's streetcars, buses, trolleys, and cable cars, transit jobs served as a source of pride and provided a sense of belonging in San Francisco. In addition to giving blacks their first niche in the municipal sector, the jobs provided black migrant workers with prominent public positions as they traversed the city. After finally obtaining a "conductorette" job for the Market Street Railway, Maya Angelou remembered feeling a great sense of pride as she donned her blue uniform and change belt. The job also altered her image of the city itself as well as her place

within it. “I lost some of my need for the black ghetto’s shielding-sponge quality,” she recalled, “as I clanged and cleared my way down Market Street, with its honky-tonk homes for homeless sailors, past the quiet retreat of Golden Gate Park and long closed undwelled-in-looking dwellings of the Sunset District.”⁷⁰ The willingness of black streetcar workers to defend two newly-hired Japanese-American machinists after white Muni workers threatened to walk off of the job in protest in 1945 also suggests that at least some of these workers vigilantly guarded against any potential threat to deprive them of their Muni uniform. According to one report, “the position of the Negro workers was that if a movement to deny employment to minority groups goes unchallenged, it will not be many weeks before the right of Negroes to employment on the Municipal Railway system will also be challenged.”⁷¹ Such fears would prove justified in the postwar years.

The integration of the San Francisco Municipal Railway workforce provided ammunition for fair employment campaigns in other parts of the country as well. Audley Cole’s battle against Division 518 was covered in major black newspapers, including the *Chicago Defender*, *Pittsburgh Courier*, and the *Atlanta Daily World*. As civil rights activists and government officials intensified campaigns in Chicago, Philadelphia, Los Angeles, Seattle, and Washington, D.C., black journalists hoped that the results in San Francisco would help to defang opposition to black platform workers in those cities. “The Municipal Railway of San Francisco, Calif., is proving to other transit companies throughout the Nation that Negroes have a right as citizens to work as conductors and motormen on street cars and buses,” the *Pittsburgh Courier* declared in a March 1944 story – complete with photographs of black men and women on the job.⁷² “Trainmen Prove Merit on Frisco Rail Lines,” a *Chicago Defender* headline trumpeted for an April 29, 1944 article that stressed the fine job black conductors and operators were doing and

the public's acceptance of them.⁷³ Spencer Rogers, whose letters to Langston Hughes and J.A. Rogers were reprinted in their respective columns in the *Defender* and *Courier*, claimed that San Francisco's integrated transit workforce best represented the ideals of freedom and democracy that American soldiers were fighting for. In a statement that likely would have worried many white northerners, Rogers suggested that "if the men and women of the Muni can sit side by side on the benches at the car barn, why can't they live in houses side by side."⁷⁴

Like the black press, the FEPC also hoped that the successful employment of black platform workers in San Francisco would convince other cities that blacks and whites could work together peacefully and that white urbanites would accept the presence of black operators and conductors. However, as events in cities such as Philadelphia, Washington, D.C., and Pittsburgh suggest, such efforts were more effective in buttressing FEPC orders than in compelling transit companies and unions to cooperate. In a 1943 speech, the FEPC's Assistant Executive Secretary cited the employment of black platform workers in New York, Detroit, Cleveland, San Francisco, and a few smaller cities as evidence that "non-white operators can be accomplished without serious or permanent impairment of local transportation service."⁷⁵ Events in San Francisco were particularly useful for the FEPC and civil rights groups in their cases against transit companies elsewhere in California. Spencer Rogers informed FEPC officials that he had "behind stage" support from Ed Vandeleur – former president of Division 518 and a leader in the California Federation of Labor – "to win opportunities for minority employment up and down the coast on car lines, railways, utilities, etc."⁷⁶ FEPC West Coast Regional Director Harry Kingman buttressed his arguments in cases against Oakland's Key System and the Los Angeles Railway Corporation by citing the successful integration of the San Francisco Municipal Railway.⁷⁷

Muni's experienced black operators and conductors also directly strengthened the FEPC's Oakland and Los Angeles cases. Black Muni workers were especially valuable resources because San Francisco's PUC manager refused to allow municipal railway representatives to testify at FEPC hearings.⁷⁸ Several former Muni employees filed complaints after they tried unsuccessfully to obtain employment with the Key System.⁷⁹ In one of the more theatrical moments at the FEPC's Key System hearings in San Francisco on March 19, 1945, the FEPC attorney instructed Thomas E. Davis, a black Muni motorman and member of Amalgamated Division 1004, to stand up in the audience and request a transfer to Amalgamated Division 192, which had a closed shop agreement with the Key System.⁸⁰ At the Los Angeles Railway hearings on August 8, 1944, the "star witness" was Nora Slayden, a former Muni conductor who had been turned away by the system's white southern-born interviewer. Not only was she accepted by white workers and passengers in San Francisco, she told an FEPC attorney, but "was told by many white passengers that they preferred Negro conductors as they had more patience with children and older persons."⁸¹ By simply working as conductors and operators with the San Francisco Municipal Railway, black platform workers became important actors and symbols in a major front in the battle for fair employment during World War II.

Black Workers and the TWU in San Francisco

Many of the African Americans who obtained platform jobs with Muni during this period also became active union members and, in the process, played an essential part in transforming the transit system's labor politics and laying a potential foundation for black strength in the municipal sector. In the first few years after Audley Cole broke through the municipal railway's color line in 1942, it was uncertain how and to what degree black transit workers would also

integrate the city's two divisions of the Amalgamated transit union. After all, Division 518 had comprised the primary obstacle to Cole's employment, and throughout the remainder of World War II Amalgamated divisions in Oakland, Los Angeles, and most notably Philadelphia, among others, continued to voice opposition to the employment of black platform workers. Although Cole obtained a union card from Division 518, at the time some observers felt that black platform workers in San Francisco might take advantage of the open shop and remain outside of organized labor.⁸²

Without records it is impossible to ascertain the exact number of African Americans who joined Divisions 518 and 1004. However evidence suggests that black workers were hesitant to place their trust in the Amalgamated union's leadership. In May 1945, for example, the NAACP's San Francisco chapter reported that it was receiving numerous work-place grievances from black transit workers. Under the leadership of Joseph James, a black labor activist who had led the fight among black shipyard workers against union discrimination during the war, the branch referred these complaints to the Amalgamated and urged black platform workers to join the union. "Union membership, when accorded on a basis of equality, is the most valuable asset a Negro worker can possess," the branch advised in its monthly newsletter. "It is not only his privilege, but his duty, to join the union that has jurisdiction on his job. The NAACP therefore urges all Negroes who have not yet joined a streetcar union, to do so at once."⁸³ A few months after the NAACP issued this statement, black Muni workers would begin joining a union in large numbers. But instead of signing up with one of the Amalgamated divisions most black workers would try their luck with a newly-formed local of the Transport Workers Union (TWU) – a CIO affiliate without a track record on the West Coast.

The TWU had not originally set its sights on organizing the platform workers on the San

San Francisco Municipal Railway. Founded in 1934 by New York City transit workers, the TWU did not begin to successfully organize outside of New York until World War II. Even then, it concentrated its efforts on the East Coast and Midwest, with its most significant victory coming in Philadelphia in 1944.⁸⁴ Not only was San Francisco far from the union's center of operations, but the Amalgamated union had a strong foothold in cities up and down the West Coast. However, the TWU had targeted the Bay Area in its inchoate campaign to organize workers in the expanding airline industry. Therefore it was by a stroke of luck that the union had a man on the ground when a rupture shook San Francisco's two Amalgamated divisions in 1945, creating an opportunity for the TWU to place a stake in the West Coast urban transit industry.

The Amalgamated's troubles began when the city purchased and took over operation of the Market Street Railway in September 1944. The resulting consolidation of San Francisco's two major transit systems ignited a bitter seniority dispute between the two divisions of the Amalgamated union. Members of Division 1004, who had worked on the privately-owned Market Street Railway, took the position that seniority should be based upon each worker's original date of hire. The municipal workers in Division 518, on the other hand, shrewdly insisted that seniority begin the date each worker entered the civil service, which would have eliminated seniority for all Market Street Railway employees hired prior to consolidation. Since both divisions were affiliated with the Amalgamated, the city agreed to let the union settle the matter internally. By March 1945, however, the two sides remained at an impasse. And after Division 1004 rejected a compromise offer and the Amalgamated moved to consolidate the two divisions into a single unit, Division 518 withdrew from the union and established the independent Municipal Carmen's Union (MCU). At this point William Grogan, TWU International Vice President, took time away from the campaign to organize local Pan American

Airline workers and consulted with the MCU's president and secretary-treasurer. Shortly thereafter, the dissident Amalgamated members voted to affiliate with the TWU and Local 250 was born. Suddenly and unexpectedly, the TWU felt it had a potential foothold from which they could organize the transportation industry on the West Coast.⁸⁵

From the outset, TWU officials calculated that the union's success in San Francisco would hinge largely on its ability to recruit African Americans. At its founding, Local 250 had approximately 900 former members of Division 518 compared to the 1,600 platform workers who opted to remain with the Amalgamated in its newly chartered Division 1380.⁸⁶ Since African Americans represented roughly a quarter of the city's transit workers in 1945 and, as the NAACP's plea suggested, did not appear to possess a strong allegiance to the Amalgamated union, which continued to exclude black workers in other West Coast cities such as Oakland. The TWU thus looked to black workers to help reduce the membership gap. A few days before the TWU decided to issue a charter to the MCU, Grogan advised TWU international president Michael J. Quill of the "large Negro membership in the Market Street Railway" that could potentially provide fertile ground for organizing. The international office in New York dispatched international representative John "Jack" Cassidy to oversee Local 250's organizing drive. Cassidy quickly made black workers the focal point of the TWU campaign. "If we can force an election, we can win by getting the Negro vote," he reported in October 1945, adding a few weeks later that "the Negro group represents the majority here and we will have to concentrate on signing them up."⁸⁷

The TWU's San Francisco campaign came at a time when it was increasing its support of African American civil rights. Although the union had included African Americans since the 1930s, historian Joshua Freeman writes that prior to World War II "the TWU record on race had

been at best mixed.” It was not until 1941, when the TWU encountered fierce community pressure while trying to maintain a neutral position during a bus boycott in Harlem, that it “began paying more attention to black workers in its newspaper and more persistently pressed for civil rights legislation.”⁸⁸ The union’s hand was forced again when race became a major issue during its organizing drive in Philadelphia a few years later. The TWU won a representative election among Philadelphia Transit Company (PTC) workers in 1944 amid rising tensions surrounding a FEPC order to upgrade the PTC’s black workers – whom it had confined to menial jobs – to platform positions. At first the TWU tried to “soft-pedal” its position on the issue, but it eventually took a more forthright stance in defense of the PTC’s black workforce. When over 3,500 white transit workers walked off the job the day that eight African Americans were to begin training as motormen, the TWU worked behind the scenes to convince white workers to end the strike and helped prevent outbreaks of interracial violence.⁸⁹ The TWU’s racial liberalism was also in part a product of its leftist leadership. The TWU was within the CP orbit until 1948, and many of its communist members stressed the strategic value of organizing black workers.⁹⁰ In the immediate postwar years, Joshua Freeman writes, the TWU “vigorously pressed the struggle for black rights” through its participation in local campaigns in Fort Worth, Tulsa, Miami, and New Orleans.⁹¹

TWU organizers found that organizing black labor migrants in San Francisco differed from its experiences in other cities. After his first few months in the city Cassidy complained that San Francisco’s black transit workers were the “most unpredictable bunch of people I have ever dealt with – easily confused and too easily led.”⁹² Still, most black workers preferred the TWU to the Amalgamated. The fact that the Amalgamated had resisted Audley Cole’s employment a few years earlier and that its Oakland division continued to exclude African Americans must have

helped offset the problem of being the new kid on the block. The campaign was further assisted by two of the city's preeminent black labor activists: Revels Cayton and Joseph James, who Cassidy recruited to help. Revels Cayton was named after his grandfather, Hiram Revels, the first African American ever elected to the United States Senate (1870), and his brother Horace was a renowned intellectual and writer. A member of the Marine Cooks and Stewards Union, the Communist Party, the California CIO Council, and the National Negro Congress (NNC), Cayton had been a leading figure in fights for working-class rights and racial equality up and down the Pacific coast during the 1930s. He believed that joining the labor movement was imperative if "the Negro" was to "fight successfully in the reconversion period to keep his wartime jobs."⁹³ He therefore welcomed the TWU's request to assist its organizing efforts, however whatever contribution he was able to make ended after a few months when he took a position as the NNC's executive director in New York City.⁹⁴ Joseph James would have crossed paths with Cayton in black-left activist circles. According to black journalist Thomas Fleming, most of James's closest associates were "extreme white liberals," including Communists such as Harry Bridges.⁹⁵ James had become interested in San Francisco's black transit workers as head of the local NAACP branch, and when black workers approached the NAACP with workplace grievances, he could now refer them to the TWU instead of the Amalgamated. In addition to urging black workers to join Local 250, Cayton and James put Cassidy in touch with black church and civic leaders.⁹⁶ Mike Quill also solicited the assistance of Harry Bridges, who offered the use of two ILWU members to assist the TWU drive.⁹⁷

The TWU took a few additional measures to help attract black workers. It added three African American workers to Local 250's Executive Board "with the thought in mind of showing the negroes that we were offering full membership and not just paper membership." TWU

officials also assigned James Fitzsimon to replace Cassidy, who had grown frustrated with the campaign and who was also committed to organizing transit workers in Omaha. The TWU planned to make Fitzsimon a permanent organizer on the West Coast.⁹⁸ Fitzsimon was a leftist and had vocally supported the rights of black workers during the Philadelphia campaign while also enlisting support from the city's left-wing community.⁹⁹ Cassidy informed his New York headquarters that Fitzsimon's background, "particularly the leadership he gave in the Philadelphia lock-out, will work toward our advantage."¹⁰⁰ Shortly after Fitzsimon's arrival, Local 250 distributed a flyer reminding workers that the Amalgamated went on strike "against the employment of colored workers in Philadelphia," and that it took the "combined forces of the Transport Workers Union and the United States Government to put the colored workers on the streetcars."¹⁰¹ Fitzsimon also may have been responsible for bringing Anthony Robinson to San Francisco to help recruit black workers. Robinson had previously been active in TWU Local 206 in New Orleans, which consisted mostly of black truckers.¹⁰² TWU officials in New York were concerned when they learned that Robinson had surfaced in San Francisco and had been elected Local 250 vice-president. According to one international representative, Robinson was "a character of questionable background and intentions" and had "resorted to all of the tactics of racial nationalism in order to develop the schisms within the ranks" of Local 206 in 1942-43.¹⁰³ Mike Quill warned Fitzsimon that Robinson was "a government agent provocateur and informer" and that he should "be guided accordingly."¹⁰⁴ Yet Robinson appeared a better fit in San Francisco. He was elected vice-president of the local, and Bill Grogan reported that "despite his past history [Robinson] appears to be working out alright."¹⁰⁵

The TWU's need to focus on black workers created problems other than trying to figure out how best to earn their confidence. As will be discussed below, all workers that Muni hired

during the war – which would account for all of its black employees – were considered “limited tenure,” and their employment was only guaranteed through the six months following the conclusion of the war (workers hired by the Market Street Railway before the city took it over were promised permanent employment). TWU officials worried that black limited tenure employees would be replaced by white workers, who were already showing a preference for Division 1380.¹⁰⁶ Fitzsimon, who was selected in part to take over for Cassidy because of his role in Philadelphia, also caused problems within the fledgling local. Longtime municipal carmen leaders Henry Foley and Jack Sherry complained that Fitzsimon was usurping the local’s autonomy and that he was introducing a “communistic element” into Local 250.¹⁰⁷ Division 1380 already red-baited the TWU because of “Red Mike” Quill, and the local’s anti-communist leaders were likely weary of leftist organizers and representatives who came to San Francisco.¹⁰⁸ Foley and Sherry requested the removal of Fitzsimon, and Mike Quill, already concerned that Fitzsimon was not pulling his weight in the San Francisco airline and urban transit campaigns, agreed to replace him with the less divisive Bill Grogan.¹⁰⁹

Although membership figures do not exist for this period, the TWU appears to have been successful in attracting most of Muni’s African American workers. During the union’s first few months in San Francisco organizers reported gains among employees on the former Market Street Railway lines, where the Amalgamated continued to hold sway. John Daugherty, the West Coast Director of TWU’s Air Transport Division confidently reported that the “Negroes are signing up right along.”¹¹⁰ By November 1945 Joseph James was already reporting that “Negroes are quite numerous in each” of the two unions, and over the next few years newspaper reports as well as union officials would reflect a shift by emphasizing Local 250’s large “Negro” membership.¹¹¹ As Cassidy predicted, black workers seemed to hold the balance of power in the

car barns as the TWU began to loosen the Amalgamated's grip on the Muni workforce. By May 1947, Local 250 had signed up 1,556 of San Francisco's approximately 2,600 platform workers.¹¹²

The first public demonstration of Local 250's active black membership took place in June and July of 1946, when striking transit workers shut down the Muni system for three days. The strike was a rare instance of cooperation between Local 250 and Division 1380, both of which managed to set aside their differences in pursuit of a 15 cent hourly wage increase. The strike, as it was widely reported across the nation, created the "greatest traffic jam in the city's history," as automobiles and taxis descended on San Francisco's downtown area.¹¹³ By all accounts, the strike was "100 percent effective" and culminated in the passage of a charter amendment that made San Francisco's platform workers some of the highest paid in California.¹¹⁴ On the strike's first day, black journalist Handsel Bell visited the city's car barns and spoke with union officials and black workers on the picket lines. While he was unable to catch up with Division 1380 officials, he spoke with Henry Foley, Local 250's president, for over an hour. Foley told Bell that several black workers were "very active in the union," and that black union members in general "were all giving a good account of themselves and could be counted on to help carry the fight to a successful conclusion."¹¹⁵ Bell proceeded to see for himself as he traversed the city on foot and met with striking black workers. At the Potrero car barn he spoke with J.B. Mason, who "was there to protect his job and seemed interested in his work." Walter Stephens, a conductor with just three months experience, "was enthusiastic about the 100 per cent cooperation shown by the various pickets and by the public in general." At the Fillmore car barn he spoke with John Smith. "He enjoys his work ... He's union, political, religious and community-conscious." At the nearby Geary Street car barn, Bell found that it "is pro CIO, and there you'll find our people

predominating.” Bell’s report attested to both the conspicuous presence of African Americans in the city’s car barns, their importance to Local 250, and the value that they placed on their jobs and union membership.

Transit Jobs and Permanent Employment in Postwar San Francisco

The widespread attention and support that black Muni workers received during the war would contrast sharply with their fight to keep their jobs in the postwar years. In western port cities like San Francisco, the black migrants who arrived seeking work during the war faced an uncertain future. This was generally the case for black migrants in other northern cities at war’s end, but the FEPC found that the “entire west coast area is characterized by problems which in newness and intensity distinguish it from the rest of the country.”¹¹⁶ Black migrants had struggled to find any form of adequate housing during the war, but at least they had obtained employment. In the immediate postwar years, persisting housing shortages and discrimination were compounded by increased employment discrimination – which combined to raise serious questions about the status of black migrants in San Francisco. Charles S. Johnson’s 1944 study, *The Negro War Worker in San Francisco*, determined that “employment opportunity” underlay “all problems of the new population” and that the “future of the Negro worker within the Bay Area constitutes an unknown, indefinite quantity.”¹¹⁷ Many companies had only hired black employees “for the duration of the war” and planned on giving hiring preferences to returning veterans. Most of the employers who Johnson’s team interviewed “refused to commit themselves as to future plans for using Negro workers, and several indicated that they expected that “Negro workers will go back home after the war since they are not satisfactorily adjusted in the city.” However, interviews with black migrants revealed that the majority had no intention of

leaving.¹¹⁸ A 1944 survey of one Northern California industry found that fifteen percent of black workers planned on returning home after the war, compared to thirty-three percent of their white counterparts.¹¹⁹ But remaining would not be easy for black migrants, as observers forecasted a precarious economic future for black labor migrants in the Bay Area. “The outlook for jobs is a gloomy one,” Joseph James wrote in 1945. “The history of California is woven through and through with this pattern of dealing with racial minorities: we need them; we use them; when we are through with them, we banish them. ... The end of the war which created the need for Negro labor has come.”¹²⁰

While black labor migrants may not have been cognizant of this history, they tried to maintain their wartime gains as long as possible to stave off what they feared would be an economic crisis. While white workers began leaving their wartime jobs for more permanent employment after 1943, black workers remained in those jobs as long as possible. But they could not prevent the inevitable loss of shipyard jobs. Whereas In January 1945, 26,000 African Americans still worked in Bay Area shipyards in January 1945, by the following September that number had shrunk to less than 12,000 and would continue a precipitous decline.¹²¹ Compared to their white counterparts, black war workers suffered more from layoffs, decline in earnings, and unemployment. When they did seek permanent employment in private industry, they encountered discrimination, which either kept them unemployed or forced them into less-skilled and lower-paying jobs. Black veterans who sought to relocate to the Bay Area likewise encountered difficulty obtaining work.¹²² In 1947 Julius Stern, ILWU member and director of the CIO veterans and jobs bureau, estimated that ninety percent of the job orders received by his department specified “white workers only.”¹²³ As a result, whereas African Americans constituted just five percent of the Bay Area’s population, they accounted for twenty percent of

those receiving unemployment insurance as the region transitioned to a peacetime economy.¹²⁴

“The chief source of income of the San Francisco Negro today seems to be from the municipality owned street cars and the Southern Pacific Railroad,” the *Pittsburgh Courier*’s John R. Williams observed in 1947. “Those two sources combined do not yield adequate income for the city’s 40,000 Negro residents.”¹²⁵

This postwar plight of black labor migrants was captured by Cy W. Record in his telling of the story of Willie Stokes, who left a plantation in Desha county, Arkansas and found work that “paid more than he ever dreamed” as a welder at the Kaiser Shipbuilding Company across the bay from San Francisco in Richmond. After losing his job in November 1945, Stokes spent his days at the employment service and traversing the Bay Area in search of work. His efforts were thwarted at nearly every turn by discriminatory hiring practices. Although he managed to obtain intermittent work as a laborer in 1946, by June 1947 he had been unemployed for seven months. And while a few of his friends “loaded up their cars and headed back South,” Stokes was determined to remain in California because of the relative freedoms it afforded African Americans. “Willie Stokes is not an exception,” Record wrote in his piece for *Crisis*, the official magazine of the NAACP. “He is an example.... The problem can be stated in a simple equation: Willie Stokes multiplied by 20,000.”¹²⁶

With such dim prospects for postwar employment and unemployed workers like Willie Stokes collecting unemployment benefits (along with the specter of the “Stokes Willies” – the “one percent of the Negro migrants” who were seen as “continuously guilty of almost every form of misbehavior possible”),¹²⁷ civic leaders seemed no more inclined than employers to see black labor migrants remain in the city. “[H]ow long do you think these colored people are going to be here?” Mayor Roger Lapham asked Thomas Fleming, a reporter and columnist for the city’s only

black newspaper, at a City Hall press conference in 1947.¹²⁸ Lapham's aside would have disheartened African-American sociologist Horace Cayton who, writing that same year, wondered whether west coast cities would "gain any insight or knowledge from the experience of Middlewestern and Eastern cities who were faced with the same problem a decade ago ... or whether we will witness the stupid blunders which characterized the adjustment of Negroes to the Middlewestern and Eastern cities and which characterized the early attempts of the Pacific Coast to deal with other non-white groups."¹²⁹ In San Francisco, where access to transit jobs ranked among the most important wartime gains for African Americans, the anxiety and uncertainty that Johnson, James, Stokes, Lapham, and Cayton evoked fueled the struggle over whether non-war production jobs such as transit work would be temporary or permanent.

Black Muni workers' troubles began in 1946, when the PUC announced that it would fill 300 vacant platform positions and replace approximately 1,400 limited tenure workers with permanent employees. The news raised concern among black operators and conductors, most of who had been hired as "limited tenure" employees during the war and feared that they would lose their jobs as a result. The PUC nonetheless assured Muni's limited tenure workforce that their temporary positions would last until January of 1948, and that ultimately they controlled their own fates.¹³⁰ After all, a limited tenure employee could obtain permanent status by passing the CSC's physical and written examinations. In its monthly newsletter, the PUC urged its limited tenure workers to do just that. "If you are concentrating on doing the best job you possible can as an L.T., you need feel no qualms about the security of your job and you'll be absorbing enough knowledge to pass one of the future examinations to secure your permanent Civil Service rating," the PUC counseled workers in its June 1946 newsletter.¹³¹ Meanwhile, the Civil Service Commission was aggressively recruiting applicants. The CSC set up a special

recruiting booth in the Civic Center Plaza, advertised for “young men of San Francisco to apply for permanent jobs,” requested referrals from the United States Employment Service, and broke with past practice by holding weekly examinations.¹³² If black workers were going to keep their platform jobs, it appeared that they would have to act fast. Noah Griffin, NAACP Western Regional Director, thought the issue was “a matter in which, not only our branch, but many other organizations in our community should be greatly interested.” He instructed the San Francisco branch to reach out to limited tenure workers through their churches and to “exert itself in any other way it wishes toward arousing these people to the importance of making their jobs permanent.”¹³³

Yet before long black Muni workers were finding it difficult to obtain permanent status. This was especially frustrating because of the system’s well-publicized demand for “qualified personnel.” In June 1946, the PUC requested, and the Board of Supervisors approved, a waiver of the one-year residency requirement for limited tenure platform employees in the hope that “this easing of the entrance requirement will encourage returned veterans and others who are new to the city to apply for these jobs.”¹³⁴ Such workers would be eligible to apply for permanent positions after a year of service. The residency waiver attracted more black applicants, especially among military personnel who had been stationed in the Bay Area, but ultimately it added to the numbers who were unable to achieve permanent status.¹³⁵ Touring San Francisco’s car barns during the 1946 strike, Handsel Bell averred that blacks workers’ “entrenchment into the transit system of the city represents, perhaps, the largest single employment gain made in this area during the war and one in which we have a bare possibility of retaining. ... Now the picture isn’t too rosy.”¹³⁶ He told of a civil service examination in which sixty percent of the 388 applicants were African American, only twenty-five of whom passed –

“most of them being college graduates.” Bell could not understand why so many black workers could not pass the written exam, especially when “several hundred applicants had attended the California Labor School and had been coached.” One reason was that over the course of the war the CSC had raised the “passing point” by 350 points.¹³⁷ By doing so, the PUC expected that less than half of all applicants would qualify for permanent positions.¹³⁸ Although the policy was race-neutral, it effectually decreased the likelihood that black platform workers would obtain permanent positions. When Bell asked CSC officials about the conspicuously high failure rate, they declined to comment other than to confirm “that filling the vacancies presented quite a problem.”¹³⁹

The problems that black limited tenure employees encountered between 1945 and 1947 were exacerbated by a public safety campaign waged by the mainstream press. Throughout the 1940s the PUC and Muni management came under increased public scrutiny for the alarming number of accidents involving public transit vehicles. In 1947 Muni averaged 1,023 accidents per month, which was actually an improvement from the 1945 average of 1,391.¹⁴⁰ The number of accidents involving streetcars, buses, and trolleys was the most conspicuous symptom of widespread traffic problems brought on by the city’s dramatic population increase during the war and which persisted into the postwar years.¹⁴¹ The high number of bus, trolley and streetcar accidents resulted from several factors, the two most significant being the city’s two-light traffic signal system and the outdated and dilapidated condition of Muni vehicles and tracks. Whereas most major cities used three-light (green, amber, red) traffic signals by this period, San Francisco still utilized its original two-light (green-red) traffic signals at most intersections.¹⁴² The two-signal system created dangerous situations for all drivers and especially bus and streetcar operators, whose vehicles were more difficult to maneuver and control on San Francisco’s

chaotic, congested, and perilously steep downtown streets. As Jim Wilson, president of Amalgamated Division 1380 explained, “the motorman has the alternative of breaking someone’s neck, jerking all the passengers or stopping in the middle of the street to conform with a red light.”¹⁴³ Negotiating the two-signal lights was made all the more difficult for these drivers by the state of the equipment they operated. In a 1946 report, Muni’s director of accident prevention concluded that the “inability of the car to accelerate and decelerate according to the proper standards” was a common cause of accidents” and that 200 Muni vehicles had “traveled 14 million miles over and beyond their life expectancy.”¹⁴⁴ A special mayoral committee that studied San Francisco’s transportation problems in early 1947 likewise found its public transit lines, roads, and equipment suffering from years of neglect and pointed out that “transit equipment, already ripe for replacement before the war, served double duty through the war years.”¹⁴⁵

Yet the *San Francisco Examiner* pointed the finger at the men and women, and limited tenure employees in particular, who operated those dilapidated trolleys and streetcars. The catalyst for the paper’s campaign occurred in January 1947, when Thelma Patterson, a 27-year old black migrant from Louisiana who had worked for Muni since 1945, lost control of the No. 4 Embarcadero streetcar she was operating and struck an F Stockton car at Sutter and Stockton streets, killing a 72-year old pedestrian and injuring twelve passengers. The *San Francisco Examiner* gave the horrific accident extensive front-page coverage and used it to launch a crusade against “reckless” Muni operators. The streetcar Patterson was driving belonged to Muni’s original fleet purchased in 1913, and she claimed that prior to the crash she had experienced difficulty with the breaking system.¹⁴⁶ However, the *Examiner* reported that Patterson, who ended up in the hospital and arrested for manslaughter, had “jumped the signal”

and sped through a red light.¹⁴⁷ Aside from a photograph showing the injured operator on a stretcher, the paper did not explicitly address Patterson's race or gender. Yet the fact that she was black and female was significant in light of the paper's portrayal of limited tenure employees – who were disproportionately African American and accounted for most of the female operators and conductors – as temporary workers who were ill-suited to operate the city's streetcars, trolleys, and buses. "One half of the platform force are 'limited tenure' men and women who have been employed after the most rudimentary tests of vision and physical qualifications," the *Examiner* editorialized. The paper called upon Muni officials to "start a campaign of re-education to pick competent motormen, to weed out the incompetent, dangerous operators" which would include "stricter tests of vision and muscular coordination."¹⁴⁸ The *Examiner* never alluded to race when discussing limited tenure drivers, but its characterization of "wild motormen" begged comparison with the pre-war transit workforce, which consisted entirely of white men.

The *Examiner*'s salvo placed the PUC and Muni management in a difficult position. Nobody questioned that the system's accident rate was a major problem, and in some cases operators were undoubtedly at fault. Patterson herself had been involved in six accidents prior to the fatal crash in January 1947, and the fact that she had been "completely exonerated" in five of them likely meant little to some observers.¹⁴⁹ Yet rare would have been the Muni operator – permanent or limited tenure – who had not been involved in an accident during this period.¹⁵⁰ Most Muni employees also would have likely agreed with the paper's call for "re-education," as inadequate training and outdated equipment would remain high on Muni operators' list of grievances for decades. At first city officials defended Muni operators against the *Examiner*'s attacks. PUC manager Jim Turner cited the two-light signal system as a major cause of Muni

accidents, admitting that it was “impossible for the transit operator not to be caught on an intersection occasionally with the signal against him.”¹⁵¹ The mayor’s transportation committee similarly focused on the structural problems of the city’s transportation system when it released its report in March, two months after Patterson’s accident. Among its recommendations were bonds in the amount of \$20,000,000 “for the modernization of the entire Municipal Railway system” and \$2,736,000 “for the installation of a modern, synchronized, three-light traffic system as well as a number of new traffic rules – including a one-way street system and a prohibition of left-hand turns at certain intersections – to decrease the number of accidents.”¹⁵² Although the city addressed these issues, ultimately officials decided that they could not ignore the spotlight that the *Examiner* had cast upon limited tenure drivers. As the city moved to address the criticism of its transit workforce, the plight of black Muni workers seemed to confirm Charles Johnson’s 1944 prediction that “job performance as a criterion for dismissal and re-hiring may be used to the disadvantage of racial minorities by prejudiced employer and labor officials.”¹⁵³

By the summer of 1947 Muni was firing limited tenure employees by the hundreds.¹⁵⁴ Muni management would later put the number of fired employees at 422 and conceded that most were African American.¹⁵⁵ That number did not include the hundreds of black women who also lost their jobs. At peak employment in 1945 as many as 300 women were employed as platform workers, but in 1946 the PUC decided that the job was too physically demanding for women and instructed the CSC to turn away female applicants.¹⁵⁶ By this time some women had voluntarily left the workforce, but the remaining 250 female platform workers, especially African Americans, were outraged by the PUC’s decision. “We were good enough to work all during the war,” a female platform worker employed since 1943 protested. “We proved we could do the job, and now they want to throw us out.”¹⁵⁷ Yet there was little recourse for women hired as

limited tenure employees by the Municipal Railway during the war when the PUC announced that their temporary jobs would terminate on September 30, 1947. However, the privately-owned Market Street Railway did not have a “limited tenure” classification and had promised permanent employment in its job advertisements. When workers originally hired by the MSR challenged their status as limited tenure employees, the CSC ruled that only those employed by the MSR one year prior to September 1944, when the city purchased and took over operations of the system, would have permanent status. Since the MSR did not begin hiring black workers until January 1944, this meant that the only women remaining in October 1947 would be white. “They’re keeping 25 women on and they just happen to be all white,” one black female streetcar operator protested. “If they are going to keep women, why not keep all?”¹⁵⁸

Although the CSC cited the PUC’s request for an all-male transit workforce and noted that the September 1943 date was consistent with the settlement over the seniority dispute between MSR and municipal employees (see above), black workers and their supporters, such as Oleta Yates, chairman of the San Francisco Communist Party, charged that “the policy against women is a policy against Negroes as well.”¹⁵⁹ Noting that “95 percent of the women employed are ours,” the *Pittsburgh Courier*’s Handsell Bell could not help but wonder if it was “one of the moves to get us out of the system.”¹⁶⁰ Faced with the prospect of losing her job, Lily Mae McCarty, a streetcar conductor, fumed that “they say they want to get rid of the girls, but what they really want to do is to get rid of the Negro people.”¹⁶¹ McCarty was among those whose families relied upon their employment and worried about their job prospects in the city. Black women’s wage labor was vital to the survival of working-class families, and they encountered intense discrimination in the private labor market.¹⁶² “What kind of work are we going to do?” One female Muni employee asked. “You know it’s practically impossible for colored women to

get jobs downtown. And nothing that pays like this.”¹⁶³ Although many former female platform workers found other jobs, most African American women were unable to earn wages comparable to what they earned with Muni.¹⁶⁴ Most likely ended up like Lily Mae McCarty who, two years after losing her platform job, was struggling to support her unemployed husband and two children by working part-time as a dishwasher at the Geary St. Donut Bowl.¹⁶⁵

Black male transit workers fared little better. As McCarty put it in June of 1947, “the Negro women are being canned and the Negro men are losing out.”¹⁶⁶ Many men protested that they were fired for “unsatisfactory service” without any further explanation.¹⁶⁷ “Every day someone is fired,” a black cable car gripman protested after a week in which five black workers from his car barn were discharged.¹⁶⁸ The most forceful protests emanated from black workers who were disqualified from taking the CSC written exam and discharged from their jobs for having “physical defects” such as high blood pressure or flat feet, even though many had been on the job for several years and already had received a clean bill of health from private physicians.¹⁶⁹ George Jennings, for example, began working as a cable car gripman on July 9, 1946. Shortly thereafter he applied to become a permanent operator. But after undergoing a physical examination by a CSC physician, he was rejected on the grounds that he had “flat feet.” Jennings then sought a second opinion from a private physician. In that exam, Dr. A. B. Sirbu diagnosed Jennings with a mild form of *bilateral pes planus* – a condition in which the arch of the instep of the foot collapses and comes into contact with the ground. However, Sirbu found Jennings’ feet to be “flexible,” reported that he had “an excellent range for motion,” and concluded that his condition was not the “source of any real disability.” Upon receiving Sirbu’s report, the CSC informed Jennings that it now could not approve his application because the draft board in his native Texas had rejected him for military service in 1943 on the grounds that

he suffered from asthma. Again, Jennings sought a second opinion, this time from Dr. Herbert Henderson, an African American physician, who declared that the patient's "state of health is excellent" and that there was "no disqualifying feature to prevent him from doing arduous work." Yet the 23-year old Jennings was still discharged for physical reasons despite countervailing medical opinions and a good work record.¹⁷⁰

Jennings represented a particularly egregious case, but scores of other black workers reported similar experiences. Henry Logan began working for the Market Street Railway on September 29, 1944. In January 1946 the CSC rejected his application for permanent employment because of flat feet. Like Jennings, Logan visited a private physician who concluded that he did not have flat feet and, for good measure, added that it should be irrelevant since he had already been driving a bus for three years. Despite a good record, Logan was discharged on June 22, 1947.¹⁷¹ Frank Johnson passed the CSC's physical exam, but was subsequently fired on October 20, 1947 after the Commission learned that his draft board had previously rejected him for having flat feet.¹⁷² Johnnie King, who began working as a motorman on August 31, 1945, was similarly discharged on October 22, 1947 after the CSC learned that his draft board had diagnosed him with "hypertension" even though he had already passed the Commission's physical exam.¹⁷³ Eddie Harris had established a good work record since beginning work as a streetcar operator in April 1945. Two years later the CSC's physician rejected his bid for permanent employment because of poor vision. In May a private optometrist found his eyesight to be fine, but he was fired regardless that August.¹⁷⁴ J. W. Smith, who took a job as a bus driver in 1945 because "he thought it would be permanent after the war," was one of 30 black transit workers fired from a single car barn over the course of two days in June 1947 for "unsatisfactory service."¹⁷⁵ According to the *People's World*, more than 300 black Muni

employees were fired from mid-August to mid-October – “a majority of which have been on medical grounds.”¹⁷⁶

Racial discrimination under the pretext of physical or mental disability was not without precedent in American history. Defenders of slavery often cited the supposed mental inferiority of blacks as justification for the peculiar institution. Since the Civil War, blacks had frequently been disqualified from military service on the basis of having flat feet (a condition that is far more common among people of African descent than those of European descent), which army doctors erroneously claimed made them unable to stand for long periods of time and complete long marches.¹⁷⁷ Flat feet became a common reason for disqualifying African Americans from other public-sector jobs, such as postal workers and police officers. The fact that across the bay in Oakland, where the Key system and Amalgamated Division 192 had continually blocked the employment of black transit workers despite a FEPC ruling against them, black applicants were being disqualified for medical reasons – flat feet most common among them – only added to the questionable nature of Muni firings.¹⁷⁸ Lillie Mae McCarty expressed the anger of many of her black Muni co-workers when she asked, “What have flat feet got to do with running a trolley?”¹⁷⁹ Black workers such as McCarty were convinced that Muni officials and the CSC were determined to “get rid of the Negroes.”¹⁸⁰

The subsequent campaign to secure black workers’ right to city platform jobs occurred within a very different social, political, and economic climate than had Audley Cole’s fight to become the city’s first streetcar driver in 1942. With the wartime emergency having passed, government officials at the municipal, state, and federal level scaled back their support for fair employment laws and regulations. In fact, as black platform workers were losing their jobs, the San Francisco and California legislators opposed strong fair employment laws.¹⁸¹ Nor did an

outraged public rush to their defense. Whereas Cole became a *cause célèbre*, the fired Muni drivers' cases received no coverage in the mainstream press. Unlike Cole, who had been a clear victim of disparate treatment, racial discrimination in the postwar cases were far more difficult to prove. For one, some white workers also lost transit jobs as a result of the limited tenure regulations and physical requirements. Furthermore, the city had a legitimate responsibility to ensure that its streetcars and buses made public safety a top priority, and few would dispute the necessity of making mental competency and good medical health a condition for the job. Yet a disproportionate number of fired and disqualified workers were African American, and many of the cases against them appeared dubious. In what was a harbinger of affirmative action cases in the 1960s and 1970s, black Muni workers and their allies would challenge the “disparate impact” of ostensibly race-neutral policies.

With wartime racial liberalism waning, allies for San Francisco's black transit workers were in short supply. This was due in large part to the small size of the pre-war population. In his comprehensive study of San Francisco's small black community in the first half of the twentieth century, historian Albert Broussard's chapter titled “Protest Organizations” suggests that prior to the World War II black San Franciscans lacked a tradition of employment activism. National groups such as the NAACP had small chapters that took symbolic stands on large issues, and other organizations “typically centered around one dominant individual” and “faded into oblivion after supporting a particular issue.” Thus, he concludes, “protest organizations” advanced “ideologies and strategies that offered little in the way of change.” The National Urban League even decided against establishing a local chapter because of the small size of the pre-war population.¹⁸² Arguably the strongest voice for black workers emanated from *The Spokesman*, an African American newspaper that had a brief existence in the 1930s. An array of interracial civil

rights organizations formed during the war. However, some, such as the Bay Area Council Against Discrimination – a broad coalition that included representatives from labor unions with large black memberships such as the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters and the Marine Cooks & Stewards – did not last the duration of the war. Organizations that did survive into the postwar era, such as the Council for Civic Unity, focused most of their efforts on fact-finding and educational activities.¹⁸³ In May 1947, the *New York Times* aptly summed up the state of affairs by noting that while San Francisco “now presents a typical Negro ghetto picture,” its “leadership” was “difficult to define.”¹⁸⁴

Black transit workers expected their union – which for most of them was TWU Local 250 – to challenge Muni management and the CSC. A militant union was something that Audley Cole, nor most black workers in the pre-war period, did not have in his corner and would become an important force among certain segments of the postwar black working class. Because the TWU’s initial success in San Francisco resulted in large part from its ability to attract most of Muni’s black workers, it viewed the fate of limited tenure employees with a special sense of urgency.¹⁸⁵ Local 250’s black members likewise expected their union to fight for their jobs.¹⁸⁶ As it turned out, TWU organizers had worried about the status of its limited tenure employees from the outset. “We will have to explain to the temporary employees that the civil service requirements and the examinations will be extremely hard to pass because of the physical, written and oral tests and also because veterans will be taking these examinations and the credits they will receive as veterans will be so high as to give them preference over any civilian entrant in the examination,” William Grogan advised John Daugherty in August 1945.¹⁸⁷ At Grogan’s behest, within months of chartering Local 250 TWU organizers collaborated with David Jenkins – a local Communist Party activist and the director of the California Labor School – to arrange

classes specifically designed to prepare black transit workers for the civil service exam.¹⁸⁸ In January 1947 Local 250 leaders condemned the *Examiner*'s attacks on streetcar drivers, criticizing its "snap judgment" of operators such as Patterson who were involved in accidents and demanded "fair play for carmen."¹⁸⁹ A Local 250 leaflet complained that Muni workers were being made the "whipping post for all the traffic evils in the city," and that newspaper coverage "would lead one to believe that all traffic accidents in the city are caused by motormen" speeding through red lights.¹⁹⁰ With rumors also spreading that the city was considering leasing Muni to a private company, Local 250 president Henry Foley accused the *Examiner* of attempting to "undermine confidence in municipal ownership of the trolleys."¹⁹¹

In May 1947 union officials insisted that the CSC relax some of its physical requirements, such as those that disqualified an applicant because of high blood pressure.¹⁹² On this issue Local 250 was joined by Amalgamated Division 1380, which suggests that some white drivers were also encountering problems with the medical requirements. "If a man gets a little excited and his blood pressure goes up, that's enough to knock him out," complained James O'Brien, secretary of Division 1380. But unlike his counterparts in Division 1380, Local 250 president Henry Foley pressed the racial issue, charging that "only a certain percentage of Negroes are passing."¹⁹³ The CSC acknowledged that this was indeed the case, but maintained that it was not the result of racial discrimination.¹⁹⁴ Union pressure made little headway. The CSC eventually agreed to reevaluate some of its physical requirements, although this may have been more because of a chronic shortage of platform workers than because of union pressure. Local 250 was able to get one black member a chance to take the written exam after he was initially turned away because of a scar on his face, but it was finding it more difficult to help the hundreds of other limited tenure employees who were being rejected for physical defects.¹⁹⁵ It

did not help that Local 250 was struggling financially at the time and preparing for a showdown with the city over wages and working conditions. Its position was further weakened by the persistence of dual unionism in the city's car barns, and the Amalgamated was conspicuously silent on the issue dismissals of black employees.

With Local 250 struggling to defend its black members, it received much-needed help from local Communists and fellow travelers. The dearth of labor-oriented civil rights organizations in San Francisco during this period created an opportunity for the CP and those within its orbit to assert leadership in black workers' struggle for employment rights at the grass-roots. The TWU national leadership was also still within the Communist orbit in 1947, and thus would have welcomed such alliances. John Pittman, an African-American and editor of the Communist Party's west coast newspaper, the *Peoples World*, ensured that the paper provided detailed coverage of the Muni firings and ran stories to counter the *Examiner's* crusade against limited tenure drivers. In May 1947 the San Francisco CP demanded a hearing on the firing of Muni's female employees (the PUC did not oblige).¹⁹⁶ The strongest CP-related support came from Matt Crawford, who was trying to breathe life into the NNC in the Bay Area. Born in Alabama in 1903, Crawford spent most of his childhood and early adulthood in the San Francisco Bay Area.¹⁹⁷ He joined the Communist Party in the 1930s and during the 1940s he became a fixture among Bay Area civil rights activists, working alongside other leftists and white liberals to defend the economic and political rights of black Americans. In 1936 Crawford attended the founding conference of the National Negro Congress in Chicago and proceeded to work with the East Bay chapter in Oakland before the war. He became the NNC's West Coast Regional Director early in 1947, a few months after a visit by Paul Robeson and Revels Cayton to the Bay Area had triggered the formation of a San Francisco chapter. The chapter consisted

mostly of a handful of communists from the waterfront unions, but Crawford expressed hope in February 1947 that it could “become an important force” in the fight for “full citizenship for Negro Americans – if it grows large and strong in the coming months.”¹⁹⁸

By the time that Crawford became involved in the Muni firings, the San Francisco NNC remained small and had participated – mainly through the person of Crawford – in two protests. In January and February of 1947, Crawford attached the NNC name to an ongoing CP-led protest against Fillmore district theaters that refused to hire African American ushers.¹⁹⁹ In early March the NNC led a protest against the arrest of eleven black men on vagrancy charges, demanding an end to “the practice of illegal and unwarranted arrests of Negro citizens.”²⁰⁰ But the San Francisco chapter was beset by low membership and lack of funds. When Crawford described the local NNC’s accomplishments in anticipation of another visit by Robeson and Cayton in March, he mostly referred to the East Bay chapter’s pre-war activities and to the NNC’s national campaigns.²⁰¹ News of the Muni firings that spring and summer provided Crawford with an opportunity to put the NNC at the forefront of a fight for employment rights and potentially attract new members for the fledgling local council. Crawford also figured he could count on the cooperation of Local 250. At the TWU biennial convention the previous fall, TWU president Mike Quill had welcomed NNC president Max Yergan as “a friend of the Transport Workers Union.”²⁰² Under Crawford’s direction the NNC’s small Hunters Point chapter worked with the cooperation of Local 250 (but not from Division 1380, which did not respond to NNC requests) and culled statements from fired black transit workers so that Crawford could bring a case before the CSC.²⁰³ By the summer of 1947 Crawford was convinced that “a definite pattern of unjust and discriminatory discharges was taking place,” and contacted the CSC to request a hearing.²⁰⁴

Crawford worked alongside Carlton Goodlett, the dynamic president of San Francisco’s

NAACP chapter. Goodlett served as the chapter's president from 1947 through 1949, "a very crucial time" he later recalled, "in which black people were making a transition period from the war years to becoming permanently accepted residents in the city and county of San Francisco."²⁰⁵ Goodlett, who later explained that he had "always been a militant," was born in Shipley, Florida in 1914 but was raised in Omaha, Nebraska. "I grew up in a family where our motto was that people of exceptional advantages had some responsibility to other people," Goodlett told an interviewer in 1968, noting that his father had been active in the NAACP and had helped protect Omaha's black community during the 1919 race riot. As a student at Howard University, he studied "fascism, Nazism, and communism, as well as some of the basic weaknesses of capitalism" while studying under Kelly Miller. At Howard he also met E. Franklin Frazier and W.E.B. DuBois, who stimulated his interest in Africa.²⁰⁶ After earning a doctorate in psychology in 1938, Goodlett taught at West Virginia State College, during which time he participated in the Southern Negro Youth Congress (an NNC affiliate) before heading to Nashville in 1940 to attend MeHarry Medical College.²⁰⁷ Upon settling in San Francisco in 1945, Goodlett established a medical practice and began publishing the *San Francisco Reporter*, a weekly black newspaper (he combined the paper with another weekly in 1948 to form the *Sun-Reporter*).²⁰⁸ Goodlett would draw upon all of his resources in the fight to protect the jobs of black Muni workers. As president of the local NAACP, he brought organizational muscle to the cause. As a practicing physician, he gave physical examinations to several transit workers who were deemed physically defective by the civil service physicians – and in each case he found the worker to be in good health.²⁰⁹ And as a journalist, he publicized the case in the pages of the *Reporter*.

Goodlett's good friend and colleague Thomas Fleming, himself a journalist, later stated

that during this period that Goodlett's "name became identified as a solver of social problems."

Goodlett frequently attended CP meetings and often worked closely with CP members and organizations whenever he felt that doing so would advance the causes of civil rights and world peace. In late 1946 and early 1947, for example, he (similar to Matt Crawford and the NNC) leant NAACP support to CP-led protests against several Fillmore district theaters that had refused to hire black ushers.²¹⁰ Goodlett also recruited NAACP members through the California Labor School, where he taught classes in African American history and served on the Board of Directors.²¹¹ According to Joseph James, the *Reporter* was "leftish in viewpoint," and in March 1947 Goodlett endorsed the CP-published *People's World* because it "closely approximates the Negro press in its coverage of minority problems."²¹² His FBI file for this period is replete with documentation regarding his public associations with prominent Communists, the frequency with which his name graced the pages of the *People's World*, and his participation in several organizations with close CP ties such as the American Russian Institute, National Council of American Soviet Friendship, Progressive Citizens of America, and the California Labor School.²¹³ A 1950 FBI report described Goodlett as a "Negro nationalist" who "has been connected with various CP front groups and has been used by the Communists to a certain extent and has gone along with the Communists to raise the station of the Negro in the community."²¹⁴ Goodlett himself denied that he was a CP member, and his personality, stamped by a dogged individualism and reluctance to yield to authority, suggests that he did not have the temperament to accommodate the CP's rigid structure. According to Fleming, he was also critical of white-led organizations, and during the war he had scoffed at the predominantly white Council for Civic Unity – which Matt Crawford had participated in – because he "didn't think white people should be speaking for blacks." Furthermore, as Goodlett's career as an activist over half a century

would bear out, he “wanted to run everything ... If he couldn’t run it he didn’t wanna have anything to do with it.”²¹⁵ Nevertheless, he circled tightly within the CP orbit during the 1940s and 1950s.

Goodlett’s willingness to align San Francisco’s NAACP chapter with the Communist left created discord within the NAACP. In the mid-to-late 1940s, the diverse assembly of Communists, liberals, and other leftists who comprised the NAACP’s San Francisco chapter began to splinter as its Communist and anti-communist members increasingly clashed over tactics, rules, and overall political orientation. The chapter’s reputed leftist orientation raised concerns among its noncommunist members and leaders. One FBI informant who joined the branch in 1946 claimed that “the NAACP was controlled by communists and that Dr. Goodlett was one of the communists.” Another “advised in 1948 that the president (Dr. Carleton B. Goodlett) and a majority of the Board of Directors of the San Francisco Branch of the NAACP were CP members and in complete control of the policies of the branch,” adding that Goodlett “was in frequent attendance at CP meetings in the San Francisco Bay Area.”²¹⁶ A concerned member informed the national office that she had heard Goodlett speak at the March 1947 NNC meeting that featured Paul Robeson and Revels Cayton in which he stated “that he would go along with anybody of any shade of any color pink, etc., who had the fighting spirit of democracy for all.”²¹⁷ In May 1947 a member of the chapter’s Executive Board complained to the regional office after Goodlett had permitted the distribution of the *People’s World* at a meeting. The member wondered “how far can and/or should a local branch of the N.A.A.C.P. go in alliances with Communist groups and Communist activities.”²¹⁸

The question was a thorny one that Regional Director Noah Griffin struggled to resolve. Although the national NAACP had taken a hard anticommunist line by this time, it was reluctant

to purge suspected CP members from local chapters.²¹⁹ Yet Griffin had grown weary of the “threat” posed by “certain party members into important positions in the branches,” and he feared that the local chapter would be red-baited if it participated in CP-led campaigns.²²⁰ He further believed that its association with suspected Communist-front organizations was a contributing factor to the branch’s declining membership since the end of the war. Accordingly, he admonished San Francisco members that the NAACP “should be the originator of the plan to be followed, or it should very definitely be in on the ground floor with those who are making the plans, and not come into the situation after it has been planned by some other group and therefore be unaware of all that has gone on in the first conferences outlining the plans, etc.”²²¹ Yet as he realized while attending a San Francisco branch meeting in which members voted overwhelmingly to support the CP-led pickets against Fillmore-district theaters that refused to hire minorities, convincing the rank-and-file of this would be difficult. “There were those at the meeting who said the Association should not hesitate to take a stand in fighting for jobs for Negroes,” he informed Walter White, “whether that fight had been started by Communists or whether it had been started by any other group; that the main objective was jobs for Negroes.”²²² Even the FBI recognized that “a great deal of good work was done to improve the lot of the Negro in San Francisco” during Goodlett’s tenure as the local NAACP head.²²³

But after fielding complaints from local members, the national NAACP leadership grew concerned with Goodlett. “Now, we know the San Francisco branch has been very far over to the left,” Roy Wilkins wrote to Griffin, preceding to ask his “opinion on Goodlett’s position.”²²⁴ In Wilkins’ view, the NNC “was originally designed by the Commies to put the NAACP out of business,” and he would not have approved of Goodlett’s actions.²²⁵ When Griffin met with the San Francisco NAACP president to discuss the branch’s activities a short time later, Goodlett

stressed the importance of employment campaigns and refuted the notion that the chapter's Communist associations were hindering its membership drives. Moreover, he told Griffin that he "didn't see how the NAACP could expect to compete with an organization like the National Negro Council; that the NNC intended to focus attention in San Francisco, and with such a dynamic person like Matt Crawford in charge of the region, and also of San Francisco, they were sure of success."²²⁶ Goodlett's respect for Crawford and his desire to align the NAACP with Communist-led groups in fighting employment discrimination likely caused him to inflate the NNC's presence in San Francisco. He failed to persuade Griffin, and the branch's anticommunist members would eventually oust Goodlett in a heated election in which his CP sympathies were made an issue (he would lose by a margin of three votes). But in 1947 Goodlett was still calling the shots, and he lent the NAACP name to the Muni protest while personally examining several of the disqualified Muni workers, each of who he found to be in "normal health."²²⁷

After considering Crawford and Goodlett's complaint, the CSC agreed to hold a public hearing to address the firings and charges of racial discrimination. Although Goodlett was unable to attend the September 3, 1947 hearing, Crawford was accompanied by William Wilson, Deputy Grand Master of the AF&AM Hiram of Tyre Grand Lodge of California and several representatives of Local 250. In his testimony, Crawford presented evidence from the statements of fired drivers that the NNC had collected as well as Goodlett's medical reports. He also argued that there was more at stake than the jobs of several hundred operators and conductors. Crawford considered the Muni firings as part of a larger contest over the rights of African Americans in postwar San Francisco, charging that "there are people who wanted to get rid of the Negro employes after the war and have planned how to do it."²²⁸ The PUC and CSC refuted Crawford's claims and defended the firings as being based on "physical examinations conducted by

reputable and competent physicians in the service of the commission.”²²⁹ Muni general manager William Scott “resented the implication that he had resorted to discrimination,” and in a private meeting with Crawford after the hearing was able to provide acceptable documentation for some of the workers who had been fired for “unsatisfactory service.”²³⁰

After an hour and a half of heated testimony, the CSC decided that all of the black workers who claimed that they had been unjustly rejected and dismissed for “physical defects” would be reexamined by Dr. William McKinley Thomas and, if cleared, be allowed to take the written exam for permanent employment. Crawford was upset because he had insisted that a panel of doctors including Goodlett examine the workers, but the selection of Thomas, who was a community activist and the only black doctor in San Francisco on the staff of an accredited hospital, was a victory nonetheless.²³¹ But the victory was nearly short-lived. A little over a week after the hearing the CSC reconsidered its decision and announced that it would only give reconsideration to the seven employees already examined by Goodlett.²³² The CSC maintained this position at a second hearing held in October, however black transit workers’ jobs were suddenly saved by the same factor that had helped Audley Cole become a streetcar operator in 1942: a shortage of platform workers. Throughout the entire ordeal Muni had struggled to recruit permanent employees who could meet its physical and mental requirements. In order to keep the system running at full capacity, Mayor Lapham issued an emergency proclamation that halted all firings of limited tenure employees until permanent workers were available to replace them.²³³ Although limited tenure workers had won a reprieve, Crawford and Goodlett pledged to continue to defend black transit workers against racial discrimination (Goodlett would cite the use of white doctors and physical requirements in the fight against racial discrimination and exclusion in the city’s police and fire departments).²³⁴ And though the matter seemed far from settled at

the time, the San Francisco NNC claimed victory and highlighted the campaign as one of its chief accomplishments during its first year²³⁵

Although the number of black transit workers decreased in the immediate postwar period, the limited tenure fight was not the pyrrhic victory that resulted from other wartime fair employment battles such as the Boilermakers union case. In the immediate aftermath of the firings, Local 250's membership dropped precipitously to 1,200, and by 1950 San Francisco employed just 494 black transit workers.²³⁶ But the ability of several hundred limited tenure employees to keep their jobs and eventually attain permanent status had symbolic as well as material importance. Black workers would soon come to predominate in the Muni car barns. As fewer white workers sought transit jobs in the 1950s and 1960s, Muni would actively recruit African Americans to operate its fleet of buses, trolleys, streetcars, and cable cars (see chapter 6). They would join many black men who survived the 1947 firings and who would spend their entire working lives as Muni operators; some would play active roles in union and community politics while others would rise to higher positions of authority within the Muni system.²³⁷

The importance that urban blacks placed on municipal jobs such as those in public transit was evidenced by wartime campaigns waged in cities across the North. Yet in western cities such as San Francisco, which were in effect experiencing their first "Great Migration" during World War II, the significance and implications of such battles were slightly different than those waged in Midwestern and northeastern cities, where black activists had challenged discrimination in employment for decades and where large black communities had already taken shape. The postwar case involving limited tenure employees in San Francisco spoke directly to the question of whether or not black labor migrants would maintain their wartime gains and solidify their places as San Francisco citizens. The majority of African Americans who lived in San Francisco

during the war had jobs and lived in housing that many city officials and employers considered temporary. By challenging the CSC and Muni management, black transit workers and their supporters challenged the notion that black migrants were temporary workers ineligible for “permanent” civic employment. Other black workers who comprised the first mass migration to San Francisco would also obtain jobs – such as those on the city’s docks and warehouses – that allowed them membership in powerful labor unions. The ability of black migrants to obtain municipal employment and join the labor movement in San Francisco during World War II contrasts with their counterparts who migrated to Midwestern and northeastern cities during World War I and would account for differences in the social and political development of their respective black communities.

The presence of organized labor would thus be more pronounced as the San Francisco’s black communities slowly developed in the postwar decades. The lack of a cohesive black community the likes of which existed in cities like Chicago and New York before World War II was conspicuous in the postwar fight to preserve limited tenure employees’ jobs. One difference, of course, was TWU-Local 250, which saw the fate of black workers intertwined with its own survival in San Francisco. Over the next several decade, black transit workers would try to make Local 250-A force not just for their labor rights but for the broader rights of black San Franciscans as well. The lack of an organizational protest tradition in pre-war San Francisco also created opportunities for CP-led activism in the postwar fight for fair employment. The small size and limited activities of the local NNC and the controversy surrounding Carlton Goodlett within the NAACP suggests that most black San Franciscans were weary of the CP itself. But the conspicuous presence of dedicated individuals such as Matt Crawford and Goodlett also suggests that their leadership in civil rights battles was accepted and welcomed by many black San

Franciscans. The next chapter explores this relationship between black trade unionists, the Communist Party, and fair employment activism in more depth.

¹ “‘Race Specialists’ Flayed by Coast Labor Leader,” *Chicago Defender*, September 23, 1944.

² In 1930, 38,898 African Americans lived in Los Angeles, although they still only comprised roughly three percent of the overall population. See Josh Sides, *L.A. City Limits: African American Los Angeles from the Great Depression to the Present* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), chapter one.

On the World War I Great Migration, see James Grossman, *Land of Hope: Chicago, Black Southerners, and the Great Migration* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989); Kimberly Louise Phillips, *Alabama North: African-American Migrants, Community, and Working-class Activism in Cleveland, 1915-45* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1999); Joe William Trotter, *Black Milwaukee: The Making of an Industrial Proletariat* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1985); Peter Gottlieb, *Making Their Own Way: Southern Black Migration to Pittsburgh, 1916-30* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1997); Gilbert Osofsky, *Harlem: The Making of a Ghetto* (New York: Harper & Row, 1979); Allen H. Spear, *Black Chicago: The Making of a Negro Ghetto, 1890-1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967); Kenneth L. Kusmer, *A Ghetto Takes Shape: Black Cleveland, 1870-1930* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1978).

³ This figure is from Irving Babow and Edward Howden, *A Civil Rights Inventory of San Francisco* (San Francisco: Council for Civic Unity of San Francisco, 1958). For a discussion of San Francisco’s demographic transformation during World War II, see Albert Broussard, *Black San Francisco: The Struggle for Racial Equality in the West, 1900-1954* (Lawrence, KS: The University of Kansas Press, 1993); James, “Profiles: San Francisco,” 166. San Francisco was actually home to the oldest black urban community in the West, and although small, the city’s blacks had established institutions and a rich cultural history by 1940. See Broussard, *Black San Francisco*; Quintard Taylor, “Urban Black Labor in the West, 1849-1949: Reconceptualizing the Image of a Region,” in Joe Trotter, ed., *African American Urban Experience: Perspectives From the Colonial Period to the Present* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004), 99-120.

Most migrants to the Bay Area during World War II came to work in the region’s booming shipyards. See Marilyn S. Johnson, *The Second Gold Rush: Oakland and the East Bay in World War II* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); Broussard, *Black San Francisco*, Part Two; Katherine Archibald, *Wartime Shipyard: A Study in Social Disunity* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1947); Alex Lichtenstein and Eric Arnesen, “Labor and the Problem of Social Unity During World War II: Katherine Archibald’s *Wartime Shipyard* in Retrospect,” *Labor: Studies in Working-Class History of the Americas*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (spring 2008): 113-146.

⁴ “San Francisco Mayor Wants ‘Negro Invasion’ Halted,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, July 3, 1943.

⁵ Broussard, *Black San Francisco*, 142.

⁶ Broussard, *Black San Francisco*, chapters 9. More recent books on black San Franciscans that carry the story through the 1960s have offered a similar narrative that parallels that of Midwestern and northeastern cities after World War I. See, Daniel Edward Crowe, *Prophets of Rage: The Black Freedom Struggle in San Francisco, 1945-1969* (Taylor and Francis, 2000); Paul T. Miller, *The Postwar Struggle for Civil Rights: African Americans in San Francisco, 1945-1975* (New York Routledge, 2010).

⁷ Aurthur E. Hippler, *Hunters Point: A Black Ghetto* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1974), 13-19. Additional background information on Bayview-Hunters Point in this paragraph is drawn from the following sources: Report by the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency on the Redevelopment Plan for the Hunters Point Redevelopment Project, 1968; City and County of San Francisco, Application to the Department of Housing and Urban Development for a Grant to Plan a Comprehensive Model Cities Program, April 15, 1968.

⁸ In addition to works cited in note 1, see Beth Thompkins Bates, *Pullman Porters and the Rise of Protest Politics in Black America, 1925-1945* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001); Erik S. Gellman, *Death Blow to Jim Crow: The National Negro Congress and the Rise of Militant Civil Rights* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012); Robert H. Zieger, *For Jobs and Freedom: Race and Labor in America Since 1865* (Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 2007), chapters three and four.

⁹ Broussard, *Black San Francisco*, 155-156; Robert O. Self, *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 46-54.

¹⁰ Self, *American Babylon*, 52.

¹¹ On the FEPC and its significance for African Americans, see Andrew Edmund Kersten, *Race, Jobs, and the War: The FEPC in the Midwest, 1941-46* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2000); Merle E. Reed, *Seedtime for the Modern Civil Rights Movement: The President's Committee on Fair Employment Practice, 1941-1946* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1991); Eric Arnensen, *Brotherhoods of Color: Black Railroad Workers and the Struggle for Equality* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), chapter six; Beth Thompkins Bates, *Pullman Porters and the Rise of Protest Politics in Black America, 1925-1945*, chapter seven.

¹² This chapter builds upon the works of historians who have highlighted transit systems as important sites of racial protest and political conflict. Historians of southern race relations have long identified public conveyances as important sites of racial conflict and protest. See Catherine A. Barnes, *Journey From Jim Crow: the Desegregation of Southern Transit* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983); Robin D. G. Kelley, "Congested Terrain: Resistance on Public Transportation," in *Race Rebels: Culture, Politics, and the Black Working Class* (New York: Free Press, 1994); Barbara Young Welke, *Recasting American Liberty: Gender, Race, Law, and the Railroad Revolution, 1865-1920* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

Historians have only recently started to consider the northern counterpart. See Erik S. Gellman, "'Carthage Must Be Destroyed'" Race, City Politics, and the Campaign to Integrate Chicago Transportation Work, 1929-1943," *Labor: Studies in Working-Class History of the Americas*, Volume 2, Number 2 (Spring 2005): 81-114; James Wolfinger, *Philadelphia Divided: Race & Politics in the City of Brotherly Love* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), chapters 5 and 6. Erik Gellman argues that black Chicagoans' campaign to integrate transit jobs was a larger challenge to the urban power structure. In Philadelphia, Wolfinger argues that whites viewed the prospect of black motormen as a direct threat to the city's segregated housing market. The fight to integrate transit jobs ended up driving a wedge between the New Deal political alliance of African Americans, white workers, and the federal government.

¹³ Broussard, *Black San Francisco*, 166-169.

¹⁴ Eric Arnesen and Alex Lichtenstein, Introduction to Katherine Archibald, *Wartime Shipyard: A Study in Social Disunity* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2006), lviii. Broussard, *Black San Francisco*, 158-165.

¹⁵ Quintard Taylor, *In Search of the Racial Frontier: African Americans in the West, 1628-1990* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1998), 92-93.

¹⁶ Historian Robin D.G. Kelley has stressed the significance of public transit as arenas of racial conflict. Writing about southern cities during the war, he argues that public conveyances became "moving theaters" in which blacks and whites battled over space, "as well as the manner in which space was allocated." Kelley, *Race Rebels*, 56-57.

¹⁷ Archibald, *Wartime Shipyard*, 76-77.

¹⁸ Charles S. Johnson, et al., *The Negro War Worker in San Francisco*, May 1944, 20-24, FEPC Records, Reel 75

¹⁹ *People's World*, June 5, 1947.

²⁰ “Cognitive maps” or “mapping” is a concept used by geographers and psychologists and refers to “a process composed of a series of psychological transformations by which an individual acquires, codes, stores, recalls, and decodes information about the relative locations and attributes of phenomena in their everyday spatial environment.” R. M. Downs and David Stea, “cognitive Maps and Spatial Behavior: Process and Products,” in *Image and Environments*, Downs and Stea, eds., (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1973), 8-26, quoted passage appears on p. 15.

²¹ Charles S. Johnson, et al., *The Negro War Worker in San Francisco*, May 1944, 20-24.

²² Maya Angelou, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* in *The Collected Autobiographies of Maya Angelou* (New York: Random House, 2004), 166.

²³ Kelley, *Race Rebels*, 57-58.

²⁴ Harry Kingman to Al Lundberg, September 16, 1943, read into the record during Kingman’s testimony during FEPC hearing concerning discrimination in Oakland’s Key System, “Proceedings, FEPC, in the Matter Key System and Division 192, Amalgamated Association of Street, Electric Railway, and Motor Coach Employees of America, March 19, 1945,” 195, Carton 3, FEPC Folder 40, Harry Kingman Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California at Berkeley (hereinafter cited as Kingman Papers).

²⁵ George M. Johnson, “Equal Employment for Negroes in Local Transportation Systems,” Speech delivered before the Louisville Pan-Hellenic Council in Louisville, Kentucky, May 23, 1943, Headquarter Records, Office Files of Malcolm Ross, Reel 3, Records of the of the Committee on Fair Employment Practices, Microform, National Archives and Research Administration, Collee Park, MD (herein cited as FEPC Records).

²⁶ C. L. Dellums to Harry Kingman, November 22, 1944, Carton 23, Key System Folder, C. L. Dellums Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California at Berkeley (herein cited as Dellums Papers); Harry Kingman to Al Lundberg, September 16, 1943, Carton 3, FEPC Folder 40, Kingman Papers.

²⁷ Angelou, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, 205.

²⁸ The only African American employed by the city was a messenger boy for Mayor Angelo Rossi. *San Francisco Chronicle*, March 6, 1942.

²⁹ The Municipal Railway was managed by the Public Utilities Commission (the Civil Service Commission was in charge of hiring). In September 1944 the city purchased the Market Street Railway and consolidated it with Muni.

³⁰ Paul C. Trimble, *The Platform Men*, (San Francisco, 1984), Table 27. After two years, wages for workers on the Market Street Railway topped out at \$.83 per hour. By comparison, the California State minimum wage in October 1945 was \$.40 per hour.

³¹ Philip W. Jeffress, *The Negro in the Urban Transit Industry* (Philadelphia: Industrial Research Unit, Department of Industry, Wharton School of Finance and Commerce, University of Pennsylvania, 1970), 24.

³² “Manual for San Francisco Municipal Railway Instructors,” nd, circa 1940s, Carton 1, folder 28, Arthur C. Jenkins Papers, HE4491.K47 J4, Harmer E. Davis Transportation Library, Institute of Transportation Studies, University of California, Berkeley.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Trimble, *The Platform Men*, Table 28.

³⁵ Trimble, *The Platform Men*, 435-46.

³⁶ Trimble, *The Platform Men*, Table 30.

³⁷ See *San Francisco Examiner*, April 2, 3, 4, 8, 1942.

³⁸ Office of Defense Transportation, Manpower Program for the Local Transit Industry, January 20, 1944, FEPC Records, Reel 75.

³⁹ Jeffress, *The Negro in the Urban Transit Industry*, 43.

⁴⁰ George M. Johnson, "Equal Employment Opportunity for Negroes in Local Transportation," 3.

⁴¹ *San Francisco Chronicle*, March 6, 1942.

⁴² "A California Supreme Court Justice Looks at Law and Society, 1964-1996: Oral History Transcript/Allen E. Broussard," Interviewed by Gabrielle Morris, 1997, The Bancroft Library, University of California at Berkeley, [http: Bancroft.berkele.edu/](http://Bancroft.berkele.edu/).

⁴³ Thomas C. Fleming, "In the Black World: Thomas Fleming's 20th Century, Part 5: World War II and After," http://www.maxmillard.com/books/fleming/Tfleming_part5_dtl.htm

⁴⁴ Interview with Josephine Foreman Cole, May 8 and 17, 1978, San Francisco, CA, interviewed by Jesse J. Ware, Oral History Project, Afro-Americans in San Francisco Prior to World War II. San Francisco Labor Archives and Research Center, San Francisco State University; Broussard, *Black San Francisco*, 153.

⁴⁵ "It's a Great Fight – Cole Vs. Jim Crow," *People's World*, February 14, 1942.

⁴⁶ "It's a Great Fight – Cole Vs. Jim Crow," *People's World*, February 14, 1942; *San Francisco Chronicle*, March 6, 1942.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ *San Francisco Chronicle*, March 6 and 7, 1942.

⁴⁹ "Gets Transit Job After Bitter Fight on Coast," *Chicago Defender*, April 4, 1942; "Cole Wins Motorman's Squabble," *Pittsburgh Courier*, March 28, 1942; "Gets Streetcar Job After Long Fight," *Atlanta Daily World*, March 31, 1942.

⁵⁰ Vera Vandever to Editor, *San Francisco Chronicle*, March 13, 1942.

⁵¹ Richard Grant, "The Case of Audley Cole: Racial Policy in the AFL and CIO," unpublished paper, San Francisco Labor Archives and Research Center, San Francisco State University.

⁵² *San Francisco Chronicle*, March 12, 1942.

⁵³ *San Francisco Chronicle*, March 13, 1942.

⁵⁴ *San Francisco Chronicle*, March 6, 1942.

⁵⁵ *San Francisco Chronicle*, March 10, 1942.

⁵⁶ *San Francisco Chronicle*, March 11, 14, 25, 1942.

⁵⁷ "Job Discrimination Laid to Officials," *New York Times*, August 24, 1942.

⁵⁸ "S.F. Municipal Railway Case," FEPC Records, Reel 112FR.

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- ⁵⁹ Region XII Report for Week ending July 29, 1944, FEPC Records, Region XII, Reel 75.
- ⁶⁰ "San Francisco Transit Co. To Hire Negroes," *Chicago Defender*, December 25, 1943.
- ⁶¹ Region XII Report for Week ending July 29, 1944, FEPC Records, Region XII, Reel 75.
- ⁶² Region XII Report for Week ending July 29, 1944, FEPC Records, Region XII, Reel 75; Harry Kingman to Will Maslow, December 20, 1943, Carton 2, FEPC Weekly Reports, Kingman Papers.
- ⁶³ Harry Kingman to St. Clare Bourne, November 28, 1944, Carton 1, FEPC file 3; Broussard, *Black San Francisco*, 154.
- ⁶⁴ J.A. Rogers, "Rogers Says," *Chicago Defender*, February 5, 1944.
- ⁶⁵ *People's World*, August 7, 1944. Spencer Rogers, who was beaten for training Audley Cole, recorded occasional instances of white southern migrants complaining about black platform workers. Langston Hughes, "From Here to Yonder," *Chicago Defender*, October 7, 1944.
- ⁶⁶ Wolfinger, *Philadelphia Divided*, Chapters 5 and 6; "Capital Transit Co. Accused of Barring Negroes," *Washington Post*, April 2, 1943; "Transit Company Stands Pat on Inability to Hire Negroes," *Washington Post*, January 17, 1945; "CTC Defends Ban on Negro Operators," *Washington Post*, August 10, 1948; "Case History of Fight for Negro Street Car Operators," *Pittsburgh Courier*, April 7, 1945.
- ⁶⁷ Wolfinger, *Philadelphia Divided*, Chapters 5 and 6.
- ⁶⁸ *People's World*, August 7, 1944.
- ⁶⁹ Horace R. Cayton, "Tension Areas," *Pittsburgh Courier*, September 18, 1943; *Chicago Defender* (National Edition), February 24, 1945.
- ⁷⁰ Angelou, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, 207.
- ⁷¹ "Negro Workers Support Nisei Machinist on Jobs," *Atlanta Daily World*, September 14, 1945; "Negro Workers Back Nisei on Frisco Job," *Chicago Defender* (National Edition), September 15, 1945. The white workers ultimately voted not to walk out.
- ⁷² *Pittsburgh Courier*, March 25, 1944.
- ⁷³ *Chicago Defender* (National Edition), April 29, 1944.
- ⁷⁴ J.A. Rogers, "Rogers Says," *Pittsburgh Courier*, February 5, 1944; Langston Hughes, "From Here to Yonder," *Chicago Defender*, October 7, 1944.
- ⁷⁵ George M. Johnson, "Equal Employment Opportunity for Negroes in Local Transportation Systems," 4.
- ⁷⁶ "S.F. Municipal Railway Case," FEPC Records, Reel 112FR.
- ⁷⁷ Harry Kingman to Elmer Henderson, March 10, 1944, Carton 1, FEPC File, Kingman Papers; Proceedings, FEPC, in the matter of Key System and Division 192, Amalgamated Association of Street, Electrical Railway and Motor Coach Employees of America, March 19, 1945, Carton 3, FEPC Folder 40, Kingman Papers.
- ⁷⁸ Harry Kingman to Maceo Hubbard, July 31, 1944, Carton 1, FEPC File 2, Kingman Papers.
- ⁷⁹ See for example, statements of Elanor Parker, Christina Coleman, and Juanita Beyard, Carton 23, Key System Folder, Dellums Papers.

⁸⁰ Proceedings, FEPC, in the matter of Key System and Division 192, Amalgamated Association of Street, Electrical Railway and Motor coach Employees of America, March 19, 1945, 84-95, Carton 3, FEPC Folder 40, Kingman Papers.

⁸¹ *Chicago Defender*, August 19, 1944. Testimony of Nora Slayden, Transcript of Proceedings, Alfonso Edwards, Etal., vs. Los Angeles Railway Corporation, Case No. 66, August 8, 1944, FEPC Records, Headquarters Records, Los Angeles Railway File, Reel 21.

⁸² *San Francisco Chronicle*, March 14, 1942.

⁸³ *The NAACP Counsellor*, Vol. I, No. 5, San Francisco, May, 1945, Carton 94, Folder 1, NAACP Region I Records, Bancroft Library, University of California at Berkeley.

⁸⁴ The best history of the TWU is Joshua Freeman, *In Transit: The Transport Workers Union in New York City, 1933-1966* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001; originally published by Oxford University Press in 1989). See also, Alex Lichtenstein, "Putting Labor's House in Order: The Transport Workers' Union and Labor Anti-Communism in Miami during the 1940s," *Labor History* 39, No. 1 (1998): 7-23; Alex Lichtenstein, "'Scientific Unionism' and the 'Negro Question': Communists and the Transport Workers Union in Miami, 1944-1949," in Robert H. Zieger, ed., *Southern Labor in Transition, 1940-1945* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1997), 58-85.

⁸⁵ The information for this paragraph is culled from the following sources: William Grogan to Mike Quill, July 27, 1945; Address by Henry Foley – President of the Municipal Carmen's Union, August 2, 1945; Excerpt from mayor Lapham's Speech, August 2, 1945; Address by William Grogan, August 2, 1945; Henry Foley, Article for "Bulletin" on San Francisco; all in Box 90, Folder 1, the Transport Workers Union of America, Records of Locals, Wagner 234, Taminent Library/Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, New York University, New York (Hereafter cited as TWU Records); Douglas MacMahon to John Cassidy, October 30, 1945, Box 90, folder 1, TWU Records; John Cassidy to Douglas MacMahon, November 2, 1945, box 90, Folder 1, TWU Records.

⁸⁶ Trimble, *The Platform men*, 456.

⁸⁷ John Cassidy to Douglas MacMahon, October 24, 1945; John Cassidy to Douglas MacMahon, November 12, 1945; both from Box 90, Folder 1, TWU Records.

⁸⁸ Freeman, *In Transit*, 256.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 252-259. On the TWU's approach to race in New York and Philadelphia, see also August Meier and Elliot Rudwick, "Communist Unions and the Black Community: The Case of the Transport Workers Union, 1934-1944," *Labor History* 1982 23(2): 165-197; and Wolfinger, *Philadelphia Divided*, Chapters Five and Six.

⁹⁰ Alex Lichtenstein, "Putting Labor's House in Order: The Transport Workers Union and Labor anti-Communism in Miami during the 1940s," *Labor History*, Vol. 39, No. 1 (1998): 7-23; Alex Lichtenstein, "'Scientific Unionism' and the 'Negro Question'": Communists and the Transport Workers Union in Miami, 1944-1949," in Robert Zieger, ed., *Southern Labor in Transition, 1940-1945* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1997), 58-85.

⁹¹ Freeman, *In Transit*, 276.

⁹² John Cassidy to Douglas MacMahon, October 24, 1945, Box 90, Folder 1, TWU Records.

⁹³ Richard Durham, "'Race Specialists' Flayed by Coast Labor Leader," *Chicago Defender*, September 23, 1944.

⁹⁴ John Cassidy to William Grogan, August 22, 1945, Box 90, Folder 1, TWU Records.

⁹⁵ Thomas C. Fleming, "In the Black World: Thomas Fleming's 20th Century, Part 5: World War II and After," http://www.maxmillard.com/books/fleming/Tfleming_part5_dtl.htm.

⁹⁶ John Daugherty to Douglas MacMahon, November 12, 1945, Box 90, Folder 1, TWU Records.

⁹⁷ John Cassidy to Douglas MacMahon, October 3, 1945, Box 90, Folder 1, TWU Records; Michael J. Quill to Henry Foley, August 1, 1946, Box 90, Folder 1, TWU Records; Michael J. Quill to Betty Hitchcock, August 1, 1946, Box 90, Folder 1, TWU Records.

⁹⁸ Douglas MacMahon to John Cassidy, October 30, 1945, Box 90, Folder 1, TWU Records.

⁹⁹ Freeman, *In Transit*, 93, 258-259; James Wolfinger, *Philadelphia Divided: Race and Politics in the City of Brotherly Love* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 135; Douglas MacMahon to John Cassidy, October 30, 1945, Box 90, Folder 1, TWU Records.

¹⁰⁰ John Daugherty to Douglas MacMahon, November 12, 1945, Box 90, Folder 1, TWU Records.

¹⁰¹ Flyer, "We Answer Misstatements With Facts!" Box 90, Folder 1, TWU Records.

¹⁰² Freeman, *In Transit*, 259.

¹⁰³ Raymond Tillman to William Grogan, November 14, 1946, Box 90, Folder 2, TWU Records.

¹⁰⁴ Mike Quill to James Fitzsimon, September 30, 1946, Box 90, Folder 2, TWU Records.

¹⁰⁵ Report on TWU activities in San Francisco by William Grogan, nd, circa 1946, Box 90, Folder 2, TWU Records.

¹⁰⁶ Report on TWU activities in San Francisco by William Grogan, nd, circa 1946, Box 90, Folder 2, TWU Records.

¹⁰⁷ Henry Foley to Michael Quill, September 14, 1946, Box 90, Folder 2, TWU Records.

¹⁰⁸ Division 1380 Flyer, "What a Difference in the Way the Money is Used," Box 90, Folder 2, TWU Records.

¹⁰⁹ Mike Quill to Henry Foley, December 2, 1946, box 90, Folder 2, TWU Records; Grogan would try to maintain an uneasy middle ground between the TWU communist and anti-communist wings after Quill ended his association with the Party in 1948. Freeman, *In Transit*, 305.

¹¹⁰ John Daugherty to William Grogan, August 22, 1945, Box 90, Folder 1, TWU Records.

¹¹¹ James, "Profile: San Francisco," 169, n. 1.

¹¹² Memorandum, Aaron Spiegel to Michael Quill and Douglas MacMahon, nd (circa October 1947), Box 90, folder 2, TWU Records.

¹¹³ *New York Times*, July 1 and 2, 1946; *Chicago Tribune*, July 1, 1946.

¹¹⁴ In November 1946, voters approved Charter Amendment No. 1, which based Muni wage rates on the average of the two highest wage scales in California.

¹¹⁵ *Pittsburgh Courier*, August 3, 1946.

¹¹⁶ President's Committee on Fair Employment, "Final Report," June 28, 1946 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1947), 75, accessed on hathitrust.org, May 11, 2011.

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- ¹¹⁷ Johnson, *The Negro War Worker in San Francisco*, 61, 73.
- ¹¹⁸ Ibid, 73.
- ¹¹⁹ FEPC, *Final Report*, June 28, 1946, 78.
- ¹²⁰ Joseph James, "Profiles: San Francisco," *Journal of Educational Sociology* 19, No. 3 (November 1948), 176.
- ¹²¹ Eric Arnesen and Alex Lichtenstein, Introduction to Katherine Archibald, *Wartime Shipyard: A Study in Social Disunity* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2006), lviii.
- ¹²² "Negro Veterans Face the Future," *People's World*, July 14, 1947. According to the regional FEPC, most employers requested white workers during the war as well. Harry Kingman said that his office handled 13,000 complaints of discrimination in his two years as regional director of the FEPC. "Outlook for Negro Grim as FEP Dies Slow Death," *Chicago Defender*, December 29, 1945.
- ¹²³ Doug Ward, "Color Bars, 'Over-Age' Rules Swell Jobless Rolls," *People's World*, December 12, 1947.
- ¹²⁴ FEPC, *Final Report*, 79-80; Mary Gorringer Luck, *Wartime and Postwar Earnings: San Francisco, 1944-1946* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1948), 105-129.
- ¹²⁵ John R. Williams, "California Seen Near Point of Saturation for Migrants," *Pittsburgh Courier*, July 19, 1947.
- ¹²⁶ Cy W. Record, "Willie Stokes at the Golden Gate," *Crisis*, Vol. 56, No. 6 (June 1949): 175-187.
- ¹²⁷ Wm. V.F. Scott, "Eliminate the 'Stokes Willies'," *Crisis*, Vol. 57, No. 1 (January 1950): 9-11.
- ¹²⁸ Thomas C. Fleming, "In the Black World: Thomas Fleming's 20th Century, Part 5: World War II and After," http://www.maxmillard.com/books/fleming/Tfleming_part5_dtl.htm. The same exchange is recounted by Fleming in an interview with Paul T. Miller in 2005, in which Miller gave Fleming the alias "Dennis West". Paul T. Miller, "The Interplay of Housing, Employment, and Civil Rights In the Experience of San Francisco's African American Community, 1945-1975," PhD Dissertation, Temple University, 2008, Appendix E, Dennis West Interview, 420-421.
- ¹²⁹ Horace R. Cayton, "Migrations," *Pittsburgh Courier*, October 24, 1947.
- ¹³⁰ *Trolley Topics*, April 1946.
- ¹³¹ *Trolley Topics*, June 1946.
- ¹³² *People's World*, April 5 and June 21, 1947.
- ¹³³ Noah Griffin to Carlton Goodlett, February 10, 1946, Carton 93, Folder 4, NAACP Region I Records.
- ¹³⁴ *Trolley Topics*, July 1946.
- ¹³⁵ Quintard Taylor writes that "Black military personnel frequently ended the enlistments at western bases, sent for family members, and settled permanently." Taylor, *In Search of the Racial Frontier*, 252.
- ¹³⁶ *Pittsburgh Courier*, August 3, 1946.
- ¹³⁷ Handwritten note, Crawford Papers, Box 3, Folder 4, Matt N. Crawford and Evelyn Graves Crawford Papers, Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University, Atlanta (herein cited as Crawford Papers).

¹³⁸ *Trolley Topics*, April 1946.

¹³⁹ *Pittsburgh Courier*, August 3, 1946.

¹⁴⁰ *Trolley Topics*, April 1950.

¹⁴¹ "Traffic, Transit, and Thoroughfare Improvements for San Francisco," Prepared by the Mayor's Administrative Transportation Planning Council by the Technical Committee of the Council, City and County of San Francisco, March 1947, 1.

¹⁴² "Traffic, Transit, and Thoroughfare Improvements for San Francisco," Prepared by the Mayor's Administrative Transportation Planning Council by the Technical Committee of the Council, City and County of San Francisco, March 1947, 32.

¹⁴³ "A Horse and buggy Streetcar System," *People's World*, April 5, 1947.

¹⁴⁴ "Conductor 'Taking Rap' for Delapidated [sic] Trolleys," *People's World*, April 5, 1947.

¹⁴⁵ "Traffic, Transit, and Thoroughfare Improvements for San Francisco," Prepared by the Mayor's Administrative Transportation Planning Council by the Technical Committee of the Council, City and County of San Francisco, March 1947.

¹⁴⁶ "Conductor 'Taking Rap' for Dilapidated Trolleys," *People's World*, April 5, 1947. For information on the history of Muni streetcars and routes, consult John McKane and Anthony Perles, *Inside Muni: The Properties and Operations of the Municipal Railway of San Francisco* (Glendale, CA: Interurban Press, 1982).

¹⁴⁷ *San Francisco Examiner*, January 14, 15, 1947. See additional coverage on "signal jumping" motormen in January 16, 17, 18, and 20, 1947 issues.

¹⁴⁸ Editorial, "Reckless Motormen," *San Francisco Examiner*, January 17, 1947.

¹⁴⁹ "Carmen's Union Urges 'Fair Play' in Fatal Collision," *People's World*, January 16, 1947.

¹⁵⁰ "Carmen's Union Urges 'Fair Play' in Fatal Collision," *People's World*, January 16, 1947; "City Railway Ducks Blame for Accidents," *People's World*, September 25, 1947.

¹⁵¹ "A Horse and Buggy Streetcar System," *People's World*, April 5, 1947.

¹⁵² "Traffic, Transit, and Thoroughfare Improvements for San Francisco," Prepared by the Mayor's Administrative Transportation Planning Council by the Technical Committee of the Council, City and County of San Francisco, March 1947, 6-7.

¹⁵³ Johnson, *The Negro War Worker in San Francisco*, 74.

¹⁵⁴ *People's World*, May 24, 1947.

¹⁵⁵ "Municipal Street Car Workers," Box 3, Folder 4, Crawford Papers; *People's World*, September 9, 1947.

¹⁵⁶ "Women on the Muni," *People's World*, April 5, 1947.

¹⁵⁷ "'Women in Blue' Face Loss of Jobs Sept. 30," *People's World*, May 24, 1947.

¹⁵⁸ "Women on the Muni," *People's World*, April 5, 1947; "'Women in Blue' Face Loss of Jobs Sept. 30," *People's World*, May 24, 1947.

¹⁵⁹ “Communists Ask Hearing on New Policy,” *People’s World*, May 24, 1947.

¹⁶⁰ *Pittsburgh Courier*, August 3, 1947.

¹⁶¹ “A Conductorette Reports: ‘Muni Firing Plan Aimed at the Negroes’,” *People’s World*, June 5, 1947.

¹⁶² See Lemke-Santangelo, *Abiding Courage*, 107-125; Surveying employment patterns and race/gender discrimination, Robert Zieger writes that the post-World War II decades were “a frustrating and discouraging time” for African American women. Zieger, *For Jobs and Freedom*, 142-147.

¹⁶³ “Women in Blue Face Loss of Jobs Sept. 30,” *People’s World*, May 24, 1947.

¹⁶⁴ *Trolley Topics* often provided updates on former female conductors and operators in 1946 and 1947.

¹⁶⁵ Pele Edises, “Back in ‘43 They Were Cheered, No Muni ‘Conductorettes’ Are Out in Cold,” *People’s World*, March 11, 1949.

¹⁶⁶ “A Conductorette Reports: ‘Muni Firing Plan Aimed at the Negroes’,” *People’s World*, June 5, 1947.

¹⁶⁷ Carlton Goodlett, Matt Crawford, and William Wilson to William Henderson, August 26, 1947, Box 3, Folder 4, Crawford Papers.

¹⁶⁸ *People’s World*, June 21, 1947.

¹⁶⁹ Carlton Goodlett, Matt Crawford, and William Wilson to William Henderson, August 26, 1947, Box 3, Folder 5, Crawford Papers.

¹⁷⁰ “More Negro Street Car Operators Discharged for ‘Physical Defects’” A. B. Sirbu, “Statement re George Jennings,” April 28, 1947; A. B. Sirbu, “Statement re George Jennings, November 14, 1947; R. A. Wahl to George Jennings, September 24, 1947; Herbert Henderson to Whom it May Concern, September 10, 1947; Harold Sugarman to Whom it May Concern, October 21, 1947; William H. Scott to Whom it May Concern, October 21, 1947, all in Crawford Papers, Box 3, Folder 4.

¹⁷¹ “Henry Logan – CIO,” Box 3, Folder 4, Crawford Papers.

¹⁷² “Frank Johnson,” Box 3, Folder 4, Crawford Papers.

¹⁷³ “Johnnie King,” Box 3, Folder 4, Crawford Papers.

¹⁷⁴ “Eddie Clarence Harris,” Box 3, Folder 4, Crawford Papers.

¹⁷⁵ “J. W. Smith,” Box 3, Folder 4, Crawford Papers.

¹⁷⁶ *People’s World*, October 17, 1947.

¹⁷⁷ Margaret Humphreys, *Intensely Human: The Health of the Black Soldier in the American Civil War* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010).

¹⁷⁸ In other cities African Americans reported that they were disqualified from platform jobs by unfairly administered examinations. In Pittsburgh, for example, a former Air Force pilot who had been qualified as a commercial airline pilot by the Civic Aeronautics Authority, failed the “mechanical test” to operate a streetcar in 1945. P. L. Prattis, *Labor Everywhere*, December 29, 1945.

¹⁷⁹ “A Conductorette Reports: ‘Muni Firing Plan Aimed at the Negroes’,” *People’s World*, June 5, 1947.

¹⁸⁰ “‘Women in Blue’ Face Loss of Jobs Sept. 30,” *People’s World*, May 24, 1947.

¹⁸¹ San Francisco adopted a “voluntary” fair employment plan in 1950 that was widely criticized by black San Franciscans. Broussard, *Black San Francisco*, 211-213.

¹⁸² Broussard, *Black San Francisco*, chapter 4.

¹⁸³ See Broussard, *Black San Francisco*, chapter 11.

¹⁸⁴ George Streater, “Big Negro Colonies Worry West-Coast,” *New York Times*, May 4, 1947, 5.

¹⁸⁵ William Grogan, “Local 250 – Municipal Carmen,” nd, circa 1946, Box 90, Folder 2, TWU Records.

¹⁸⁶ Eva Lapin, “It’s a Move Against the Transit Workers,” *People’s World*, Jun 21, 1947.

¹⁸⁷ William Grogan to John Daugherty, August 22, 1945, Box 90, Folder 1, TWU Records.

¹⁸⁸ William Grogan to John Daugherty, August 22, 1945; John Daugherty to William Grogan, September 1, 1945, Box 90, Folder 1, TWU Records; William Grogan, “Local 250 – Municipal Carmen,” Box 90, Folder 2, TWU Records.

¹⁸⁹ “Carmen’s Union Urges ‘Fair Play in Fatal Collision,” *People’s World*, January 16, 1947.

¹⁹⁰ “Carmen Expose ‘Real Aim’ Behind Press Campaign,” *People’s World*, January 18, 1947.

¹⁹¹ “Transit ‘Crusade’ Rebuffed,” *People’s World*, January 17, 1947; “AFL, CIO Oppose Sale of Muni Line,” *People’s World*, June 19, 1947; “S.F. City Officials Study Muni Lease Offer,” *People’s World*, June 28, 1947.

¹⁹² *People’s World*, May 24, 1947.

¹⁹³ “Unions Hit Layoffs by Muni Line,” *People’s World*, March 29, 1947.

¹⁹⁴ “CIO Carmen Will Attend Bias Hearing,” *People’s World*, September 3, 1947.

¹⁹⁵ “Unions Hit Layoffs by Muni Line,” *People’s World*, March 29, 1947.

¹⁹⁶ “Communists Ask Hearing,” *People’s World*, May 24, 1947.

¹⁹⁷ Biographical information based on “Biographical Note,” Finding Aid, Crawford Papers.

¹⁹⁸ Circular written by Matthew Crawford, February 8, 1947, ILWU History Files, William Chester, NNC File, ILWU Archives, San Francisco; According to Fances Mary Albrier, a black female labor activist and former NNC member, most non-communist blacks in the Bay Area left the organization during its pre-war existence along with A. Philip Randolph in 1940. Albrier quoted in Rigelhaupt, “Education for Action,” 284.

¹⁹⁹ “Civic Leaders Ask Theaters End Jimcrow” *People’s World*, January 18, 1947; “Picketing Called Off,” *People’s World*, January 22, 1947; “Victory at Uptown,” *People’s World*, January 25, 1947

²⁰⁰ “Groups File Persecution Charges With Board,” *People’s World*, March 14, 1947; “Police to Learn Vagrancy Law, Deputy Chief Pledges,” *People’s World*, March 20, 1947.

²⁰¹ “Robeson to Speak Friday in San Francisco,” *People’s World*, March 26, 1947.

²⁰² “Bids Labor, Negroes, Join to Fight Bias,” *New York Times*, September 29, 1946, 4.

²⁰³ “Municipal Street Car Workers,” Box 3, Folder 4, Crawford Papers.

²⁰⁴ Carleton Goodlett, Matt Crawford, and William Wilson to William Henderson, August 26, 1947, Box 3, Folder 4, Crawford Papers.

²⁰⁵ Carlton B. Goodlett, Interview by Robert Martin, November 19, 1968, Ralph J. Bunche Collection, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, 2.

²⁰⁶ Goodlett Interview, 8-9.

²⁰⁷ Goodlett Interview, 1; Goodlett FBI File, Main file No. 100-352389, in author’s possession, obtained through the Freedom of Information Act, herein cited as “Goodlett FBI File.” 3.

²⁰⁸ The above biographical sketch is based on Broussard, *Black San Francisco*, 182; *Pittsburgh Courier*, August 13, 1938 and September 21, 1940; *Los Angeles Sentinel*, January 30, 1997.

²⁰⁹ See letters from Carlton Goodlett to Civil Service Commission, October 6, 1947, and “Municipal Street Car Workers,” in Crawford Papers, Box 3, Folder 4; *People’s World*, September 5, 1947.

²¹⁰ *People’s World*, January 18, 22, 25, 1947; February 8, 19, 20, 24, 1947.

²¹¹ Holland Roberts to Carlton Goodlett, July 2, 1947, Benjamin Goodlett Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison, WI (hereinafter cited as Goodlett Papers).

²¹² James, “Profile: San Francisco,” 172; “NAACP Leader Plugs the ‘PW’,” *People’s World*, March 8, 1947; “NAACP Endorses ‘World’ Sub Drive,” *People’s World*, February 21, 1947.

²¹³ Carlton Goodlett FBI File. FBI informants disagreed as to whether or not Goodlett was in fact a CP member.

²¹⁴ Goodlett FBI File, 78.

²¹⁵ Paul T. Miller, “The Interplay of Housing, Employment, and Civil Rights In the Experience of San Francisco’s African American Community, 1945-1975,” PhD Dissertation, Temple University, 2008, Appendix E, “Dennis West” Interview, 454, 463-64.

²¹⁶ Goodlett FBI File, 8.

²¹⁷ Roy Wilkins to Noah Griffin, April 14, 1947, Carton 93, Folder 4, NAACP Region I Records.

²¹⁸ Anthony Hart to N. W. Griffin, May 14, 1947, Carton 93, Folder 4, NAACP Region I Records.

²¹⁹ Manfred Berg has argued that even though the national leadership was anticommunist and sought to distance the NAACP from the CP, the organization did not “purge” leftist members from its ranks as historians have previously asserted. Manfred Berg, “Black Civil Rights and Liberal Anticommunism: the NAACP in the Early Cold War,” *Journal of American History* Vol. 94, No. 1 (June 2007): 75-96.

²²⁰ N. W. Griffin, Regional Secretary, to Walter White, Secretary, NAACP, September 13, 1946, Carton 71, Folder 27, NAACP Region I Records, Bancroft Library; N.W. Griffin, Regional Secretary, to Walter White, Secretary, NAACP, November 8, 1946, Carton 71, Folder 27, NAACP Region I Records, Bancroft Library.

²²¹ N.W. Griffin to Walter White, November 8, 1946, Carton 71, Folder 27, NAACP Region I Records.

²²² N.W. Griffin to Walter White, November 8, 1946, Carton 71, Folder 27, NAACP Region I Records.

²²³ Goodlett FBI File, 78.

²²⁴ Roy Wilkins to Noah Griffin, April 14, 1947, NAACP Region I Records, Carton 93, folder 4, Bancroft Library.

²²⁵ Roy Wilkins, "The Watchtower," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, December 11, 1947.

²²⁶ Conference With Dr. Goodlett, West Coast Region Office – June 5, 1947, Carton 93, Folder 4, NAACP Region I Records.

²²⁷ "Municipal Street Car Workers," in Crawford Papers, Box 3, Folder 4; "City Holds Muni Bias Hearing," *People's World*, September 5, 1947.

²²⁸ "City Holds Muni Bias Hearing, *People's World*, September 5, 1947; "CIO Carmen Will Attend Bias Hearing," *People's World*, September 3, 1947.

²²⁹ William Henderson to Matt Crawford, September 25, 1947, Box 3, Folder 4, Crawford Papers.

²³⁰ "City Holds Muni Bias Hearing, *People's World*, September 5, 1947; "Municipal Street Car Workers," in Crawford Papers, Box 3, Folder 4.

²³¹ "New Chance for Muni Workers," *People's World*, September 9, 1947; "Doctor Waits to Examine Fired Muni Line Workers," *People's World*, September 6, 1947; "Negro Doctors Polled on S.F. Hospitals Ban," *People's World*, December 4, 1947; For background on Thomas, see Broussard, *Black San Francisco*, 209.

²³² William Henderson to Matt Crawford, September 11, 1947, Crawford Papers, Box 3, Folder 4.; *People's World*, October 17, 1947.

²³³ "Continued Muni Bias Fight Vowed," *People's World*, October 17, 1947.

²³⁴ Editorial, "Lack of Confidence," *Sun-Reporter*, December 8, 1951.

²³⁵ "First Year Mark Passed by the NNC," *People's World*, October 6, 1947; "Continued Muni Bias Fight Vowed," *People's World*, October 17, 1947; "Negro Fired Unjustly, City Board Rules," *People's World*, November 7, 1947.

²³⁶ Local 250 Membership as of June 1948, Box 90, Folder 2, TWU Records; This number is based on US Census date provided in Jeffress, *The Negro in the Urban Transit Industry*, 58.

²³⁷ *Chicago Defender*, April 29, 1944.

CHAPTER TWO

A TWO-WAY STREET: THE ILWU AND THE IMAGE OF THE BLACK LABOR LEADER

“The Negro labor leader has a grave responsibility to both his union and his people. His job is to bridge between his union and his people, to weld the unity between the two and build the core of a progressive people’s movement in America. His duty is to give leadership to both his union and his people. He must build for his people a reservoir of good will in labor and vice versa.”

-Revels Cayton, 1944¹

When Audley Cole was attempting to become San Francisco’s first black streetcar operator in 1942, a group of black longshoremen belonging to Local 10 of the International Longshoremen’s and Warehousemen’s Union (ILWU) decided to do its part to help. As the previous chapter showed, Cole received widespread support in the heady atmosphere of wartime San Francisco. But the longshoremen nonetheless were concerned for his safety, especially after the only white streetcar operator to train Cole was physically assaulted by his white co-workers. Cole also reported that signal conductors deliberately delayed his runs, that truck drivers sometimes attempted to impede his car, and that traffic cops occasionally placed obstacles in his way.² “We said to Cole, ‘You’re going to drive that streetcar,’” Bill Chester recalled. At six feet and more than two hundred pounds, the twenty-three year old Chester was physically suited for the rigors of working on the docks and an all-around imposing figure. To ensure that nobody tried to violently prevent Cole from performing his job once the transit union acquiesced to his employment, Chester and his cohort formed a sort of vigilante security force to protect him on his first solo runs. They rode along in Cole’s streetcar in groups of four or five, alternating during two-hour shifts, to discourage any potential attackers. “He didn’t have any more trouble and as a result now 55 per cent of all the people who drive the buses and streetcars in San Francisco are now Negroes,” Chester proudly told an interviewer in 1969.³

The small role that Bill Chester and his fellow longshoremen played integrating the San

Francisco transit industry was an opening chapter in what would become a long history of black ILWU members' civil rights and labor activism in San Francisco. In the two decades that followed Audley Cole's saga, black longshoremen and warehousemen seemed to exemplify Revels Cayton's ideal "Negro labor leader" who strove to provide "leadership to both his union and his people." They did so the height of the domestic Cold War, when left-labor-civil rights coalitions across the nation disintegrated.⁴ Given their membership in a left-led union with strong Communist Party (CP) connections, black trade unionists in the ILWU might seem an unlikely group to flourish during this period. The ILWU was among the eleven unions expelled from the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) in 1950 for its ties to the CP, and historian Robert W. Cherny has written that Harry Bridges, who led the ILWU from the founding in the 1930s until the 1970s, was "the most significant American labor leader to have maintained such close ties to the CP over such a long time."⁵ Bridges and other union leaders endured years of government surveillance, legal challenges, and deportation hearings. The union also had to fend off jurisdictional challenges from rival anticommunist unions, especially the International Longshoremen's Association and the International Brotherhood of Teamsters. Yet the ILWU survived the McCarthy era (the only expelled union to do so). Moreover, its African American leaders, most of who exhibited steadfast loyalty to the union's Communist leaders and closely associated with the CP themselves, also emerged from this period with more prestige and influence than they had during the heyday of "civil rights unionism."

The ILWU in San Francisco presents a case study in which a left-led union with close ties to the Communist Party was able to survive the McCarthy era while maintaining – and in some areas increasing – its presence and influence in local civil rights and labor struggles.⁶ Howard Kimmeldorf has argued that the ILWU's left-wing leadership, and Harry Bridges in particular,

weathered the Cold War challenge not simply because they “delivered the goods” for members.

Rather, it was their unflagging commitment to the idea of worker control and because of the larger-than-life image of Bridges himself that ensured the loyalty of the rank-and-file.⁷

Kimmeldorf also argues that the union’s commitment to racial equality played a part in its survival. To black workers, he suggests, “the ILWU was not just another dues-collecting agency, but rather a place where they felt they belonged, where the leadership certainly, if not every member, welcomed them with open arms.”⁸ This chapter examines that part of the story in more depth and considers how the ILWU’s racial policies shaped black protest and civil rights activism in San Francisco more generally. It argues that while ILWU leaders appeared to be genuinely committed to racial equality, the union considered its African-American members, and local black communities more generally, as key to its own survival. From its origins in the 1934 waterfront strike, white ILWU leaders, especially those associated with the CP, strategically cultivated an intensely loyal black following that it then relied on for support when resisting Cold War anticommunist policies, fending off jurisdictional challenges, and conducting difficult contract negotiations with employers. In doing so, the ILWU groomed a cadre of black activists who would rise to prominence within the union and the city of San Francisco more generally. In a city with a struggling National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) chapter and a new Urban League chapter, the ILWU and its black members in particular sought to assert a leadership role in local civil rights campaigns as San Francisco’s black population confronted discrimination in housing, employment, and policing in the postwar period. Asserting that trade unionists could best represent the black working-class, they buttressed the overall strength of their union by publicly linking the ILWU and the black community so that the fate of one appeared inextricably bound with the other.⁹ In doing so, they also promoted the image of

black trade unionists as community and civil rights leaders.

The Importance of “Negro members and friends”

From its founding the ILWU has opened its ranks to African Americans and vocally championed causes for racial justice. This has not gone unnoticed by historians of African American and labor history, who have regularly praised the union for its racial liberalism. Bruce Nelson writes that after officially forming in 1937 the ILWU “quickly distinguished itself as a ‘haven of racial equality’,” while Albert Broussard suggests that the “ILWU was as close to a ‘model’ union as black San Franciscans were likely to find during the years of the Second World War.”¹⁰ In this manner the ILWU stood out among Bay Area unions but was not unique among the other CIO unions that made the organizing of less-skilled, minorities, and women an important part of their mission during the 1930s and 1940s. As with many of their CIO counterparts, the ILWU’s founding leaders, most of whom were either CP members or circled tightly within the Communist orbit, genuinely supported the rights of black workers.¹¹ Yet from the union’s origins, black workers also held a place of strategic importance that shaped the way union leaders viewed its black membership and its surrounding black communities as well.

When San Francisco longshoremen went on strike in May 1934, Harry Bridges sought to convince white workers that they would need to accept African Americans within their ranks if they were to have any chance of success. San Francisco’s waterfront unions had been hostile to black workers up until that time, and ship owners had brought in hundreds of black strikebreakers to help defeat the Riggers and Stevedores’ Union when it went on strike in 1919.¹² In the years that followed these workers were not welcomed by their white counterparts. When the strike began in 1934, Bridges argued that the only way to prevent African Americans from

strikebreaking was to promise them, “You’ve got a job as a working stiff. No discrimination.”¹³

He then had to convince black workers that white trade unionists would change their ways.

“When the strike started, all the black gangs at certain docks stayed in,” Bridges recalled. “These black guys had been imported to break the 1919 longshore strike ... So in 1934, we concentrated on getting them out.”¹⁴ Bridges sought to accomplish this not only by speaking directly with

black workers, but by also visiting black churches and soliciting support from their members.¹⁵

This would mark the beginning of a long relationship between black ministers and the ILWU that would be especially beneficial to the union. African Americans such as Eugene Lasaremy, who was working as a deck engineer aboard a Matson ship docked in San Francisco when the strike began, listened to Bridges implore white workers to make common cause with their black counterparts. He remembered becoming “very impressed with Harry Bridges because of that,” adding that when “the longshoremen went out, I was ready to go too.”¹⁶

At the time of the 1934 strike and the founding of the ILWU a few years later, it was not evident that black members would become a major force within the union. As the previous chapter noted, prior to World War II African Americans accounted for less than one percent of San Francisco’s population, and there were only about fifty black workers on the city’s waterfront in 1934.¹⁷ The small number of African Americans in the area may have made it easier for Bridges to convince some white workers to accept them into the union. But thousands of migrants from the gulf coast made their way to Bay Area during the war, while others sought employment on the docks as they lost their shipyard jobs in the war’s waning months. As a result, by 1946 black workers comprised between a quarter and a third of ILWU Local 10 membership.¹⁸ Still, as the previous chapter also demonstrated, the status of these workers in the postwar years was very much in question. And when black journalists Thomas Fleming and

Carlton Goodlett learned in 1949 that Bridges, responding to pressure from older white workers about how to handle the surplus of labor, had proposed to lay off 1,000 longshoremen, the majority of whom were black, they went straight to the ILWU president's house. The editorial minds behind the *Sun-Reporter* were already friendly with the ILWU and familiar with the Communist left in San Francisco. Writing for *The Spokesman*, a small newspaper published by black Communist John Pittman, Fleming had supported the dockworkers during the 1934 strike, and Goodlett had already partnered with Matt Crawford and the National Negro Congress (NNC) on several protests and was on the board of directors at the California Labor School, which was closely tied to the ILWU and the CP.¹⁹ According to Fleming, Bridges told the pair that there was little he could do for the black longshoremen since they lacked seniority. Goodlett then informed Bridges that if he did not help black longshoremen keep their jobs, "the next time a fight comes we'll go ahead and tell the Blacks to go down there and work as scabs." According to Fleming, the threat worked. "Well you should have seen Bridges' face when Goodlett said that," he recalled. "They changed that tune."²⁰

Black longshoremen and other CP members in Local 10 objected to Bridges' proposal, and it was this opposition rather than Goodlett and Fleming's warning that ultimately brought about its defeat. Bruce Nelson thus cites this episode as an example of the constraints that democratic unionism can place on even a powerful leader such as Bridges.²¹ Yet Fleming and Goodlett's part in the controversy raised an important issue that Bridges took very seriously. Depriving employers of black strikebreakers had been an important element of Bridge's strategy during the 1934 strike, and he would have recognized the influence that the *Sun-Reporter* wielded in the black community.²² The defeat of his proposal had assured black workers access to waterfront jobs, and by the 1960s more than half of Local 10 members and a third of Local 6

members would be African American. And while Bridges had proposed the layoffs in the first place, he earned the support of the *Sun-Reporter* throughout the height of the domestic Cold War. The paper repeatedly reminded black San Franciscans that they had “a tremendous stake in the ILWU” and called upon them to support the union and Harry Bridges. Their message was clear, an attack on the ILWU constituted an attack on black San Francisco.²³ Such sentiments were not limited to the paper’s radical publisher and editor. Goodlett’s one-time partner Daniel Collins, a dentist and co-founder of the San Francisco Urban League, and “one of the prominent black leaders in San Francisco,” called the ILWU a “lifesaver” that provided the “strongest economic support” for black San Franciscans. Reflecting back on this period later in life, Collins, who did not share Goodlett’s pro-Communists views, said “I thank God for [Bridges] because he gave the only stable, the biggest block of jobs Blacks had was with his union.”²⁴

Like other unions with large black memberships, ILWU locals 10 and 6 became active in defending those workers’ basic rights beyond the docks, warehouses, and manufacturing plants where they worked. As a white business agent for Local 6 pledged in 1949, “any time any member of this union runs up against discrimination, this union will fight it.”²⁵ If black union members felt abused by the police, the ILWU sent a delegation to meet with the chief of police and, in some cases managed to get charges dropped against black members who were arrested on “vagrancy” charges.²⁶ When a Fillmore district business refused service to a black warehouseman, Locals 10 and 6 picketed the establishments and filed legal complaints.²⁷ As the ILWU’s black membership grew, it pressured its health plan provider, Kaiser Permanente, to assign black doctors and nurses to its all-white hospital staff.²⁸ The ILWU was especially active when it came to fighting housing discrimination, which became a widespread problem for black San Franciscans in the postwar decades. In the early 1950s Local 6 protested that its black

members had “been refused apartments because of their race,” while others encountered difficulty buying a house “even though our members have the money available.” On several occasions, the Locals 10 and 6 petitioned city officials to take action against segregation in the public and private housing markets.²⁹ Such actions were not always successful, but they increased the presence of the ILWU among the city’s black population. “We went into every aspect of community life,” recalled Bill Chester, a black longshoreman who would rise to leadership within the ILWU.³⁰ “We were pretty well established by the 1950s as a group of workers who didn’t just look at their own selfish points of view as far as what they had economically.”³¹

The ILWU leadership’s vocal support for racial equality earned the loyalty of the black workers who obtained well-paying jobs on the docks and inside the warehouses of the Bay Area. “When I first came to the waterfront, many black workers felt that Local 10 was a utopia,” explained Cleophus Williams, who joined the ILWU in 1944. “We’re talking about a union that gave you a chance to be somebody, to hold your head high.”³² As was the case with most of his black counterparts in the union, Williams was from the South, where white supremacy severely curtailed black workers’ economic opportunities. While Jim Crow did not reside in San Francisco, the end of the war taught many black migrants that racial discrimination was a problem in their adopted city as well. The ILWU thus provided valuable jobs for those who found most avenues to employment closed off by employers and craft unions that discriminated against racial minorities. For example, Curtis McClain moved to San Francisco with the dream of entering the printing trade after his honorable discharge from the Navy in May 1946. When the printers union would not admit him to an apprenticeship, McClain sought warehouse work through the ILWU because “they dispatched people to jobs and color was no barrier.”³³

Although he hoped that his warehouse job with the Schmidt Lithograph Company would one day lead to an apprenticeship in his preferred trade, McClain would spend his career with the ILWU.

Local 6 also provided jobs for black women, who found few employment opportunities in the postwar period. At the Colgate manufacturing plant in Berkeley, black women found employment working the conveyor belt and packing washing powder and soap. The work could be strenuous, but as one of the first black women to work at Colgate explained, “It was better than doin’ housework.” Several of these women who obtained jobs at Colgate during the war remained there for decades, and credited the ILWU for the opportunity. When Local 6 began organizing at Colgate, African Americans only held janitorial positions. And while the union at first focused on organizing the plant’s male workers, it soon realized that it made sense to sign up female employees as well – especially as their numbers increased during the war.³⁴ “Local 6 made it possible for blacks to get where we got,” explained Lillian Prince, who worked at Colgate from 1946 until 1981. “If it hadn’t been for the union, we wouldn’t have made it.”³⁵

Black workers’ loyalty to the ILWU was often directed at its controversial president. Cleophus Williams, who joined Local 10 in 1944, recalled a famous moment in which Harry Bridges “said that if things reached a point where only two men were left on the waterfront, if he had anything to say about it, one would be a black man.” Bridges’ espousal of racial equality had a profound impact on black workers, especially those such as Williams who had migrated from the South. “Bridges was not a personal friend of mine,” explained Williams, who in 1967 would become the first black president of Local 10,” but I don’t know anybody I admired more.”³⁶

Black workers’ could also identify with Bridges’ fight against the government and anticommunist labor leaders during the Cold War. Referring to attempts by the CIO and the federal government to remove Bridges from his position of power on the waterfront, another

black longshoreman stated that “I felt that he was being abused the same as I was,” adding that the “only thing different about it was he was a white man getting’ it.”³⁷ Such sentiments were not unique to African Americans. As one longtime white member of Local 6 put it, “church-going Catholics” in his Mission district neighborhood “swore by Harry ... they didn’t buy this red-baiting shit.”³⁸ But black workers represented a new force in the union in the postwar years, and their loyalty would serve the union’s pro-Communist leadership during the McCarthy Era.

The ILWU’s left-wing leadership emerged from World War II more secure than their counterparts in other CIO unions that followed the CP line. Rank-and-file workers were generally satisfied with their working conditions amid the wartime increase in production, and the union did not experience the same degree of turnover that undermined support for left-wing union leaders in other manufacturing industries such as auto and electrical.³⁹ Whereas other unions welcomed in new members with no ties to the militant generation of the 1930s, Howard Kimmeldorf writes that the ILWU’s early wartime recruits hailed from the city’s political left-wing and “infused the local with fresh radical blood.”⁴⁰ Although Communists and fellow travelers constituted a minority within Locals 10 and 6, by most accounts they were well-organized, occupied important leadership positions, and wielded considerable influence within the union.⁴¹ According to Keith Eickman, a white CP member who joined Local 6 during the war, there usually “wasn’t any basic disagreements over what the Party and the union members wanted” when it came to bread and butter labor issues.⁴² But the potential for conflict existed as noncommunist within the union were weary of its leaders’ political associations. As CP member and Local 6 business agent Jack Olsen explained, Communists had to be careful about the issues they sought to advance within the union. As he put it, “had a Communist club come to a meeting and said, ‘We want an endorsement of the Soviet Union,’ we would have had our ass ripped

off.”⁴³

Yet by the close of the 1940s the combination of McCarthy-era anticommunism and ILWU’s leaders’ controversial pro-Communist policies invited challenges from noncommunist and anticommunist members. In Local 10, a “Blue Slate” formed in 1949 to distinguish noncommunist candidates in union elections from the “red” leadership.⁴⁴ Anti-Communist factions within ILWU locals multiplied as the union took political positions that defied the CIO.⁴⁵ In 1948, the ILWU spurned the CIO’s endorsement of Democratic presidential candidate Harry Truman in favor of Henry Wallace, whose insurgent Progressive Party was strongly influenced by the CP. Bridges and CP members in the union worked to rally the rank-and-file around Wallace, but, as Jack Olsen lamented, “the support for Wallace disappeared when election day came.”⁴⁶ During a major warehouse strike the following year, Local 6 leaders made the *People’s World*, the CP’s west coast newspaper, the local’s official paper. “This was a mistake because the majority of the members of the union didn’t read the *PW* and didn’t want to read the *PW*,” explained Eickman, who had little luck selling the paper at union meetings and on the picket lines. “The members would throw them in the garbage can.”⁴⁷ Many noncommunist members also disagreed with the union’s opposition to the Marshall Plan and the Korean War. By 1950, when the CIO expelled the ILWU and the Teamsters launched a jurisdictional battle against Local 6, a growing segment of the membership had lost its patience with its pro-Communist leadership. “It was like a civil war,” Eickman recalled. “When anyone who was considered a Communist got up to speak, they would chant, ‘Communist! Communist! Communist!’”⁴⁸

By recruiting a number of the union’s new black members, the ILWU’s pro-Communist leaders created valuable allies that it would look to for support during its internal and external

postwar battles. According to David Jenkins, a white Communist in Local 10, “the question of building black leadership in the union was a goal of the CP and a goal with many of us who had left the CP.”⁴⁹ LeRoy King remembered that “not many Blacks were active in Local 6” when he joined the union. But Henry Glickman and Clarence Paton, both Communists, urged black members to attend meetings and demonstrations. Their urgings convinced King to become more involved in the union, and he would become especially close to Paton (King would marry Paton’s daughter, Judy, in 1950).⁵⁰ Along with white probationary Local 10 members, black workers in Local 10 were required to attend classes at the CP-led California Labor School (CLS) before they could become full members.⁵¹

Harry Bridges himself took a personal interest in Bill Chester as he became involved in union affairs. After joining Local 10 in 1945, Chester became a shop steward, served as a picket line captain during the 1946 strike, was elected chairman of the publicity committee when Local 10 again went on strike in 1948 and 1949, and was elected a convention delegate in 1950. Then, in 1951 Harry Bridges appointed Chester as the Northern California Regional Director, making him the highest ranking black official in the ILWU’s history.⁵² Chester would be one of Bridges’ most loyal lieutenants in the years that followed. According to the labor journalist Sidney Roger, Bridges picked Chester to become international Vice-President in 1969 in part because of his loyalty but also because he “had a direct line with the longshoremen, and especially with the black majority in San Francisco.”⁵³ Given the public stand that Communists had taken for civil rights within the union and the broader community, black workers were receptive to their advances. Cleophus Williams recalled that it was the “left-wingers” who “were the ones that would come over and speak to you and ask you about your housing and your transportation.”⁵⁴ As LeRoy King put it, Communists “were saying all the right things, fighting for the rights for

all people and especially blacks and integration.”⁵⁵

When black members of Locals 10 and 6 organized among themselves to fight racial discrimination within the union, the ILWU’s left-wing leaders also lent their support. Historian Bruce Nelson has noted that despite its espousal of racial equality, the ILWU’s commitment to racial equality within its own house was often compromised by union leadership’s adherence to other principles – “especially seniority, local autonomy, and a belief in rank-and-file democracy.”⁵⁶ Moreover, the ILWU locals that were farther from the union’s San Francisco base, such as Local 8 in Portland and Local 13 in San Pedro, openly discriminated against black workers.⁵⁷ But racial discrimination was also a problem in the union’s San Francisco locals, where some of the white rank-and-file did not share the leadership’s racial liberalism. Albert Broussard writes that the ILWU’s “record in upgrading black workers was dismal” in the 1940s and early 1950s, and black members complained that union officers, who were overwhelmingly white, failed to adequately investigate when black workers felt that they were unfairly discharged.⁵⁸ In the late 1940s black members of Local 10 and 6 joined together “to bring about equality and truly eliminate discrimination.” According to Bill Chester, who joined together with a handful of other black longshoremen in Local 10 who had belonged to the International Longshoremen Association in the Gulf Coast before migrating to the Bay Area, “we just called it ‘getting the boys together to talk over a problem.’”⁵⁹ In local 6, Curtis McClain, LeRoy King, and about twenty-five other black members called their group the “Frontiersmen Club.”

Black workers who banded together in both locals did not consider themselves a caucus and did not look to challenge the ILWU leadership. Rather, as black members fought their way into leadership positions they became an adjunct of the union’s left-wing. When Bridges tabbed Chester to become a regional director in 1951, Chester explained that “as a Negro” he could

assist “in building an even greater unity behind ILWU’s progressive program.”⁶⁰ In the case of the Frontiersmen, McClain says that the clear purpose “was to organize so we could elect an Afro-American to a full-time position and address the grievances taking place.”⁶¹ When Frontiersmen ran for elective office, they highlighted black members’ complaints of discrimination in hiring and on the job.⁶² Although the groups only consisted of African Americans, the union’s Communist members assisted when they could. Chester notes that Local 10 blacks “found a group of well-meaning progressive whites as we called them” that “knew what we were doing and at the membership meetings as we presented our program, we more or less had their unqualified support.”⁶³ The Frontiersmen, according to King, also had support from “very progressive” whites, some of who were “Communists, in and out of the Communist Party.”⁶⁴ According to Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) informants, CP members in Local 6 backed the Frontiersmen’s unsuccessful efforts to elect McClain as a business agent in 1954 and 1955.⁶⁵ And as McClain earned appointments to other union committees, the *Dispatcher* cited him as evidence of the ILWU’s commitment “to develop minority leadership in its ranks and bring forward new forces that will contribute to the solidarity of the membership.”⁶⁶ By the time McClain was finally elected business agent in 1960 African Americans were better represented on union committees and as organizers, and the Frontiersmen dissolved.⁶⁷

The decision of pro-Communist union leaders to groom young black ILWU members for leadership positions proved valuable in the union’s postwar battles. Although some African Americans opposed the union’s pro-Communist wing and became FBI informants and friendly witnesses at House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) hearings that focused on Communist influence within the ILWU, the majority closed ranks behind the union and its embattled president.⁶⁸ Jack Olsen remembers that “when the crisis came” for Local 6 in 1950,

“the black membership of the local was solidly at our side.” The International Brotherhood of Teamsters had challenged the ILWU’s “march inland” to organize warehouse workers in the late 1930s, and saw the McCarthy era as an opportunity to raid Local 6 in the Bay Area.⁶⁹ As Olsen tells it, Local 6’s battle against the Teamsters was the first opportunity for black members to demonstrate their gratitude and loyalty to the ILWU. “They knew the job the ILWU had done in opening up to them,” he explained. “Young people like LeRoy King and Curtis McClain came to the forefront.”⁷⁰ LeRoy King remembers going “around making sure our warehouses were organized” and getting “the churches and the community to support the ILWU.”⁷¹ Local 6 managed to repel the Teamsters’ “with only marginal losses.”⁷² And while its black members were not the sole factor in the local’s survival, they played an important part in maintaining Local 6 as the dominant presence in Bay Area warehouses.

Considering the ILWU’s connection to the CP and the support white leftists gave to the union’s black members, it makes sense that black longshoremen and warehousemen either joined or closely associated with the CP. Most black ILWU members in San Francisco, along with many other African Americans in the 1940s and early 1950s, studied labor economics, history, and art at the Communist-run California Labor School, which stressed training black workers to become leaders in their unions and communities.⁷³ Some, such as Bill Chester, also taught classes at the school. It is difficult to determine with certainty whether or not people such as Chester, McClain, and King were actual Party members, although circumstantial evidence suggests that they spent brief stints in the CP. As far as the FBI was concerned, Chester was a Party member from 1942 until 1952.⁷⁴ The FBI also suspected that Curtis McClain was a Communist until 1954.⁷⁵ LeRoy King was northern California chairman of the Bridges-Robertson-Schmidt Defense Committee and decades later explained that he had a “good

relationship” with the Communists.⁷⁶ Many may have been like Local 10 member Cleophus Williams, who took classes at the CLS, “was in all the marches,” and subscribed to the *People’s World*, but chose not to become a party member.⁷⁷ Regardless of whether they joined or not, the majority of black Local 10 and 6 members circled well within the Communist orbit and appeared willing to go along with policies enacted by the union’s leftist leaders.

Black ILWU members’ close association with the CP subjected them to government harassment and surveillance. The government was concerned with the activities of the left-led waterfront unions of the West Coast because of their access to major ports and their interaction with pro-Communist waterfront unions in other countries in South America and Asia.⁷⁸ The FBI closely monitored black and white ILWU leaders for decades, periodically attempting to interview them and relying on dozens of informants to keep abreast of their activities. Between 1950 and 1967, the Bureau had twenty-four informants on Bill Chester alone. Although it concluded that he had left the CP around 1952, the FBI still determined that Chester participated in Communist-front organizations throughout the decade. And as late as 1959, when Chester attended a “Pacific-Asia” conference of dock workers’ unions in Japan, the FBI still believed that Chester “could be particularly dangerous in the event of a national emergency” because of “his position and past activities.”⁷⁹ CP membership and association cost some waterfront workers their jobs. Most politically-motivated dismissals resulted from the port security program that was enacted after the start of the Korean War to ostensibly protect the nation’s waterfronts from sabotage and espionage. The law required all seamen and those longshoremen working on any Army or Navy docks to apply for Coast Guard passes. If the Coast Guard determined the applicant to be associated with or sympathetic to any group subversive or disloyal to the U.S. government, he was deemed a security risk, denied a pass, and unable to work until cleared by

the Coast Guard. “You’d go on board, but you’d get a notice that said, ‘Your presence aboard this ship is inimical to the security of the United States’,” recalled Whitey Kelm, a merchant seaman who eventually found work with the ILWU after being screened off a ship.⁸⁰ According to historian Ellen Schrecker, the program’s prime objective was to destroy communist-led maritime unions – particularly the ILWU and the Marine Cooks and Stewards union (MC&S).⁸¹

The port security program was especially costly for African Americans, who comprised between fifty and seventy percent of workers “screened” off of the waterfront.⁸² Screened workers could file appeals, but black workers who did so complained that the union members who participated on the board were anticommunist and sometimes racist. At their appeal hearings, for example, black workers were asked the following questions: Have you ever had dinner with a mixed group? Have you ever danced with a white girl? Are you trying to buy a home?⁸³ According to R.J. Keene, who conducted a five-part investigative series for the *Sun-Reporter* early in 1952, most of the screened black workers were active within the MC&S and ILWU, and in the case of the latter they had exhibited loyalty to Harry Bridges.⁸⁴ “Just being on the waterfront, it seemed, we were suspect,” recalled Local 10 member Cleophus Williams. Williams also suggests that most of those screened were either CP members or fellow travelers. He explained that the program “was devastating for all of us, black and white, because many of the fellows who had flirted with the CP were screened out and couldn’t get cleared for navy or army work.” However Williams, who was sympathetic to the CP but “never put my name on any paper,” was cleared by the government to work.⁸⁵ Indeed, the most outspoken black victims of the program were CP members. John Flowers, a party member who had participated in several Communist-front groups in addition to belonging to the MC&S, claimed that he was screened off the waterfront because of his “work in the union of carrying out a program for the brothers,

fighting against discrimination of the companies, fighting for the enforcement of the contract.”⁸⁶

Al Thibodaux, another CP member in the MC&S, protested that the “Negro people for the first time in the history of this country, have been declared subversives toward the country and the whole group of us are out to overthrow the government and sell it all away.”⁸⁷

Thibodaux may have overstated the reality of the program’s intentions, but it nevertheless did create serious hardship for many black waterfront workers and MC&S members in particular. As one black sailor put it in 1951, “the Korean war has brought particular hell to waterfront Negroes.”⁸⁸ Whereas longshoremen screened off of Army and Navy docks could at least still work on commercial docks, screened cooks and stewards could at best work “standby” on ships in port or seek an alternative line of work.⁸⁹ Some MC&S members claimed that their screened status made it difficult to hold down other jobs. For example, one black worker obtained a job as a bus driver for the San Francisco Municipal Railway, but said that he was fired once management learned that he had been screened off the waterfront.⁹⁰ The screening of loyal MC&S members, both white and black, also made the union vulnerable in its ongoing jurisdictional struggle against the National Maritime Union (NMU)-CIO and the Sailor’s Union of the Pacific (SUP)-AFL, which received a charter from the AFL in 1938 “for a new maritime superstructure” under the umbrella Sailor’s International Union (SIU), which would cover all stewards and deck sailors.⁹¹ The SUP and SIU were led by Harry Lundeburg, a Norwegian-born sailor based in Seattle who had become a strident anticommunist by the early 1950s.⁹² The SUP also excluded African Americans, and supporters of the MC&S, such as *Sun-Reporter* columnist Thomas Fleming, accused Lundeburg of masking “his anti-Negro bias under the convenient term that he is fighting Communism.”⁹³ As MC&S members were screened off ships, the NMU and SUP tried to lure away anticommunist cooks and stewards while calling for National Labor

Relations Board (NLRB) elections. Meanwhile, in 1953 Hugh Bryson, national president of the MC&S, was indicted by the federal government for falsely swearing in a 1951 Taft-Hartley affidavit that he was not a member of the Communist Party. With the MC&S off of the ballot, in 1955 the MCS-AFL, a newly-created affiliate of the SIU, won a jurisdictional election over the ILWU, which had hastily organized a stewards department in an attempt to thwart Lundeburg's union. The MC&S was no more, and its most prominent black members quietly faded from the scene.⁹⁴ Surveying the docks in 1956, Thomas Fleming lamented that "Negro seamen are now being replaced as fast as Lundberg [*sic*] can do it."⁹⁵

Black ILWU leaders also encountered anticommunist opposition from local civil rights oriented groups. LeRoy King remembered being "isolated" within the black community. According to King, groups like the NAACP and the Urban League "didn't want anything to do with us because they called us Reds and Communists because of Bridges."⁹⁶ Many ILWU members held NAACP memberships throughout the postwar period, and were especially welcome when Carlton Goodlett was president. In 1950, when the national office announced that the expelled CIO unions would not be allowed to participate in its National Mobilization for Civil Rights because they were under suspicion of communist infiltration, Goodlett issued a bitter statement condemning Roy Wilkins. Although Goodlett had been ousted as president the months earlier, the San Francisco chapter had already invited the ILWU and MC&S to send delegates. To exclude these unions from NAACP programs, Goodlett warned, was "irreparably damaging the Association and will weaken the NAACP on the Pacific Coast."⁹⁷ But Goodlett's warnings had little impact on NAACP leaders. Under the stewardship of western regional director Franklin Williams, over the next several years the Bay Area NAACP chapters acted to further distance themselves from organizations and individuals who associated with the CP.

Williams, who took over as regional director in 1950 after spending five years as a legal assistant for Thurgood Marshall, considered Communist infiltration into the NAACP's west coast branches "a most serious situation" that commanded immediate and tough action. He demanded that the *People's World* refrain from reporting on NAACP activities, and in 1954 the regional office circulated a flyer admonishing members to stay away from suspected communist-front groups, including the National Negro Labor Council, in which the ILWU and MC&S were heavily involved, the CLS, and the Civil Rights Congress. "They say they are 'working for your civil rights'," the circular warned, "but they work among us in the interest of the Communist party or other subversive and un-American movements."⁹⁸ Black ILWU members claim that they maintained their memberships throughout this period, but they appear to have had little input in the organization's decision-making. When northern California NAACP chapters organized a mass "Fight for Freedom" rally focusing on employment discrimination and featuring A. Philip Randolph in 1954, the ILWU was conspicuously absent from the event's speakers and sponsors.⁹⁹ Opposition from NAACP leadership notwithstanding, black ILWU leaders were not completely isolated in their communities. The thousands of jobs that the union provided along with its advocacy of black workers' civic rights, which received favorable coverage in the pages of the *Sun-Reporter*, earned it a favorable reputation among black San Francisco. By the end of the 1950s, the ILWU research department claimed, Local 6 members, 4,500 of whom lived in San Francisco, spent roughly \$11 million annually in San Francisco and Oakland.¹⁰⁰ King, Chester, and other black ILWU leaders sought to further buttress their community support as their union found itself embattled by government investigations and raids from rival unions. It ultimately did so by solidifying an alliance with influential black ministers.

At first, the black labor leaders formed alliances with "unsophisticated" ministers who

ran small storefront churches in the Fillmore district. But as an increasing number of ILWU members became active in their churches – especially when it came to offering financial support and serving as trustees, “the more sophisticated minister came along.”¹⁰¹ Among the latter were the Reverends Hamilton Boswell of the Jones Methodist Church, F. D. Haynes of the influential Third Baptist Church, and Robert L. Turner of the Pleasant Hill Baptist Church and president of the Baptist Ministers Union (BMU). A number of black trade unionists also belonged to the Macedonia Baptist Church, which had a large working-class membership. Chester himself formed a particularly strong relationship with Hamilton Boswell and the BMU, and his message to the ministers centered on the idea of uniting the clergy and the trade union movement. Black ministers helped disseminate trade union principles while reminding congregants of the important economic and social role that the ILWU played in their communities. These early efforts at coalition building would prove dividends during the 1960s, when black trade unionists and ministers would become influential power brokers in city politics. But in the short term, it served to further anchor the ILWU in San Francisco’s black community.

Black San Franciscans also rallied around the waterfront unions during the 1950s, when the port security programs and government investigations into Communist subversion threatened the existence of both the ILWU and MC&S (and in the case of the latter, contributed to its demise). When the SUP initiated its move to oust the MC&S from the waterfront, Reverends Boswell and Haynes helped lead a “community committee” that protested the screenings and sought the protection of black workers’ jobs, and the BMU also passed a resolution pledging full support to embattled MCS president Hugh Bryson.¹⁰² When an envoy of Joe Curren’s “goons” tried to intimidate Goodlett into helping the NMU drive “the communists out of MCS” in 1952, he defiantly told them that he was “going to do all I can to make your mission here a total

failure.”¹⁰³ In the early 1950s, the Bridges-Robertson-Schmidt Defense Committee, which included LeRoy King and Bill Chester, published a pamphlet entitled “American Minorities and the Case of Harry Bridges,” that contrasted the ILWU’s racial liberalism with the racial discrimination of the ILA and Teamsters. The pamphlet’s message was clear: the anticommunist attacks against Harry Bridges and the ILWU were in large part driven by reactionary forces that opposed racial equality. Along with numerous photos featuring the union’s racial minority members, it included ringing endorsements from several prominent black San Franciscans. Reverend Robert L. Turner of the Pleasant Hill Baptist Church and president of the Baptist Ministers Union hailed Bridges as “a Godsend among men.”¹⁰⁴ Carlton Goodlett heralded the ILWU and the MC&S as “the guardians of the Negro community and its economic backbone.” And Robert Potter, a leader of the San Francisco Benevolent Protective Order of Elks of the World, similarly declared that the “campaign against (Bridges) is in fact a campaign against the livelihood and security of the members of our community.”¹⁰⁵ Although the overall ability of black San Franciscans to repel congressional committees and rival unions would have been limited, their vocal support for the ILWU nevertheless highlighted a relationship that was mutually beneficial and one that ILWU leaders did not take for granted. As Bridges was quoted in his defense committee’s pamphlet, “The ILWU would never have grown and prospered without the help of its Negro members and friends.”

“a hungry man cannot make a full contribution to any struggle”

The effort by the ILWU’s pro-Communist leaders to cultivate a loyal group of black leaders within the union also constructed an image of black trade unionists as civic leaders who best represented the interests of the city’s black working class. This idea began to take hold

during the brief and troubled existence of the San Francisco chapter of the National Negro Labor Council (NNLC). The participation of black ILWU members in the NNLC came at the urging of union leaders and in particular Harry Bridges, who had attended the 1950 National Trade Union Conference of Negro Rights in Chicago. The conference was attended by some 900 delegates representing mostly left-led unions and spawned the idea for an organization to advance the cause of the black working class.¹⁰⁶ Prior to the NNLC's first annual convention in October 1951, the ILWU Northern California District Council passed a resolution endorsing the convention and urging the union, through its locals and international leadership, to support and participate in the convention as delegates.¹⁰⁷ It sent Bill Chester, along with a \$500 donation, to represent the ILWU at the Cincinnati convention.¹⁰⁸ Although Bridges wanted Chester to represent the ILWU in Cincinnati, he instructed the regional director that his "activities must be confined to my area – Northern California."¹⁰⁹ In the year leading up to the Cincinnati convention Chester emerged as a leader in the San Francisco council and was one of its featured speakers when it hosted Paul Robeson for a concert and rally in May 1951.¹¹⁰ He was accompanied in Cincinnati by Al Thibodeaux, a Communist and patrolman with the MC&S, who led the San Francisco NNLC throughout 1951.¹¹¹ Black trade unionists from the ILWU and the MC&S comprised most of the SFNLC membership throughout its brief existence. Thibodeaux was the chapter's Chairman, John Flowers of the MC&S served as Executive Secretary, LeRoy King chaired the Jobs Committee, while Chester was the NNLC Regional Vice President for the West Coast. Gerald Johnson had joined the MC&S after the war, and by the time he joined the board of the San Francisco council he was organizing black workers in unions for the CP.¹¹² Although it had a predominantly male membership, the chapter also had two female officers – Louise Jacobs (Treasurer) and Flossie Ainsworth (Secretary), both from the Distributive,

Processing and Office Workers of America (DPOWA) and veterans of previous Communist-led civil rights organizations in the Bay Area.

Part of the NNLC mission was to bring organized labor, and black trade unionists in particular, into the forefront civil rights campaigns.¹¹³ Historian Martha Biondi writes that the black trade unionists who comprised the NNLC sought to place economic inequality and discrimination at the forefront of the civil rights struggle by infusing “labor organizing with an antiracist consciousness and civil rights organizing with class consciousness.”¹¹⁴ In San Francisco Bill Chester embraced this role, arguing that the labor movement – and black trade unionists in particular – would serve as the base of “support and strength” for the “Negro people’s struggle for complete freedom.”¹¹⁵ During a 1952 radio broadcast, Chester told labor journalist Sidney Roger that the NNLC was better equipped than the NAACP or National Urban League to address the economic problems that confronted the black working class. He explained that “as Negro trade unionists we feel – we simply know – that we can find better solutions to our problems as trade union people than can other people not directly connected with the trade union movement.”¹¹⁶ Goodlett and the *Sun-Reporter* also continued to echo Chester’s notion that black trade unionists offered unique and vital leadership in the fight for racial equality in San Francisco. The *Sun-Reporter* regularly reported on NNLC activities, and Goodlett spoke at several of the local council’s meetings and conferences. He considered the 1952 NNLC western regional conference “the most significant meeting held in San Francisco in the six and a half years I have been a resident of the city.” Goodlett’s praise for black trade unionists dovetailed his critique – inspired by his own battles within the NAACP – of black professionals who had done little to address the problems of the black working class, especially employment discrimination. “The workers control the livelihood of the professional people, and the Negro professional needs

the support of the workers,” he told NNLC delegates. “The fact that the Negro Labor Council has centered its attention on jobs shows that you know that jobs are the issue today, because a hungry man cannot make a full contribution to any struggle.”¹¹⁷

For Chester and other black trade unionists, the NNLC provided an alternative means to challenge employment discrimination in the absence of state and local fair employment laws. In 1946 California voters rejected Proposition 11, which would have outlawed employment discrimination and created a Fair Employment Practices Committee (FEPC), by a margin of two to one. Los Angeles Assemblyman Augustus Hawkins led the campaign to get Proposition 11 on the ballot after the California legislature had rejected three separate fair employment bills.¹¹⁸ Hawkins and another black Assemblyman, Byron Rumford of Oakland, would introduce FEP bills every year between 1949 and 1958 – each going down in defeat.¹¹⁹ The situation was no better at the municipal level, where the state’s major cities also rejected FEP laws. After rejecting a strong fair employment law that would have included jail time for offenders, in 1950 the San Francisco Board of Supervisors adopted a “voluntary” fair employment plan in which the San Francisco Employers Council took responsibility for enforcing fair employment instead of a formal commission empowered by the city. Without providing specific evidence, Almon Roth, attorney for the Employers Council, insisted that in its first year the voluntary plan had made “remarkable progress.”¹²⁰ Minority and liberal white activists disagreed. “It proved to be a plan to AVOID the practice of democracy,” the *Sun-Reporter* editorialized a little over a year after the voluntary plan had taken effect.¹²¹

By the spring of 1951 the Citizens Committee for Equal Employment, which had led the fight for an FEP law two years earlier, was pressing for another vote on the ordinance. The Committee represented a cross-section of local civil rights groups, including the San Francisco

NAACP, United Latin Americans of America, Japanese American Citizens League, the Chinese American Citizens Alliance, California Federation for Civic Unity, Jewish Community Council, and the San Francisco Labor Council (AFL) and CIO Council. After studying the voluntary plan, in May the Committee paraded a series of speakers at two hearings concerning employment discrimination conducted by the Board of Supervisors. Each testimony echoed the assessment of Richard Dettering, executive director of the Committee, who argued that “the voluntary plan has been utterly inadequate to cope with the problem” of employment discrimination.¹²² Support for the law also came from religious leaders, the ILWU and MC&S, and the Communist Party, the latter of which created some problems for pro-FEP forces. Dettering hinted that tensions over tactics existed between the Committee’s liberal leadership and the “the vocal left-wing groups and the Peoples World,” while CP support discredited the ordinance in the eyes of some.¹²³ When Hursel Alexander, CP legislative director for California, attempted to speak at one of the May hearings, he was cut off by Supervisor Dewey Mead, who shouted that he was “not going to listen to any damn Communist.” Two other supervisors warned that the board take care “less we do what the Communists want us to do,” and the three left the room as Alexander continued to speak.¹²⁴ Although both the local Republican and Democratic party central committees also supported the FEP, when the Supervisors met to vote on the ordinance on May 28, Almon Roth warned that “a vote for this ordinance is a vote for the (Communist) Party line.” Although representatives of the ILWU urged that the board pass the ordinance, Roth, who feared that the law would make San Francisco “a mecca” for unemployed minorities, cited the union’s large black membership as evidence that a law compelling fair employment was not necessary.¹²⁵ In the end Roth carried the day. Before a standing room crowd, the supervisors rejected the FEP ordinance by a vote of 6 to 5 and would not consider the law again for six years.¹²⁶

In the absence of local, state, and federal FEP laws, the San Francisco NNLC pursued what the *Sun-Reporter* called a “home-grown variety of fair employment practices.”¹²⁷ Under the guidance of Chester and Thibodeaux, the San Francisco council challenged employment discrimination through conferences, negotiations, and occasional picket lines. In its first few years of activity the San Francisco council followed the national organization’s pledge to “win job opportunities for women throughout industry, in offices, department stores, public utilities, air lines, etc.,” to organize domestic workers, and to assure women the “right to play a leadership role in government, industry, and the unions.”¹²⁸ Wartime employment had served as a catalyst for black women finding work outside of domestic service, but in San Francisco, as in the rest of the country, they still found their employment opportunities curtailed, especially when compared to their white counterparts. In 1948 approximately one-fifth of black women worked in “clerical, proprietary-managerial, or professional jobs” whereas three-fourths of all employed women in the San Francisco-Oakland Metropolitan Area worked in those occupations. In 1950, sixty-nine percent of black women worked in “unskilled” jobs, compared with 56 percent of their male counterparts. Those who sought higher paying clerical positions encountered stiff resistance from employers and employment agencies. The few job advertisements that requested a photograph were in white-collar occupations such as insurance, clerical, sales, teaching, nursing, and advertising. One black woman was unable to obtain work after responding to employment ads at nine different agencies in 1955. Despite having a high school diploma, two years of business school training, and several years’ experience in sales and office work in her native New York, she was only referred to employers in a few cases. Most agencies informed her that she did not fit the employer’s specifications. One asked her why she came to San Francisco “when jobs are so hard to get for people like you?” While another told her that “Negroes are wasting their time

looking for office work.”¹²⁹

The NNLC first targeted Sears, Roebuck and Company, which only employed “Negro maids and cleaning women” in its 674 retail stores, for one of its first national campaigns, and the San Francisco council led the charge.¹³⁰ The San Francisco council hoped that a victory against Sears would lead to sales jobs in department stores across the city, where the few black women employed worked as “stock girls, culinary workers, matrons and window-trimmers.”¹³¹ In October 1951 San Francisco council leaders began meeting with Sears officials. The company was building a new store at Geary and Masonic streets, in general proximity to the Western Addition, and the NNLC demanded that the store employ black women in “white collar jobs.” But a company representative turned away the delegation, informing them that there were no white-collar positions available for black workers because, in part, Sears did not feel white customers would approve.¹³² A few weeks later, the SFNLC urged delegates at the Cincinnati convention “to initiate a nation wide campaign to break this un-American hiring policy of the Sears store and to make their starting point San Francisco and follow through from there.” It outlined a three-pronged program of publicity, letter-writing and petitioning, and urging African Americans to apply for jobs at all Sears stores.¹³³ Back in San Francisco, the NNLC responded to Sears’ intransigence by placing a picket line in front of the store on Geary and Masonic, which was still under construction at the time. Three weeks after the campaign began, Sears hired its first black female sales clerks and cashiers.¹³⁴ This was the “first breakthrough” in the NNLC’s campaign for jobs at Sears, and in the two years that followed the NNLC pressured Sears to hire black workers in sales and clerical positions in stores across the North and West.¹³⁵

For Bill Chester, the Sears campaign demonstrated the potential leadership role that black trade unionists were destined to play in the continuing struggle for civil and economic rights. His

memory of the campaign further reveals the image of the black trade unionists – and those belonging to the ILWU in particular – that he sought to construct. In a 1969 interview, he recounted that when the ILWU joined the NNLC picket line in front of Sears the rest of the city's labor movement closed ranks in support of the cause. "The teamster's wouldn't deliver the stuff in and as a result construction stopped," he explained. "The building trades wouldn't work and the company officials came out from Chicago and assured us that when the stores opened all people would be hired regardless to race."¹³⁶ News coverage of the Sears campaign, which was limited mostly to the *People's World*, did not mention other unions joining or honoring the NNLC pickets. Given the respect that many local labor leaders held for the ILWU, even in the divisive Cold War climate, it is possible that this did occur. Indeed, there was precedent for anticommunist unions demonstrating support for the ILWU during the McCarthy era. In 1950, the Transport Workers Union (TWU) Local 250 refused instructions from its national leadership to join the reconstituted California and San Francisco CIO councils after the expulsion of the ILWU.¹³⁷ Local 250 further outraged TWU president Mike Quill, who testified against Bridges at a deportation hearing in May 1950, when it invited the ILWU leader to discuss his "frame up" at a membership meeting.¹³⁸ The ILWU had helped Local 250 organize black workers after it established in 1945, and although its leaders were noncommunist, they were "very sympathetic with the Bridges Group."¹³⁹ But it is unlikely that the Teamsters would have shown the ILWU the same respect. At the time Local 6 was locked in a bitter jurisdictional battle with the Teamsters, who attempted to raid its divisions after the ILWU was expelled from the CIO. Just two years earlier Teamsters had helped break a Local 6 strike against Sears Army street store. And in 1952, Chester told an NNLC audience that they "must fight such labor leaders as Dave Beck of the Teamsters" who discriminated against African Americans.¹⁴⁰ Yet for Chester, the

idea that he and other black ILWU members could draw on their union's power and influence in order to command the cooperation of unions with records of racial discrimination such as the Teamsters and those in the building trades set them apart from groups like the NAACP.

Whatever the case may have been, the image of the black trade unionists as civil rights leaders surpassed what they were able to actually accomplish through the NNLC. Although Chester's prestige grew during the early 1950s, that of the NNLC did not. By the summer of 1952 San Francisco council had set in motion its local program as part of the national organization's goal of 100,000 jobs for black Americans. The San Francisco council focused on stores in the Fillmore district, where its survey of 107 merchants revealed that 53 black workers were employed full-time and another 25 had part-time employment. NNLC representatives could use the fact that thousands of ILWU members lived in the Western Addition and patronized its businesses as leverage when meeting with business owners. After negotiating with some businesses to increase the number of black employees and encouraging black women to apply for clerical jobs at department stores, the NNLC arranged employment conferences with Yellow Cab Company, the Pacific Telephone Company, and United Air Lines – each of which had poor records when it came to minority employment.¹⁴¹ At a regional conference held in January 1952, Bay Area council members also adopted a legislative agenda aimed at fighting unions that continued to discriminate against minorities and women and petitioning for state and federal fair employment legislation.¹⁴² Chester had been the keynote speaker at the 1952 regional conference, and he presided over two sessions at the NNLC second annual convention in the fall. In the spring he also busied himself trying to arrange another concert featuring Paul Robeson to raise money for the organization.¹⁴³ “The Freedom Train is rolling out here,” Chester assured Coleman Young, NNLC executive secretary, in February 1952.¹⁴⁴ Yet in April he informed the

national leadership that the “Council out here is doing fair” but that it had “many problems,” and by 1953 there was scant mention of the San Francisco council in the local left-wing and African-American press.¹⁴⁵ Repeated attempts by Coleman Young to get updates from Chester on the activities of the San Francisco chapter in 1953 and 1954 often went unanswered.¹⁴⁶ The campaigns that the group launched in the first half of 1952 also went unfulfilled and would be taken up by other groups later in the decade. In 1955 the local NAACP re-launched the moribund campaign against Yellow Cab, and the San Francisco Negro American Labor Council would revisit racial discrimination in the airline industry in the early 1960s.

Most historians attribute NNLC struggles to what Martha Biondi refers to as the “anticommunist network.”¹⁴⁷ Yet evidence suggests that the San Francisco council’s problems went beyond opposition from anticommunist civil rights groups, FBI harassment, and HUAC subpoenas. From the outset the San Francisco council appeared to have difficulties recruiting members, especially outside of the ILWU and MC&S. In May 1951 the *People’s World* reported that “more than 1,000 Negro unionists in the Bay Area” turned out to listen to Paul Robeson and Revels Cayton speak at NNLC meetings in San Francisco and Oakland.¹⁴⁸ A few months later, Thibodeaux boasted in a *People’s World* article that the chapter already had 160 members, adding that “many more are involved in its activities.”¹⁴⁹ But such estimates were likely inflated – and turning out to listen to Robeson did not equate to support for the NNLC. The NNLC western regional conference in January 1952, which was the largest event staged by the group in San Francisco, drew only about seventy-five men and women to San Francisco from the Bay Area and across the state.¹⁵⁰ When FBI agents questioned Chester about the council’s activities in 1956, he said that “the NNLC was not very successful in the San Francisco Bay Area” and that it “did not have a large membership and meetings were only attended by a few people.”¹⁵¹

Noncommunist and anticommunist trade unionists might have been weary of a group led by workers closely associated with the CP, and while the NNLC did not issue pro-Soviet policies, its condemnation of the Smith Act and demand for the return of Paul Robeson's passport may have given some pause.¹⁵² Still, some membership problems did stem from Cold War policies. Because the council primarily consisted of workers from Communist-backed unions, the problems that the MC&S encountered under the port security program would have added to any recruitment problems that it had. Chester told FBI agents that his decision to leave the NNLC in 1954 was in part influenced by the Attorney General's placing it on the list of subversive organizations the previous year. In addition to leaving the organization himself, he also advised "all his friends in the unions to stay away from the NNLC" because he did not want them to jeopardize their job security.¹⁵³ But in his resignation letter to Coleman Young, Chester cited his "inability to function in the past" as his reason for leaving, and explained that it was "physically impossible for me to participate in the policy making deliberations of the N.N.L.C." in large part because of "my own heavy load of trade-union responsibilities in the ILWU which make it impossible for me to leave the West Coast."¹⁵⁴ Support from ILWU leadership for the NNLC also may have waned. As early as September 1951, Chester confided to Paul Robeson that he was "having some difficulties with some of the progressives here – they just can't seem to understand the importance of the Negro Labor Councils and the Negro's fight for liberation."¹⁵⁵ The early 1950s were difficult times for the ILWU, and it needed young activists like Chester and King to help the union fend off raiding unions.

In the latter half of the decade the ability and willingness of black ILWU members to coordinate with other civil rights organizations also increased as their union distanced itself from the Communist Party. By the mid-1950s a significant number of ILWU members had left the CP,

which had experienced a sharp decline in its already small United States membership. FBI informants reported that black union leaders Curtis McClain and Bill Chester left the party at some point between 1952 and 1954. One FBI informant claimed that Chester continued to support “progressive” candidates in Local 10 elections through the 1950s, although by 1960 the FBI informants “could furnish no information ... regarding any CP or front group activity” by Chester. According to the FBI Chester had also requested present and former CP members to refrain from running for union offices.¹⁵⁶ Some ILWU members likely left the CP because they found the economic risks of party membership too great for a waterfront worker during the height of the red scare. Others, such as Local 6 member Jack Olson, became disenchanted with the Party itself. “I felt the Party had lost its viability as an American working-class force,” Olson said of his leaving the Party in 1952. “There was an exodus from the ILWU Party clubs, too.”¹⁵⁷ And still others, such as Keith Eickman, were expelled by the Party. “I had an argument on the floor of the stewards’ council with a black Local 6 leader who is still one of my friends,” remembered Eickman, who was expelled for “white chauvinism” in 1955.¹⁵⁸ Some members remained tied to the CP and committed to left-wing causes, however, at least at the local level, the ILWU leadership drifted more toward the center as they concerned themselves with gaining political influence and securing basic bread-and-butter labor issues.

Whatever its causes, the decline in CP activity among ILWU members coincided with an apparent détente between the local NAACP and the union’s left-wing members. At the time the NAACP was refocusing on employment discrimination in much the same way that the NNLC had a few years earlier, and it would have found the participation of black trade unionists to be of particular value. The NAACP launched its largest fair employment protest in 1955, when it attempted to revive the moribund NNLC campaign against the Yellow Cab Company. The

ILWU supported the campaign, and Local 6 sent a delegation to the company's offices to personally protest its refusal to employ black drivers.¹⁵⁹ When in 1960 the San Francisco NAACP decided to participate in the national organization's protest against Woolworth and Kress stores in support of the campaign to desegregate lunch counters in southern five and dime stores, the ILWU hosted meetings at which the local organization launched its "Don't Buy" campaign and participated in picket lines in front of the retail chains' Market street stores.¹⁶⁰ By 1966, when the San Francisco NAACP found its membership at an "all-time low level," it sought help from the ILWU in a mass membership drive. A decade earlier the NAACP had instructed its members to stay away from people like LeRoy King, but it now pleaded with him that it was "of paramount importance that we have the involvement of you and your organization in this great challenge that lies before us."¹⁶¹

"a new and dignified kind of relationship between a union and the Negro community"

The ILWU continued to look for ways to strengthen its ties with San Francisco's African American community after the demise of the NNLC. In the latter half of the 1950s Revels Cayton, the black radical and former MC&S and National Negro Congress activist who had left San Francisco in 1945, spearheaded the union's civil rights activism. After spending more than seven years in New York City, Cayton returned to San Francisco in May 1953.¹⁶² By that time he had distanced himself from the Communist Party.¹⁶³ Although overweight and beset with health problems, in 1955 Cayton found employment at the Hills Brothers coffee plant, where he worked until back problems forced him to seek less strenuous employment in 1960. While at Hills Brothers he joined the ILWU Local 6 and became involved with the Frontiersmen. At the Local 6 contract and constitutional convention in 1955, he advanced the Frontiersmen agenda by

calling upon the ILWU to “make the electing of Negro officials a part of its fighting program for survival.”¹⁶⁴ Cayton’s influence was evident a little over a month later when San Francisco’s Local 6 issued a “Statement of Policy on Negro Rights” at the ILWU biennial convention in Long Beach, declaring that the “security of the ILWU and its collective bargaining achievements will be strengthened by the victory of the Negro people in the campaigns in which they are most concerned at the present time.”¹⁶⁵ The following year, in an effort to “get our own house in order,” Local 6 created a Committee on Integration. Acknowledging the “upsurge of Negro militancy” in the South, in 1957 the new committee demanded that “other organizations, trade union and civic, join in the fight to make equality and dignity a reality for the Negro people in all those communities in which our members reside.”¹⁶⁶ That same year Local 6 joined a renewed community campaign to fight for a municipal FEP law and instructed all of its divisions to establish FEP committees.¹⁶⁷ Meanwhile, beginning in 1959, when the union recruited new workers under a new probationary category called “B men,” Bill Chester and Harry Bridges overcame the objections of some older white members to see to it that at least half of the new B-men were blacks from areas of high unemployment.¹⁶⁸ Highlighting the ILWU’s continued presence in San Francisco’s black community (and the Western Addition-Fillmore in particular), in 1960 *Sun-Reporter* readers voted Bill Chester “Man of the Year.”¹⁶⁹

The Local 6 and Local 10 actions reflected the ILWU’s established belief that support for local civil rights struggles could be mutually beneficial for the union. Yet upon his return to the city and the local labor movement, Cayton must have felt that the ILWU was not doing enough to maintain its alliance with black San Franciscans. The blossoming of the civil rights movement in the South and the emergence of Jim Crow as a national issue also inspired Cayton to reinvigorate the labor-black alliance. At an ILWU district council meeting in January 1960, he

advanced a resolution to “make common cause, wherever possible, with the Negro community on those common issues that affect us both – most notably those issues that will spell full freedom and equality for the Negro people,” something he had counseled black waterfront workers in New York to do a decade earlier. The new union policy urged all members “to avail themselves of the opportunity to function in the various movements of the Negro community in a way that they will make a constructive contribution to the security of their community and thereby help to strengthen the Negro-Labor alliance so necessary to both groups,” while promising that “they will have the Union’s support and our firm belief this activity will, among other things, make the more effective workers in the Union.”¹⁷⁰

The resolution itself was grandiose and did not include specifics, but soon after its adoption Local 6 demonstrated the type of reciprocity the community could expect. It established a Communities Activities Committee, which Cayton chaired, and sponsored a conference aimed at expanding “job opportunities for Negroes and chances for Negro advancement by spreading knowledge of the provisions of California’s new FEP law” and to address “the problem of increased apprenticeship opportunities for minorities” in the skilled trades.¹⁷¹ In return, Local 6 expected community support in its pursuit of a thirty cent per hour wage increase for warehouse workers. The *Sun-Reporter* embraced the proposal as “a new and dignified kind of relationship between a union and the Negro community that has the new and reciprocal factor of being a true two-way street.” The fact that the union expected a *quid pro quo* for its community involvement did not bother Goodlett and Fleming in the least. “How many come to us and say, in effect, ‘Give these people a place at your council tables, and you will be stronger? They will come to you as part of your community, not as our spokesmen.’ That, in essence, is what the ILWU is saying,” the paper approvingly editorialized. “The success of this union in its struggles for wages

and conditions is thus of vital concern to our entire community.”¹⁷²

The union’s new “reciprocity” policy helps explain why its black members did not join the newly-formed San Francisco chapter of the Negro American Labor Council (NALC). Indeed, it suggests that more than anticommunism caused black ILWU members to remain outside the new organization of black trade unionists. Officially founded in May 1960 in Detroit, several months after A. Philip Randolph squared off with American Federation of Labor (AFL) president George Meany over racial discrimination within the organized labor during the group’s annual convention in San Francisco, the NALC sought to provide an organizational vehicle with which to challenge racial discrimination within the AFL, “encourage high levels of union responsibility among Negro trade union members,” and to “encourage more active community leadership on the part of Negro trade unionists in the general Negro community.”¹⁷³ The previous decade Randolph had counseled black workers to avoid the NNLC because of its Communist connections and in 1952 had joined other unionists in forming the National Negro Labor Committee, which historian Clarence Lang calls “a blatant attempt to take the initiative from the NNLC.”¹⁷⁴ Yet upon learning of plans for the new organization in the fall of 1959, along with a rumor that Randolph had “laid aside his anti-Communist attitude,” Bill Chester contacted Randolph in an offer to collaborate, informing him that the ILWU had “felt the need for some kind of Negro labor council in which we could help each other in our mutual problems, regardless of union affiliations or other differences.”¹⁷⁵ A few months later the ILWU praised Randolph’s stance against Meany and his call to organize black trade unionists as “a calculated move” and “the answer to continued rebuff from calloused labor bureaucrats.”¹⁷⁶ There is no record of a response from Randolph, although Chester and others in the ILWU, who no longer associated closely with the CP, still may not have felt welcome. The NALC constitution barred

communists from leadership positions, and Randolph made it clear that he would not tolerate local branches he thought to be controlled by the Communist Party.¹⁷⁷ In June 1961 Carlton Goodlett, who lauded the formation of the San Francisco NALC, also urged the group to work with the “militant leadership provided by the ILWU,” which suggests that, at least from Goodlett’s perspective, the NALC was weary of the longshore and warehouse workers.¹⁷⁸

Yet Chester and other ILWU leaders also may have concluded that investing in the NALC may not have the same reciprocal returns that the union expected from civil rights activism conducted under its own auspices. The NALC did not fit the two-way street that the ILWU sought to pave between itself and San Francisco’s black community. The ILWU would offer support for the NALC while remaining outside the organization. It co-sponsored and hosted several NALC events – including a visit from Randolph. When the NALC picketed the Sailor’s Union of the Pacific at Pier 50 for refusing to register ten black seamen for work, 150 ILWU members – most of whom were black – honored the picket line.¹⁷⁹ But no members of the ILWU appeared on the San Francisco NALC membership rolls.

Although the ILWU did not participate, the NALC helped make black trade unionists visible and respected civil rights activists in San Francisco. Without direct participation of the ILWU, the SFNALC was destined to be a small organization. Although it received favorable publicity in the pages of the *Sun-Reporter* and had an “alert nucleus,” the SFNALC struggled to enlist members as its leaders felt “handicapped by the apathy found generally in the labor movement and especially among Negro trade unionists.”¹⁸⁰ Lacking in resources, San Francisco leaders also received little guidance from the national organization on questions such as whether to accept applications from non-trade unionists (which also pointed to organizers difficulties in recruiting black workers) and “how best to attack discrimination within a given union without

giving aid and comfort to the enemies of organized labor.”¹⁸¹ James Herndon, the chapter’s president, also expressed frustration over the chapter’s lack of an official charter from the national NALC. “A charter has some type of magical appeal for some of our people, and many trade unionists we have approached for membership,” Herndon informed A. Philip Randolph. “They will not join unless we have a charter.”¹⁸² Only thirty delegates from unions across the Bay Area attended a regional conference in 1961, and they spoke frankly about the difficulty of getting black trade unionists to trust one another and to promote the NALC program. At the peak of its activity in 1962, the SFNALC listed just 46 dues-paying members.¹⁸³

Yet as historian Will Jones has pointed out, “the NALC was a network of leaders rather than a mass organization like the NAACP or a union.”¹⁸⁴ The San Francisco NALC was led by a cadre of dedicated activists who, unlike the black trade unionists who had comprised the NNLC, entered the labor movement after the height of the Red Scare and who lacked ties to left-led unions. Its president, James Herndon, belonged to the International Typographers Union. A native of Troy, Alabama, Herndon was a classmate of Martin Luther King, Jr. at Morehouse College and served as president of the campus NAACP chapter. According to Gerald Johnson, who had been an officer in the NNLC, Herndon “was enamored” with Morehouse president Dr. Benjamin Mays, a social activist, Baptist minister, and former Pullman Porter who also became a mentor of King.¹⁸⁵ “I mean that was his hero,” Johnson recalled.¹⁸⁶ Mays’ influence stayed with Herndon as he earned a law degree from Howard University and moved to San Francisco in 1956. Before accepting a position with the law firm of Garry, Dreyfus & McTernan in 1961, he co-founded the African American Historical and Cultural Society of San Francisco and joined the ITU while working as a printer at the *San Francisco Chronicle*.¹⁸⁷ When the NALC formed in 1960, Herndon took the lead in setting up a San Francisco chapter and became a mentor to

other young trade unionists who joined the organization. Among them was David Johnson, a Jacksonville, Florida native who settled in San Francisco after the war to study photography under Ansel Adams. He took a job at the post office in 1949, where he found himself surrounded by several other well-educated African Americans, some people “with Ph.D.s” who could not find other employment. At the time he did not “know anything about unions,” however he soon became involved in efforts to fight employment discrimination within the post office and to get better black representation within the union. Johnson joined the National Association of Postal Employees, and organization of black postal workers, around 1956, taking photographs for its newspaper and becoming “really interested in what was going on in that struggle.”¹⁸⁸ When Herndon set up the San Francisco NALC, Johnson, who lived in the Fillmore district, signed up. They were also joined by Harold Brooks, who served as NALC western field secretary. Brooks was a mortician by trade and believed that “the relationship between juvenile delinquency and job opportunities” was “an extremely close one.” In the years leading up to his time with the NALC, he claimed to devote twelve to fourteen hours a day performing volunteer work with youth at the Bayview Community Center.¹⁸⁹

The activities of the SFNALC belies Clarence Lang’s contention that that the NALC “co-opted” much of the NNLC agenda to accommodate a more conservative anticommunist political culture.¹⁹⁰ In fact, the only difference in the tactics and goals of the San Francisco NNLC and NALC were the parts of the city in which they operated. Like their counterparts in the ILWU, Herndon, Johnson, and Brooks sought “to make Negro workers active community participants.”¹⁹¹ Yet whereas the NNLC had concentrated on the centrally-located Western Addition-Fillmore district, the NALC was more heavily involved in Bayview-Hunters Point. By 1961 Hunters Point still contained the dilapidated buildings constructed to house shipyard

workers during World War II, had the highest unemployment rates in the city, and lacked even the limited organizational activity of the Fillmore-Western Addition. The one exception were several female activists, collectively known as the “Big Five,” who wielded the lion’s share of social and political power in the community in the postwar decades.¹⁹² “The poverty program here started right after the war when we were faced with being the first fired after being the last hired during the hostility of the Second World War,” Harold Brooks stated in reference to the Big Five’s leadership in the fight for social welfare, fair employment, and fair housing in the 1950s and 1960s.¹⁹³ NALC leaders allied with the Big Five, and together they helped spearhead formation of the Bayview Citizens Committee (BVCC) after the San Francisco Housing Authority evicted the families of twelve teenagers who were involved in a gang shooting outside of a dance in Hunters Point. According to sociologist Arthur Hippler, the protest surrounding the evictions “marked the beginning of the unusual expansion of political and social organization in Hunters Point,” and after the SFHA agreed to rescind the evictions the BVCC vowed to carry on the fight against discrimination in housing, employment, and education.¹⁹⁴ For the next several years the NALC focused its efforts on the Bayview-Hunters Point area and worked closely with the BVCC. James Herndon served as chairman of the BVCC Job Opportunities Committee, in which several other NALC members also participated.¹⁹⁵ Through members such as Harold Brooks, the SFNALC was also closely tied to the Bayview Community Center, which provided recreational and educational programs for youth in the community while serving as a meeting place for community-based social and political activism.¹⁹⁶

Unlike the San Francisco NNLC, the NALC operated in the shadow of – rather than in lieu of – a fair employment law. A coalition of white liberals, civil rights organizations, labor unions, and religious leaders resurrected San Francisco’s moribund campaign for a fair

employment law in 1956. “We think that now is the time for this matter of a fair employment law to be put before our Board of Supervisors again,” a *Sun-Reporter* editorial announced in January.¹⁹⁷ The proposed law had remained dormant since the Board of Supervisors narrowly rejected FEP in 1951, but by 1956 the political climate had changed. Eleven states and eleven cities, including New York, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Detroit, Cleveland, Minneapolis, and Buffalo had enacted fair employment laws. San Francisco Mayor George Christopher, a Republican who entered office in January 1956, had voted for the FEP ordinance as a Supervisor five years earlier and pledged to back the measure again as the city’s chief executive.¹⁹⁸ In 1956 the Council for Civic Unity (CCU) was also in the final stages of compiling data for its *Civil Rights Inventory of San Francisco*, which would dispel any notion that the voluntary plan had been successful in eliminating racial discrimination in employment. Although the study would not be published until 1958, CCU executive director Edward Howden made preliminary findings available to the Board of Supervisors and reported in December that “inequality of employment opportunity” remained a serious problem in San Francisco.¹⁹⁹ As Carlton Goodlett rallied *Sun-Reporter* readers behind the FEP, a new coalition called the San Francisco Committee for Equal Job Opportunity worked on drafting the law. The 1956 proposal was modeled on the 1951 ordinance, with the important omission of the controversial provision allowing violators to be sentenced to jail. A series of hearings on FEP held in January 1957 revealed the breadth of support for the law this time around as representatives of business, labor, both political parties, and civil rights, religious, and civic groups all urged its passage.²⁰⁰ That summer San Francisco became the first major city in California to enact a law outlawing employment discrimination based on race or religion.²⁰¹ And its impact was immediate. In August the Yellow Cab Company, which had weathered protests for years from the NNLC and NAACP, announced that it would

hire black drivers for the first time in San Francisco when the FEP ordinance took effect.²⁰²

But as Thomas Fleming counseled black San Franciscans, the new FEP would not work with such magic in most cases, pointing to the “tremendous task” that the new commission faced.²⁰³ In its two years of operation, the city’s fair employment bureaucracy was understaffed, slow-moving, and limited in scope. During the final campaign to pass the ordinance, Edgar Osgood, who headed the San Francisco Committee for Equal Job Opportunity, explained that despite its enforcement mechanisms he expected most of the law’s impact would be “education, preventive and conciliatory in nature.”²⁰⁴ Edward Howden, who took over as head of the San Francisco Commission on Equal Employment Opportunity (SFCEEO) in September 1958 (a couple of months after the CCU published its 345-page study detailing racial discrimination in San Francisco), similarly focused on combatting discrimination through education. He would do so under budgetary complaints that limited the SFCEEO staff. In the spring of 1958 the Board of Supervisors rejected the commission’s request for a \$28,000 budget, agreeing to allocate \$19,170 to its activities after “a storm of protest.”²⁰⁵ Moreover, the SFCEEO did not generate the same level of publicity as the wartime FEPC. It heard all complaints in private and only held public hearings in cases that it could not settle behind closed doors. Victims of discrimination had to initiate the proceedings themselves, and proving discrimination could be difficult. In two years the SFCEEO received 80 complaints, about half of which were dismissed and thirty-five percent of which were “satisfactorily adjusted” with no cases heard in public.²⁰⁶ The results were modest, but supporters of the law cited these results as evidence that the fair employment law “worked to the satisfaction of all concerned.” In August 1959 Howden stated that the experience of the SFCEEO “points up the fact that FEPC is an indispensable instrumentality if California is to make steady and significant progress toward the goal of complete equality of employment

opportunity for all, and if minority-group youth are to be inspired to secure the education and training which will equip them for the increasingly skilled, technical and professional level occupations of the immediate future.”²⁰⁷ Howden spoke shortly after C.L. Dellums, Tara Hall Pittman, Augustus Hawkins, and Byron Rumford, who had led the campaign for a state FEPC since the end of the war, were finally able to get the support they needed in Sacramento to pass a fair employment law.²⁰⁸ The new state agency would take over for the SFCEEEO (Governor Pat Brown appointed Howden to the new state FEPC), thus ending its short run. The employment campaigns that the NALC and BVCC waged in Hunters Point would thus supplement the inchoate state-run fair employment machinery in San Francisco and California.

The SFNALC and the BVCC focused their employment campaign on the expanding service and retail sector, where they identified an urgent need for black workers to “fight to win a fair share of these new jobs” in which they were underemployed.²⁰⁹ A Council for Civic Unity (CCU) survey of fifteen department and specialty stores in 1955 found that three-fourths had no black sales clerks. A union official told CCU researchers that most retail establishments still refused to employ African Americans in sales positions, and that his union tried “to cater to the whims of the employer” by sending the “type” of clerk requested. A poll conducted by the union in 1954 found that 51 percent of its members thought that their stores were opposed to hiring minority clerks.²¹⁰ Most of the complaints filed with the SFCEEEO were in the “wholesale and retail trade” sector, and those businesses were among the most susceptible to direct-action protests such as picketing and selective patronage campaigns.²¹¹ When the SFNALC and BVCC surveyed the employment practices of Bayview-Hunters Point stores in November 1961, they also found that most of the businesses were owned by whites and few employed any black workers. At the time the unemployment rate among adult black men in the district had reached

12.2 percent and was growing, with women experiencing an even higher rate.²¹²

The SFNALC and BVCC employment campaign in Bayview-Hunters Point were similar to those waged by the NNLC in the Fillmore district during the previous decade. They combined “Don’t Buy Where you Can’t Work” pickets with behind-the-scenes negotiations to “to get jobs for our people in areas where we spend our money.”²¹³ By 1963, the NALC-BVCC campaign in Bayview-Hunters Point had succeeded in making neighborhood businesses more responsive to the employment needs of its customer base. After an initial campaign against the Super-Save market resulted in the Chinese-American owned store hiring two black sales clerks, several other markets and banks in the Bayview-Hunters Point district followed suit, some not waiting to be contacted by the SFNALC.²¹⁴ “The smart merchant must by now realize that the citizens of the Bayview-Hunters Point area are determined to change the false image that’s been with them for centuries,” the *Sun-Reporter* editorialized.²¹⁵ As significant as this breakthrough was, the campaign only provided a handful of jobs, and the focus on sales jobs for female workers did nothing to alleviate the problem of male juvenile delinquency that the NALC linked to employment discrimination. Moreover, during the protest against Super-Save, Local 648 of the Retail Grocery Clerks Union filed a complaint with the California Fair Employment Practices Commission alleging that the NALC had violated the state fair employment law by asking the union to dispatch workers on the basis of race.²¹⁶ As a result, James Herndon counseled the SFNALC to “never demand merchant hire a proportionate number of Negroes because employment would then be a question of membership in Negro race rather than on merit.”²¹⁷ Its subsequent job actions would focus more on apprenticeship and upgrading in male-dominated industries while making demands for the gradual increase in the employment of black workers.²¹⁸

Although their accomplishments may have been modest, the SFNALC elevated the presence of black trade unionists in Bayview-Hunters Point. Even as the SFNALC disbanded in the mid-1960s, its members remained important community leaders as they were active in a variety of causes. James Herndon would eventually become the firm's first African-American partner at Garry, Dreyfus & McTernan and amass a client list that included housing rights groups, the United Farm Workers, and Huey Newton.²¹⁹ Harold Brooks continued to work with youth and along with other members of the Big Five he became active in the district's federally-funded poverty programs later in the 1960s. David Johnson remained active in NAPE and helped found a black caucus at University of California at San Francisco.²²⁰ Johnson would also join with black ILWU members after they formed a city-wide group of black trade unionists in the middle of the decade.

Although he did not lead his union into the NALC, Bill Chester still sought a citywide organization of black trade unionists that could be led by the ILWU's black contingent. In 1963, he joined Revels Cayton, LeRoy King, and a few other ILWU members in founding the United Negro Labor Assembly in an effort to unite black trade unionists from across the city (the group would later change its name to the Labor Assembly for Community Action). Although it initially consisted mostly of ILWU members, over the next several years the Labor Assembly would expand to include trade unionists from other unions with significant African American membership, such as the Laborers Local 261, Transport Workers Union Local 250, the International Ladies Garment Workers Union, the National Alliance of Postal Employees. As with the NNLC and NALC, the Labor Assembly sought to place trade unionists at the forefront of black workers' struggle for economic equality.²²¹ Yet they did so in a different way. By 1963, black trade unionists, especially those in the ILWU, had earned reputations as community

leaders who could draw upon the support of their union in their fight for civil rights. Rather than launch campaigns against individual businesses as its predecessor organizations had done, the Labor Assembly would seek to wield influence through political channels.

Before doing so, the Assembly strengthened its power base by solidifying the alliance between trade unionists and black ministers. Revels Cayton, had been attempting to forge an alliance with the ministers since returning to San Francisco. Although he considered himself an atheist, he joined the Macedonia Baptist Church “for political, not religious reasons” and became “the leading layman in the Baptist Ministerial Alliance.”²²² Bill Chester had also established a solid working relationship with the Baptist Ministers Union during the previous fifteen years. Shortly after forming, the Labor Assembly partnered with the local BMU and the Ministerial Alliance to establish the Church Labor Conference (CLC). The ministers’ helped buttress the legitimacy of the Labor Assembly while providing black trade unionists with another institutional platform. As one Labor Assembly member put it, their fight against economic inequality needed “the insight and talent of ministers, professionals, businessmen, and politicians relating to the masses at the bottom of the heap.”²²³ According to sociologist David Wellman, who interviewed members of the CLC while earning a master’s degree at the University of California at Berkeley in the mid-1960s, “CLC leaders were directly linked to the Negro community” because their “roles as leaders of unions and churches involved them in the problems and issues confronting Negro people in their daily lives.”²²⁴ Wellman noted that the CLC worked well because each party respected the other’s autonomy.²²⁵ ILWU leaders also viewed the CLC as “an extension of the good cooperation between the ILWU and the Negro community.”²²⁶ Cayton later told biographer Richard Hobbs that black trade unionists’ idea of the “church-labor concept” was that the “church would have them on Sunday and they gave them

a spiritual, and we have them during the week and we give them the bread and butter.”²²⁷ As the Civil Rights Movement continued to expand across the South and inspire activists in the Bay Area, Cayton hoped that the CLC would become a new force in black San Franciscans’ fight for equality. As he announced to the founding meeting of the CLC, “We are not building a namby-pamby organization, but a rough, tough, angry organization that is going to say and do what is necessary to change the way of life of Negroes now living in San Francisco.”²²⁸

Immediately upon forming, the CLC placed itself at the forefront of local events by organizing a massive demonstration in support of the black freedom movement in Birmingham, Alabama and across the South. After being challenged by his longtime friend Matt Crawford to “see what you can do about shaking up some kind of demonstration” in solidarity with blacks in Birmingham, Cayton had little trouble convincing the newly-formed CLC to organize the rally. The demonstration showcased the organizational potential of the CLC as it quickly set out to make the idea a reality. The ministers contacted the city’s black and white churches and recruited the Reverend Bernard Lee, vice president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), to speak at the rally. Meanwhile, the black labor leaders solicited support from the city’s labor unions and civic leaders, and secured the use of seven sound trucks to spread word of the demonstration throughout the streets of San Francisco and Berkeley. CLC organizers also enlisted widespread media attention, which helped ensure a large turnout. LeRoy King served as the grand marshal of the march, Bill Chester co-chaired the event along with the Reverend Hamilton Boswell of the Jones Methodist Church, and Revels Cayton acted as coordinator.²²⁹

The mass demonstration took place ten days after the idea was first conceived. Under the banner “We March in Unity for Freedom in Birmingham and Equality in San Francisco” and to the tune of “We Shall Overcome,” between 15,000 and 30,000 people marched up Market Street

and gathered at the Civic Center on Sunday, May 26, 1963. The march featured a cross-section of the city's civil rights, religious, and civic leaders. One observer noted that "watchers constantly joined the parade as it proceeded up Market Street." ILWU banners and members were conspicuous among the marchers and speakers. Chester's address linked the southern and northern freedom struggles, declaring the "desire to see a new birth of freedom in America – in Birmingham, in Mississippi, in every state of the deep South. ...and in New York, Chicago, Detroit, Portland, Oakland. ...and right here in San Francisco."²³⁰ The San Francisco Police Department praised the organizers for the orderly behavior of demonstrators, and Mayor George Christopher officially proclaimed May 26th Human Rights Day in San Francisco. The demonstration raised more than \$16,000 for the SCLC, with \$3,500 (the largest single donation) coming from the ILWU.²³¹ Reflecting on the event more than two decades later, Revels Cayton told interviewer Richard Hobbs that he "always looked upon it as one of my very best accomplishments."²³²

The May rally was the first of several demonstrations that the ILWU helped organize in San Francisco during 1963-1964. A few weeks after returning from the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, in September 1963 Chester and King helped organize a march and rally in response to the bombing of the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church that killed four girls in Birmingham, Alabama. And in the summer of 1964 the CLC staged another mass rally in downtown San Francisco – this time to protest the civil rights position of Arizona Senator Barry Goldwater, who would accept the Republican nomination for President a few days later at the nearby Cow Palace. James Farmer of CORE, John Lewis of SNCC, Ralph Abernathy of the SCLC, New York Governor Nelson Rockefeller and Senator Jacob Javits, and baseball great and Republican Jackie Robinson were also among the approximately 20,000-30,000 in attendance.²³³

In 1967 the ILWU hosted Martin Luther King, Jr. in San Francisco and made him an honorary member of Local 10. According to Revels Cayton, the CLC “never worked out a day-by-day program ... they never got into a jobs program.” But its ability to mobilize a cross-section of the city in the 1963 and 1964 demonstrations showed that after almost two decades, black trade unionists – with help from their minister allies – had become a formidable force in San Francisco.

For black trade unionists in the ILWU, who dominated the CLC and Labor Assembly, community activism had always been a two-way street – a means to benefit both black San Franciscans and the union itself. It was perhaps because of this history that Carlton Goodlett viewed the growing power of black trade unionists with some trepidation. He had reminded the ILWU at its 1957 convention that the black community did not “blindly” support the union.²³⁴ And in an editorial lauding the Birmingham demonstration, the *Sun-Reporter* challenged “the leaders of the Negro church and Negro labor” to provide “meaningful” and “substantive” programs to address racial inequality in employment, housing, and education. “Who are better qualified to be the economic guardians of the Negro community than the leaders of organized Negro labor,” the paper declared, pledging its support to “these important leaders.”²³⁵ That support would be severely tested in the years that followed.

¹ Richard Durham, “‘Race Specialists’ Flayed by Coast Labor Leader,” *Chicago Defender*, September 23, 1944.

² *People’s World*, February 14, 1942.

³ William Chester, Interview by Robert Martin, July 23, 1969, Ralph Bunche Collection, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University (Hereinafter cited as “Bill Chester Interview”), 27.

⁴ Many civil rights and labor historians argue that Cold War anticommunism crushed this “decisive first phase” of the civil rights movement and eliminated the potential for far-reaching social and economic change. See Robert Rogers Korstad, *Civil Rights Unionism: Tobacco Workers and the Struggle for Democracy* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2003); Martha Biondi, *To Stand and Fight: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Postwar New York City* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003); Michael K. Honey, *Southern Labor and Black Civil Rights: Organizing Memphis Workers* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993); Beth Tompkins Bates, *Pullman Porters and the Rise of Protest Politics in Black America, 1925-1945* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001); Jacqueline Dowd Hall, “The Long Civil Rights Movement,” *Journal of American History*, Vol. 91, No. 4 (March 2005): 1246, 1247; Robbie Lieberman and Clarence Lang, eds., *Anticommunism and the African American Freedom Movement: Another Side of the Story* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

Eric Arnesen, building on civil rights historians such as Steven Lawson and Adam Fairclough, has recently challenged this “new consensus” on domestic anticommunism and civil rights. He argues that the “Communist Party’s line mattered tremendously for how the left-labor-civil rights coalition evolved; that the coalition was never as strong as its historians claim; and the Party contributed substantially to its own decline as well as to that of the coalition; and that the ideas that were extinguished were far less persuasive and unique than the new conventional wisdom maintains.” Eric Arnesen, “Civil Rights and the Cold War at Home: Postwar Activism, Anticommunism, and the Decline of the Left,” *American Communist History* 11:1, 5-44.

⁵ Robert W. Cherny, “The Making of a Labor Radical: Harry Bridges, 1901-1934,” *Pacific Historical Review*, Vol. 64, No. 3 (August 1995), 364.

⁶ Historian William P. Jones makes a similar point concerning black trade unionists in his work on the Negro American Labor Council. William P. Jones, “The Unknown Origins of the March on Washington: Civil Rights Politics and the Black Working Class,” *Labor: Studies in Working-Class History of the Americas* (Volume 7, Number 3, Fall 2010): 33-52.

This chapter and the next are also influenced by Kevin Boyle’s observation that “McCarthyism may have actually broadened liberalism, as it pushed into the liberal orbit at least some radicals seeking to remain politically engaged after the destruction of the independent left.” Kevin Boyle, “Labour, Left, and the Long Civil Rights Movement,” *Social History* Vol. 30, No. 3 (August 2005): 370. Eric Arnesen has also recently questioned the degree to which “the domestic Cold War silenced radical voices at the forefront of vital, interconnected social movements, depriving the nation of a powerful analysis that linked race, class, capitalism, and colonialism.” Eric Arnesen, “Civil Rights and the Cold War at Home,” 23-28.

⁷ Howard Kimmeldorf, *Reds or Rackets? The Making of Radical and Conservative Unions on the Waterfront* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).

⁸ Kimmeldorf, *Reds or Rackets?* 165.

⁹ Black ILWU members’ community activism that this chapter describes in some ways parallels what historian David Lewis-Coleman has referred to as the “civic unionism” of black autoworkers in Detroit during the same period. David Lewis-Coleman, *Race Against Liberalism: Black Workers and the UAW in Detroit* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 2.

¹⁰ Nelson, *Divided We Stand*, 96-97; Albert Broussard, *Black San Francisco: The Struggle for Racial Equality in the West, 1900-1954* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1993), 156.

¹¹ Bruce Nelson asserts that they were “determined to put an end to the long era of white supremacy” on the waterfront. Nelson, *Divided We Stand*, 90.

¹² Nelson, *Divided We Stand*, 90, 96.

¹³ Bridges quoted Harvey Schwartz, *Solidarity Stories: An Oral History of the ILWU* (Seattle and London: The University of Washington Press, 2009, 29.

¹⁴ Bridges quoted Harvey Schwartz, *Solidarity Stories: An Oral History of the ILWU* (Seattle and London: The University of Washington Press, 2009, 30.

¹⁵ Bruce Nelson, *Divided We Stand: American Workers and the Struggle for Black Equality* (Princeton and Oxford: Prince University Press, 2001), 96.

¹⁶ Eugene Lasaremy Oral History excerpt appears in *The ILWU Story: Six Decades of Militant Unionism* (San Francisco: ILWU, nd), in author's possession.

¹⁷ By 1940, there were approximately 60 black longshoremen working San Francisco and Oakland ports. Nelson, *Divided We Stand*, 96, 101.

¹⁸ Nelson, *Divided We Stand*, 96-97; Kimmeldorf, *Reds or Rackets?* 146.

¹⁹ Max Millard, "Thomas Fleming, 'Good Soldier' of San Francisco's Black Press, Retires from Sun-Reporter at 89."

²⁰ "Dennis West" (Thomas Fleming) Interview with Paul Miller, Appendix E, in Paul T. Miller, "The Interplay of Housing, Employment, and Civil Rights In the Experience of San Francisco's African American Community, 1945-1975," PhD Dissertation, Temple University, 2008, 445. Based on his conversations with Bridges at the time, labor reporter Sidney Roger notes that Fleming and Goodlett had an impact on Bridges. "Sidney Roger: A Liberal Journalist on the Air and on the Waterfront : Labor and Political Issues, 1932-1990," Oral History Interviews of Sidney Roger conducted by Julie Shearer, 1989 and 1990, International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Oral History Series, Regional Oral History Office, University of California at Berkeley, hereafter cited as Sidney Roger Oral History, 604.

²¹ Nelson, *Divided We Stand*, 99; see also Kimmeldorf, *Reds or Rackets?* 149.

²² According to Albert Broussard, Goodlett was the "most influential members" of the city's postwar black elite. Broussard, *Black San Francisco*, 182.

²³ For just few examples, see, Thomas C. Fleming, "The Weekly Report," *Sun-Reporter*, February 25, 1956; Editorial, "What the Bridges Verdict Means to Labor," *Sun-Reporter*, June 20, 1953; "'Campaign Against ... Our Community': 18-Year Attack on a Union That Won't Discriminate," *Sun-Reporter*, November 29, 1952.

²⁴ Interview With "Anthony Anderson" (Daniel Collins) by Paul Miller, Appendix C, in Paul T. Miller, "The Interplay of Housing, Employment, and Civil Rights In the Experience of San Francisco's African American Community, 1945-1975," PhD Dissertation, Temple University, 2008, 364, 370. Background of Collins in Broussard, *Black San Francisco*, 182.

²⁵ "Local 6 Wins Bias Case for Negro Member," *Daily People's World*, June 7, 1949.

²⁶ See, for example, "Local 6 Negroes Win protection From Cop Raiders," *Daily People's World*, June 12, 1961; *Local 6 Bulletin*, May 5, 1951, June 18, 1951.

²⁷ "Local 6 Wins Bias Case for Negro Member," *Daily People's World*, June 7, 1949; *Local 6 Bulletin*, June 13, 1949; *Local 6 Bulletin*, February 29, 1952

²⁸ Bill Chester Interview, 24; Editorial, "Are Negro Doctors Banned by Permanente?" *Sun-Reporter*, July 25, 1953; "Kaiser Officials Keep Mum on Negro Doctor Discrimination," *Sun-Reporter*, October 17, 1953.

²⁹ *Local 6 Bulletin*, March 13, 1953, May 4, 1953, July 20, 1953, October 20, 1952, July 25, 1951.

³⁰ Bill Chester Interview, 25.

³¹ Harvey Schwartz, ed., "Bill Chester: ILWU Civil Rights and Community Leader, 1938-1969," ILWU Oral History Project, Volume VI, Part I, ILWU.org.

³² Harvey Schwartz, *Solidarity Stories: An Oral History of the ILWU*, 51.0

³³ Curtis McClain, Interview by Robert E. Martin, Ralph Bunche Collection, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, (herein cited as McClain Interview), 3.

³⁴ See Paul Heide oral history in Schwartz, *Solidarity Stories*, 171.

³⁵ See oral histories of Fannie Walker, Virginia Wysinger, and Lillian Prince in Harvey Schwartz, *Solidarity Stories*, 199-200.

³⁶ Harvey Schwartz, *Solidarity Stories: An Oral History of the ILWU* (Seattle and London: The University of Washington Press, 2009, 48; Kimmeldorf, *Reds or Rackets?* 148.

³⁷ Quote appears in Kimmeldorf, *Reds or Rackets?* 151.

³⁸ Joe Lynch Oral History, in Schwartz, *Solidarity Stories*, 175.

³⁹ Kimmeldorf, *Reds or Rackets?* 131-144.

⁴⁰ According to Howard Kimmeldorf, in 1945 only 247 West Coast longshoremen were officially enrolled in the CP, and fellow travelers never represented more than twenty percent of ILWU members.. *Reds or Rackets?* 144, 163.

⁴¹ See Jack Olsen oral history in Harvey Schwartz, *Solidarity Stories*, 286.

⁴² Harvey Schwartz, *Solidarity Stories*, 278.

⁴³ Harvey Schwartz, *Solidarity Stories*, 285.

⁴⁴ Kimmeldorf, *Reds or Rackets?* 149.

⁴⁵ Kimmeldorf, *Reds or Rackets?* 150.

⁴⁶ Harvey Schwartz, *Solidarity Stories*, 286.

⁴⁷ Harvey Schwartz, *Solidarity Stories*, 278-79.

⁴⁸ Harvey Schwartz, *Solidarity Stories*, 279; see also Jack Olsen oral history, 286-87.

⁴⁹ David Jenkins, "The Union Movement, the California Labor School, and San Francisco Politics," an oral history conducted in 1987 and 1988 by Lisa Rubens, Regional Oral History office, the Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, 1993, p.287; see also Kimmeldorf, *Reds or Rackets?* 146-147.

⁵⁰ Harvey Schwartz, *Solidarity Stories: An Oral History of the ILWU*, 206-207; My Interview with LeRoy King.

⁵¹ Kimmeldorf, *Reds or Rackets?* 147.

⁵² Chester Interview, 14-16.

⁵³ "Sidney Roger: A Liberal Journalist on the Air and on the Waterfront: Labor and Political Issues, 1932-1990." Oral History Interviews of Sidney Roger conducted by Julie Shearer, 1989 and 1990, International

Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Oral History Series, Regional Oral History Office, University of California at Berkeley, hereafter cited as Sidney Roger Oral History, 817-818.

⁵⁴ Harvey Schwartz, *Solidarity Stories*, 47.

⁵⁵ LeRoy King Interview by author, November 6, 2002, San Francisco, CA.

⁵⁶ Nelson, *Divided We Stand*, 98-99; see also, Nancy Quam –Wickham, "Who Controls the Hiring Hall? The Struggle for Job Control in the ILWU During World War II," in Steve Rosswurm, ed., *The CIO's Left-Led Unions* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1992), 47-67

⁵⁷ Nelson, *Divided We Stand*, 100-101; Kimmeldorf, *Reds or Rackets?* 145; Oral history of Walter Williams in Harvey Schwartz, *Solidarity Stories*, 80-87; Testimony of Lou Rosser, 103.

⁵⁸ Broussard, *Black San Francisco*, 156; Oral histories of Cleophus Williams and Curtis McClain in Harvey Schwartz, *Solidarity Stories: An Oral History of the ILWU*, 48; 203; My interview with LeRoy King.

⁵⁹ Bill Chester and Cleophus Williams oral histories in Harvey Schwartz, *Solidarity Stories: An Oral History of the ILWU*, 39; 48. Howard Kimmeldorf writes that the black longshoremen who migrated from the Gulf Coast had long histories of opposing racism within the ILA. Kimmeldorf, *Reds or Rackets?* 144-45.

⁶⁰ "Bill Chester Named for ILWU Post," *People's World*, February 19, 1951.

⁶¹ Harvey Schwartz, *Solidarity Stories: An Oral History of the ILWU*, 204.

⁶² "Warehouse Local 6 Candidates Spotlight Minority Job Rights," *People's World*, October 12, 1951.

⁶³ Chester Interview, 9-10.

⁶⁴ LeRoy King Interview.

⁶⁵ Curtis McClain FBI File, obtained by author through Freedom of Information Act.

⁶⁶ *The Dispatcher*, May 13, 1953.

⁶⁷ "SF Warehouse Integration Report," *The Dispatcher*, March 15, 1957.

⁶⁸ Bill Chester's FBI file, obtained by author through the Freedom of Information Act. The most noted black friendly witness who had worked within the ILWU was Lou Rosser, who testified before HUAC in 1953. For examples of black ILWU members who spoke out in defense of Bridges, see *The Dispatcher*, April 29 and June 10, 1949. See also, "Warehouse Local 6 Candidates Spotlight Minority Job rights," *People's World*, October 12, 1951.

⁶⁹ Harvey Schwartz, *The March Inland: Origins of the ILWU Warehouse Division 1934-1938* (San Francisco: ILWU, 2000, originally published in 1978 by the Institute of Industrial Relations at the University of California at Los Angeles).

⁷⁰ Harvey Schwartz, *Solidarity Stories*, 287.

⁷¹ Harvey Schwartz, *Solidarity Stories*, 207.

⁷² Schwartz, *The March Inland*, 171.

⁷³ The ILWU was closely associated with the CLS – it provided financial support and its members taught and took classes at the school. See Rigelhaupt, "Education for Action," "Labor School Training Negroes for Leadership," *Daily People's World*, January 8, 1947.

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- ⁷⁴ “William H. Chester,” July 3, 1962, Chester FBI File.
- ⁷⁵ Curtis McClain FBI File.
- ⁷⁶ LeRoy King Interview.
- ⁷⁷ Harvey Schwartz, *Solidarity Stories*, 49.
- ⁷⁸ Chester FBI File.
- ⁷⁹ Memorandum, February 25, 1959, Chester FBI File.
- ⁸⁰ Schwartz, *Solidarity Stories*, 50.
- ⁸¹ Ellen Schrecker, *Many are the Crimes McCarthyism in America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 267-268.
- ⁸² Schrecker, *Many are the Crimes*, 269; Kimmeldorf, *Reds or Rackets?* 150; R.J. Keene, “Families Hard Hit By Waterfront ‘Screenings’,” *Sun-Reporter*, January 12, 1952.
- ⁸³ R. J. Keene, “Unwarranted Delays Shown In Screening MCS Workers,” *Sun-Reporter*, February 2, 1952.
- ⁸⁴ The series ran in the *Sun-Reporter* on January 12, 19, 26, and February 2 and 9, 1952.
- ⁸⁵ Schwartz, *Solidarity Stories*, 48-49.
- ⁸⁶ R. J. Keene, “Fear Haunts Many Negro Waterfront Workers,” *Sun-Reporter*, January 26, 1952.
- ⁸⁷ Proceedings of the Founding Convention of the National Negro Labor Council, Cincinnati, October 27-28, 1951, ILWU History Files-William Chester-NNLC; “SF Speakers Spur FEP Campaign,” *People’s World*, February 20, 1951.
- ⁸⁸ Buddy Green, “Ferment in the Fillmore,” *People’s World*, February 9, 1951.
- ⁸⁹ Initially, the ILWU did not protest the program and agreed to keep certain men off the Army and Navy docks. R. J. Keene, “Unions With Least Bias Hit Hardest By Screening,” *Sun-Reporter*, January 19, 1952.
- ⁹⁰ R. J. Keene, “Fear haunts Many Negro Waterfront Workers,” *Sun-Reporter*, January 26, 1952.
- ⁹¹ Jane Cassels Record, “The Rise and Fall of a Maritime Union,” *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*, Vol. 10, No. 1 (October, 1956): 83.
- ⁹² Bruce Nelson, *Workers on the Waterfront: Seamen, Longshoremen, and Unionism in the 1930s* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1990), 191-193.
- ⁹³ Thomas C. Fleming, “My Report,” *Sun-Reporter*, September 29, 1951. Lundeberg was also quoted as saying “All Negroes are communists.” Joe E. Wade, “Facts on Leadership of Sailors Union of Pacific,” *Sun-Reporter*, March 8, 1952.
- ⁹⁴ Bryson and his supporters maintained that he had not belonged to the CP and that his indictment was a “frame-up” engineered by Lundeberg. He was convicted of perjury and sentenced to five years in prison and a \$10,000 fine. Record, “The Rise and Fall of a Maritime Union,” 89-90; “3,000 Negro Seamen Concerned Over Jobs,” *Sun-Reporter*, November 19, 1953.
- ⁹⁵ Thomas Fleming, “the Weekly Report,” *Sun-Reporter*, February 25, 1956.

⁹⁶ LeRoy King Interview. King may have overstated the degree to which he and others were red-baited. In a 2005 interview, Tom Fleming claimed to have had a recent encounter with King in which the latter accused the *Sun-Reporter* or red-baiting the ILWU. In an oral history interview David Jenkins makes the same charge, saying that "Goodlett never called us a Communist union, but the inference was there." There is no evidence of the black newspaper ever red-baiting the union – overtly or subtly. On the contrary, as is discussed throughout this chapter, the *Sun-Reporter* was one of the ILWU's staunchest supporters – especially among black San Francisco. As the next few chapters show, Tom Fleming and Carlton Goodlett became political rivals with the ILWU in the 1960s and 1970s and were relentless in their criticism during that time. It is likely that King and Jenkins conflated that criticism with "red-baiting" that they may have encountered from other quarters. See "Dennis West" (Thomas Fleming) Interview with Paul Miller, Appendix E, in Paul T. Miller, "The Interplay of Housing, Employment, and Civil Rights In the Experience of San Francisco's African American Community, 1945-1975," PhD Dissertation, Temple University, 2008; David Jenkins, "The Union Movement, the California Labor School, and San Francisco Politics," an oral history conducted in 1987 and 1988 by Lisa Rubens, Regional Oral History office, the Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, 1993, p.247.

⁹⁷ "NAACP Hit for Ban on 'Allies'," *People's World*, January 6, 1950.

⁹⁸ A copy of the flyer was attached to a letter sent by NAACP Western Regional Secretary-Counsel Franklin Williams to the editor of the *People's World*, insisting the paper refrain from reporting on NAACP activities. Franklin Williams to Editor, *Daily People's World*, March 5, 1954, Carton 71, Folder 29, NAACP Region I Records, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley. On Williams' anticommunism, see Broussard, *Black San Francisco*, 228-230.

⁹⁹ "6,000 Hear A. Philip Randolph Launch 'Fight for Freedom'," *Sun-Reporter*, April 3, 1954.

¹⁰⁰ "Revels Cayton, 'Local 6 Adopts Wage and Unity Program,'" *Sun-Reporter*, March 19, 1960.

¹⁰¹ My Interview With LeRoy King; Bill Chester Interview, 30-32.

¹⁰² 1st Community Conference on Minority Rights Held Tues.," *Sun-Reporter*, January 8, 1955; "We Can't Let This Frameup Stick," *Sun-Reporter*, March 13, 1954.

¹⁰³ Buddy Green, "Ferment in the Fillmore," *Daily People's World*, February 9, 1951.

¹⁰⁴ Quote appears in Bruce Nelson, "The 'Lord of the Docks' Reconsidered: Race Relations among West Coast Longshoremens, 1933-61," in Calvin Winslow, ed., *Waterfront Workers: New Perspectives on Race and Class* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 158

¹⁰⁵ "American Minorities and the Case of Harry Bridges...", nd, circa earl 1950s, ILWU History Files-Minorities-Blacks Thru 1959.

¹⁰⁶ "ILWU Will Help Found Negro Body," *The Dispatcher*, October 12, 1951; David M. Lewis Coleman, *Race Against Liberalism: Black Workers and The UAW in Detroit* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 38.

¹⁰⁷ Jeff Kibre to Louis Goldblatt, October 5, 1951, ILWU History Files, Minorities-Blacks, NNLC, William Chester, Correspondence, ILWU Archives; Rigelhaupt, "Education for Action," 219.

¹⁰⁸ Jeff Kibre to Coleman Young, October 22, 1951; Coleman Young to Louis Goldblatt, November 21, 1951, ILWU History Files, Minorities-Blacks, NNLC, William Chester, Correspondence, ILWU Archives;

¹⁰⁹ Bill Chester to Paul Robeson, September 21, 1951, ILWU History Files, Minorities – Blacks, NNLC, William Chester, Correspondence, ILWU archives.

¹¹⁰ "Negro Labor Rallies Hail Paul Robeson," *People's World*, May 15, 1951.

¹¹¹ Thibodeaux was chairman of the California Emergency Defense Committee, which assisted individuals charged under the Smith Act, until 1955. "Reports of the Subversive Activities Control Board, Volume III (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1966), 388-399.

¹¹² Paul Miller Interview with "Wade Jones," (Gerald Johnson), 402-403.

¹¹³ Robert Zieger, *For Jobs and Freedom: Race and Labor in America Since 1865* (Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 2007), 168.

¹¹⁴ Martha Biondi, *To Stand and Fight*, 263.

¹¹⁵ SF Speakers Spur FEP Campaign," *People's World*, February 20, 1951.

¹¹⁶ "Negro Labor Council Leader Tells Program for More Jobs," *Daily People's World*, December 12, 1952.

¹¹⁷ Speech of Carlton Goodlett, Western District Regional Conference – National Negro Labor Council, January 26 and 17, 1952, San Francisco, CA, ILWU History Files-William Chester-NNLC, ILWU Archives.

¹¹⁸ Kevin Allen Leonard, *The Battle for Los Angeles: Racial Ideology and World War II* (Albuquerque, NM, 2006), 284-295.

¹¹⁹ Self, *American Babylon*, 85.

¹²⁰ Broussard, *Black San Francisco*, 212-217.

¹²¹ Editorial, "Where Will They Stand?" *Sun-Reporter*, March 31, 1951.

¹²² "FEPC Debate Still Before Supervisors," *Sun-Reporter*, May 12 1951; "FEPC Put Off," *Sun-Reporter*, May 19, 1951.

¹²³ Richard Dettering letter to the Editor, *Sun-Reporter*, June 9, 1951.

¹²⁴ "FEPC Debate Still Before Supervisors," *Sun-Reporter*, May 12 1951; "FEPC Put Off," *Sun-Reporter*, May 19, 1951.

¹²⁵ Before voting down the ordinance, Supervisors approved an amendment that would have imposed a one-year residency requirement before filing a complaint with the FEPC. "Almon Roth Calls Tune in Defeat of San Francisco FEP Ordinance," *The Dispatcher*, June 8, 1951.

¹²⁶ "Supervisors Kill FEPC Ordinance; Vote 6-5," *Sun-Reporter*, June 2, 1951.

¹²⁷ Editorial, "The Need for Home-Grown FEPC," *Sun-Reporter*, July 26, 1952.

¹²⁸ Mindy Thompson, *The National Negro Labor Council: A History* (San Jose, CA: The American Institute for Marxist Studies, 1979), 28.

¹²⁹ Irving Babow and Edward Howden, *A Civil Rights Inventory of San Francisco*, Part I, *Employment* (San Francisco, 1958), Homeland Ministries Archives, Reel 9, Box 20, Folder 6.

¹³⁰ Thompson, *The National Negro Labor Council*, 39.

¹³¹ Fred Stripp, "The Treatment of Negro American Workers by the AFL and the CIO in the San Francisco Bay Area," PhD dissertation, Pacific School of Religion, Berkeley, 1948.

¹³² “Labor Council Asks Better Jobs at Sears,” *Sun-Reporter*, October 27, 1951; “A Negro? ‘Patience’, Says Sears,” *Daily People’s World*, October 23, 1951; Bill Chester Interview, 29.

¹³³ Untitled Document, October 23, 1951, ILWU History Files, William Chester, NNLC, ILWU Archives.

¹³⁴ Thompson, *The National Negro Labor Council*, 39; Al Thibodeaux to members, November 3, 1951, ILWU History Files, William Chester, NNLC, ILWU Archives; “A Victory in Negro Jobs Drive,” *Daily People’s World*, April 21, 1952.

¹³⁵ Thompson, *The National Negro Labor Council*, 39-42.

¹³⁶ Bill Chester Interview, 29.

¹³⁷ The TWU withdrew from State and City councils after the shakeup. Jack Sherry to Gustav Faber, January 10, 1950, Box 90, Folder 4, TWU Records.

¹³⁸ Allan Haywood to Michael Quill, November 6, 1950; Tim Flynn to Allan S. Haywood, November 4, 1950, Box 90, Folder 4, TWU Records.

¹³⁹ Jack Sherry to Gustav Faber, June 14, 1950, Box 90, Folder 4, TWU Records. Quill reprimanded Local 250 officials for both actions, telling them that they were “in direct violation of the CIO” and that they were “embarrassing” the TWU. “I cannot understand why Harry Bridges is being allowed into Local 250 since he was kicked out of the CIO for very good reasons,” Quill intoned. “I hardly think it is necessary to speak more plainly about the appropriateness of a speaker at a TWU local meeting who calls the president of the Congress of Industrial Organizations a strike-breaker and sell-out artist.” Local 250 eventually agreed to join the CIO councils and to cancel the Bridges appearance. Mike Quill to Jack Sherry, November 8, 1950, Box 90, Folder 4, TWU Records; Jack Sherry to Gustav Faber, November 11, 1950, Box 90, Folder 4, TWU Records; Jack Sherry to Michael Quill, November 14, 1950, Box 90, Folder 4, TWU Records.

¹⁴⁰ Keynote Address given by William Chester, Regional Conference, Western District – National Negro Labor Council, January 26 and 27th, 1952, ILWU History Files – William Chester – NNLC, ILWU Archives.

¹⁴¹ San Francisco National Negro Labor Council, April 11, 1952, ILWU History Files-William Chester-NNLC, ILWU Archives; San Francisco National Negro Labor Council Newsletter, Volume 1, Number 1, May 1952, ILWU History Files-William Chester-NNLC, ILWU Archives; “Negro Labor Council Pushes Jobs Campaign,” *Sun-Reporter*, July 19, 1952; Negro Labor Council Sparks Airline Jobs,” *Sun-Reporter*, July 26, 1952; “Negro Labor Council Seeks Airways Jobs,” *Sun-Reporter*, August 9, 1952; John Flowers to NNLC Members, May 20, 1952, ILWU History Files-William Chester-NNLC, ILWU Archives.

¹⁴² Keynote Address given by William Chester, Regional Conference, Western District – National Negro Labor Council, January 26 and 27th, 1952, ILWU History Files – William Chester – NNLC, ILWU Archives.

¹⁴³ William Chester to Edward Sharkey, April 24, 1952; William Chester to Coleman Young, April 9, 1952; William Chester to Michael Gaffay, May 16, 1952, ILWU History Files-Minorities-Blacks-NNLC-William Chester-Correspondence; Philip S. Foner, ed., *Paul Robeson Speaks* (New York: Kensington Publishing Company, 1978), 276.

¹⁴⁴ William H. Chester to Coleman Young, February 7, 1952, ILWU History Files, Minorities-Blacks, NNLC, William Chester Correspondence, ILWU archives.

¹⁴⁵ William Chester to Coleman Young, April 9, 1952, ILWU History Files-Minorities-Blacks-NNLC-William Chester-Correspondence, ILWU Archives.

¹⁴⁶ See, for example, Coleman Young to William Chester, October 27, 1954; Coleman Young to William Chester, March 15, 1954; Coleman Young to William Chester, March 30, 1954; Coleman Young to William

Chester, July 23, 1954; Coleman Young to William Chester, September 15, 1954, all in ILWU History Files-Minorities-Blacks-NNLC-William Chester-Correspondence, ILWU Archives.

¹⁴⁷ Biondi, *To Stand and Fight*, 263-268. See also Clarence Lang, "Freedom Train Derailed: The National Negro Labor Council and the Nadir of Black Radicalism," in Robbie Lieberman and Clarence Lang, Eds., *Anticommunism and the African American Freedom Movement, "Another Side of the Story"* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009), 161-188.

¹⁴⁸ "Negro Labor Rallies Hail Paul Robeson," *People's World*, May 15, 1951. Cayton observed that most NNLC members in the area were from the maritime unions.

¹⁴⁹ "Million Members by fall – Negro Labor Council Goal," *Daily People's World*, July 13, 1951.

¹⁵⁰ "Negro Labor Maps All-Out Jobs Fight," *Daily People's World*, January 28, 1952; "NLC Maps Coast Drives," *Daily People's World*, January 29, 1952.

¹⁵¹ Agents described Chester as "uncooperative" and reported that he refused to answer questions about the Communist Party. However he agreed to discuss the NNLC. Chester FBI File.

¹⁵² Regional Conference, Western District – National Negro Labor Council, January 26 and 27th, 1952, ILWU History Files – William Chester – NNLC, ILWU Archives.

¹⁵³ Chester FBI File.

¹⁵⁴ William Chester to Coleman Young, November 10, 1954, ILWU History Files-Minorities-Blacks-NNLC-William Chester-Correspondence, ILWU Archives.

¹⁵⁵ Bill Chester to Paul Robeson, September 21, 1951, ILWU History Files-Minorities-Blacks-NNLC-William Chester-Correspondence, ILWU Archives. This was several years before the Communist Party withdrew its support and opposed the NNLC. See Lang, "Freedom Train Derailed," 179.

¹⁵⁶ Chester FBI File, February 23, 1960.

¹⁵⁷ Schwartz, *Solidarity Stories*, 287.

¹⁵⁸ Schwartz, *Solidarity Stories*, 279.

¹⁵⁹ "ILWU Convention Hits Yellow Cab Hiring Policy," *Sun-Reporter*, April 7, 1956.

¹⁶⁰ "Sit-In Student to Address April 1 Meeting," *Sun-Reporter*, March 26, 1960; Winkie Frank, "Why We March," *Sun-Reporter*, March 5, 1960.

¹⁶¹ Joseph Howerton to LeRoy King, November 22, 1967, Carton 44, Folder 60, NAACP Region I Records; Leonard Carter to NAACP Members, October 16, 1966, Carton 94, Folder 3, NAACP Region I Records.

¹⁶² Richard S. Hobbs, *The Cayton Legacy: An African American Family* (Pullman, WA: Washington State University Press, 2002), 193-194.

¹⁶³ Hobbs, *The Cayton Legacy*, 167-170.

¹⁶⁴ "More Negro Officials for ILWU Asked," *Sun-Reporter*, March 12, 1955.

¹⁶⁵ Local 6, "Statement of Policy on Negro Rights," ILWU Eleventh Biennial Convention, Long Beach, CA, April 4-9, 1955, ILWU History Files-Minorities-Black-Through 1959, ILWU Archives.

¹⁶⁶ "SF Warehouse Integration Report," *The Dispatcher*, March 15, 1957.

¹⁶⁷ “SF Warehouse Integration Report,” *The Dispatcher*, March 15, 1957.

¹⁶⁸ Chester Oral History, 12-13; Cleophus Williams Oral History in Schwartz, *Solidarity Stories*, 49.

¹⁶⁹ “Mrs. Smith, Chester and Miss Swisher Capture Honors in Citizen Awards,” *Sun-Reporter*, March 26, 1960.

¹⁷⁰ “Statement of Relation of Negro People and the Labor Movement,” January 23, 1960, ILWU History Files, Minorities-Blacks, 1960, ILWU Archives; “New Goals Seen for Negro Labor,” *Daily People’s World*, May 16, 1950. Cayton had raised the issue before the ILWU Northern California District Council in December 1959, NCDC Minutes, December 19, 1959, ILWU Archives; Revels Cayton, “Local 6 Adopts Wage and Unity Program,” *Sun-Reporter*, March 19, 1960.

¹⁷¹ “ILWU Opens Support Drive for Apprentice Training FEP Law,” *Sun-Reporter*, June 11, 1960; “Unionists Map Automation Battle,” *Sun-Reporter*, July 9, 1960.

¹⁷² Editorial, “What ILWU Action Means,” *Sun-Reporter*, March 19, 1960.

¹⁷³ Pamphlet, NALC, “General Purposes of the Negro American Labor Council,” William Chester, NNLC and NALC Files, ILWU Archives, San Francisco, CA; Zieger, *For Jobs and Freedom*, 168-170; Jervis Anderson, A. Philip Randolph: *A Biographical Portrait* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1972), 298-305.

¹⁷⁴ Lang, “Freedom Train Derailed,” 173.

¹⁷⁵ Jeff Kibre to Harry Bridges, October 15, 1959; William H. Chester to A. Philip Randolph, October 21, 1959, ILWU Officers Correspondence, Chester, William, Box 68 - Chester, William ILWU Correspondence, 1954-55, ILWU Archives.

¹⁷⁶ “Statement on Relation of Negro People and the Labor Movement,” January 23, 1960, ILWU History Files, Minorities-Blacks, 1960, ILWU Archives.

¹⁷⁷ Jones, “The Unknown Origins of the March on Washington,” 42.

¹⁷⁸ “Negro Trade Unionists Hear Rumford, Goodlett,” *Sun-Reporter*, June 3, 1961.

¹⁷⁹ San Francisco Negro American Labor Council Quarterly Newsletter, Volume 1, Number 2, June 1962, Richard Parrish Papers (Additions), 1959-1976, Box 6, Folder 4, Reel 7.

¹⁸⁰ David Johnson to A. Philip Randolph, April 6, 1961; “San Francisco NALC News Notes,” nd, circa May 1961, Richard Parrish Papers (Additions), 1959-1976, Box 6, Folder 4, Reel 7, The New York Public Library, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture.

¹⁸¹ David Johnson to A. Philip Randolph, April 6, 1961; “San Francisco NALC News Notes,” nd, circa May 1961, Richard Parrish Papers (Additions), 1959-1976, Box 6, Folder 4, Reel 7, The New York Public Library, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture. “Negro American Labor Council Newsletter,” Number 1, August, 1961, William Chester Files, National Negro Labor Council, Negro American Labor Council, ILWU Archives.

¹⁸² James Herndon to A. Philip Randolph, May 12, 1961, Richard Parrish Papers (Additions), 1959-1976, Box 6, Folder 4, Reel 7, The New York Public Library, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture.

¹⁸³ “NALC Membership Survey,” July 1962, “NALC Membership Survey,” March 1963, Richard Parrish Papers (Additions), 1959-1976, Box 1, Folder 6, Reel 1, The New York Public Library, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture.

¹⁸⁴ Jones, *The March on Washington*, 142.

¹⁸⁵ Jones, *The March on Washington*, 92.

¹⁸⁶ Paul Miller interview with Gerald Johnson, 404.

¹⁸⁷ “James Herndon – Social Activist for African Americans,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, October 18, 2002; *African Americans of San Francisco* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2012), 75.

¹⁸⁸ Paul Miller Interview with “William White” (David Johnson), 497-531.

¹⁸⁹ Harold B. Brooks, Jr., “Labor Report,” *Sun-Reporter*, January 6, 1962; “Harold Brooks – Longtime S.F. District Leader,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, October 20, 2001.

¹⁹⁰ Lang, “Freedom Train Derailed,” 179-180.

¹⁹¹ San Francisco Negro American Labor Council Quarterly Newsletter, Volume 1, Number 1, January 1962, Richard Parrish Papers (Additions), 1959-1976, Box 6, Folder 4, Reel 7.

¹⁹² Testimony of Harold Brooks, “Examination of the War on Poverty: Hearings Before the Subcommittee Employment, Manpower, and Poverty of the Committee on Labor and Public Welfare, United States Senate, Washington, D.C., July 10, 13, and 18, 1967, 3446. Hippler, *Hunter’s Point*, 165-170. There is some disagreement concerning who precisely comprised the Big Five, usually six or seven women are referred to.

¹⁹³ Joel Skidmore, “Hunters Point: Community at Crossroads,” *Sun-Reporter*, January 15, 1972; Hippler, *Hunter’s Point*, 165-170.

¹⁹⁴ Arthur E. Hippler, *Hunter’s Point: A Black Ghetto* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1974), 175.

¹⁹⁵ James Herndon to A. Philip Randolph, March 26, 1962, Richard Parrish Papers (Additions), 1959-1976, Box 6, Folder 4, Reel 7 The New York Public Library, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture.

¹⁹⁶ Bob Ward, “Bayview Community Center’s Job Program,” *Sun-Reporter*, July 30, 1966; Hippler, *Hunter’s Point*, 175.

¹⁹⁷ “Renew Drive for FEP,” *Sun-Reporter*, January 21, 1956.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid; “Mayor Speaks Out on F.E.P. Law,” *Sun-Reporter*, March 23, 1957.

¹⁹⁹ Lawrence E. Davies, “Drive on Job Bias Pushed on Coast,” *New York Times*, December 23, 1956, 15.

²⁰⁰ “Third Hearing on FEP,” *Sun-Reporter*, February 2, 1957.

²⁰¹ “FEC Past First Test,” *Sun-Reporter*, May 25, 1957,

²⁰² “Yellow Cab Falls in Line with FEP Law,” *Sun-Reporter*, August 3, 1957; “10 Drivers Ready For Yellow Cab,” *Sun-Reporter*, August 10, 1957.

²⁰³ Thomas Fleming, “The Weekly Report,” *Sun-Reporter*, September 7, 1957.

²⁰⁴ Lawrence E. Davies, “Drive on Job Bias Pushed on Coast,” *New York Times*, December 23, 1956, 15.

²⁰⁵ Lawrence E. Davies, "F.E.P.C. Year Old in San Francisco," *New York Times*, August 17, 1958, 56.

²⁰⁶ The San Francisco Commission on Equal Opportunity ceased accepting complaints on September 18, 1959, when the new California Fair Employment Practice Act went into effect. Final Report of the Commission on Equal Opportunity of the City and County of San Francisco, 1960, 10-18, San Francisco Public Library.

²⁰⁷ "Opinions of Other Newspapers," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, August 6, 1959.

²⁰⁸ The 1958 elections had ushered in a Democratic majority in the California legislature and a Democrat, Edmund Brown, into the Governor's mansion. Self, *American Babylon*, 86.

²⁰⁹ San Francisco Negro American Labor Council Quarterly Newsletter, Volume 1, Number 1, January 1962, Richard Parrish Papers (Additions), 1959-1976, Box 6, Folder 4, Reel 7.

²¹⁰ Irving Babow and Edward Howden, *A Civil Rights Inventory of San Francisco*, Part I, *Employment* (San Francisco, 1958).

²¹¹ Final Report of the San Francisco Commission on Equal Employment Opportunity, 14.

²¹² Daniel Edward Crowe, *Prophets of Rage: The Black Freedom Struggle in San Francisco, 1945-1969* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 2000), 57.

²¹³ James Herndon to A. Philip Randolph, March 26, 1962, Richard Parrish Papers (Additions), 1959-1976, Box 6, Folder 4, Reel 7.

²¹⁴ James Herndon to A. Philip Randolph, March 26, 1962, Richard Parrish Papers (Additions), 1959-1976, Box 6, Folder 4, Reel 7.

Wong would close the Third Street Super Save Market in 1968 after another round of protests. Community activists protested that Super Save showed "no economic interest in the Black community," citing the continued paucity of black workers and charging high prices for low-quality products. *The Spokesman*, May 1968.

²¹⁵ Sam Jordan, "NALC and Bayview Citizens Map Plans for Jobs Drive," *Sun-Reporter*, March 3, 1962.

²¹⁶ James Herndon to A. Philip Randolph, March 26, 1962, Richard Parrish Papers (Additions), 1959-1976, Box 6, Folder 4, Reel 7.

²¹⁷ James Herndon to A. Philip Randolph, March 26, 1962, Richard Parrish Papers (Additions), 1959-1976, Box 6, Folder 4, Reel 7.

²¹⁸ San Francisco Negro American Labor Council, "The United Airlines Story," William Chester, NNLC, NALC Files, ILWU Archives; "NALC Charges Discrimination by United Airlines," *Sun-Reporter*, September 28, 1963; "NALC to Stage Job Rally," *Sun-Reporter*, May 11, 1963; "Fight for Jobs or Perish, Job Confab Theme," *Sun-Reporter*, May 18, 1963.

²¹⁹ "James Herndon – Social Activist for African Americans," *San Francisco Chronicle*, October 18, 2002; *African Americans of San Francisco* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2012), 75.

²²⁰ Paul Miller Interview with David Johnson, 532-533.

²²¹ David Wellman, "Negro Leadership in San Francisco," 13.

²²² Hobbs, *The Cayton Legacy*, 194-195; Richard Hobbs Interview of Revels Cayton, August 12-13, 1986, San Francisco, CA, Tapes 1-3, 15.

²²³ Quoted in Wellman, "Negro Leadership in San Francisco," 11.

²²⁴ Wellman, "Negro Leadership in San Francisco," 16.

²²⁵ Wellman, "Negro Leadership in San Francisco," 12-16. At its founding, the labor leaders and ministers purposefully set a loose structure for the CLC, agreeing that they would pursue their individual programs and unite in common cause whenever possible. "Labor-Church Group Banquet," *Sun-Reporter*, April 13, 1963.

²²⁶ NCDC Minutes, May 25, 1963.

²²⁷ Cayton Interview With Richard Hobbs, 170.

²²⁸ "Labor-Church Group Banquet," *Sun-Reporter*, April 13, 1963.

²²⁹ Richard Hobbs Interview of Revels Cayton, August 12-13, 1986, San Francisco, CA, Tapes 1-3, 17-18; "Mass March Up Market St. Will Support Ala. Protests," *Sun-Reporter*, May 25, 1963.

²³⁰ "San Francisco Answers Birmingham," *The Dispatcher*, May 31, 1963.

²³¹ Gene Robertson, "30,000 Hear SCLC Leader," *Sun-Reporter*, June 1, 1963; "San Francisco Answers Birmingham," *The Dispatcher*, May 31, 1963; *Local 10 Bulletin*, June 28, 1963, ILWU Archives; NCDC Minutes, June 15, 1963; "San Francisco Marches for Birmingham, Alabama," Clips from *Freedom March (1963)* by Harvey Richards, The Harvey Richard Media Archive, <http://vimeo.com/22955886>.

²³² Richard Hobbs Interview of Revels Cayton, August 12-13, 1986, San Francisco, CA, Tapes 1-3, 17,

²³³ "The People Say No," *The Dispatcher*, July 24, 1964; "Negroes Parade on Coast Today," *New York Times*, July 12, 1964.

²³⁴ Rigelhaupt, "Education for Action," 225.

²³⁵ Editorial, "Human Rights – Continuing Challenge," *Sun-Reporter*, June 1, 1963.

CHAPTER THREE

WHEN WORKERS MEAN BUSINESS: BLACK CONTRACTORS AND RACIAL DISCRIMINATION IN THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY

Whereas black workers in postwar San Francisco found institutional strength in the Transport Workers Union (TWU) and the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union (ILWU), this was not the case for those who sought employment in the construction industry. Unlike the TWU and ILWU, most building trades unions did not welcome black workers or support fair employment campaigns. Without access to progressive labor unions, many skilled black craftsmen pursued a different type of labor activism in the mid-twentieth century. Similar to early-twentieth-century black strikebreakers and black domestic workers, these workers confronted racial discrimination and inequality with a subtler, more individualistic, and understated form of resistance.¹ Instead of trying to fight their way into a union, many black craftsmen went into business for themselves. They found that obtaining a contractor's license was a better means by which to increase employment opportunities as well as to obtain more control over their daily work lives.

As entrepreneurial craftsmen, black contractors linked their own economic advancement to the material improvement of black workers more generally. Black contractors employed and trained black workers who were unable to gain union membership or access to union-administered apprenticeship programs. In the construction industry, black contractors considered themselves as guardians of the black working class. And when civil rights organizations and the Department of Labor (DOL) began to pressure unions in the building trades to admit more racial minorities in the mid-1960s, black contractors offered themselves as an alternative to labor unions when it came to increasing the number of minority workers in the skilled trades. In doing so, they sought to circumvent local power structures and convince national civil rights activists,

government reformers, and private foundations to consider the problems that minority businessmen encountered alongside those that restricted employment opportunities for minority workers.

Discrimination in the Building Trades

The paucity of skilled black construction workers in the 1960s obscures their deep tradition in the skilled crafts associated with the building trades. “The negroes are not only the agricultural laborers but the artisans of the South,” the San Francisco *Daily Evening Bulletin* observed in 1874. “Slavery has left them this one advantage. ...All through the towns and cities of the farther South, at least, we have found them working as blacksmiths, carpenters, shipbuilders, house-painters, etc.”² But black workers began to lose this advantage in the late nineteenth century, as white craft workers sought to consolidate control over skilled construction work. In their 1930 study, Lorenzo Greene and Carter Woodson wrote that “the prejudice of the organized whites in trades unions” constituted the “greatest obstacle to the increase of the Negro skilled artisans.”³ Although by the early twentieth century most unions did not officially prohibit black workers from joining, they excluded them in practice or by custom while accepting white immigrants who poured into Northern and Midwestern cities in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.⁴ The most restrictive unions were in the skilled trades in which black artisans did not have an established tradition, such as electrical work, engineering, and plumbing. In northern cities where unions controlled access to the best jobs, the few black craftsmen who worked in these trades found it difficult to earn a living. For example, a black electrician in St. Louis claimed that he could get three times as much work if he were able to get into the Electrical Workers Union, which did not admit blacks.⁵ Black trade unionists in the older crafts

also encountered stiff union resistance of another sort. In Pittsburgh, for example, historian Peter Gottlieb writes that “antipathy towards black members and frequent refusals by white masons to work with blacks accomplished practically the same thing as outright denial of admission would have.”⁶

Discriminatory unions not only hurt black craftsmen by limiting their job opportunities, but they also increasingly prevented African-American workers from acquiring new construction industry knowledge. African Americans were usually barred from union and (in some cases, municipal) administered vocational and apprenticeship programs, which made it extremely difficult to keep abreast of new building materials and methods in trades other than the static trades of bricklaying and common laborer.⁷ The increased use of steel frames, reinforced concrete, operating cranes and derricks, and elevators that were instrumental to the construction of the modern buildings represented new areas that African Americans would find their access to training and apprenticeship limited. Plumbing and pipefitting also became more integral to modern construction during the early twentieth century and required a grasp of modern technology. A plumber needed to “understand the principles that govern the circulation and pressure of water, and the construction and operations of siphons, tanks, filters, etc.,” Frank Leslie Shaw wrote in his 1916 study of the construction industry. “They have to be prepared to meet unexpected emergencies with tested knowledge.” A gas-fitter needed “to know the nature of gasses and the methods of distributing them” while also being able to read blueprints.⁸ In the early twentieth century, electricians and inside wiremen were also increasingly needed to install the system of metal tubes throughout a building to fit it for electrical use. These workers needed to be able to read blueprints and also “have some technical knowledge of the simple elements of electricity and magnetism so that he will understand conductors, insulators, circuits, currents,

connections, and systems distribution.”⁹ Other new trades, such as operating engineers and structural iron workers required less technical knowledge but nevertheless represented a set of skills that could not be passed down from former slave artisans or their descendants.

Although the history of racial discrimination and exclusion in the building trades dated back to the nineteenth century, in western metropolitan areas such as the Bay Area the problem became particularly acute beginning in the 1940s with the massive wartime migration of African Americans from the South and Midwest. Many of the southern black migrants who transformed the racial composition of the urban North and West in the decades surrounding the two world wars were skilled workers who had obtained their skills from older black artisans or from vocational schools, such as the Hampton Institute.¹⁰ Among the tens of thousands of black Americans who migrated to the Bay Area in the decades surrounding World War II were experienced and skilled plumbers and pipe fitters, electricians, painters, and plasterers who sought work in the booming shipyards and expanding commercial and residential construction markets of the region. But, like their counterparts who arrived in other union strongholds such as New York, Chicago, Pittsburgh, and Seattle during the First and Second World Wars, these migrants found the opportunities to ply their trades severely curtailed by racially restrictive labor unions that proved obstinate when faced with external pressure to reform. “The main problem Negroes must face is the racially restrictive patterns in several trades, of which plumbing is a notable example,” the Fair Employment Practices Committee’s (FEPC) *Final Report* explained in 1946. “As things stand now, Negroes will find their building trades employment mainly as cement finishers, plasterers, carpenters, painters, paperhangers, bricklayers, hod carriers and common laborers.”¹¹

A study conducted by the San Francisco Council for Civic Unity (CCU) in 1956

confirmed the FEPC's gloomy forecast. It found that when skilled migrants were able to find construction work it was mostly in the Hunters Point Naval shipyard and private shipyards that had government contracts. Even those few who had belonged to southern unions and were able to transfer to a San Francisco local found themselves waiting endlessly in hiring halls while their white counterparts were sent out to jobs.¹² The CCU concluded that "the practices of some unions and of many contractors made the problems of training and entry even greater for Negroes than for white workers." It added that most black construction workers were "employed in the lower level jobs" and that there was a "serious problem of upgrading."¹³ Thus most black craftsmen could expect to only gain entry to the Hod Carriers and Common Laborers Union. "No matter what your skill they tried to put all Negroes in that one union," recalled Matt Crawford, the Communist activist and former head of the local National Negro Congress.¹⁴ One result of this discrimination was that by the 1960s racial minorities comprised the majority of the Laborers' Union Local 261. These workers eventually transformed the local, which had a historically conservative leadership. In 1963 the first black members were elected to Local 261 offices, and together with progressive white, Latino, and Japanese-American members, they sought, in one reporter's words, "a new day in race relations in local labor unions."¹⁵

Yet racial discrimination in the construction trades exposed the limitations of what black trade unionists could accomplish when it came to combatting racial discrimination within the house of labor. In San Francisco, black longshoremen, warehouse workers, and transit workers fought discrimination within their own unions and industries. ILWU members also had tried to help black workers gain access to skilled construction jobs, however their efforts went nowhere. Curtis McClain of ILWU Local 6 recalled that in the immediate postwar years black labor activists "did not move on the crafts" because they knew that even if a black worker had learned

a trade before migrating to San Francisco “that they would be denied an opportunity to enter into that field.” Black trade unionists such as McClain and their community allies did not feel that they could take on the powerful building trades unions in the 1940s and 1950s. With the ILWU already fighting off government attempts to deport its president along with jurisdictional challenges from the International Longshoremen’s Association and the Teamsters, it was also reluctant to take any steps that might antagonize the Building Trades Council. As McClain explained, “coming from the family of laborers ourselves, we felt that there was going to be an airing of dirty linen, that we wanted an opportunity to air it within our own family to see if we could get them to change their ways.” However, when it came to challenging the construction unions behind closed doors, McClain conceded that there “was not very much movement in that direction.”¹⁶ Similarly, when the ILWU, under the direction of Bill Chester, sought to compile data on black workers in the building trades in 1959 as part of a campaign (called “Operation Boot Strap”) to increase the number of black workers and apprentices in the city’s skilled trades, it cautiously decided against approaching union officials directly out of concern that they would “resent this kind of interference of another union in their internal affairs.”¹⁷

Black trade unionists in the San Francisco Negro American Labor Council (NALC) fared little better. The San Francisco chapter included a few construction workers from Cement Masons Local 580 and Laborers Local 261 among its members, and one of its primary aims when it formed in the early 1960s was to increase the number of black apprentices in the skilled construction trades. Working with the East Bay NALC, the San Francisco branch formed an Apprenticeship and Upgrading Committee that sought to recruit and help prepare young black workers for entrance exams while also enlisting sympathetic white building trades unionists to help open up union apprenticeship programs to minorities.¹⁸ Harold Brooks, NALC west coast

field secretary, promised to lead the way. "I will concern myself with youth and job opportunity preparation, apprenticeship and other training programs," he wrote in January 1962. "I will try to tell youth of the qualifications needed, the channels to follow in order to enter an apprenticeship program, and whenever possible which trades are holding exams, the time, place and where they can obtain advance help."¹⁹ But aside from a few efforts by Laborers Local 261 and the Carpenters union to increase their number of minority apprentices, the NALC made little headway in its first several years. At a conference held in May 1963, local NALC leaders noted that the number of black apprentices and workers in the skilled trades still lagged far behind that of whites, and several black trade unionists who attended "voiced deep disappointment over the apathy on the part of organized labor toward growing Negro unemployment."²⁰ Not only was union resistance a problem, but the NALC noted that finding qualified black youth who desired a career in the skilled crafts was also difficult because of a general "lack of early motivation towards the trades" and because "the negro community stresses professions."²¹ Moreover, because of organized labor's history of discriminating against racial minorities in the skilled trades, many community leaders and young African Americans viewed union-administered apprenticeship programs with skepticism. As the San Francisco Human Rights Commission (HRC) reported in 1966, while minority communities expressed the desire for greater access to training programs, "it was accompanied by an expressed feeling that these training programs should not be another fruitless gesture, that there should be jobs at the end of the training trail."²²

After the HRC was established in 1964, black ILWU members used it to exert greater pressure on the skilled building trades unions to open their ranks to minorities. The HRC was formed as part of Mayor Jack Shelley's attempt to alleviate the city's racial problems, and he had sought ILWU participation from the outset. Three of the ILWU's leading black members, Revels

Cayton, Bill Chester, and Curtis McLain served on the HRC and its employment committee during its first several years. The HRC focused intently on employment discrimination, and its first report concluded that “affirmative remedial action must be initiated, encouraged and coordinated” to increase minority employment in skilled trades such as construction as well as newer white-collar jobs. These affirmative actions were similar to what the NALC had already been doing, and included providing employment and apprenticeship information to minority organizations and communities, urging employers and union leaders to voluntarily accept minority workers, and drafting an ordinance that would prohibit racial discrimination in all city contracts.²³ By its second year of operation the HRC had concluded that “the problem of equal job opportunity” had “moved substantially from the stage of remedying today’s discrimination to the stage of remedying the results of yesterday’s discrimination.” The HRC admonished that remedying past discrimination would be more “complex than were remedies for discrimination in hiring,” but it stopped short of advocating the modern affirmative action formula of quotas and goals. Rather, it emphasized expanded recruitment and training programs for young minority workers. The HRC also called for greater action among labor unions in the skilled trades, specifically in terms of expanding their number of apprentices, actively recruiting minority journeymen, and training construction laborers in skilled crafts.²⁴ These recommendations were buttressed with some tough talk. In 1966 Revels Cayton demanded that craft unions “open their gates ... on construction all over the city,” and suggested that the HRC hold public hearings on the issue if the problem persisted.²⁵

Yet as the HRC’s attempt to pass a nondiscrimination ordinance through the Board of Supervisors would show, there were limits to how far ILWU members would go towards compelling unions in the building trades to change their membership policies. The ordinance’s

“affirmative action” requirement drew upon the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and merely required contractors, subcontractors, and suppliers to take “affirmative action to insure that applicants are employed, and that employees are treated during employment, without regard to their race, color, religion, ancestry, or national origin.” Instead of the numerical goals and timetables that would become synonymous with affirmative action after the Department of Labor issued the Philadelphia Plan in 1969, the HRC’s use of the phrase applied to “employment, upgrading, demotion or transfer; recruitment or recruitment advertising; layoff or termination; rates of pay or other forms of compensation; and selection for training, including apprenticeship.”²⁶ But the ordinance was significant in its move away from “voluntary compliance” on all city contracts and the powers that it gave to the HRC to investigate, adjudicate, and enforce the ordinance’s provisions. When hearings concerning the ordinance were scheduled late in the spring of 1966, the *Sun-Reporter* announced that “this will be one of the most important hearings that concerns the welfare of its minority citizens, who are still not getting their due share of jobs because of discrimination.”²⁷ Yet those hopes were soon dashed when the ILWU, led by Harry Bridges, joined the SFBTC and the rest of the San Francisco Labor Council in opposing the ordinance on the grounds that it would allow employers to pass blame on to unions while also undermining seniority rights.²⁸ When the HRC revised the ordinance to accommodate organized labor’s objections later that summer, black San Franciscans responded with a mixture of outrage and betrayal. “We are greatly concerned that those amendments can be used to continue existing practices,” local National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) leader Clifton Jeffers protested. “These unions are the ones that kept me down,” added Thomatra Scott, who struggled to find a job upon migrating to San Francisco from Mississippi.²⁹ The *Sun-Reporter*, which had steadfastly supported labor in the past, now suggested that black works

might “study and support” right to work laws.³⁰ Noting that “Labor for many years sold the Black Man a bill of goods about being our best friend,” Harold Brooks of the NALC averred that “When the chips are down, then we find out who our real enemies are and some are very close to us.”³¹

Black Contractors and Black Labor

While black trade unionists were unable to make much headway when it came to increasing black employment in the skilled construction trades, a group of black contractors emerged and attempted to claim leadership in the fight for black jobs. In the two decades following World War II black construction contractors were relatively few in number and operated on the margins of the industry. A 1946 study by the National Urban League found that in cities where black craftsmen encountered the most racially exclusive construction markets, many chose to become contractors. In Seattle, for example, the League reported that the “majority of Negro building mechanics operate as small contractors.” In St. Louis, the Urban League’s John Clark explained in 1947 that “In order for these skilled building mechanics to continue to have sufficient work, practically all of them must operate as a contractor.”³² Indeed, as several black craftsmen who did the same in the Bay Area after World War II attested, by setting up shop for themselves, black construction workers hoped to gain a greater degree of autonomy and control over their work lives.³³ “I was told that the union could not put me to work because most of the people (white) requesting plumbing work done in their home definitely did not want a Negro plumber,” a black master plumber who tried to join the local plumbers union in 1945 recounted. At this time there were no Negroes in the union. Rather than join the union and face the possibility of not getting any calls I decided to take the state examination for a license to

contract.” Another contractor who joined the Pile Drivers Union in 1934 left the local eight years later “after being told that the contractors did not want to work Negroes.” A Black plasterer who fought his way into Oakland Local 112 and worked on government contracts during the war “decided to take the state board and contract on my own” when “the government jobs were over” and “chances of working with white painting contractors would be very poor.” Added a black carpenter who “experienced many forms of discrimination” as a member of Local 33 in Oakland, “Because of the discriminatory practices, I decided to take the state board and begin contracting on my own. I still retain my union card but do not depend upon the union for men to any great extent.”³⁴ Many of these contractors would also take it upon themselves to train and employ other black workers. “After passing the state board I made it a point to train as many Negroes as possible for the trade and was determined to use them on jobs,” an Oakland-based black plumbing contractor explained.”³⁵ Black craftsmen acted similarly in cities across the country. By going into business for themselves, they were engaging in a subtle, individualistic form of labor activism. Most of those who began contracting during these years could more accurately be described as self-employed workers than as businessmen.

Ray Dones was one of these contractors. A native of Marshall, Texas, Dones moved to Denver, Colorado and began working as an electrician in 1943 after learning the electrical and plumbing trades while working as a Pullman Porter. He eventually passed the city exam to become a journeyman electrician and in 1950 he moved to the San Francisco Bay Area. Upon his arrival, Dones found his opportunities to ply his trade hindered by the local electrical workers union. “I tried to get a job through the hiring hall that is operated in Oakland, and I was not able to secure employment through this referral system that they have,” he recalled. He eventually found work with a non-union contractor in Berkeley and later obtained a California electrician’s

license, which enabled him to establish his own business, Dones Electric (which later became Aladdin Electric), in 1953. As with most other black contractors, Dones took small jobs in predominantly black neighborhoods, often worked alongside his employees, and in some cases worked for other contractors. A member of the U.S. Civil Rights Commission unwittingly summed up the tenuous existence of most black contractors when he told Dones during a 1967 hearing, “I don’t understand whether you are an employee or an employer.”³⁶

By the mid-1960s Dones’ business was suffering. The type of residential jobs that he had built his business on were becoming harder to find, while government spending on the construction of highways, public transportation, public buildings such as schools and post offices, and “urban renewal” housing plans fueled a construction boom in northern and western cities.³⁷ Black contractors such as Dones were unable to obtain these lucrative contracts. Working primarily on small jobs in black neighborhoods, they kept a low profile and lacked the financial capital and social and professional connections needed to compete for work on a citywide basis. Public construction work tended to be “closed-shop,” and out of necessity most black contractors employed nonunion black workers. Furthermore, in order to qualify for a contract on a public-construction project a contractor needed to qualify for surety bonds. These bonds were a form of insurance that would cover delinquent construction, supply, and labor costs in the event that a contractor could not fulfill a contract.³⁸ The Miller Act of 1935 required contractors on all federal projects valued at least \$2,000 to obtain surety bonds to insure the completion of the project, payment for their workforce, payment for their material suppliers, and in some cases for the bid itself. In the decades that followed, states and municipalities passed “Little Miller Acts” of their own that established similar bonding requirements for locally-funded projects.

Bonding requirements created difficulties for all small-scale contractors, but black contractors in particular complained that this system created a “vicious circle” in which they lacked the experience, finances, and managerial capability required in order to obtain the bonds needed to qualify for the very types of projects that would give them that experience. Unlike other forms of insurance, surety companies did not adjust rates to accommodate risk. Instead, they only issued bonds to contractors who could meet three criteria (known as the “three ‘Cs’): the necessary capital, capacity, and character to complete the job. Because the latter two criteria were determined by the bonding company, a black contractor who managed to meet the capital requirements for a contract might still be turned down for bonds on the basis that he lacked the experience or some other quality deemed necessary to complete the job. Moreover, when determining “character” and “capacity,” black contractors frequently insisted that surety firms considered a fourth “C”: color. A national survey conducted by the NAACP in 1969 found that “getting bonds” was the most common problem that minority contractors encountered, followed by securing loans and financing; labor shortages; lack of capital; and difficulties with estimating and bidding.³⁹

Dones and other black contractors in the Bay Area found an opportunity to increase their access to government construction contracts in the mid-1960s, when community activists, white contractors, building trades unions, and federal government officials clashed over the racial composition of the work-force on the construction of the Bay Area Rapid Transit system (BART). “BART is the thing that we organized around,” recalled Joe Debro, who helped organize black contractors in 1966. “That really stimulated us.”⁴⁰ BART was a billion-dollar state-of-the-art, seventy-five mile, three-county rail network that was scheduled to take at least five years to complete. The seed money for the project came from a \$792,000,000 bond issue

approved by the counties of Alameda, San Francisco, and Contra Costa in 1962, but sizable state and federal grants would also be needed to complete the system. During the peak period of construction, which was targeted for 1967, the estimated manpower was projected at nearly 8,000 workers.⁴¹ Much of the construction, moreover, would take place in minority neighborhoods where unemployment rates exceeded the national average. For example, in West Oakland, a once thriving African American working-class neighborhood in which the primary business thoroughfare stood directly in the path of BART bulldozers, 13.8 percent of all men and 15.2 percent of all women were unemployed in 1966, including 41 percent of all blacks between the ages of 14 and 19.⁴² The unemployment rate for the city as a whole in 1965 was 20 percent for minority workers as opposed to 8 percent for whites. The federal Economic Development Administration (EDA) considered BART among “the most promising prospects for large-scale job creation in Oakland” if local workers were utilized. However, the EDA warned that if “crews are brought in from outside the Bay area (and those are bound to be largely white) when so many thousands of local minority residents are unemployed, a dangerous situation will quickly result.”⁴³

The issue of minority employment on the construction of BART quickly came to a head. When rumors circulated in the summer of 1965 that BART intended to go outside of the Bay Area to hire any skilled construction workers that local unions could not supply, community, religious, and civil rights groups formed JOBART (Jobs Opportunities Bay Area Rapid Transit). JOBART was a manifestation of the growing calls for “community control” that emanated from America’s inner cities in the second half of the 1960s and early 1970s. Black Americans living in urban ghettos increasingly demanded more power over their communities through authentic representation in municipal governing bodies such as school boards, poverty boards, and police

commissions, along with significant participation by resident workers and contractors in government-funded construction projects.⁴⁴ Robert O. Self has argued that groups such as JOBART signaled the rise of “a community-centered politics of place” that attenuated the ties between the emerging Black Power movement and liberal fair employment politics.⁴⁵ JOBART and likeminded protest groups were less-willing to work through existing institutions than civil rights liberals such as black trade unionists, which contributed to rising tensions between inner-city activists and government officials. JOBART would eventually challenge the city on a wide range of issues concerning West Oakland, but its immediate concern was employment. “Many of our local residents, who are presently unemployed or on the welfare rolls will be forced to stan[d]by while white workers will be imported to the Bay Area to meet any manpower shortages created by BART and other construction projects,” Tom Fike, JOBART’s fiery co-chairman, protested at an Oakland Town Hall meeting in January 1966.⁴⁶ “BART must hire a substantial number of Negroes, Mexican-American, and other minority people,” the group declared. “As a large employer in the Bay Area, BART has a duty to solve the problems of discrimination which keep so many of our people poor and unemployed.” JOBART’s initial resolutions thus called on BART district officials and its contractors to actively recruit, train, employ, and facilitate union membership for minority workers from Bay Area communities.⁴⁷

BART district officials dismissed JOBART’s demands as being prepared “without knowledge or realistic appreciation of the manner in which the construction industry is organized.”⁴⁸ BART general manager B. R. Stokes informed JOBART that it could not adopt the group’s resolutions because to do so would unfairly exclude the majority of contractors who had collective bargaining agreements with building trades unions, and, in his view, result in a costly lawsuit or possibly a strike.⁴⁹ In Stokes’ view, BART officials had taken a forthright stand in

support of fair employment and “affirmative action” because they required that all contracts include a nondiscrimination clause, and he would come to feel that JOBART and other civil rights activists were using BART as a “whipping boy” in order to incite minority groups.⁵⁰

As the months passed, relations between BART district officials and JOBART became increasingly acrimonious, and negotiations over minority employment on BART construction intensified. For a while Stokes hoped that he could convince JOBART to modify its resolutions, or to at least to lessen the group’s influence among Bay Area religious and civil rights organizations. In February he requested that C. L. Dellums, an African American leader of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters and chairman of the state fair employment practices commission, to chair a series of meetings between the BART Labor Management Committee, contractor and union representatives, local leaders of the NAACP, Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), Urban League, and JOBART.⁵¹ The meetings took place, but JOBART representatives did not attend. By this time, JOBART had changed its name to Justice on BART (thus keeping its original acronym) and adopted additional resolutions protesting evictions and the destruction of black homes and businesses.⁵² The group was unwilling to compromise within the framework of the BART Labor-Management Agreement, and Stokes complained that “the more militant members of JOBART assumed control of the organization, and today the participants in JOBART are predominantly representatives of the more militant minority groups in Oakland.”⁵³ He expressed this concern to Dellums, chiding JOBART leadership’s refusal “to meet for forthright, honest discussions of problems related to minority group employment.”⁵⁴ Meanwhile, JOBART picketed construction sites, staged protest marches, and called for a moratorium on construction and evictions.⁵⁵ “[W]e have not refused to talk (with BART) but dialogue must have some substance,” Tom Fike thundered. “[W]e (JOBART) have wasted a year ... you have not

trained people in the area ... if you do not meet your responsibility we (JOBART) must take direct action.”⁵⁶

Such was the state of affairs when BART applied for a \$13 million grant from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) in 1966. The request for federal funds provided an opening for the DOL to intervene in BART’s employment policies. Beginning in the 1950s the federal government had taken incremental steps to end racial discrimination in government contracts.⁵⁷ These efforts produced little change, but they took on a new sense of urgency in 1963 and 1964, when CORE and the NAACP picketed large construction sites in New York City, Philadelphia, Cleveland, St. Louis, Newark, and Washington, D.C.⁵⁸ In response to those protests, President Kennedy issued Executive Order 11114, which required government contractors to take “affirmative action” with regards to African Americans and directed the President’s Committee on Equal Employment Opportunity (PCEEO) (created in 1961) to monitor hiring practices on federal construction projects.⁵⁹ President Johnson followed with Executive Order 11246, which further affirmed the government’s commitment to “equal employment opportunity” in government contracts.⁶⁰ Building upon the series of executive orders, a cadre of young and ambitious liberals working within the Department of Labor’s Office of Contract Compliance (OFCC) saw an opportunity to give teeth to their agency’s enforcement powers through a result-oriented approach involving what would ultimately amount to racial hiring quotas.⁶¹ Beginning in 1966, the OFCC targeted metropolitan areas where it would experiment with developing a workable plan to integrate construction crews on publicly-financed projects. It had already begun experimenting with plans in St. Louis and Cleveland when the BART issue drew its attention to the San Francisco Bay Area.

When HUD received BART's application, Secretary Robert Weaver informed Secretary of Labor Willard Wirtz that "All of the major issues, save for equal employment, have been resolved." Citing civil rights groups' complaints against Bay Area building trades unions and "the racial situation in Oakland," Weaver proposed joint action between HUD, the Department of Labor, and other federal agencies.⁶² The Department of Labor heeded Weaver's call. "It is my feeling that the entry of Federal funds into this project ... is the one chance remaining to effect a real change in union attitudes towards EEO [equal employment opportunity]," Robert Magnuson, the OFFC area coordinator for San Francisco, informed Edward Sylvester, OFCC director, in July 1966.⁶³ EDA assistant secretary Eugene Foley, whose department had approved \$23,000,000 in public works and business loans projects in Oakland, likewise believed that the federal government "had a big stake" in the Bay Area and that "what we do here will be a pattern for the entire nation."⁶⁴ Throughout the rest of 1966 and 1967, federal government officials met with local civil rights groups and BART officials in order to develop an affirmative action program for the local construction industry that would result in more skilled minority workers on publicly-funded projects.

As the drama surrounding BART was unfolding in the summer of 1966, Ray Dones had just laid off two of his six employees. Hoping to obtain a loan that might help him meet the bonding requirements needed to bid on some of the government-funded projects in West Oakland, he paid a visit to the Oakland Small Business Development Center (OSBDC). Following passage of the Economic Opportunity Act in 1964, the Office of Economic Opportunity established Small Business Development centers across the country to provide businesses located in low-income areas with business training and counseling and "to serve as intermediaries between EOL [Economic Opportunity Loan program] loan applicants and the

SBA [Small Business Administration].”⁶⁵ The Oakland center was headed by Joseph Debro, who the *Oakland Tribune* praised as a “bright, personable and aggressive” man “who obviously could earn more than his present salary of \$13,500 if he went into private industry,” and reported that he had “made the Oakland center one of the most active in the country in terms of loans.”⁶⁶ A native of Jackson, Mississippi, Debro and his parents were among the tens of thousands of African Americans who migrated to the Bay Area during World War II. After graduating from McClymonds High School in West Oakland he earned an engineering degree and a master’s degree in chemistry from the University of California at Berkeley.⁶⁷ He had become interested in large-scale construction projects during the 1950s while working as an engineer on the construction of Interstate 580 in the East Bay.⁶⁸ And while at the OSBDC he became acutely aware of the problems that minority contractors faced obtaining larger government contracts.

Dones and Debro hit it off immediately, and instead of arranging a loan they discussed the possibility of forming an association that could assist black contractors in making the transition from small residential construction to large public-sector projects. Debro had thought about this idea for a while, and he felt that the controversy surrounding BART construction had created the opportune time for such a venture.⁶⁹ After speaking with Debro, Dones rounded up fifteen other Bay Area black contractors who, like Dones, “found themselves in a disadvantaged and particularly precarious position” because of the decline in small-scale privately-financed construction.⁷⁰ The contractors met on August 13 in Oakland to discuss their mutual problems and, with assistance from Debro and the OSBDC, founded the General and Specialty Contractors Association (GSCA).

The GSCA sought to immediately insert black and minority contractors into policy debates concerning the integration of the skilled construction trades. They would do so by

highlighting their historic role in training and employing minority workers and by stressing that they were uniquely positioned to help quell racial unrest stemming from discrimination in the construction industry. In September 1966, the GSCA adopted a three-point resolution on affirmative action that called for hiring preferences for local residents on federal contracts, increasing the ratios of minority apprenticeships in each craft, and a requirement that federal contractors “provide a training program as an allowable cost item in the contract specifications.”⁷¹ At the same time, the GSCA sought to address the specific problems that beset black contractors, such as those relating to bonding, capital, and basic business skills. As the group explained to Edward Sylvester, OFCC Director, it sought “to provide through our collective resources more contracts for our members in order that we may assume our share of the responsibility to provide training opportunities for those young men who have heretofore been excluded by past practices of discrimination because of race, creed, color, and place of national origin in this industry.” All the GSCA asked was for Sylvester’s “active support of our Association by encouraging your agency to consider our group where construction contracts are offered.”⁷² And as Dones suggested in letter to President Lyndon Johnson, his group could help allay “the unrest which is part of the social revolution which is taking place in our country.”⁷³

It was this last point that caught the attention of the Department of Labor, which pledged to support the GSCA “in every way we can.”⁷⁴ Sylvester was kept apprised of the GSCA’s activities by Vincent Macaluso, the OFCC Assistant Director for Construction, and Robert Magnuson, OFCC area coordinator for the Bay Area. A Yale educated lawyer, Macaluso had become interested in assisting black contractors while working in the PCEEEO earlier in the decade.⁷⁵ In June 1966 he had reached out to the National Businessmen’s League (formerly the National Negro Business League), which consisted of successful African American businessmen,

“to discuss with them our program for developing minority group craftsmen into subcontractors through training programs.” The League was not interested, but as the OFCC went about devising affirmative action plans that summer and fall, Macaluso instructed his area coordinators to push for provisions calling for the use of minority contractors. Magnuson was in constant contact with the GSCA, and in November he informed Macaluso that the group “had been moving forward progressively and increasing their membership,” and that they had “already had training sessions on bonding requirements, legal aspects of bidding, and writing contracts.” He advised Macaluso that the GSCA three-point proposal “would advance training opportunities and encourage contractors toward training if agency regulations could be conformed to provide for this cost allowance.”⁷⁶ Magnuson and Macaluso made sure that minority contractors were included in the OFCC Operational Plan for San Francisco Bay Area Contract Construction Program, which Sylvester first announced in December 1966.⁷⁷ Similar to the affirmative action plans that the agency was devising for St. Louis, Cleveland, and Philadelphia, the San Francisco Plan called on contractors and unions to commit to equal opportunity in hiring and apprenticeship, to upgrade minority craftsmen, and to actively seek out minority youth for apprenticeship programs. Item nine of the plan, which required general contractors to “encourage minority group subcontractors, and subcontractors with minority representation among their employees to bid for subcontracting work,” revealed the influence of the GSCA on OFCC officials. In a follow-up memorandum dated February 6, 1967, Sylvester elaborated on how contractors might meet this obligation by subdividing the work for minority subcontractors who were not able to handle a large job and by providing “coaching and guidance” in business methods for minority craftsmen who expressed interest in becoming subcontractors. He also

explicitly recommended that contractors contact the GSCA in order to “identify prospective bidders for sub-contracts.”⁷⁸

In the year following the OFCC order, the GSCA seemed to gain influence among the various parties involved in increasing minority employment in the skilled construction trades. Prospective contractors for BART and other government projects in the Bay Area requested GSCA suggestions on fulfilling the minority contractor provisions of the affirmative action order. The Bay Area Urban League also enlisted the help of the GSCA in compiling a Directory of Minority Journeymen that contractors and agencies could use to help comply with the order.⁷⁹ In July 1967 the San Francisco Laborers Union Local 261 lent the GSCA use of its hiring hall so that it could interview out-of-work laborers to “find qualified journeymen or qualified apprentice candidates.”⁸⁰ In August the San Francisco HRC instructed the city’s Housing Authority to include “the minority contractors group” in its invitations to bid on jobs on the city’s Hunters Point housing rehabilitation project.⁸¹ The San Francisco Redevelopment Agency (SFRA) also scrutinized subcontractors’ equal employment records and held equal employment conferences with developers and general contractors in which, among other things, it strongly urged them to work with Dones and the GSCA to increase the use of minority subcontractors.⁸² And in January 1968 the SFRA provided free office space for the GSCA in downtown San Francisco, which served as a headquarters and a venue for classroom instruction.⁸³ The following year the agency launched plans for a “Special Construction Project” for Hunters Point, which was to include special local resident pre-apprentice, apprentices, journeyman training, and minority contractor participation.

In 1968 the SFRA awarded the general contract for the construction of Martin Luther King Square apartments – a 110-unit, \$2,066,300 block-square project in the Western Addition

A-2 project area – to the Winston A. Burnett Construction Company of New York.⁸⁴ It marked the first time that the agency had awarded a general contract to a black-owned construction firm. Although Burnett Construction was not a locally-based company (it had opened a San Francisco office months before winning the Martin Luther Square contract), Winston Burnett was mindful of resident demands for “community control” of construction projects in their neighborhoods. A member of New York’s largest minority contractor association, he believed that “urban renewal and rehabilitation ... starts with people, not with brick and mortar,” and claimed that his company was committed to the “total involvement of minority groups in all areas of rehabilitation in the center city.”⁸⁵ Burnett Construction achieved this by using black subcontractors who “utilize those persons indigenous to the communities to be renewed and rehabilitated.”⁸⁶ On the Martin Luther King Square project, Burnett awarded subcontracts to small local black firms (several of which were GSCA members), and worked with the city to waive bonding requirements when necessary.⁸⁷ The subcontractors employed minority workers and some, such as New City Plumbing (a company formed by three GSCA members, one of whom was based in the Western Addition) provided on-the-job training for Western Addition residents.⁸⁸ To help get more black San Franciscans on the job, the New City Plumbing contractors convinced Winston Burnett Company officials and Mayor Joseph Alioto’s office to waive the city requirement that they use lead and oakum joints on the Martin Luther Square Project. The use of No-Hub cast iron pipe with mechanical joints, they explained, was desirable because “relatively unskilled mechanics can become acquainted with the cutting, fitting, layout and theory of cast iron sanitary plumbing more rapidly than with lead and oakum joints.”⁸⁹ This course of action promised more immediate results than the affirmative action program of the other plumbing subcontractor, which pledged to recruit minority applicants and train them for

pre-apprenticeships. The Martin Luther King Square project was completed without any protests from community activists and the use of black contractors and predominantly minority craftsmen made it ‘the first of its kind in San Francisco.’⁹⁰ HUD assistant secretary Samuel C. Jackson praised it as representing “what urban renewal should be.” He cited the need for affordable housing in the Western Addition, adding that “not only was built IN the community and FOR the community, it was built BY the community.”⁹¹

During this time the GSCA continued to expand. By the end of its first year the GSCA listed seventy-six members (not including people who worked in fields related to construction and advised the association) and included contractors from Oakland, San Francisco, Berkeley, and several other Bay Area cities.⁹² These efforts were bolstered with the influx of federal funds. Throughout 1967 the GSCA sought DOL funding to “accelerate the job already started” by the group by providing a “training program to develop the administrative, operation and procurement techniques of minority group construction contractors for full productive participation in the construction industry.” In order to better appeal to the DOL, the GSCA also stated that its “specific purpose of this project is to find ways and means of developing jobs in the construction industry for minority workers who have been excluded from the industry or who work in it only on a limited basis.”⁹³ But the DOL was not interested in funding an organization of employers, and it refused to subsidize these GSCA programs. However, the EDA liked the program, and determined that it meshed with its own objectives in Oakland.⁹⁴ A division of the Department of Commerce (DOC), the EDA was a product of Great Society liberalism that aimed to alleviate the worst excesses of poverty – particularly among inner-city residents. It was established by the Public Works Act and Economic Development Act of 1965 in order to “generate jobs, help retain existing jobs, and stimulate industrial and commercial growth in

economically distressed areas of the United States” (it replaced the Area Development Administration).⁹⁵ In the wake of the decade’s urban riots (and especially the 1965 Watts riot), the new agency’s mission took on an added sense of urgency. In fact, Eugene Foley’s first assignment as head of the EDA was Oakland, and as mentioned above he secured \$23 million in development grants for the city in 1966.⁹⁶ That summer, the DOC began encouraging black business owners to form trade associations in order to improve their operations and enhance profitability. The DOC deemed the first two associations, one among drycleaners and the other among furniture and appliance retailers, to be successful.⁹⁷ As the origins of the GSCA attests, black contractors did not need government prodding to organize. Nevertheless, with its potential to stimulate black enterprise and provide jobs in a major metropolitan area experiencing racial unrest, the GSCA seemed an ideal client for the EDA to carry out the DOC agenda. In January 1968 the EDA approved a \$75,000 grant for the GSCA, which it used to hire a management staff and expand its educational programs.⁹⁸ The EDA would award similar grants to new black contractor associations in Los Angeles and Chicago the following year. In all three cases, the EDA grant was the first federally-funded program to assist African American contractors in their respective cities.

The GSCA’s activities and growing reputation caught the attention of the NAACP, which was trying to stake a leadership role in the fight to integrate the skilled trades across the country while simultaneously increasing the relevance of its urban chapters amid the rise of community-centered Black Power activism. Under the guidance of its labor director, Herbert Hill, the national office closely followed the GSCA’s activities from its inception and by the end of 1967 had concluded that “the issue of Negro contractors getting some of the government contracts is a very live issue that we are going to have to deal with.” Accordingly, the national office instructed

its West Coast affiliates to “keep abreast” of the GSCA and its members, “work very closely” with them, and “attempt to involve them as well in the whole of the issues on public construction that we are seeking to take on.”⁹⁹ In early 1967 the two groups joined forces in protesting the exclusion of minority workers and contractors on the construction of a new post office complex in West Oakland, and in the spring of 1968 the NAACP included “Bay Area Negro Contractors” in its newly formed Labor Council to “operate as a special task force to achieve economic justice in the building trades industry for Bay Area Negro workers.”¹⁰⁰ West Coast Regional Director Leonard Carter kept Herbert Hill apprised of the conditions of black contractors in the West, and Hill himself met with Ray Dones and the GSCA on at least two occasions.¹⁰¹

Hill’s observations eventually convinced the NAACP to launch its own organization of black contractors, a consortium called the National Afro-American Builders Corporation (NAABC). “The establishment of a national organization of Negro contractors would make possible the employment of large numbers of Negro construction workers who are denied access to union controlled hiring halls and also makes possible the establishment of independent apprenticeship programs directly operated by groups of Negro-owned contractors,” Hill explained, “thereby bypassing the traditional restrictive apprenticeship training system which excludes Negroes from skilled craft occupations in this industry.”¹⁰² Moreover, Hill suggested that the NAABC might help the NAACP better compete with urban groups that extolled Black Power and community control. “If the Association allocates adequate manpower and funds to this project,” Hill said of the NAABC in its formative stage, “we will be in a position to develop a new and significant facet of the NAACP’s program that can have long-range implications for our growth in urban communities.”¹⁰³ The NAABC showed early promise. In its first nine months, it organized 24 working chapters in 21 states, including a national headquarters in

Philadelphia and regional offices in Gary, Indiana and Newark, New Jersey. And although the corporation had “lost some of the bids because the time element (for bidding and estimating) was too short to secure the needed capital,” its local chapters had managed to obtain bonds in several instances and secure housing contracts in Boston, South Bend, Gary, Flint, Dayton, Birmingham, Mobile, and High Point, New York.¹⁰⁴

“Bonding is the Key”

Despite the GSCA’s initial impact, few minority contractors actually benefited from the OFCC’s San Francisco Operational Plan. Many contractors contacted the GSCA when submitting their bids pursuant to Item Nine of the plan, but would seldom follow-up once they won a contract. More significantly from the point of view of the OFCC, few minority workers obtained jobs through the plan. In its weekly report to OFCC Director Edward Sylvester in September 1967, Vincent Macaluso’s office summarized the progress of the San Francisco Operational Plan in three short words: “Not too swell.”¹⁰⁵ The Plan looked good on paper. However it contained no provisions for evaluating contractors’ actual performance. “A [white] contractor can repeat exactly what the plan says and still not achieve any EEO [equal employment opportunity],” an OFCC review observed. “He can seek, advertise, promote, encourage, cooperate with unions and participate without hiring any minority workers.”¹⁰⁶ Whereas government officials had initially praised BART officials for their apparent commitment to affirmative action, the OFCC’s disillusionment now echoed that of JOBART activists from the previous year. BART’s affirmative action program, which B. R. Stokes hailed as “a model for the country,” was “the thinnest kind of window dressing,” Macaluso now averred.¹⁰⁷ As the summer fog rolled into the Bay in 1968, he reported that “The San Francisco

Plan has resulted in no known increase in membership in the mechanical trades.”¹⁰⁸

The GSCA hoped that the San Francisco Plan’s failings would convince DOL officials that the use of minority contractors on government projects would be the best way to ensure that minority workers were used as well. In April 1967 the GSCA announced that it would hold a one-day conference on Contract Compliance Under Executive Order 11246 at Berkeley High School on May 20th. In his invitation to government officials, Dones explained that the conference was “an effort to allay the unrest and apprehension in neighborhoods which can ill afford additional tensions created by racial discrimination on construction jobs paid for with Federal funds.”¹⁰⁹ Although Dones maintained that the GSCA believed “that all sides can work out a sound, workable plan together,” DOL officials viewed the GSCA’s attempt to take charge of its affirmative action program with trepidation.¹¹⁰ In early May Macaluso nervously reported that the GSCA had already sent out 300 invitations to labor union officials and members of the NAACP, Urban League, CORE and JOBART. The participation of JOBART, which had supported the GSCA in its effort to obtain contracts on the construction of HUD-sponsored senior housing early in 1967, was cause of particular concern.¹¹¹ The GSCA also extended invitations to President Johnson, Willard Wirtz, Edward Sylvester, and Office of Equal Opportunity Director Paul Boyajian, each of whom respectfully declined. Their busy schedules likely would not permit a trip to the Bay Area, but they also were not about to subject themselves to the potential firestorm that the conference might ignite. That task was left to Robert Magnuson and his boss, Vincent Macaluso, who unsuccessfully tried to convince Dones to cancel the conference when the two met on May 4.¹¹²

The conference nearly erupted into the maelstrom that government officials feared. After Henry Miller of the National Business League disparaged union apprenticeship standards in his

keynote speech, a furious J. Lamar Childers and his building trades union colleagues threatened to walk out. A former journeyman himself, Childers had been involved in the construction trades for forty years and had led the Alameda County Building Trades Council (ACBTC) for fifteen of them. He angrily denied that racial discrimination was a problem in the construction unions, and according to Magnuson, he was “inclined to be antagonistic, defensive and pretty reactionary with respect to this issue.”¹¹³ However, Dones managed to calm Childers and convinced him to stay. “The rest of the day was spirited, frank, but not really bitter,” Macaluso noted with surprise. “In fact it was a pretty healthy exchange.” He and Magnuson were also somewhat relieved that “the main thrust of the discussion was not upon the inadequacies of the government program, but rather upon the common problem of the trades in the minority group community in the lack of construction jobs.” The meeting was a success for Dones and the GSCA. Not only was Dones able to showcase his ability to mediate between community activists, labor leaders, and government officials, but the conference also passed resolutions calling for the federal government to assist minority contractors with bonding problems.”¹¹⁴

While Dones used public forums to promote the idea that the government should make bonding assistance for minority contractors integral to its affirmative action programs in construction employment, Joseph Debro was already busy working out the details of what such a plan might actually look like. Debro offered government officials a way to assist minority contractors with bonding while putting unemployed minorities to work with the “On the Job Training Credit Bank of Oakland.” The plan, which he called a “community action program,” would provide training and employment for approximately six hundred minority workers while also creating “an economically viable group of building contractors who will be able to carry-on the training of minority workers and assist the less qualified associated in increasing their

business skills.” With proper funding the Credit Bank would help cover the training costs for the upgrading of minority construction workers while simultaneously increasing the bonding capacity of minority contractors. The plan would target semi-skilled craftsmen, many of whom were already union members, who could only find work “in rare periods of over employment.” Contractors in the program would sponsor these workers for on-the-job “re-training” in specialized areas, during which they would receive full union wage-scale. For each worker a contractor agreed to train, the Credit Bank would give him an advance payment of \$2,000. These funds would be deposited into the contractor’s account at the Credit Bank, and the contractor could then apply these funds towards meeting bonding requirements. As GSCA members obtained more contracts, they would also continue to benefit from the technical and managerial assistance that the association provided. The program’s on-the-job training approach offered an alternative to union-administered apprenticeship programs that had historically kept blacks out of the skilled trades. “We hated apprenticeship with a passion,” Debro recalled, “because we saw that as a way of keeping people out of the unions.”¹¹⁵ Debro believed that “the most meaningful contribution that this project could make would be the establishment of a new Federal program modeled on its success.”¹¹⁶

The Credit Bank plan quickly gained adherents. Congressman Jeffery Cohelan, a “Johnson liberal,” became an enthusiastic supporter of the program and Debro’s chief ally in his search for government backing and funding. A Bay Area native and former secretary-treasurer of the Milk Drivers’ and Dairy Employees Local 302, Cohelan represented California’s Seventh Congressional District, which encompassed Berkeley and most of North and West Oakland and was home to a majority of East Bay African Americans.¹¹⁷ He became interested in the problem of minority exclusion from the skilled building trades during the protests against the construction

of BART and the West Oakland Post Office, and he had intervened on behalf of the NAACP on the latter. Cohelan had also worked closely with the OSBDC, during which time he had gotten to know and respect Debro. Upon drafting the Credit Bank Proposal, Debro set about convincing Cohelan that this was the best way to integrate the construction industry. “Minorities will only be hired above the token level when minorities are the prime contractors or sub-contractors in the job areas in question,” he explained. This, and not “attacking unions,” “compliance laws,” or “closing down the job,” was the only realistic solution. “Bonding is the key word to producing jobs for Negroes in the construction industry,” he stated. “The BART problem, the Post Office problem and finally the Redevelopment problem will be soluble in a liberal bonding market.”¹¹⁸ He estimated that the increased bonding capacity of minority contractors alone would instantly provide at least 175 jobs.¹¹⁹ Cohelan needed no further persuading. He was “excited about Joe’s proposal” and believed that the program offered “one of the most exciting and promising opportunities for a major breakthrough in employment of skilled minority construction workers.” More immediately, he hoped it might “help tremendously with the problem we are exploring of getting Negro workers and Negro sub-contractors involved with the construction of the new Oakland Post Office.”¹²⁰ It surely helped that Debro’s plan pointed the finger at somewhere other than organized labor, and thus would not place the Democratic Congressman in the awkward position of taking sides between two of his chief constituents.

With Cohelan’s assistance, Debro gained additional important backers. Vincent Macaluso, who held Debro in high regard, endorsed the proposal and offered assistance in obtaining funds.¹²¹ Eventually, the Credit Bank received approval from bonding industry representatives, as well as J. Lamar Childers and the Alameda County Building Trades Council. A few years earlier Childers had vehemently opposed the creation of the East Bay Skills Center,

which pledged to provide training for the “hard-core unemployed” without direct union control.¹²² Childers found the objectives of Debro’s plan, which invited union participation and explicitly honored existing union agreements, “consistent with those of organized labor.”¹²³ As the GSCA grew and sought union membership for its workers, Childers increased his organization’s interaction with it, which included his participation in the May 20th compliance conference. By this time the GSCA claimed that approximately one-third of its members had union agreements, and Childers said that he expected to use the Credit Bank “as a vehicle to sign others in the Association as well as to upgrade the presently non-union workmen and get them in the Union.”¹²⁴ The ACBTC was responding to forces of change while also trying to put itself in a position to exert some form of control over those forces. On the one hand it felt that it needed to work the GSCA – especially if GSCA members were going to get government contracts, while on the other it sought to have some oversight of the process of training minority workers and bringing them into the construction unions. Given the choice between complying with federally-imposed affirmative action programs and cooperating with the GSCA, Childers had no qualms choosing the latter.

While Debro’s proposal had many well-wishers, he struggled to find a source of funding. The proposed Credit Bank came with a \$350,000 price tag, and it turned out that no government agencies were willing to foot the bill. Debro and Cohelan expected to obtain funds from the Department of Labor, a logical choice given the department’s oversight of the OFCC.¹²⁵ Yet the DOL concluded that funding Debro’s bonding program fell outside of its statutory and budgetary jurisdiction.¹²⁶ The DOL’s rejection was particularly inauspicious, since it suggested that the agency did not view minority contractors as essential to integrating the skilled trades. The EDA also determined that it had no statutory authority to fund the program.¹²⁷ With his options

running out, Debro turned to the private sector. He took the proposal to the Management Council for Bay Area Employment Opportunity, a private group funded by the Ford Foundation.¹²⁸ This time the proposal was well-received, although the Council suggested that the bonding and training components of the program be split so that the GSCA still might be able to obtain DOL funding on the latter. Encouraged by this news, Debro submitted the plan to the Ford Foundation.

By the time the Credit Bank proposal reached the desk of Douglas Pugh, the Ford Foundation had already developed an interest in minority contractors as well as a willingness to push philanthropy beyond the reach of the liberal state. During the 1960s the Ford Foundation embraced a new “philanthropic activism” that targeted its grants at solving inner-city problems and influencing liberal social reforms and policies.¹²⁹ In doing so, historian Karen Ferguson argues, the Ford Foundation “played a vanguard role in a nationwide effort by the so-called liberal establishment to engage black power.” This included, Ferguson argues, supporting racial separatism as a means to eventually bring poor inner-city blacks into the economic and social mainstream.¹³⁰ Assisting black contractors, who sought to attach themselves to nascent Black Power movements in their efforts to gain more work and who offered a path to urban black economic development that included creating jobs through black-owned firms, dovetailed with this mission. In 1967 The Ford Foundation had begun discussing the bonding problem with surety companies, and HUD requested the Foundation’s assistance in helping minority contractors to qualify for urban redevelopment projects.¹³¹ Pugh, an African American who had fought employment discrimination while working for the New York Urban League, liked what he saw. He recommended the proposal, and in June 1967 the Foundation gave its oral approval. In 1968 it awarded the GSCA a three-year grant in the amount of \$300,000, which was to go towards a revolving fund that minority contractors could use to meet bonding requirements.¹³²

The training element of the proposal would have to wait. “The development of Negro contracting firms along traditional lines – graduation from the trades into small construction, followed by larger and larger jobs as experience is gained – has been practically nil,” Mitchell Servidoff, the Ford Foundation’s vice president for national affairs and a former president of the Connecticut AFL-CIO, explained when announcing the grant. “These circumstances are at odds with current efforts to expand Negroes’ participation in the economic life of the nation generally, and particularly in the national housing program, where a major thrust is to rebuild ghetto areas.”¹³³

Although it would only cover the bonding half of the original Credit Bank proposal, news of the Ford Foundation grant generated excitement and anticipation among black and white liberals who were searching for solutions to the economic problems in the nation’s urban ghettos. Malacuso predicted that it would “set a shining example of what Negro subcontractors can do with a little outside help.”¹³⁴ John Williams, director of the Oakland Redevelopment Agency (ORA) and an African American, was sympathetic to what the GSCA was trying to do and anticipated that the grant would lead to redevelopment contracts for GSCA members. “It was gratifying when this grant came through,” he stated, “because bonding is one of the very weak areas for these contractors.”¹³⁵ Others seeking to assist minority contractors praised the advent of the bonding program. “This project could be done throughout the country,” the executive director of Lower Manhattan’s Small Business Development Corporation predicted, “and the association could be the vehicle whereby it could spread out throughout the different cities, and where the association feels it is important to work.”¹³⁶ The Ford Foundation itself shared these high expectations. As the Oakland program was getting underway, Douglas Pugh prepared a bonding program manual “to serve as both a stimulus and a tool for individuals and organizations interested in sponsoring minority contractor bonding problems in other

communities,”¹³⁷ and the Foundation went to work on similar programs that would launch in New York, Boston, Cleveland, and Boston the following year.¹³⁸

The Oakland Bonding Assistance Program, as it was named, produced encouraging results in the early going that seemed to confirm the GSCA claim that bonding problems were the main obstacle preventing minority contractors from competing on government work. In its first two years, the program made thirty-five bond-related advances totaling \$287,544. Whereas in 1966 there were only three minority-owned construction firms with contracts on HUD rehabilitation projects, by 1972 28 of the 43 firms with such contracts were minority-owned.¹³⁹ Trans-Bay Engineers and Builders, a general contracting firm formed by Dones, Debro, and four other GSCA members, became the program’s biggest client. It was able to obtain an interest-free \$50,000 loan from the revolving fund in order to secure a bond on the West Oakland Health Center project, a contract that the company would have otherwise lost because the surety company had previously cancelled its bond at the eleventh hour. The job netted the company a \$26,000 profit and quickly led to contracts on several other redevelopment projects worth five million dollars.¹⁴⁰ Among them was the construction of three high-rise apartment buildings sponsored by the More Oakland Residential Housing, Inc. (MORH), a nonprofit community sponsor comprised of West Oakland community organizations. As the general contractor on this project, the *Oakland Post* reported, Trans-Bay became the first minority firm to build a high-rise in the western United States.¹⁴¹ According to the 1970 *Registry of Minority Construction Contractors*, Trans-Bay had obtained the largest bonds and worked the largest jobs of any minority general contracting firm in the Bay Area.¹⁴²

As its members began to win contracts through the Bonding Assistance Program, the GSCA was able to obtain funding for the training component initially outlined in the OSBDC

Credit Bank proposal. The two programs, Project Upgrade and PREP (Property Rehabilitation Employment Project), were funded through grants from the Department of Labor and the Ford Foundation.¹⁴³ They also received approval from the Alameda County Building and Construction Trades Council, which preferred collaboration with the GSCA to the types of affirmative action programs that the OFCC was developing for the construction industry. Established in 1968, Project Upgrade's mission was to help minority craftsmen with previous construction experience but who were beyond the traditional age of an apprentice attain journeyman status.¹⁴⁴ The program combined classroom instruction with on-the-job training – during which trainees received full union prevailing wage rates and fringe benefits.¹⁴⁵ After completing 1500 hours of on-the-job training and 600 hours of classroom instruction, a Project Upgrade trainee qualified for full membership into the local carpenters' and painters' unions and were eligible for the plumbers, electrical workers, sheet metal workers, and operating engineers unions upon successfully passing a regular journeyman exam.¹⁴⁶ Mitchell Servidoff believed that Project Upgrade represented a novel approach to solving the problem of racial inequality in the construction industry. "Although other programs have been attempted to upgrade minority craftsmen, no other project has been so closely tied to both contractors and unions," he stated. "In this program, all participants will benefit: the minority workers who will achieve full status as union journeymen and financial rewards; the contractors, who will be able to give concrete evidence of their compliance with Federal equal-employment regulations; and the unions, who have been seeking a systematic method of bringing minority workers into their organizations while preserving their traditional standards of craftsmanship."¹⁴⁷

Launched in the summer of 1969, PREP aimed to provide construction experience for "young men with poor work records from low income areas" whose likelihood of applying for

and gaining acceptance to a union apprenticeship program were slim.¹⁴⁸ Each recruit received a general secondary education while receiving on-the-job training from a journeyman-instructor while performing rehab work on homes located in redevelopment project areas.¹⁴⁹ PREP was more ambitious than Upgrade, but the GSCA hoped that it would demonstrate their ability to transform the so-called “hard-core unemployed” into productive craftsmen. Gene Johnson, a GSCA member and PREP manager, believed that the program could “demonstrate to the young people that there is a way into the construction trades” while also convincing “the employers and labor unions that men from the center-city areas can learn these skills if they are given the opportunity.”¹⁵⁰

Programs such as Project Upgrade and PREP bolstered the credibility of the GSCA among government officials, and by the summer of 1969 Dones was regularly addressing OFCC monthly compliance meetings in order to underscore the need for government assistance for minority contractors.¹⁵¹ Earlier in the year Vincent Macaluso’s office prepared a paper titled “A Plan to Allow Minority Construction Contractors to Overcome the Problem of ‘Unbondability’.”¹⁵² A collaborative effort between the OFCC, the GSCA, OSBDC, Ford Foundation, and representatives from several bonding companies, the paper offered six “alternatives to the hang-up of unbondability.”¹⁵³ These alternatives, most of which had already been voiced in some form by the GSCA, included waiving bonding requirements on federal projects; including provisions requiring the use of minority contractor requirements in affirmative action plans; persuading white contractors to joint venture with minority contractors; persuading “benevolent foundations or wealthy individuals” to underwrite bonds; requiring bonding companies to accept a certain percentage of “unbondable” minority contractors; and issuing government loans to contractors for bonds. It was unclear how aggressively the OFCC

would pursue the ideas outlined in the paper or how they would be implemented, although several months later the DOL issued a \$480,000 contract to the General and Specialty Contractors Association of Philadelphia to provide journeyman upgrading and apprenticeship training for “inner city youth.”¹⁵⁴ The fact that it was considering the bonding issue at the same time that the DOL was close to finalizing its affirmative action model suggests that it was seriously considering the importance of minority contractors to its affirmative action programs.

The founding of the GSCA was the harbinger of a wave of minority contractor associations that formed in major cities across the country in the late 1960s. Many of these associations began to take shape around the same time or soon after the GSCA, and all of them owed their existence to local conflicts over employment discrimination and public construction. In Los Angeles, John Brown began discussing common problems with other black contractors in 1966. After traveling to Oakland and meeting with GSCA members, he presided over the formation of the Los Angeles Association of General, Sub and Specialty Contractors.¹⁵⁵ In Cleveland, black craftsmen and contractors organized the United Contractors Association in 1966 and immediately sought government support for black apprentices and builders who lacked industry knowledge.¹⁵⁶ In 1967, a group of mostly black and Puerto Rican American contractors in New York formed the Association of United Contractors of America.¹⁵⁷ Four black contractors on Chicago’s west side formed the West Side Builders Association in 1968. With assistance from the Chicago Economic Development Corporation and an EDA grant, the group expanded into the city-wide United Builders Association of Chicago in 1970.¹⁵⁸ Detroit homebuilders John Bingham and LaVarne Cobb initiated a series of meetings among black contractors that eventually matured into the Metropolitan Contractors Association.¹⁵⁹ Similar groups also formed in other cities, prompting one OFCC official to comment early in 1969 that

“Contractor associations are emerging like spring flowers.”¹⁶⁰ Like the GSCA, these groups not only claimed to represent the interests of black contractors but also black construction workers. In cities such as Boston, Seattle, and Pittsburgh, such groups began as organizations of contractors and craftsmen.¹⁶¹

By the summer of 1969, Dones noted “growing support ... for minority contractors to unite in forming their own association as an effective means of improving opportunities in securing contracts for construction projects.”¹⁶² On July 25 and 26, 1969, the GSCA and the Los Angeles Association of General Sub and Specialty Contractors co-sponsored a national conference of minority contractors at the St. Francis Hotel in San Francisco. Debro and Dones personally invited black contractors who were organizing associations and participating in construction site protests in cities across the country. The conference program included sessions on the usual array of topics: technical assistance, bonding, finding working capital, instituting training programs, and increasing profits. Minority contractors from across the country attended and shared their difficulties in competing with white firms for government contracts. But the meeting’s primary objective was to form a national association that would fight for a “fair share of the construction business,” which its attendees fulfilled by establishing the National Association of Minority Contractors (NAMC). Ray Dones was installed as the inaugural President and Joseph Debro the Executive Director for the new organization. While the NAMC endeavored to provide business training for its members, it also clearly sought to promote the idea that minority contractors were the best resource for training and employing minority workers. “When one asks why more qualified minority craftsmen are not hired for various construction projects, the labor unions blame the contractors and the contractors point their finger back at the unions,” Dones explained. “We will attempt to end this kind of a shell game

with a coalition of minority contractors form all phases of construction. We hope to be able to train people from the ghetto and poverty areas, and put them to work on construction jobs. It will be up to the unions, if they want to organize them and we will welcome their cooperation.”¹⁶³

The formation of a national organization highlights a key difference between black workers and contractors in the construction industry and black trade unionists who operated from a municipal base of power. Black contractors in the Bay Area were mostly excluded from the local political decision making, and they therefore placed more emphasis on working with federal government officials and agencies. Unlike black transit workers or black dock and warehouse workers, black construction workers in San Francisco (and other Bay Area cities) – with the exception of members of the Laborers Union – had little representation in the labor movement. In the absence of trade union leadership, a group of entrepreneurial craftsmen sought to represent the interests of blacks and minorities in the construction industry. Drawing on their own experience as workers, employers, and mentors, they intervened in evolving debates over affirmative action by trying to develop policy solutions that addressed both the problems that impacted black workers with those that impacted black businessmen. But as the Department of Labor moved closer to implementing an affirmative action program for the construction industry, it remained uncertain whether or not black contractors would be included in the plan.

¹ Eric Arnesen, “Specter of the Black Strikebreaker: Race, Employment, and Labor Activism in the Industrial Era,” *Labor History* Vol. 44, No.3, 2003: 319-335; Elizabeth Clark-Lewis, *Living In, Living Out: African American Domesticity in Washington, D.C., 1910-1940* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1994).

² *Daily Evening Bulletin* (San Francisco), February 18, 1874.

³ Carter Woodson and Lorenzo Greene, *The Negro Wage Earner*, (Washington, D.C.: Associated Publishers, 1930), 168.

⁴ Robert Zieger, *For Jobs and Freedom: Race and Labor in America Since 1865* (Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 2007), 53-54.

⁵ W.E.B. Du Bois, ed., *The Negro American Artisan: A Social Study Made by Atlanta University* (Atlanta: The Atlanta University Press, 1912), 66.

⁶ Peter Gottlieb, *Making Their Own Way: Southern Blacks' Migration to Pittsburgh, 1916-1930* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1997) 148.

⁷ Zieger, *For Jobs and Freedom*, 54.

⁸ Shaw, *The Building Trades* (Cleveland, OH: The Survey Committee of the Cleveland Foundation, 1916), 20.

⁹ Shaw, *The Building Trades*, 22.

¹⁰ James Gregory, *The Southern Diaspora: How the Great Migrations of Black and White Southerners Transformed America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005).

¹¹ President's Committee on Fair Employment, "Final Report," June 28, 1946 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1947), 89, accessed on hathitrust.org, May 11, 2011.

¹² Arthur Monroe was a case in point. He had migrated to San Francisco in 1951 from Louisiana, where he had belonged to a local of the Operator Engineers Union. He was thus able to get a card for Local 3 in San Francisco, but after a year could no longer pay his dues because he had never been sent out on a job. "Construction Worker Gets Run-Around," *Sun-Reporter*, April 10, 1954.

¹³ Council For Civic Unity, *A Civil Rights Inventory of San Francisco*, Part I: Employment, 191-192.

¹⁴ Interview with Matt Crawford, no date, Northern California, Minorities Committee, California C.I.O. Council, Homeland Ministries Archives, folder 12, box 120.

¹⁵ Keith Craig, "Local 261 Election Drive," *Sun-Reporter*, June 8, 1963; "5 Negroes Elected to Positions in Construction Laborers Union," *Sun-Reporter*, June 15, 1963.

¹⁶ Curtis McClain, Interview by Robert E. Martin, July 11, 1969, Ralph Bunch Collection, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, 14.

¹⁷ Phil Eden to Bill Chester, February 6, 1959, ILW History Files, Minorities-Blacks Thru 1959, ILWU Archives.

¹⁸ "Summary of Conference of California Bay Area Negro Trade Unionists, March 25, 1961," Richard Parrish Papers; "SF Negro Labor Council to Open Membership Drive Here," *Sun-Reporter*, December 12, 1961.

¹⁹ Harold B. Brooks, Jr., "Labor Report," *Sun-Reporter*, January 6, 1962.

²⁰ "NALC to Stage Job Rally," *Sun-Reporter*, May 11, 1963; "Fight for Jobs or Perish, Job Confab Theme," *Sun-Reporter*, May 18, 1963; "Report on NALC Job Conference," *Sun-Reporter*, May 23, 1963.

²¹ "Summary of Conference of California Bay Area Negro Trade Unionists, March 25, 1961," Richard Parrish Papers.

²² *Second Annual Report*, Human Rights Commission of the City and County of San Francisco, September 2, 1965 – September 2, 1966, 4-5

²³ *First Annual Report*, Human Rights Commission of the City and County of San Francisco, September 1965, 25.

²⁴ *Second Annual Report*, Human Rights Commission of the City and County of San Francisco, September 2, 1965 – September 2, 1966, 3, 8-9, 15.

²⁵ Press Release, HRC, February 14, 1966, NAACP Region I Records, Carton 23, Folder 42.

²⁶ San Francisco Nondiscrimination Ordinance, Draft of May 18, 1966, Carton 23, Folder 42, NAACP Region I Records.

²⁷ “Demand Non-Biased City Contracts,” *Sun-Reporter*, May 7, 1966.

²⁸ Statement of Harry Bridges to the Social Services Committee of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors, June 16, 1966; “Statement of International Longshoremen’s & Warehousemen’s Union in Re Ordinance Concerning Nondiscrimination in City Contracts,” June 21, 1966, ILWU History Files – Minorities-Blacks – 1960-; “S.F. Union Balk Over Anti-Job Bias Proposals,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, June 17, 1966. Some SFBTC leaders, such as Al Figone of the Carpenters Union, supported the initial draft of the HRC ordinance.

²⁹ “Major Changes in Job Bias Plan,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, June 24, 1966 [check date].

³⁰ Editorial, “Labor Union Discrimination,” *Sun-Reporter*, December 3, 1966.

³¹ Harold Brooks, “Open Letter to SF Labor,” *The Spokesman*, October 15, 1966.

³² Testimony of John Clark, Study and Investigation of Housing, Hearings before the Joint Committee on Housing, 80th Congress, First Session, September 10 and 19, 1947, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1948, 673.

³³ Finding information on these contractors is difficult, but thanks to 32 interviews conducted by Wilmer Joseph Leon, a graduate student in sociology at the University of California at Berkeley, for his 1954 Masters’ thesis, it is possible to gain insight into their experiences and attitudes towards the industry in the middle of the twentieth century. The following analysis draws heavily on interview excerpts that appear in Leon’s study. Wilmer Joseph Leon, “The Negro Contractor in Oakland, California, and Adjacent Cities” (M.A. Thesis, University of California at Berkeley, 1954).

³⁴ Leon, “The Negro Contractor in Oakland,” 10, 22, 32, 25.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 10.

³⁶ “Faces Around the Bay,” *Oakland Post*, February 5, 1970; “Ray Dones: Pioneer Builder Still Active,” *Oakland Post*, February 22-28, 2006; Gilbert B. Friedman, “The Surety Bond Caper,” nd, NAACP Region I Records, Carton 23, Folder 24. Testimony of Ray Dones, Hearing Before the United States Commission on Civil Rights, San Francisco and Oakland, CA, May 1-6, 1967 (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office), 352-353.

³⁷ Grace Palladino, *Skilled Hands, Strong Spirits: A Century of Building Trades History* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005), 157.

³⁸ Jeffrey S. Russell, *Surety Bonds for Construction Contracts*, (Danvers, MA: American Society of Civil Engineers, 2000), 7.

³⁹ “A Survey of Minority Construction Contractors,” Washington, DC: Office of Equal Opportunity, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 4. The selected cities were: Akron, Albuquerque, Atlanta, Baltimore, Birmingham, Boston, Buffalo, Charlotte, Chicago, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Columbus, Dallas, Dayton, Denver, Detroit, Flint, Fort Worth, Gary, Houston, Indianapolis, Jacksonville, Jersey City, Kansas City (Kansas and Missouri), Los Angeles, Louisville, Memphis, Miami, Milwaukee, Mobile, New Orleans, New York City, Newark, Norfolk, Omaha, Philadelphia, Phoenix, Pittsburgh, Richmond, Rochester, Sacramento, St. Louis, San Antonio, San Diego, San Francisco (and Oakland), Seattle, Tampa, Toledo, and Washington, D.C.

⁴⁰ Joseph Debro Interview by author, August 10, 2007, Oakland, CA.

⁴¹“Estimated Manpower Required on BART Jobsite Construction 1965-1971,” and “Bay Area Rapid Transit District Resolution,” *JOBART Information Kit*, NAACP Region I Records, Carton 20, Folder 21, Bancroft Library, University of California at Berkeley.

⁴² Daniel Edward Crowe, “The Origins of the Black Revolution: The Transformation of San Francisco Bay Area Black Communities, 1945-1969” (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Kentucky, 1998), 138.

⁴³ “Report on Oakland, California, Summary of Findings and Recommendations,” September 29, 1965, Records of the Economic Development Administration, Record Group 378, Records of the Office of the Executive Secretariat, Office of Administration, Subject Files, 1965-1969, Box 9, NARA, College, Park, MD.

⁴⁴ Alan A. Altshuler, *Community Control: The Black Demand for Participation in Large American Cities* (New York: Pegasus, 1970), 13-17; A. Donald Bourgeois, “Community Control and Urban Conflict,” *Theory Into Practice* Vol 8, No. 4 (October 1969): 243-246; Norman I. Fainstein and Susan S. Fainstein, “The Future of Community Control,” *The American Political Science Review* Vol. 70, No. 3 (September 1976): 905-923; Joseph Rodriguez, “Transit and Community Power: West Oakland Residents Confront BART,” *Antipode* 31, No. 2 (1999): 229-242; David Goldberg and Trevor Griffey, “Introduction: Constructing Black Power,” in David Goldberg and Trevor Griffey, Eds., *Black Power at Work: Community Control, Affirmative Action, and the Construction Industry* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2010), 3, 8-10.

⁴⁵ Robert O. Self, *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 191-198;

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CHAPTER FOUR

BUILDING A “SOPHISTICATED POLITICAL COMMUNITY” OUT WEST: CARLTON GOODLETT, THE ILWU, AND LIBERAL POLITICS IN BLACK SAN FRANCISCO

“The issue is which coalition to join and how to make it responsive to your program. Necessarily there will be compromise. But the difference between expediency and morality in politics is the difference between selling out a principle and making smaller concessions to win larger ones. The leader who shrinks from this task reveals not his purity but his lack of political sense.”

–Bayard Rustin, 1965¹

“The advocates of Black Power are not opposed to coalitions per se. But we are not interested in coalitions based on myths. ... Black Power simply says: enter coalitions only after you are able to ‘stand on your own.’ Black Power seeks to correct the approach to dependency, to remove that dependency, and to establish a viable psychological, political and social base upon which the black community can function to meet its needs.”

–Kwame Ture (Stokely Carmichael) and Charles V. Hamilton, 1967²

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“A very strange phenomenon has occurred in San Francisco in recent weeks,” Carlton Goodlett observed in the fall of 1967. The outspoken black physician and publisher of the Bay Area’s most widely-read African-American newspaper, the *Sun-Reporter*, was referring to news of an unexpected political alliance between the moderate liberal mayoral candidate Joseph Alioto and leaders of the International Longshoremen’s and Warehousemen’s Union (ILWU) and their allies in the Baptist Ministers Union (BMU). Since the late 1940s Goodlett had been working to build a powerful voting bloc out of the city’s expanding black population. By mid-September of 1967, he and similarly inclined African-American political and community leaders were championing the mayoral candidacy of Jack Morrison, a like-minded member of the Board of Supervisors and seasoned ally of organized labor and the city’s racial minorities. Goodlett was therefore incredulous when the ILWU, led in part by its cadre of African American activists, announced its support for Alioto, a newcomer to electoral politics. Goodlett and his cohort considered Alioto an enemy of progress due to his policies as an appointed member of the Board

of Education (1948-1954) and San Francisco Redevelopment Agency (1955-1959). In Goodlett's view, the black trade unionists and their minister allies – whom he had grown accustomed to praising in *Sun-Reporter* editorials – had sold out black San Franciscans for the chance of personal and organizational aggrandizement. “For the past 15 years the Negro community has been developing solidarity, at least in political aims,” he fumed. But during “the past few weeks, we have watched this solidarity being torn asunder.”³

Carlton Goodlett's concern about the political activism of black trade unionists and ministers in 1967 came at a pivotal juncture in African-American political history. The Voting Rights Act had been passed two years earlier, and civil rights leader Bayard Rustin had called upon black Americans to hasten the transition “from protest to politics” by forging progressive political coalitions with liberal whites, religious leaders, and trade unionists.⁴ Black Power activists, Stokely Carmichael foremost among them, disagreed with Rustin and counseled against entering into such coalitions until African Americans had forged independent bases of political power strong enough to place them on an equal footing with any coalition partners.⁵ Despite their tactical and ideological differences, both Rustin and Carmichael considered the ghettos of northern and western cities as potential wellsprings of black political power, and in 1967 those voters in Cleveland and Gary, Indiana realized that potential by helping make Carl Stokes and Richard Hatcher the first African American mayors of major American cities. Stokes had established ties to the Democratic Party and ran a campaign that loosely mirrored Rustin's politics of liberal coalition building. A community activist, Hatcher ran a campaign that more closely resembled Carmichael and Hamilton's notion of Black Power.⁶ That same election season black trade unionists in San Francisco represented another variant of the emergence of black power in American urban politics. African Americans comprised roughly thirteen percent

of the city's population, closely approximating the national percentage and not enough to elect a black candidate to a citywide office such as mayor. Instead, black trade unionists pursued political influence in Rustinian fashion by drawing upon their ties to both the labor and civil rights movements. Although their activism would produce an unprecedented level of black and minority participation in municipal government, the alliance between San Francisco's black trade unionists and Joseph Alioto confronted black San Franciscans with complex questions about the relationship between black politics and liberalism that transcended the more abstract debates between the likes of Rustin and Carmichael.⁷

The choices confronting black political activists in the late 1960s were also intricately enmeshed in the turbulent history of postwar Democratic Party liberalism.⁸ By the late 1960s Democratic Party leaders at the national and local levels were struggling to preserve their New Deal coalition while confronting the "urban crisis" that beset the nation's major metropolises. Checking the political pulse of the nation's electorate in the fall of 1967, *New York Times* correspondent Max Frankel found that a general malaise had descended across the land. Americans from various walks of life expressed discontent with liberalism, citing the war in Vietnam, rising tax rates and inflation, racial tensions, and federal anti-poverty and welfare programs as reasons for potentially abandoning the Democratic Party.⁹ Indeed, sandwiched between the 1966 elections, in which Republicans picked up forty-seven congressional seats and conservative candidate Ronald Reagan pulled off a surprising victory in California's gubernatorial race, and Republican Richard Nixon's presidential election in 1968, much was at stake for liberal Democrats in local campaigns such as the mayoral races in Cleveland, Gary, and San Francisco during what Frankel referred to as the political "season of discontent." With the fate of liberalism seemingly hanging in the balance, black and white ILWU leaders saw an

opportunity to gain real influence among mainstream liberals and a chance to shape municipal policy. Their achievement suggests that at the local level the ‘unraveling’ of American liberalism in the 1960s was neither complete nor inevitable. Nor did the decline of postwar liberalism assure the ascendance of the New Right. By tracing the efforts of Carlton Goodlett and the ILWU to organize San Francisco’s black voters into an influential voting bloc, this chapter examines the evolution of the black-labor-liberal political coalition in San Francisco from the late 1940s through the 1960s. The two allies would choose divergent paths stemming from left-led political coalitions from the 1940s – one would lead toward Black Power politics while the other would lead to a liberal coalition within the Democratic party.

Lessons From the Postwar Years, 1945-1951

As San Francisco entered the postwar period, it was unclear how its rapidly expanding black population would alter the city’s existing political culture. Prior to the mid-1960s, the city was governed by what historian William Issel terms a “liberal growth regime,” led by moderate business leaders who accommodated the New Deal model of a business-labor-government partnership in their desire for labor peace accompanied by continued urban development and economic expansion.¹⁰ Municipal officials were elected in at-large nonpartisan elections, and nothing resembling the political machines or ward-based politics that shaped black politics in Midwestern and northeastern cities existed in San Francisco. Unlike their counterparts in New York, Chicago, and other cities in the midwest and northeast, San Francisco’s small black population had no established political leaders before World War II and did not constitute even a junior partner in the local New Deal liberal coalition. No African American from the city had ever been elected to local, state, or national office, and many of the migrants who accounted for

the majority of the city's black electorate had never participated in politics. Aside from a small cadre of black ministers, there were no clear community leaders capable of mobilizing potential black voters.

Carlton Goodlett was determined to change that. In the two and a half decades following World War II, nobody worked harder to forge an influential black voting bloc in San Francisco. The militant doctor and newspaper publisher sought to make himself the spokesperson of black San Francisco while mobilizing the black electorate. "He wanted the newspaper as a power base, which he exercised all during his tenure," recalled Daniel Collins, a fellow Meharry alum who had a dental practice in San Francisco and for a short time co-owned the *Reporter* (and *Sun-Reporter*) along with Goodlett.¹¹ In 1946 Collins and Goodlett founded the Fillmore Democratic Club, which Goodlett later described "as a basis by which we begun [sic] our march to active political participation and representation in Government."¹² Despite its name, the political club drew African Americans, many of whom were wartime migrants, from all over the city, and sought to make the local and state Democratic Party more responsive to African Americans. Through organizations like the Fillmore Democratic Club and especially his newspaper, Goodlett would consistently seek to rally black voters behind candidates who most forthrightly supported civil rights, social democratic reforms, world peace, and black nationalism. Goodlett was nearly always unwilling to sacrifice principle for political expediency, and his political views often led him into conflict with black and white liberals. He occupied a permanent place on the left periphery of the liberal spectrum, associating with the Communist Party and fellow travelers in the immediate postwar period and supporting Black Power activists in the late 1960s. In 1968 he proudly explained that "many of the leaders of the Democratic party are very much disturbed that they never can satisfy my appetite."¹³

Goodlett's attempt to become a leading spokesperson for a unified black electorate sometimes drew him to "third" parties and brought him into close contact with the ILWU. The unorganized state of black politics in San Francisco would also provide an opportunity for the ILWU to increase its own political influence in the city. In contrast to Goodlett, however, the ILWU would come to separate its ideological positions on national and global issues from its participation in local politics. Just as the union's labor activism would increasingly focus on bread-and butter issues in the postwar decades, its political activism would also accommodate the city's moderately liberal political culture. In the immediate postwar years, however, both Goodlett and the ILWU looked to mobilize black voters by drawing them into left-led political coalitions. These efforts, highlighted by the unsuccessful campaigns of two black candidates, Henry O. Mariott and F. D. Haynes, caused both to reconsider their approaches to local politics.

In 1948 Henry Mariott was the Independent Progressive Party (IPP) candidate for the California Assembly seat in the 23rd district, which cut through the Western Addition and included his Geary Street home. The ILWU and Carlton Goodlett both figured prominently in the formation of the Independent Progressive Party (IPP) in California and in the Bay Area in particular. ILWU president Harry Bridges was a vocal critic of Harry Truman's foreign policy and the decision of the CIO to endorse the president, and he, along with other Communists in the Bay Area maritime unions, helped lead the drive to place Henry Wallace's name on the 1948 presidential ballot.¹⁴ Despite his activities within the Democratic party, Goodlett was also active in the Progressive Citizens of America (PCA), the forerunner to the IPP in California. Although he later maintained that he voted for Truman in the 1948 election, Goodlett participated in the petition drive to get Wallace on the ballot and spoke at several PCA rallies and shared the podium with Wallace during an appearance in San Francisco in May 1947.¹⁵ In doing so he

threatened the cause of black political solidarity. His activities for Wallace and the PCA caused friction within the San Francisco National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the Fillmore Democratic Club.¹⁶ Goodlett's political activities would also cause his friend and business partner, Daniel Collins, to sell his share of the *Sun-Reporter* to Goodlett for \$1 in 1949 (Collins claimed that this left him with a \$14,000 loss on the investment). In a later interview, Collins explained that he was disturbed by the number of Goodlett's "political friends" who were frequenting the paper's offices. He hinted that these were friends Communists, and feared that "in the official documents of this country" he "was becoming indistinguishable from Goodlett. And that wasn't where I wanted to be."¹⁷

Nevertheless, Goodlett and IPP leaders likely viewed Henry Mariott's campaign as an opportunity to increase the party's appeal among African Americans, who they considered a natural constituency given the racial liberalism of the party and its standard bearer. Mariott was born in Missouri, graduated from Lincoln University, and spent a year at the University of London, England studying political economics. A World War I veteran, Mariott worked in the postal service for 24 years before migrating to San Francisco in 1944. He worked as a warehouseman at the Crocker Union plant in San Francisco and was a member of ILWU Local 6 – serving as educational director and a member of the executive board. He also belonged to the San Francisco Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) Council executive board and was the labor chairman for the local NAACP. In 1948 the fifty-year old Mariott became a member of the IPP central committee and attended the founding convention of the national Progressive Party in Philadelphia.¹⁸ Like many IPP activists, Mariott also belonged to the Communist Party, and his campaign dovetailed ILWU leaders' efforts to generate support for the third party among black San Franciscans and rank-and-file union members.¹⁹

Mariott was the first African American in San Francisco history to seek a seat in the state assembly and stood little chance of winning. Although the 23rd district encompassed part of the Fillmore district, it had been gerrymandered to include the working-class Mission district and was an Irish-American political stronghold.²⁰ Mariott's opponent was Irish-American Democrat William Clifton Berry, an undistinguished legislator and loyal follower of local Democratic power broker William Malone, who also lived in the 23rd district.²¹ Although the "Malone machine" traditionally enjoyed backing from organized labor, Berry had done nothing to earn the support of black San Franciscans. Thus any chance that Mariott had of winning hinged on whether the IPP could mobilize the city's unorganized black electorate.²² This would be a tall order. More than half of the city's eligible black voters were not on the rolls, and according to the NAACP approximately two thousand of those potential voters were "housewives with small kids while others are workers who cannot get down to city hall while it is open."²³ And despite Registrar of Voters Thomas Ashe's assertion that it was a "waste of time" to send registrars to Hunters Point because "they're mostly Negroes out there" and "not particularly interested in voting," the Board of Supervisors, responding to community pressure, passed a resolution calling for an accelerated registration drive to sign up 150,000 potential voters in the city.²⁴ Even with a registration drive, Mariott and other Progressives knew that defeating the entrenched Democrat would not be easy. Echoing other Communists who were active in the Progressive Party, Mariott warned that his campaign could expect "all kinds of race baiting, red baiting, confusing propaganda lies and intimidation" to "throw the weak off the right path."²⁵

Mariott's campaign trumpeted the Progressive Party platform. On national issues, he opposed the Truman Doctrine, Marshall Plan, the Taft-Hartley law, "and the whole range of foreign and domestic policy expressed in the support of reactionary governments abroad and the

lynching, mob violence, and persecution of foreign born here at home.” But mobilizing black San Franciscans to vote involved identifying issues that directly impacted their lives. Mariott and the IPP thus joined other noncommunist liberals in calling for strong fair employment laws and “adequate low-cost housing.”²⁶ As the first two chapters discussed, employment discrimination was widespread in postwar San Francisco, and by the fall of 1948 a third of black workers were unemployed. IPP county chairman Germain Bulcke, also an ILWU official, pledged that the IPP would not “become part of the conspiracy of silence that condemns more and more Negro workers to unemployment because of racial discrimination,” and Mariott would help lead that fight.²⁷

Since the war African Americans had struggled to find adequate and affordable housing, and as the campaign entered its final months concerns over housing and redevelopment took center stage in the Western Addition. Drawing on input from the San Francisco Planning and Housing Association, a wartime group formed by leading citizens and architects who advocated urban renewal, the City Planning Commission began work designating renewal neighborhoods in 1947. Its first study targeted the Western Addition, which required redevelopment because “it is close to the financial district ...and contains slopes on which apartments with fine views can be erected.” Ominously for black and working-class residents of the area, the Commission matter-of-factly assumed that “only a relatively small proportion of [colored and foreign-born families] may be expected to be in a position to occupy quarters in the new development.”²⁸ In July 1948 the Board of Supervisors moved to form a redevelopment agency in accordance with the California Community Redevelopment Act of 1945. Once the city cleared this hurdle it could condemn and tear down designated slum dwellings and sell the cleared land to developers. Mariott joined other community activists in condemning the city’s urban redevelopment plan as

a scheme led by “real estate lobbyists” to “drive Negroes and other minorities” out of the Western Addition “by raising rents ... beyond their ability to pay.” Mariott and the IPP demanded protection for working class and minority families at risk of being priced out by the construction of high-rent units. “I’m in favor of urban development,” Mariott maintained, “but I feel that the people of the area should be given guarantees of being able to return to the area to live, at rentals they can afford to pay.”²⁹

The results of the 1948 election proved disappointing for Mariott and the IPP. As chapter two noted, on election day most rank-and-file ILWU members voted for Harry Truman. The same held for black San Franciscans (and African Americans across the country, for that matter).³⁰ Truman outpolled Wallace in the Western Addition and Hunters Point, where most of the city’s African Americans lived, and the president defeated Republican Thomas Dewey in city precincts by a 47 to 45 percent margin. Henry Wallace trailed far behind with seventeen percent of the city’s vote.³¹ Mariott received more votes from black San Franciscans than Wallace, but he still received just twenty-five percent of the votes against Berry. Voting turnout among African Americans and Western Addition residents in general was low, and Mariott blamed bad weather and long lines at polling places for keeping black and working-class voters away from the polls. While many of the Western Addition’s 35,000 black residents did not live in the 23rd district, the 4,000 votes Mariott received had to have been disheartening.³² These results notwithstanding, Mariott and the IPP considered the 1948 election as a building block to future success. Mariott resumed his position with ILWU Local 6 and headed the IPP Fillmore Council, which announced plans to open a “community service center” in a converted garage located at 1520 Ellis Street in the summer of 1950. Through the center the IPP proposed to assist unemployed, injured, and elderly residents fight evictions and obtain financial assistance.

“Community service is one of our main functions,” Mariott proudly announced. “We’re here to stay!”³³ This optimism was misplaced. Within a few years the center, along with the IPP, was gone, and Henry Mariott had become an informant for the FBI.³⁴

The results of the 1948 elections suggested that if black San Franciscans were to achieve political influence it would come through the Democratic Party. A study prepared for the Fillmore Democratic Club concluded that “the San Francisco Negro electorate emerged as a balance of power vote” in the 1948 election. Hal Dunleavy, a pollster and statistical expert who authored the report, pointed to black voters’ abandonment of the Republican Party for the Democratic party and their population increase as primary reasons for their growing potential political relevance. Dunleavy may also have considered results from across the bay in Oakland, where Byron Rumford, a black pharmacist running on the Democratic ticket, won election to the California Assembly in the heavily black seventeenth district.³⁵ Rumford’s election reflected a quick maturation of black political organizing in the East Bay, but Dunleavy stressed that converting potential influence to actual influence in San Francisco would involve a continued increase in political and organizational activity in the Western Addition and Hunters Point. Citing low voter turnout and registration, he noted that “much of the potential Negro vote is not expressed.” Dunleavy concluded that it was up to black political activists, who needed to form “strong alliances” with other minority groups and “those sections of labor not unfavorable to Negroes in public office,” to realize the full potential of the black vote in San Francisco.³⁶ By highlighting the importance of African Americans to the Democratic Party, Dunleavy’s analysis dismissed the IPP as a vehicle for black political representation.

Even if their future lay in the Democratic Party, black political activist learned that electing a black candidate to a local or state office would be difficult. In 1951 the IPP called

upon “the entire Negro community” and progressive groups to elect a black supervisor.³⁷ A short time later Carlton Goodlett and Bill Chester of the ILWU, each of who had supported the Progressive Party a few years earlier, helped form the United Citizens League, a broad biracial coalition of black ministers, trade unionists, professionals, liberals and leftists whose sole purpose was to pursue that objective.³⁸ The League selected Reverend F.D. Haynes, who had already waged two unsuccessful campaigns for supervisor in 1945 and 1947. Haynes was born “at a crossroads between Richmond, Virginia and the Blue Ridge mountains.” He became pastor at the influential Third Baptist Church in 1932, and was one of the only ministers in San Francisco to support the 1934 waterfront strike. Like Goodlett, he was determined to increase black political participation and influence in San Francisco and the nation, stating that for too long “our people – the Negro people – missed active leadership toward their rights and privileges as citizens.”³⁹

Haynes’ influence among black San Franciscans (the Third Baptist Church had roughly 4,000 members by 1951) made him an attractive candidate for white and black Democrats. In contrast to Mariott’s third-party candidacy, Haynes identified as a Democrat and played a part in leading black San Franciscans into the Democratic Party. The Fillmore Democratic Club had spearheaded Haynes’ campaign for supervisor in 1947, in which he was also endorsed by the American Federation of Labor (AFL) Union Labor Party (ULP) and the San Francisco CIO Council. The CIO had supported Haynes when he first ran for the same office in 1945, but the ULP endorsement marked the first time the AFL had ever supported a black candidate in San Francisco.⁴⁰ Haynes’ 1947 platform differed little from Mariott’s the following year and was representative of the reforms that urban liberals pursued in the postwar period, stressing the need for affordable housing, improved public transportation, the repeal of the sales tax, and a fair

employment law while condemning restrictive covenants and the Taft-Harley act. Black ILWU members who lived in the Western Addition campaigned vigorously for Haynes and mayoral candidate Frank Havenner, a left-wing Democrat. Haynes finished a distant eighth in the race to fill six at-large supervisor seats, but at the time his campaign gave black political activists something to build upon.⁴¹ But Haynes' defeat in 1951, his third in as many attempts to win election to the Board of Supervisors, was more disappointing. Results showed a decline in black voting – Haynes' vote total of 36,000 was significantly less than the 64,000 he received in 1947. It also showed a decrease in white support. The AFL ULP did not endorse Haynes in 1951 as it had four years earlier.⁴² More than anything else, the failures of the Mariott and Haynes' campaigns suggested that electing a black candidate to city or state office might not be possible in the immediate postwar period.

Organizing Black Voters, 1951-1964

Between 1951 and 1967 Carlton Goodlett and his colleagues at the *Sun-Reporter* continued efforts to mobilize and organize black voters in San Francisco. Yet for the most part African Americans remained junior partners – and often silent partners at that – within the Democratic Party. The prospects for an influential black voting bloc increased as the city's black population continued to grow in the postwar decades, reaching nearly 80,000 and roughly ten percent of the city's population by 1960 and thirteen percent by 1970.⁴³ This population was also largely concentrated in two areas – the Western Addition and Hunters Point. But like their counterparts in Oakland, black San Franciscans' political ambitions were thwarted by at-large rather than district-based elections. Yet unlike East Bay blacks, who directed their energies at state and national politics, black political activists in San Francisco continued in their pursuit of

political influence at the municipal level. Unable to elect one of their own, throughout this period black leaders instead sought to help elect liberal whites who would then hopefully appoint African Americans to city commissions and seek their counsel on racial matters.⁴⁴ But aside from the appointment of a few black attorneys and ministers to minor city posts, black political representation in San Francisco in the first two decades following World War II, in the words of historian Albert Broussard, was “more shadow than substance.”⁴⁵

During this period Carlton Goodlett and Thomas Fleming became the city’s most conspicuous black political activists. Through the *Sun-Reporter* the pair sought to influence political appointments while vigilantly monitoring the racial policies of the successful candidates that the paper endorsed. When it came to issues relating to African Americans, they hoped that they could push liberal politicians (whether they were Democrats or Republicans) further to the left. Goodlett himself remained tied to the Communist and noncommunist left into the early 1960s. In addition his continued involvement with the California Labor School until its demise in 1957, Goodlett belonged to the Civil Rights Congress, spoke at meetings in defense of CP leaders arrested under the Smith Act, the Northern California Committee for the Protection of the Foreign Born, and the Fair Play for Cuba Committee. In the summer of 1962 Goodlett was chairman of the U.S. delegation at the Soviet-led World Peace Council in Moscow, and he returned to the Soviet capital two years later for the World Youth Forum. By the mid-1960s Goodlett was becoming an outspoken critic of the war in Vietnam, and in 1965 he submitted an offer to negotiate a peace with North Vietnam on behalf of the World Council of Peace Presidential Committee to Lyndon Johnson.⁴⁶ Much of Goodlett’s involvement with the Communist left stemmed from his interest in global peace and had less of an impact on his local political activism. In his view black Americans had “no voice in formulations of policy of

disarmament and peace,” and he believed that full citizenship rights for America’s racial minorities could not be achieved without global peace.⁴⁷ Influenced by his interactions with Paul Robeson and W.E.B. DuBois, Goodlett described himself in 1968 as “an articulator of the relationship between black liberation at home, African freedom struggles abroad and world peace.”⁴⁸ Although his peace activism took him all over the world and kept him within the Communist orbit, he maintained throughout this period that he was not a Party member. In a 1953 *Time* magazine article, Goodlett suggested that black Americans were not interested in the Communist Party because it was “rundown,” “underprivileged,” and atheist. He also quipped that he “wouldn’t last ten minutes in Russia” because of his belief in “the right to protest.”⁴⁹ Nevertheless, his peace activism still reflected an independent radicalism that would keep him on the margins of Democratic party politics.

Meanwhile, the ILWU continued to devote considerable energy and resources to political activism, although it increasingly found itself supporting more centrist liberals who did not always mesh with union leaders’ views (although it maintained strong ties to left-liberal State Assemblyman – and later Congressman – Philip Burton and his younger brother, John). This would begin, in warehouse worker and one-time Communist Keith Eickman’s words, the ILWU’s “long history” of “bourgeois political action,” in which the union distanced itself from the CP-influenced politics of the immediate postwar period.⁵⁰ The union appealed to municipal candidates because of San Francisco’s political structure, which mandated nonpartisan municipal elections. Since it was against the law under this system for political parties to officially run candidates for local offices and to deploy their organizational resources to win elections, candidates had to enlist their own precinct workers while amassing a campaign war chest.⁵¹ This made the support of a large and politically active union like the ILWU, which could supply votes

as well as an army of campaign workers, especially valuable. “[W]e don’t have just paper endorsements,” black Local 6 leader Curtis McClain explained in a 1969 interview. “When we endorse a candidate, we go all out to see that that candidate is elected. We get out in the field and we ring doorbells, we work out of our headquarters.”⁵² Yet once in office, candidates usually preferred to keep a safe distance from the ILWU because of its radical past and historic connection to the Communist Party. As Goodlett wryly noted in 1964, the ILWU was a union “whose support every politician wants while he is a candidate but once elected most politicians shun the I.L.W.U. like the plague.”⁵³

Although allies since the 1940s, during the 1960s the political fortunes of the ILWU and black San Franciscans became increasingly entwined as the union refocused on politically organizing the city’s expanding African American population. The catalyst for this development was Revels Cayton, who, upon returning to San Francisco in 1953 after a seven-year absence, was struck by the weakened political state of the city’s labor movement and the racial inequities that seemed to have multiplied with the continued influx of African Americans to the region.⁵⁴ He believed that the organizational talents of black ILWU leaders could do what the Fillmore Democratic Club, IPP, and other activists had thus far been unable to accomplish: to transform the city’s Western Addition and Bayview-Hunters Point districts into a “sophisticated political community, such as in Harlem and Chicago.”⁵⁵ Political organizing would comprise another element of the ILWU’s program of “reciprocity” with the black community that Cayton was developing at the time (see chapter two). Just as with its civil rights actions, Cayton sought to convince his peers that a black-ILWU political coalition could strengthen the union’s hand in municipal politics. “We in the ILWU have found from our experiences in the political field and in the struggle for civil rights and the dignity of working men and women that the Negro

communities of Northern California constitute a great reservoir of strength for our organization,” Cayton’s resolution asserted.⁵⁶ The timing for a revival of the labor-civil rights coalition in San Francisco seemed propitious, as organized labor and the NAACP helped the Democratic Party to a landslide victory in the 1958 statewide election.⁵⁷ The following year Cayton set out to persuade the union’s political committee to consider the potential potency of “a vitally important coalition” between the ILWU and the city’s black residents.⁵⁸

Following Cayton’s direction, the ILWU took its first significant step towards building a political coalition with San Francisco’s African American community during the 1962 Democratic primary campaign for the California State Assembly seat in the 18th district, which encompassed the Western Addition. Gerrymandered districts had played a hand defeating Henry Mariott in 1948 and Joseph Kennedy, a black attorney, in 1960. But in 1961 the 18th district was redrawn by Philip Burton, a liberal Democrat who sought the creation of a liberal congressional seat that he could eventually take, in such a way that it united the Western Addition into a single assembly district and thus strengthened the black vote.⁵⁹ The seat had been held for the better part of two decades by Ed Gaffney, a seventy-five year old Democrat who had first won election as a loyal lieutenant of powerful Democrat William Malone. A former Shakespearean actor and house painter, Gaffney had done little to distinguish himself in Sacramento. Comfortable in the company of the Irish-American Catholics with whom he identified, Gaffney had difficulty relating to his black constituents. Hamilton Boswell, Reverend at Jones Methodist Church, charged that Gaffney “had never done a thing for us, never even visited any of us, didn’t care.”⁶⁰ ILWU political strategist David Jenkins later recalled that Gaffney “had a very decent record” but was “a typical Building Trades trade unionist” and “was backwards on race.”⁶¹ Unwilling to support Gaffney, Boswell and other prominent African Americans rallied around the upstart

campaign of Willie Brown, a twenty-eight-year-old attorney with strong civil rights credentials.

Brown's challenge to Gaffney in the primary created a potential dilemma for the ILWU since it had the appearance of pitting the city's labor and African American leaders against each other. In addition to prominent ministers Hamilton Boswell and F. D. Haynes, Brown had the backing of Carlton Goodlett, who had been instrumental in convincing Brown to enter the political arena, and longtime ILWU ally Philip Burton.⁶² Yet the Teamsters and the AFL-CIO Committee on Political Education (COPE) endorsed Gaffney, who also received backing from Governor Edmund "Pat" Brown and powerful Democratic State Senator Jesse Unruh of southern California. Since many African American ILWU members lived in the 18th district and had been active in grass-roots campaigns against housing and employment discrimination, Cayton urged union leaders to break with the rest of labor and aggressively campaign for Brown so that the ILWU could "show its muscles in that community" and prevent "the machines from organizing the district."⁶³ He convinced some of his skeptical colleagues that supporting Brown "would bring around the ILWU material support in that district." David Jenkins remembered that Cayton "was the one who really alerted us to the fact that Willie Brown was electable."⁶⁴ And after the ILWU Joint Legislative Committee unanimously endorsed Brown a little over a month later, the rest of the labor movement was outraged.⁶⁵ Unfazed by the rest of labor's objections, Cayton predicted that the ILWU would "be the most active group in the campaign," though he cautioned that union leaders would have to "reeducate our own members for coalition with the minorities" and develop "corps of Negro and white members who know how to fight a complicated fight on a community level."⁶⁶ Cayton himself took time off work to campaign for Brown – driving a sound truck through the district and escorting Brown to various union halls around town.⁶⁷ If the union's leadership could effectively impart the importance of the campaign and community

organizing among its rank and file, Cayton believed, the ILWU could strengthen its position within both the Western Addition and Bayview-Hunters Point.⁶⁸

Meanwhile, the San Francisco Negro American Labor Council (SFNALC), an organization of black trade unionists not belonging to the ILWU that was mainly involved in fair employment campaigns in the Bayview-Hunters Point district, were mobilizing as well. Rejecting the notion that black trade unionists “owe a duty to Gaffney,” in May the SFNALC unanimously voted to endorse Brown because “Negro representation in legislature is the companion struggle to the one Negro trade unionists wage for union representation inside labor.”⁶⁹ Even after Gaffney defeated Brown in the primary, the SFNALC redoubled its political activities for the fall elections. In the months leading up to November, black trade unionists registered voters in Bayview-Hunters Point as part of a San Francisco Labor Council COPE registration drive and, along with other northern California NALC chapters, sponsored a one-day conference on “Jobs and the 1962 Election.”⁷⁰ The conference highlighted the relationship between “political action” and “economic policies that will put unemployed Negroes back to work,” while prompting “Negro workers to think about the united contribution Negro workers can make in this election.”⁷¹ The SFNALC was also critical of the Democratic Party’s inconsistent record on racial issues and suggested that black workers would not accept leaders who failed to support their employment and citizenship rights. It sent a telegram to President Kennedy condemning his administration for its weak response to violence against civil rights protesters in the South. In a public statement, the SFNALC also argued that the “indifference and silence on the part of white California liberals, churchmen and politicians – highly vocal on human freedom abroad – to the growing waves of terror against black people” was “cause for Negro workers to be alarmed.”⁷² By pressing the Democratic Party from within, the SFNALC

became another locus of black labor's political activity.

Results of the 1962 elections were mixed for the development of black political organization and voting strength. Although Gaffney defeated Willie Brown in the 1962 primary (the margin of victory was less than 1000 votes), the ILWU felt satisfied that it had "solidified relations with the Negro community" and in the future could "deliver a powerful vote there."⁷³ From Carlton Goodlett's perspective, however, it was yet another disappointing electoral performance for black San Franciscans. Goodlett praised the ILWU for its "forceful endorsement of Brown and the marshalling of its membership in the 18th A.D.," but he felt betrayed by the rest of organized labor, which in his view had "refused the first request ever made by San Francisco Negroes for political reciprocity."⁷⁴ When the 78-year old Gaffney again received endorsements from the Teamsters' Union and the AFL-CIO COPE in 1964, Goodlett could only conclude that "Organized labor is opposed to Negro progress in the political arena."⁷⁵ Yet his greatest disappointment was that the black political solidarity that he long sought continued to flounder. "[T]he hard facts of reality indicate that Willie Brown was defeated by Negroes," he lamented. "There are several thousand potential Negro voters in the 18th A.D. who did not exercise their franchise. ... Hundreds of Negroes failed to register. Hundreds, after registering, failed to vote. Many voted the top of the ticket but failed to vote for an assemblyman."⁷⁶ Before black voters could close ranks, they still needed to be mobilized in the first place.

Over the next couple of years, Goodlett and the ILWU marshaled their resources to support black and liberal white candidates in state and municipal elections. According to David Jenkins, the union's legislative coordinator in the Bay Area, the ILWU, and Cayton in particular, proved "key in electing Willie Brown" to the state assembly on his second attempt in 1964.⁷⁷ Brown's victory came a year after the ILWU had waged a vigorous campaign in San Francisco's

black neighborhoods to elect Democrat John (“Jack”) Shelley to the mayor’s office, liberal white Democrat George Moscone to the Board of Supervisors, and to make Percy Moore – an administrator of the ILWU Health and Welfare Fund – the first African American elected to the Board of Supervisors.⁷⁸ For the first time, black ILWU leaders were also able to use the Church Labor Conference (CLC), the civil rights group that they helped create early in 1963, to mobilize black voters. According to Local 6 member Keith Eickman, the CLC itself was an outgrowth of the ILWU’s political campaigns in the Western Addition the previous year.⁷⁹ Led by Local 6, its women’s auxiliaries, and supported by black ministers, the ILWU deployed all of its resources in support of the two campaigns: assigning members to work 270 precincts, registering voters, distributing campaign literature, making financial donations, and printing up 30,000 slate cards for its members. In return for this support, union leaders appealed to the liberal Shelley to “take a more positive position on the civil rights issue” and to pledge to appoint African Americans to city commissions.⁸⁰

Carlton Goodlett also endorsed Shelley and was especially enthusiastic in his support for Percy Moore. The thirty-nine-year-old Moore had moved to San Francisco in 1946, earned a degree in political science from the University of California in 1950, began work with the ILWU in 1953, and was active in numerous political and community organizations in the Bayview-Hunters Point district. In addition to highlighting the prevailing exclusion of blacks from city government, his campaign stressed the need for public housing and the prevention of industrial flight from San Francisco.⁸¹ From the outset Goodlett championed the union official as the most qualified African American to become the first member of his race to win a seat on the Board of Supervisors, and he preemptively dismissed the notion that Moore’s affiliation with the leftist ILWU would make him unfit to serve.⁸² In addition to acknowledging the important role that

black trade unionists played in Willie Brown's 1962 campaign, Goodlett cautiously welcomed the emerging political leadership of the CLC. For Goodlett, Moore's affiliation with the labor half of the coalition only added to his qualifications. Still upset that the rest of organized labor had been unwilling to support Willie Brown the previous year, he also felt that Moore's position with the ILWU created "an opportunity for reciprocity" from the AFL-CIO COPE. "Labor is still obligated to the Negro community," he intoned in a *Sun-Reporter* editorial.⁸³ This time organized labor obliged, but even with its endorsement Moore failed to enlist enough white support to win the at-large supervisor seat.⁸⁴ His defeat was a bitter reminder that even if black San Franciscans closed ranks behind a single candidate, they still faced an uphill battle in citywide elections.

For the champions of coalition, Moore's defeat was somewhat offset by the victories of Shelley and Moscone. "The San Francisco Elections was a victory – although an incomplete victory for the progressive, Labor and Negro Alliance," the ILWU *Local 10 Bulletin* declared after the votes were tallied in November 1963.⁸⁵ While disappointed by Moore's defeat, African Americans, labor leaders, and white liberals viewed the 1963 municipal elections as a harbinger of positive change. By defeating Harold Dobbs, a conservative attorney and part owner of the popular Mel's Drive-In restaurant chain, Jack Shelley became the city's first Democrat Mayor since 1907. The son of an Irish immigrant longshoreman, Shelley had strong ties to the San Francisco labor movement and Democratic Party. He joined the International Brotherhood of Teamsters at the age of twenty-four when he took a job driving bread trucks. After earning a law degree from the University of San Francisco he was elected president of his local union and president of the San Francisco County AFL Labor Council. His political career began in 1938, when he won election to the California State Senate and in 1948 he was elected to the United

States Congress, a seat he held until taking over at City Hall in 1964.⁸⁶ The ILWU hoped that the money and work that organized labor contributed to Shelley's campaign would "for the first time" give "labor a chance to have a say-so in city government."⁸⁷ The union also anticipated that Shelley would make good on his pledge to appoint African Americans to city positions – a feeling that was shared by Carlton Goodlett. The *Sun-Reporter* had endorsed Shelley while the city's two major daily newspapers supported Dobbs, and, according to a survey conducted by Tom Fleming, the *Sun-Reporter*'s political columnist, the Mayor-elect outpolled his conservative opponent by a margin of greater than two to one in the city's predominantly African American precincts.⁸⁸ Making clear that it expected Shelley to be responsive to the black voters who helped elect him, the *Sun-Reporter* editorialized "that the tenure of office of Mayor Shelley will be one of the glorious periods in San Francisco."⁸⁹

Jack Shelley and Liberalism in Crisis

Jack Shelley's sole term as Mayor of San Francisco was far from glorious, and it was representative of the broader crisis of liberalism mid-1960s America. Shelley's administration proved especially impotent when it came to handling racial issues. Throughout his four years at City Hall, Shelley struggled to satisfy the demands of San Francisco's growing civil rights movement on the one hand and residents who deplored the militant tactics of young activists on the other. Even seemingly popular measures did not escape criticism. For example, when Shelley broke the Board of Supervisors' color barrier in June of 1964 by appointing Terry Francois, an attorney and former president of the San Francisco chapter of the NAACP and the only African American to serve on the city's short-lived fair employment commission, Carlton Goodlett criticized the mayor for allegedly breaking a promise to appoint the more liberal and militant

Percy Moore.⁹⁰ Unbeknownst to Goodlett, ILWU leaders had a hand in Francois's appointment. According to David Jenkins, Shelley had promised the ILWU that in exchange for their support he would support Moore's candidacy and appoint an African American to the Board of Supervisors should an opening occur. The ILWU also promised to see to it that Moore supported Shelley. But Moore, along with other African American activists, were weary of Shelley's unproven civil rights record, and when he refused to do so Jenkins, Bill Chester, and LeRoy King were furious. Angered by Moore's intransigence, when Shelley sought the ILWU's counsel as to who support when the vacancy opened up on the board, Jenkins, Chester, and King proposed Terry Francois, a rival of Goodlett.⁹¹ The incident foreshadowed the break that was to come between the ILWU and Goodlett, but at the time he directed his outrage at the mayor. By that time, however, Shelley had bigger problems. Within a few months of settling into the mayor's office, young student activists belonging to the newly formed San Francisco United Freedom Movement (UFM) launched a series of mass demonstrations against employment discrimination in downtown San Francisco that created divisions among black and white liberals and militants over the meaning of racial equality in San Francisco and the direction of the local civil rights movement.

The UFM was led by activists belonging to the San Francisco chapter of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), which had operated in fits and starts since first forming during World War II. By 1964 it had reemerged with renewed energy and leadership, punctuated by direct action protests against the San Francisco School Board, J.C. Penny's, Macy's, and Lucky Supermarkets in 1962 and 1963.⁹² These protests reflected CORE's evolving militancy as members employed confrontational tactics such as picket lines and various forms of "sit-ins." For example, to protest the lack of black employment at Lucky Supermarkets, CORE activists

staged “shop-ins,” in which they filled shopping carts with items before abandoning them at the register. Lucky claimed that this resulted in \$15,000 in damaged goods, but Wilfred Ussery, San Francisco CORE’s vice-chairman, countered that the tactic was necessary “to create a dynamically tensed situation throughout the Bay Area that would force powerful community leaders to act.”⁹³ Ussery would become a national leader of CORE and a leading black power figure in San Francisco.

While black labor leaders and ministers were forming the Church Labor Conference in the spring of 1963, Ussery spearheaded the formation of the UFM. The civil rights federation emerged out of a conflict that began in June, when Mayor George Christopher proposed the creation of a biracial committee to study racial discrimination in San Francisco. CORE leaders demanded more immediate action and dismissed the proposal outright, rejecting “a conference where business men talk to business men, city officials talk to city officials, labor leaders talk to labor leaders, and professional people talk to professional people.” Instead, Ussery called for “an eye-ball to eye-ball confrontation with the power structure of the city.”⁹⁴ A few months later eleven local civil rights groups joined CORE in a mass “freedom rally” to protest racial discrimination in San Francisco. Initially, the civil rights coalition included groups committed to direct-action protests; namely CORE, the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), the local NAACP (which had come under militant leadership), and a new group consisting mostly of radical white students that called itself the Ad Hoc Committee to End Discrimination. The small biracial CORE and SNCC chapters were already gravitating towards black power, but a majority of UFM members were white, had middle-class backgrounds, and worked as professionals or were students. David Wellman observed that the “contact the groups in the UFM had with [the Negro community] were relatively non-existent,” and as a result it was

“isolated from the Negro community.”⁹⁵ The CLC declined an early invitation to join the UFM for the same reason that black ILWU leaders were reluctant to participate in organizations they did not control. As one black labor leader told Wellman, “We do not want to be captured by the Freedom Movement.”⁹⁶ Yet the CLC, and the ILWU in particular, did not consider themselves adversaries of the UFM. In fact, they mostly supported the young activists, many of whom were the sons and daughters of union’s members. Bill Bradley, Jr., who became SF CORE chairman in 1963, was the son of a longshoreman, and Ella Hill Hutch, who helped revive the city’s CORE branch in 1961, worked as an ILWU receptionist. Eventually, other groups with larger black memberships and stronger ties to San Francisco’s black communities, including the SFNALC and Bayview Citizens Committee, joined the UFM and gave it a degree of organic connection with working-class African Americans.

In the winter and spring of 1964 the UFM staged a series of dramatic and highly-publicized pickets and sit-ins against employment discrimination at the Sheraton-Palace Hotel, car dealerships on Van Ness Avenue’s “Auto Row”, and Bank of America. Like the SFNALC job actions two years earlier, these demonstrations evoked frustration with the limitations fair employment laws while calling for a more immediate and results-oriented approach to employment discrimination. But whereas the SFNALC protests involved black activists and took place out of the public eye in the middle of Bayview-Hunters Point, the UFM demonstrations occurred in the heart of San Francisco, consisted mostly of white students, received front-page coverage in the mainstream press, and resulted in hundreds of arrests.⁹⁷ Student activists had actually indirectly helped Shelley in his mayoral campaign the previous fall when they picketed Mel’s Drive-In restaurants and the home of Harold Dobbs to protest the lack of African Americans employed as servers and cashiers by the restaurant chain.⁹⁸ But when hundreds of

young activists blocked the entrances to the Palace Hotel in early March, Shelley was uncertain how to respond. Business leaders expected the city to defend their property rights. Several black ministers and moderate black leaders supported the demonstrations in principal but were weary of the protesters and their tactics. “I’m not opposed to demonstrations,” explained Terry Francois, who provided legal services to the Ad Hoc Committee. “My differences took place when the students blocked the doorways to the Sheraton-Palace.”⁹⁹ But the demonstrators were cheered on by the *Sun-Reporter* and its readers. Carlton Goodlett belonged to the UFM and, in addition to writing editorials in support of the demonstrations, participated in the Palace Hotel sit-in along with several members of his paper’s staff. Shelley viewed the picketers with a degree of skepticism and expressed concern that some “were just young kids who are going out and having a ball,” but in general he tried to occupy a middle-ground that balanced the competing claims of civil rights and property rights. “Everyone has a right to demonstrate,” he announced, “but that right should not interfere with other person’s rights – even the right of a business to operate peacefully.”¹⁰⁰

Shelley’s efforts to balance civil rights and property rights previewed the challenges that lay ahead for the liberal coalition in San Francisco and across the nation. Although he had resisted early demands to arrest the demonstrators and oversaw the signing of a non-discrimination hiring agreement, he received little credit from the UFM and the *Sun-Reporter*, which heralded the protest as a victory. In a column critical of Shelley’s overall handling of racial issues during his first six months in office, Thomas Fleming criticized the city’s “harsh law enforcement retaliation” against the demonstrators.¹⁰¹ Meanwhile, conservatives lashed out at the mayor for appearing to cave in to the demands of young irresponsible activists. “I hope that from your ceding to the demands of a pressure group other similar illegal actions may not take place,”

former Mayor Roger Lapham admonished Shelley, adding for good measure that the mayor's "failure to take the aggressive action needed stands out as an example of what not to do."¹⁰²

Meanwhile, the City Hall mailroom filled with angry letters from San Franciscans and other Bay Area residents who, in the words of one longtime San Francisco Democrat, felt that Shelley let a bunch of "children and students out on a lark" dictate policy while the "responsible people and taxpayers of this city are paying for the protection of law and order and the privilege to conduct their business as they see fit."¹⁰³ Shelley replied to his critics that his administration was "seeking to maintain a moderating influence while at the same time upholding the law and the constitutional rights of all our citizens." But his attempt to remind frustrated constituents that the nation was "witnessing a growing social revolution," and that it was his duty "to guide this revolution into peaceful and constructive channels" likely carried little weight to those who refused to acknowledge the legitimacy of the fair employment protest in the first place.¹⁰⁴

In the fall of 1964, Shelley once again found himself at odds with militant civil rights and community activists as they battled for control over San Francisco's Economic Opportunity Council (EOC), the community action agency (CAA) formed by Shelley to conform with the requirements with the 1964 Economic Opportunity Act (EOA). A cornerstone of Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty, the CAAs, in the words of historian Allen J. Matusow, "were charged with mobilizing local resources for a comprehensive attack on poverty" by providing "new services to the poor; to coordinate all federal, state, and local programs dealing with the poor," and by "promoting institutional change in the interests of the poor."¹⁰⁵ Despite the EOA's requirement that CAAs be "developed, conducted, and administered with the maximum feasible participation of residents of the areas and members of the groups served," Shelley had no intention of surrendering administration of the poverty program – along with the several million

dollars in federal funds that came with it.¹⁰⁶ The mayor claimed the right to appoint the EOC's fifty members, and he gave special preference to representatives of business, industry, and labor. Only five of the appointees were black, all considered "moderates" by militants and community leaders. In response, civil rights and community organizations formed a loose coalition called Citizens United Against Poverty (CUAP) and demanded that the poor gain a greater voice in the poverty program, especially in the selection of representatives to the EOC and the neighborhood poverty boards. CUAP was led by a diverse group that included outspoken militants such as Wilfred Ussery, who sought to make the poverty program a vehicle for Black Power. Already weary of Ussery and the UFM, Shelley initially ignored CUAP's demands and accused the group of injecting "a power play and politics" in to the poverty program. Steadfastly refusing to acknowledge the legitimacy of CUAP, in May 1965 Shelley partnered with Los Angeles Mayor Sam Yorty during the U.S. Conference of Mayors in St. Louis to introduce a resolution accusing the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) of "fostering class struggle." Meanwhile, Carlton Goodlett, now a CUAP spokesperson, criticized the mayor's intransigence in the *Sun-Reporter*, and CUAP appealed to state and federal officials, including OEO head Sargent Shriver, to suspend all antipoverty funds until the dispute over the composition of the EOC was resolved. The conflict culminated in a series of tumultuous EOC meetings in August 1965, during which Shelley squared off with community representatives. After black representatives from the Western Addition and Hunters Point walked out of an August 11 meeting in protest, the two neighborhoods boycotted the EOC for three weeks. As his name was hissed, jeered, and booed at an August 31 EOC meeting, Shelley relented, finally conceding that "There seems to be a very strong feeling that control of the program should be with those who are involved in it." The EOC was then reorganized, with a majority of its members elected from the "target" areas. With the

balance of power having shifted from City Hall to the neighborhoods, Shelley exerted little influence on the poverty program in the ensuing years and never attended another EOC meeting. In addition to losing the battle for control of the poverty program, Shelley's standing among black San Franciscans had further suffered for the effort.¹⁰⁷

One factor in Shelley's capitulation in the fight for control of the program was the specter of racial violence, which intensified after the Watts riot in Los Angeles in mid-August. Shelley's fears of racial violence were eventually realized in the fall of 1966, when Hunters Point erupted in four days of rioting that resulted in \$100,000 in property damage, 146 arrests, and 44 injuries (42 of which were suffered by African Americans).¹⁰⁸ As with other riots that ravaged American cities during the mid-1960s, the violence in Hunters Point stemmed from several long-term causes, notably police brutality, poor housing, and high unemployment. The spark that ignited the riot occurred in the early afternoon of September 27, when a police officer fatally shot a sixteen-year old car thief in the back. Outraged residents demanded to speak with the mayor, and when he arrived at the Bayview Community Center that evening he was confronted by several hundred black teenagers. The angry crowd was in no mood to listen to Shelley's assurances that the officer involved had been suspended, and participants hurled bricks and firebombs as he hastily retreated to City Hall. As rioters continued throwing objects and began looting white and Chinese-owned businesses, police moved in and sealed off the area. Meanwhile, Shelley contacted fellow Democrat and San Franciscan Edmund "Pat" Brown, who was entering the home-stretch of a faltering gubernatorial reelection campaign against conservative upstart Ronald Reagan, and requested deployment of the National Guard.¹⁰⁹ When the conflict escalated after police began shooting at rioters on the second day, James Richards, Harold Brooks (formerly of the NALC), and several other young black men organized themselves into a group

that they called the Hunters Point Young Men for Action Council. In an attempt to keep things from escalating further, the Young Men for Action met with Shelley and Police Chief Tom Cahill. Eventually, the mayor's office permitted the Young Men for Action to patrol the area themselves, and according to Richards they managed to calm the young rioters, convincing them not "to destroy ourselves like that."¹¹⁰

For many San Franciscans, the riot was yet another example of Shelley's inability to handle the city's volatile racial problems. Shelley also struggled to gain confidence among the residents of the city's black neighborhoods. As order slowly was restored in Bayview-Hunters Point, Shelley publicly declared that black Americans "do not have the same economic and social opportunities that are taken for granted by their fellow citizens" and identified racial discrimination as "the cancer of our city's economic life."¹¹¹ Yet he proved incapable of improving relations between Bayview-Hunters Point and City Hall. When redevelopment of the area commenced and as the city applied for federal funds under the Model Cities Act, residents of Bayview-Hunters Point made it clear that they expected to play a major role. In May 1967, Oceola Washington, one of the leading female activists in the community, told a panel consisting of George Murphy and Senator Robert F. Kennedy at the Bayview Community Center that promises for hundreds of jobs in the aftermath of the riot never materialized. "This was only a bluff to cool people off, and as soon as this was done the jobs disappeared," she explained, adding ominously that if things did not change "it might not be so good this summer."¹¹²

The 1964 civil rights demonstrations, the battle for control of the city's poverty program, and the Hunters Point riot were the most conspicuous signs of Shelley's struggle to navigate San Francisco's troubled racial waters. Throughout his mayoral term he came under scrutiny on other issues relating to black San Franciscans as well, such as the lack of minority appointments to city

commissions and for not taking decisive action to address the problem of *de facto* school segregation. During the fight over the composition of the EOC, Carlton Goodlett reminded Shelley that the “black belts” had been instrumental in his 1963 election, and it was apparent that he could not take that vote for granted in his bid for reelection.¹¹³ In January 1966, the influential Baptist Ministers Union, which had supported Shelley’s candidacy in 1963, warned that it would “certainly not forget his failures in the Mayoralty election of 1967.”¹¹⁴ For more militant activists in the Western Addition and Bayview-Hunters Point, Shelley’s troubled mayoral term served to further alienate them from Democratic Party liberalism while reinforcing growing demands for black power and independent political action.

As Shelley came under increased scrutiny from nearly every corner of black San Francisco, black trade unionists and the ILWU refrained from vocalizing any stern criticism of the mayor as they began to find themselves with a direct line to City Hall. In contrast to Goodlett’s adversarial relationship with Shelley, the ILWU sought a constructive partnership with the Democratic mayor. Their approach was effective, as Shelley welcomed the union’s input on issues relating to race and labor. In 1966 sociologist David Wellman observed that “it was not strange to overhear Negro unionists call the Mayor and ask to speak with ‘Jack’ . More important, perhaps, is the fact that ‘Jack’ was quite willing to speak with them.”¹¹⁵ According to Jo Freeman, who participated in the Palace Hotel demonstration while a student at UC Berkeley, the standoff ended only after “leaders of the ILWU had phoned Mayor Shelley ... and urged him to resolve the conflict.”¹¹⁶ In the aftermath of the 1964 demonstrations, Shelley consulted with the ILWU on the creation of the San Francisco Human Relations Commission (HRC) and named Revels Cayton as an inaugural member and appointed Curtis McClain in 1966.¹¹⁷ That same year he appointed Cayton deputy director of the San Francisco Housing Authority. Shelley also

consulted with Bill Chester and Harry Bridges on several occasions concerning civil rights issues and the problem of industrial flight from San Francisco.¹¹⁸

As Shelley prepared for a difficult reelection campaign in 1967, ILWU leaders hoped to increase this influence. David Jenkins, the union's chief political strategist and a former Communist, accepted an appointment as the campaign's labor coordinator. Jenkins, who was white, was not as critical of the mayor as black militants such as Carlton Goodlett, and even praised Shelley as a "fine labor mayor" who had "acted correctly on the peace parades and the disturbance in Hunters Point."¹¹⁹ Sensing Shelley's vulnerability and thus his heightened need for assistance from organized labor, Bill Chester also viewed the campaign as an opportunity to "pump in ILWU issues," which included mechanization, taxes, minority unemployment, fair housing, expanding the city fire and police commissions (so as to include African American and minority members), and even opposition to the Vietnam War.¹²⁰ Shelley would have agreed with the ILWU on most of these issues. Nevertheless, Chester argued that it was important for the ILWU to assert its strength and independence within the campaign. "We should work for Shelley on an ILWU basis, not on his basis," Chester told the ILWU Northern California District Council (NCDC), the political arm of the union in northern California.¹²¹ With the Democratic coalition tearing at the seams, ILWU leaders were determined to strengthen the position of progressive trade unionists and civil rights activists within the local liberal political culture.

Joseph Alioto and the 1967 Mayoral Election

The fortunes of local and state liberal-labor-civil rights coalitions had deteriorated significantly between Shelley's victory in 1963 and the San Francisco mayoral campaign of 1967. Black San Franciscans began warning of a "white backlash" in 1964, when California

voters overwhelmingly approved Proposition 14, which overturned a state fair housing law passed the previous year. San Franciscans had approved the measure by approximately 25,000 votes, prompting Willie Brown to lament that “there are more bigots tha[n] good people in San Francisco.” In 1966 conservative actor-turned-politician Ronald Reagan became California’s governor when he defeated liberal incumbent Pat Brown, who had swept into office with a landslide victory over Senator William Knowland of Oakland in 1958. The following summer, San Franciscans chose Milton Marks, a moderate Republican, over left-liberal John Burton in a special election to fill a vacated Democratic-held seat in the State Senate. Marks became the first Republican State Senator to represent San Francisco in 32 years. Although ILWU leaders such as David Jenkins did not expect Marks to be “a stooge for Reagan,” to some the election suggested that, in the words of Philip Burton’s biographer, “Reagan’s magic extended to liberal San Francisco.”¹²² As the mayor’s race heated up toward the end of summer, Shelley’s prospects for reelection diminished by the day.

As in 1963, Shelley’s chief opponent was conservative attorney and businessman Harold Dobbs. This time around, however, Shelley was an embattled incumbent while Dobbs’ core messages of fiscal conservatism and “law and order,” which had carried the day for Reagan in 1966, appeared to resonate more powerfully with the majority of San Francisco voters. Decrying the increase in city spending and rising property tax rates during Shelley’s first term, Dobbs directly appealed to the region’s emerging “homeowner populism” by promising to “remove the frills and fat” from municipal finance while refusing to raise taxes on property owners or businesses.¹²³ Dobbs also promised San Franciscans that he would make the city’s streets “the safest in the world.”¹²⁴ He accused Shelley of “handcuffing” the police by telling the Chief of Police “what he could do and couldn’t do in the use of firearms.” Dobbs argued that police

officers should be allowed to “use their guns” and do “anything to carry out the law and provide protection.”¹²⁵ The *San Francisco Examiner*, which endorsed Dobbs, buttressed his attack by warning San Franciscans that “the next mayor would have to be prepared to handle mounting civil rights protests, labor strikes, race riots, the rise in prostitution and topless nightclubs, and San Francisco’s emergence “as world capital of the Hippies.”¹²⁶ Dobbs’ relentless attacks were effective, and by September Shelley was trailing far behind him in the polls.

The mayoral race took a sudden and unexpected turn in early September when Shelley withdrew from the race because of health problems. Although the mayor explained that he was following doctor’s orders, political observers speculated that influential financial backers had pulled the plug on the floundering campaign.¹²⁷ Shelley’s exit from the race created an unanticipated dilemma for the city’s Democratic electorate, which outnumbered Republicans by a margin of two to one. Despite his troubles, the Mayor had received endorsements from most of the city’s liberal stalwarts, including unanimous support from organized labor and even an endorsement from the ever-critical *Sun-Reporter*. By September the mayor also appeared to have the tacit support of Philip Burton, a political rival, and his so-called “Burton Machine.”¹²⁸ But the choice of who to support in Shelley’s absence tore apart this precarious consensus. Would the liberal coalition realign around its progressive wing? Or would it gravitate towards a candidate who could better assuage the concerns of the city’s homeowner populists?

Progressive-minded liberals rallied behind the candidacy of Jack Morrison, a former reporter for the *Chronicle* who was serving his second term on the Board of Supervisors. Morrison had built a reputation as a left-liberal who defended the rights of minorities and working-class San Franciscans.¹²⁹ His 1967 platform, which he named the “Just Society,” sought to revive postwar liberalism by promising a “humane” approach to redevelopment; to support

civil rights and appoint an African-American to the Public Utilities Commission; to expand public transportation; and to take control of city government away from “downtown big money interests” and give it back to the “real community.” Morrison also vocally opposed the Vietnam War and supported passage of Proposition P, a symbolic ballot declaration – which gained national attention – calling for the immediate withdrawal of U.S. troops from Vietnam.¹³⁰

Congressman Phillip Burton and his younger brother, John, both leaders of the left-wing of the California Democratic party, threw their support behind Morrison within days of his candidacy.¹³¹ Their close friend and the city’s leading African-American politician, Assemblyman Willie Brown, soon followed suit.¹³² Both the Burtons and Brown met with ILWU leaders to secure their support for Morrison as well.¹³³

They also assumed they could count on Carlton Goodlett to rally black voters around Morrison’s candidacy. By 1967 Goodlett was still operating on the left-wing fringe of the Democratic party. When in 1965 a reporter asked Goodlett if he was a Communist, he answered “I’m a registered Democrat ...but I am a man opposed to violence and I have a record of fighting injustice anywhere, irrespective of what this matter is, anyplace in the world.”¹³⁴ As his criticism of Shelley demonstrates, that view often brought him into conflict with mainstream Democrats. In 1963 he helped lead pickets against Pat Brown, California’s Democratic governor, to protest the lack of black state appointees. “At long last we are convinced that something dramatic must be done to shake up the Democratic Party, and the leader of the Democratic Party, Governor Brown,” Goodlett announced at the time. “Negroes can’t take the chance that he will continue either to forget us or to ignore us.”¹³⁵ Three years later Goodlett challenged Brown in the Democratic primary after the governor’s northern California campaign chairman told a delegation of blacks that they had no choice but to support the incumbent because the alternative,

Republican candidate Ronald Reagan, would be far worse. Tired of California Democrats taking its black support for granted, Goodlett launched his campaign in protest.¹³⁶ “In 1966 our Party needs an inspiring, intelligent and liberal leadership which espouses a progressive program,” he implored the California Democratic Council. He offered a platform that called for an end to the Vietnam War, extending the vote to 18-year olds, the abolition of capital punishment, an aggressive public works program, a “minim income allowance for our unemployed and impoverished citizens,” a quota system to ensure racial minority representation in government, to address the problem of migratory workers, and a pledge to “use preventative medicine to cure the causes which create a Watts in every major city of California.”¹³⁷ His insurgent campaign, which drew support from several prominent black activists including comedian Dick Gregory and the Reverend Cecil Williams, finished third in the primary. According to Goodlett, most of his 151,000 votes came not from black Americans, who feared that by abandoning Brown they would open the door for Los Angeles populist mayor Sam Yorty, but from “the peace movement.”¹³⁸

As his gubernatorial platform indicated, Goodlett’s politics meshed with the emerging New Left. After his failed campaign Goodlett joined the steering committee of the National Conference for New Politics (NCNP) and attended two of the group’s national meetings held in Chicago during the summer and fall of 1967.¹³⁹ Established in 1966, the NCNP platform of ending the Vietnam War and strengthening grass-roots antipoverty and civil rights programs attracted a diverse mix of reform Democrats, antiwar activists, civil rights leaders, Black Power activists, and Communists from across the country.¹⁴⁰ Goodlett’s first foray in New Left coalition politics was not a good experience. When close to 3,000 activists gathered to attend a NCNP convention in Chicago to discuss, among other things, supporting a third-party ticket

headed by Martin Luther King, Jr. and Dr. Benjamin Spock in the 1968 presidential race, a Black Caucus demanded that the convention adopt a 13-point program that, according to one critical report, “gave the conference the appearance of a black power convention.”¹⁴¹ Goodlett was sympathetic to the black nationalism of the nascent Black Power movement, but disapproved of the Caucus’s divisive language and hostile disposition, which unsettled many of the convention’s white attendees along with peace activists such as himself. Telling the Caucus that “no revolution has ever succeeded without the middle class and professionals,” Goodlett pleaded with the Caucus to temper its demands. “My advice wasn’t too well taken,” he averred.¹⁴² Recounting events three weeks later, Goodlett told a Bay Area “discussion group” that the Black Caucus had considered him a “house nigger” and had threatened him.¹⁴³ Goodlett would increasingly associate with Black Power groups, especially the Black Panthers, in the coming years. Yet he did not share some of their jaundiced views towards white and middle-class activists and politicians, and, in 1967, of Morrison’s candidacy, which community activists in Hunters Point dismissed as “timid.”¹⁴⁴ Given Morrison’s record on racial issues and forthright opposition to the Vietnam War, Carlton Goodlett considered him the clear choice for black voters. “[O]nly Jack Morrison understands the foreboding circumstances and the dangerous conditions which the denial of justice to racial minorities has created in San Francisco,” the *Sun-Reporter* editorialized.¹⁴⁵ And he predicted that a “cross-section” of the city’s black leadership, including those from labor and the church, would join him in supporting Morrison.¹⁴⁶

Much to the dismay of Goodlett, Brown, and the Burtons, the ILWU and black trade unionists broke rank and instead aligned with Joseph Alioto, a centrist candidate and political newcomer. A native San Franciscan and one of the nation’s top anti-trust attorneys, Alioto was a lifelong Democrat and devout Catholic whose political outlook blended New Deal liberalism

with Catholic social justice theory. As a student in San Francisco's Catholic schools in the 1930s, Alioto had participated in the city's Catholic Action campaign before leaving his hometown to earn degrees at St. Mary's College at Moraga, California and the School of Law at Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C. According to historian William Issel, Alioto often referred to the "Catholic character of his New Deal philosophy," which derived his time working as an assistant for Monsignor Francis J. Hass, who had served in the United States Department of Labor and the Fair Employment Practices Committee during the Roosevelt administration.¹⁴⁷ Earlier in the year Alioto had served in the mayoral campaign of Eugene McAteer, a State Senator and rising star in the California Democratic Party. Political observers considered McAteer, who billed himself as a centrist, as the early favorite, and on May 23rd a poll showed that the State Senator had more support than Shelley and Dobbs combined.¹⁴⁸ But just three days later McAteer died suddenly of a heart attack while playing handball at the Olympic Club, dramatically altering the contours of the race. McAteer's wealthy backers were reluctant to shift their resources towards Shelley's reelection campaign, prompting rumors that Alioto would inherit the late senator's campaign organization. And on September 8, only a few hours after Shelley officially withdrew, Alioto did just that.¹⁴⁹ Although he had entered the race at the eleventh hour, Alioto assured voters that "I started this campaign as chairman for the great Senator Gene McAteer and I inherited the great organization that Gene McAteer built."¹⁵⁰

In both theory and practice Alioto's political philosophy reflected what historian Kevin Mattson describes as American liberalism's "humanist project." Mattson suggests that "liberalism demands that citizens think of public purposes and improve the quality of collectively shared resources."¹⁵¹ The notion of "organic communal solidarity" permeated Alioto's 1967 campaign, and found its greatest rhetorical application in his repeated pledge to

forge a “grand urban coalition” that could mitigate the worst evils of the “urban crisis.”¹⁵² In the two months leading up to the November election, Alioto fashioned himself an outsider and independent when it came to city politics, and sought to bring together the city’s minority, labor, business, and religious communities under a nonpartisan liberal banner. On the campaign’s major issues of crime, property taxes, and downtown development and urban renewal, Alioto deftly carved out a position squarely in the middle of his two chief opponents. In fact, the polarized candidacies of Morrison and Dobbs allowed Alioto to appeal to a broader base of moderate voters than might not otherwise have been possible.

Alioto’s ability to play Dobbs and Morrison off one another was evident in his crime platform, an issue of great importance to white moderates and conservatives on the one hand and black San Franciscans on the other. Alioto explained that he would be “the lawyer for the Police Department” and ensure that the police would be equally well versed in respecting the constitutional rights of the city’s residents as they would be in fighting crime. At the same time, he promised to “mobilize all forces” to keep the streets safe from “the Marina to Hunters Point.” The cornerstones of his crime platform were the creation of a Crime Commission and a “Mobile Tactical Force.” He was careful to stress that the Commission, which would represent “all elements of San Francisco,” would not operate as a citizen review board – something civil rights activists supported and police officers vehemently opposed in 1966. Rather, it would “revise police procedures for effective and just law enforcement and report on the present laws dealing with gun sales, narcotics, pornography and sex crimes” as well as address issues of crime prevention, jails, probation, and rehabilitation. The Tactical Force would function as a special unit that could move in quickly at the earliest sign of violence or disorder.¹⁵³ These policies would have been enough to cast him as a conservative “law and order” candidate in just about

any other city, but Alioto reminded voters that it was Dobbs who had a “police dog mentality.”¹⁵⁴ Predicting that his conservative rival would give police a “free hand” when dealing with minorities, student radicals, and hippies, Alioto warned that “If Harold Dobbs is elected I think you are going to see considerable trouble in the Negro Community.”¹⁵⁵ After the election Tom Wicker of the *New York Times* marveled that Alioto was able to steal “the ‘crime’ issue from the Republicans without losing Negro support.”¹⁵⁶

As endorsements came in from across the city, it became apparent that Alioto’s centrist campaign appealed to both the city’s moderate and conservative organizations. In addition to the financial backing he received from liberal downtown business owners such as hotel magnates Benjamin Swig and Cyril Magnin, he collected a majority of the endorsements from the city’s numerous ethnic and neighborhood clubs. Importantly for his prospects of winning votes from the city’s moderate Republicans, these included the support of traditionally conservative groups such as the Civic League of Improvement Clubs and the Italian Federation, both of which had supported Dobbs when he ran against Shelley in 1963.¹⁵⁷ In his frequent public appearances in front of endorsement committees, Alioto, who had learned Italian as his first language and could “quote Dante as easily as case law,”¹⁵⁸ quickly earned a reputation as an electrifying and dynamic speaker capable of stealing the show. He was especially colorful when contrasted with the unassuming Morrison and the wooden Dobbs. Yet it was more likely his defense of small property owners, his stance on crime, and his commitment to economic development that made him attractive to these constituencies.

Alioto faced a more difficult task when it came to gaining the trust and support of San Francisco’s labor movement. According to Dick Meister, the *Chronicle*’s veteran labor reporter, the withdrawal of Shelley and entrance of Morrison and Alioto had caused the greatest discord

“by far in local labor history” over a mayoral endorsement.¹⁵⁹ Initially, most of the city’s senior labor officials were reluctant to show their hand, although some of the more progressive unions, such as Local 4 of the painters union, were quick to back Morrison. As Daniel Del Carlo, longtime labor activist and Secretary of the Building Trades Council (SFBTC), told reporters, “Alioto isn’t very well known in the labor movement.”¹⁶⁰ Even George Johns, a personal friend of Alioto and secretary of the San Francisco Labor Council, initially hesitated to offer his public support.¹⁶¹ However, it did not take long for many to be won over by the Alioto’s charisma and pro-labor sentiments. The son of a fish wholesaler and homemaker, Alioto stressed his working-class roots and promised to be a friend of labor while arguing that a vote for Morrison would essentially amount to a vote for Dobbs.¹⁶² His pro-growth liberalism, coupled with his support for public-sector unions and provisions to use union labor and materials in city contracts further placated the city’s trade unionists. Although the AFL-CIO COPE was unable to agree on a candidate, Alioto picked up endorsements from the International Ladies Garment Workers Union, Service Workers Local 1100, the Department Store Employees Union Local 1100, the Bay City Metal Trades and Industrial Unions Council, and the SFBTC.¹⁶³ In a relatively short period of time, Alioto had secured support from business liberals, small homeowners, and much of the labor movement. To complete his “grand urban coalition,” however, he would seek to fortify his support among racial minorities and black San Franciscans in particular.

“We Don’t Want Another Reagan Around”

When it came to political coalitions, black power activists were particularly weary of white liberals who sought to coopt black leadership or who solicited black votes without the real intent of pushing for sweeping social change.¹⁶⁴ Carlton Goodlett felt that Morrison was a

progressive liberal who African Americans could trust to fight for social reform, but he had serious misgivings about Alioto. “Who is this man Alioto?” He rhetorically asked after the ILWU announced its endorsement. “Where has he been for the last 15 years?”¹⁶⁵ In Goodlett’s assessment, Alioto was “a man of great wealth and a glib tongue” who had shown no interest in the plight of black San Franciscans. He suggested that one need look no further than Alioto’s terms on the school board (1948-1954) and redevelopment agency (1955-1959), during which nothing was done to address *de facto* segregation in the city’s schools while thousands of poor black families were displaced from their Western Addition homes, to understand where Alioto stood on racial justice. “The most charitable thing that could be said is that during the last 20 years Alioto has either been unconcerned or has ignored our problems,” Goodlett editorialized, “in those very few instances where he had an opportunity to contribute positively to our struggle to gain equity in political affairs, he made no effort to do so.”¹⁶⁶ Other prominent African Americans echoed Goodlett’s assessment. Stating that “Mr. Alioto has no appeal to Negro voters,” Assemblyman Willie Brown, predicted that minority voters would support Morrison.¹⁶⁷

Goodlett and Brown assumed that the ILWU, with its cadre of black activists, would follow suit. Goodlett and the ILWU had collaborated on political campaigns since the ill-fated IPP campaigns after World War II, and Goodlett considered the union as an important part of the coalition needed to achieve greater black political representation and meaningful municipal reforms. At first it seemed inevitable that the ILWU would close ranks behind Morrison. Several union leaders initially expressed that Alioto “was far too conservative for their taste.”¹⁶⁸ Furthermore, the union had supported Morrison in his past bids for the Board of Supervisors and his platform dovetailed with the union’s political views, including its forthright stance against the War in Vietnam. “My two major opponents are out of the same mold,” Morrison reminded them.

“One is a right-wing Republican, the other is a right-wing Democrat.”¹⁶⁹ But despite their frequent collaboration, the ILWU had travelled a different political path from leftists such as Goodlett. Their public positions on national and global issues remained similar, but when it came to local and state politics the ILWU had proven far more accommodating to Democratic party liberalism during the 1950s and 1960s. While Goodlett sparred with moderate Democrats such as Pat Brown and Jack Shelley over their racial policies, ILWU leaders applauded liberals’ support for fair employment and housing along with their willingness to consult with labor leaders. As one ILWU leader lamented after Brown’s defeat, he “was a humanitarian who listened to the ILWU and we had access to his office and to many of his right-hand men.”¹⁷⁰ Nevertheless, the city’s progressive and minority political activists were shocked when the ILWU Legislative Committee voted 40 to 17 to endorse Alioto instead of Morrison.

The ILWU’s decision to join Alioto’s liberal coalition resulted in part from political developments not only in San Francisco but in California and the nation as well. By 1967 Lyndon Johnson’s landslide presidential victory was a distant memory, as so-called “middle America” grew increasingly weary and resentful of War on Poverty programs, campus protests, fair housing legislation, affirmative action (discussed in Chapter 7), school busing to achieve “racial balance” in schools (discussed in Chapter 5), and mounting calls for “black power” that appeared especially menacing with the outbreak of urban violence in cities across the nation.¹⁷¹ For the ILWU, Reagan’s alarming gubernatorial victory brought these developments too close to home. ILWU leaders who directed the union’s 1966 political campaigns acknowledged that many of their own white members had voted for Reagan. “If we are under the impression that our members are for a progressive program, we are wrong,” Keith Eickman warned the NCDC, noting that he “was surprised at the number of Local 6 members who admitted that they voted

for Reagan.” Local 10 member Archie Brown concluded that many “white workers are afraid of job competition.” He suggested that these members voted for Reagan because they “see the unemployed minorities and fear for their jobs.”¹⁷² Given the events of the previous three years, David Jenkins warned union leaders in 1967 that “a defeat in San Francisco will set the state up for grabs.”¹⁷³ This became a recurrent theme during heated debates at NCDC meetings, as key leaders in the union argued that circumstances required that they compromise some of their ideological ground for the greater good. “We cannot overlook the backlash,” Bill Chester admonished members of the NCDC following the victories of Reagan and Milton Marks in 1966.¹⁷⁴ “WE DON’T WANT ANOTHER REAGAN AROUND,” the *Local 10 Bulletin* declared, adding that “Alioto is the only liberal candidate for mayor who can defeat Harold Dobbs – Reagan’s candidate.”¹⁷⁵ “Jack’s a great guy, and we would support him for any other office,” the Legislative Committee declared upon announcing its endorsement of Alioto. “The trouble is, though, in this mayor’s race Alioto can win. Morrison just can’t.”¹⁷⁶ Left-wing Democrats such as Goodlett did not agree with the ILWU’s political calculus. Alioto was far too conservative for their taste, and Goodlett was always reluctant to surrender ideological ground for political expediency. In a city where registered Democrats outnumbered Republicans by a margin of two-to-one, they hoped that Alioto and Dobbs would split conservative and moderate votes while Morrison could win on the strength of progressives and some moderates.

Having concluded that Morrison could not win even with their support, ILWU leaders grew confident that they could attain considerable influence in an Alioto administration. The ILWU and Alioto were not complete strangers. Alioto boasted that he had developed “exemplary relations” with the union as general manager and then president of the California Rice Growers Association, a claim that union leaders corroborated.¹⁷⁷ Shortly after announcing his candidacy,

Alioto made a “serious attempt” to get an endorsement of the ILWU.¹⁷⁸ He undoubtedly sought the manpower and votes an ILWU endorsement would bring to his campaign. But he also considered the union as a vital piece of his “grand urban coalition.” He felt that as mayor his “number one priority” would be to “work on social tensions in the city,” and that the ILWU, as the city’s leading progressive union with a large black membership and strong record on civil rights, would be instrumental in assisting him.¹⁷⁹ Alioto explained how in a meeting with David Jenkins, Revels Cayton, Bill Chester, and LeRoy King in which he promised – in exchange for the union’s support – to consult with the union on racial issues and to appoint an African American to his cabinet and to appoint trade unionists and minorities to every city commission. King remembered that Alioto told them that “You’re going to be the ones that make the decisions for appointments.”¹⁸⁰ It was a political trade-off that the ILWU leaders were happy to accept. If Alioto kept his word, the ILWU would be able help transform the face of municipal government. In doing so they would not only be able to help African Americans achieve their goal of representation, but help ensure that the city pursued pro-labor policies. Such a move was consistent with ILWU political and civil rights activism in the postwar decades in that it placed the security and influence of the union ahead of all else. ILWU leaders could live with breaking ranks with their allies on the liberal left because they firmly believed that what was good for the union was also good for the city’s working-class and racial minorities. The ILWU Legislative Committee issued its endorsement shortly after meeting with Alioto, and Jenkins, Chester, and King joined his campaign committee. Trumpeting the potential power that the union’s coalition with Alioto could deliver, Keith Eickman predicted that “ILWU prestige is at its highest ... and maybe after the election certain politicians will consult with us.”¹⁸¹

Still, the endorsement created controversy within the ILWU, as some of its former

Communist members and younger New Leftists defiantly insisted that they would support Morrison regardless of the union's official endorsement.¹⁸² By the 1960s leftists both inside and outside of the union were growing ever-more critical of its leadership, including its longtime president, Harry Bridges. Critics considered the two Mechanization and Modernization Agreements ("M & M") that the union signed in 1960 and 1966, which paved the way for the automation and deskilling of waterfront jobs, as evidence that it had sold out its rank-and-file and turned its back on its radical past.¹⁸³ Longtime Communist Archie Brown, who won a Supreme Court case in 1965 affirming the right of Communists to hold union offices, registered his opposition to the endorsement with the NCDC and informed them that he was campaigning for Morrison.¹⁸⁴ In addition to voicing their objections within the legislative committee, dissenting Local 10 members circulated bulletins urging African Americans to vote for Morrison.¹⁸⁵ Archie Brown had previously warned union leaders that the 750 "B" men, who were predominantly young African Americans in their late teens and early twenties, considered the ILWU "as part of the establishment" and were therefore unlikely to follow its political lead.¹⁸⁶ Along with a few other left-wing leaders, Brown felt that the ILWU needed to assert its independence and distance itself from the mainstream of the Democratic Party.¹⁸⁷ But Jenkins, Chester, and Eickman implored union leaders to close ranks behind Alioto, repeating the refrain that a vote for Morrison in the three-man race amounted to a vote for Dobbs. Reminding the rank-and-file that the union's prestige and influence was at stake as well, Eickman warned that if the ILWU could not close ranks behind Alioto it would wind up with "no influence in San Francisco."¹⁸⁸

The ILWU-Alioto alliance triggered an intense debate over the purpose of coalition politics and black political power in San Francisco. Black trade unionists in the Labor Assembly for Community Action, a city-wide organization of black trade unionists that ILWU members

spearheaded earlier in the decade (see chapter 2), mobilized in support of Alioto, and in October the Baptist Ministers Union officially voted to endorse Alioto in large part because “Negro labor, including the International Longshoremen’s and Warehousemen’s Union, is solidly behind Alioto, and has been since the outset of his campaign.”¹⁸⁹ But the vote had been divisive (14 to 12), and like dissenters within the ILWU a vocal faction refused to abide by the endorsement. Instead, they joined members of the city’s Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance in pledging their support for Morrison.¹⁹⁰ Carlton Goodlett, who considered himself the political sage of black San Francisco, was especially critical of the ILWU and BMU. Goodlett refused to compromise the demands of black San Franciscans simply because Morrison was less likely to defeat Dobbs. In the weeks following the ILWU and BMU endorsement of Alioto, Goodlett and Tom Fleming regularly berated the trade unionists and ministers in the pages of the *Sun-Reporter*. Unaware of the deal that ILWU leaders had struck with Alioto, Goodlett and Fleming claimed that the two organizations had sold out their own political principals while setting “minister against minister, friend against friend, husband against wife, in the black ghettos” of San Francisco.¹⁹¹ “We eagerly await statements from the ministers and the ILWU on specifically what in the mysterious program offered by Alioto will enable black people to reach our agreed goal: effective participation in our city’s government,” Goodlett wrote two weeks before the election.¹⁹² Goodlett and Fleming shared Morrison’s hope that the ILWU rank and file and the city’s minority population more generally would cast their votes for the more left-liberal candidate.¹⁹³ “The dockers have discovered that the Negro vote is important,” Fleming wrote a few days before the election, “but they have not discovered that Negroes will speak for themselves at the polls and not serve the interests of some power-mad labor spokesmen and the willing Negro sycophants who can be bought for a few pennies.”¹⁹⁴

Largely missed in the uproar surrounding the black trade unionists and black ministers endorsements of Alioto was the more anti-liberal politics of Black Power that emanated most urgently from Bayview-Hunters Point, which lacked even the modest political tradition of the Western Addition-Fillmore district. The area's most vocal activists continued to be the women commonly known as the "Big Five," some of who would join black trade unionists in supporting Alioto. Older female leaders increasingly found themselves in conflict with young male militants. "These women look at us like kids," Adams Rogers explained in 1969. . "And we have to prove ourselves not only to them but to our society."¹⁹⁵ Rogers, a young militant poverty worker, would end up doing this by allying with Alioto as well. But other young men remained weary of politics. After the 1966 election, *The Spokesman*, a newspaper published out of the Bayview-Hunters Point EOC office, called upon the community to more actively engage in politics. Plagued by high unemployment, crime, poor schools, and impending redevelopment projects, Hunters Point activists spoke with urgency and a sense of desperation when trying to mobilize the community to political action. "Residents acknowledge the need for more power in politics, but little else results except acknowledgement," the paper averred. "All definitions of Black Power include greater political influence, but little is done by its advocates except talk."¹⁹⁶ Like Bill Chester and ILWU leaders, *The Spokesman* viewed the election of conservative Ronald Reagan as a wake-up call that would finally spur black voters to action. "[M]aybe we can look for a "Black Backlash," the paper wryly hoped.¹⁹⁷ Writing in *The Spokesman* in January 1967, Earl Anthony, Jr. also bemoaned the area's "political impotency" and lack of organization. "With organization, we are a powerful political force," he wrote. "Without organization, we are ineffective, and can be 'used' as a political tool by any white element that chooses to use us for its own personal political ambitions."

Anthony's call for organization did not look to black labor leaders, who seemed too entrenched in the liberal establishment. Anthony was a member of the Black Panther Party, and as such intimated that a more revolutionary organization was needed in Hunters Point. The Black Panthers considered the ILWU as a former revolutionary force whose large black membership made it relevant to African Americans in the Bay Area. David Hilliard, a Panther leader who had worked a short time as a "B Man," told the *Black Panther* newspaper in 1969 that the ILWU had an important part to play in the "struggle" because of its overall strength. However, he had "got very turned off" to the ILWU while working as a B man. He found that its black members "were completely transfixed with the idea that this is the best job to have," and that "with a job working as a longshoreman you somewhat escape the whole thing of oppression." Thus, Hilliard explained, the ILWU was "plugged into the system" and kept apart from "organizations that are moving to try and put together a proletarian revolution."¹⁹⁸ The idea that the ILWU was part of the power structure did not portend well for the potential of black labor leaders to mobilize Bayview-Hunters Point voters in 1967 and pointed toward a widening gulf between Black Power activists in that part of the city and the black trade unionist movement that would be tested in the years that followed.

"Taking the Political Action": The Election

As the returns came in on Election Day it became increasingly evident that Goodlett, Fleming, and Morrison had misgauged their influence over black voters. When the final votes were tallied, Joseph L. Alioto had won with 110,405 (43.4%) votes to 94,504 (37.2%) votes for Dobbs and 40,436 (16.0%) votes for Morrison.¹⁹⁹ Alioto outpolled his two chief opponents in three of the city's four State Assembly Districts, and although he was unable to win a majority, the election

results suggest that Alioto succeeded in attracting the cross-section of the city's population that he claimed to represent. Having waged his campaign on two fronts, his centrist position served him well among the San Francisco's Democrats and also attracted a share of the city's 106,158 registered Republican voters. According to political scientist Frederick Wirt, "liberal Republican leaders privately reported they backed Alioto."²⁰⁰ The results were more surprising in John Burton's 20th assembly district, which included some of San Francisco's poorest minority neighborhoods – including Chinatown, Bayview-Hunters Point, and the Mission. With John Burton's influence in the district, many observers anticipated a close battle between Morrison and Alioto. Just a few months earlier, Burton had won decisive victories in the Hunters Point district in a special election for a vacated seat in the State Senate, winning some precincts against his moderate Republican opponent by totals of 167-1, 132-1, 124-1, 187-2 and 191-3.²⁰¹ In the November election, however, Alioto defeated Morrison in each of those neighborhoods. In fact, Alioto scored his widest margin of victory in the 20th assembly district, winning 46.4 percent of the vote and 71.4 percent of the precincts. Morrison, on the other hand, totaled just 17.0 percent of the votes and only won three precincts. Alioto's campaign in Hunters Point and the Western Addition had been spearheaded by LeRoy King, David Jenkins, and to a lesser degree Bill Chester, who operated neighborhood headquarters and recruited precinct workers from the ILWU and Labor Assembly ranks. According to Jenkins, they enlisted hundreds of "blacks and minorities" from those neighborhoods into the campaign. Jenkins had the campaign supply him with "\$10,000 in fives and tens" to pay the recruits. Looking back on the campaign decades later, Jenkins proudly recalled that "We transformed the black relationship into the center of politics in a way that was actually extraordinary."²⁰² In Morrison's own analysis, the "ILWU did more to elect Alioto than anyone" because it "gave him a liberal cachet and allowed him to get the black vote."²⁰³

The emergence of black trade unionists as a potent force in municipal politics created tension among San Francisco's black political leadership and signaled a broader transformation in the city's African American politics. Black professionals, journalists, and politicians – Carlton Goodlett and Willie Brown among them – considered themselves the political spokespeople of San Francisco's black – and to a larger extent, minority – population. Goodlett and his peers comprised what historian Albert Broussard has described as San Francisco's "new black leadership class" that emerged from World War II to comprise the vanguard in the fight for racial equality. The ability of King, Chester, and other black trade unionists to deliver votes for Alioto signaled another shift in the character of the city's black leadership. In a city without entrenched party machines, black trade unionists had demonstrated that they could deliver the vote. David Jenkins would later claim that "Black leadership passed clearly in the city into the hands of the black trade union movement and its white allies, with the black trade union leadership being a dominant force."²⁰⁴ This may have been overstating the case, but black trade unionists and those in the ILWU in particular demonstrated themselves as a new political force in 1967. Even their new political rivals at the *Sun-Reporter* grudgingly acknowledged the change. When Alioto won reelection in 1971, fiery political columnist Emory Curtis conceded that "the key to that operation was Black union leaders who are first rate political tacticians, like Leroy King of the ILWU" who "did a real professional job of handling the nuts and bolts of political power – delivering the vote for their man, Alioto. It worked."²⁰⁵

Black radicals and professionals such as Carlton Goodlett and his colleagues at the *Sun-Reporter* decried what they considered to be an irresponsible and self-serving power grab by black trade unionists. The rift between the outspoken activists had festered throughout the campaign, and boiled over on election night. As King, Bill Chester, and Revels Cayton watched

as the returns came in at City Hall, they were accosted by Goodlett and Tom Fleming. “You got the black community and now anytime anything goes wrong in the black community you guys are going to be responsible for it!” Goodlett screamed. “You got that God damn guy in there. He is not our guy. You got him in there, so you guys are going to be responsible!”²⁰⁶ He delivered the same message, albeit in a calmer manner, a few days later in his newspaper, reminding “those black religious leaders and black labor leaders that the task of repeatedly articulating the needs of racial minorities, and particularly of the black community, rests squarely on their shoulders.”²⁰⁷ Throughout Alioto’s two terms in office, the *Sun-Reporter* vigilantly monitored the actions of the Labor Assembly, and black ILWU leaders in particular, while reminding its readership that these were “anointed,” “self-appointed,” and “pseudo” leaders who were mere “hirelings” of the Mayor. “They’re on the mayor’s team,” Goodlett stated in 1970, “they’re taking care of union interests only.”²⁰⁸ Reflecting on this period much later in life, King also commented on what he and Chester perceived as a class-based shift in black political leadership. “We were taking the political action,” he recalled with satisfaction. “He [Goodlett] used to be the spokesmen, so we had taken it all away from them.”²⁰⁹

The divergent political paths travelled by Carlton Goodlett and the ILWU highlight the development of two competing political traditions among black San Franciscans. Both traced their roots to the popular front coalitions of the postwar years. Goodlett’s politics would ultimately lead him into the Black Power movement, while the ILWU, and black trade unionists more generally, would continue to think of themselves as militants while allying with mainstream Democratic party liberals. Ultimately, the political alliance between the ILWU, black trade unionists, and Joseph Alioto shows how the history of postwar liberal-labor-black

urban political coalitions did not always conform to the national narrative. The path to black political representation and influence in postwar San Francisco intersected with the city's labor movement. The opportunity for black trade unionists, especially those who could trace their personal and institutional roots to the progressive political movements of the immediate postwar years, to acquire political influence distinguishes San Francisco from other urban experiences. Keeping with the tradition of black labor activism, black trade unionists rejected the calls of more militant black power activists to seek more independent political bases in favor of the power that their union provided them. Just as Bayard Rustin had urged African Americans to build progressive electoral coalitions with white liberals, trade unions, and religious groups in order to transform the Democratic Party, black trade unionists in San Francisco seized the opportunity to increase their influence within the local Democratic Party. But as with their black counterparts who gained elective offices in southern cities in the 1960s and 1970s, the challenge for black trade unionists in San Francisco would lie in lobbying for policies that would benefit San Francisco's black population while working within the confines of organized labor and a moderate political administration. As the historian Steven Lawson has written of black politicians, "Once elected, black politicians had to master the techniques of making deals and forging compromises, often settling for solutions hammered more out of pragmatism than principle."²¹⁰ And as Bayard Rustin pointed out, blacks working within coalitions would have to compromise and make concessions. The situation for black trade unionists in San Francisco, who would assume advisory and appointed positions within municipal government, was no different. To what degree would they be able to influence Alioto and shape urban racial policies? Could black trade unionists represent the interests of the black working class in City Hall any better than black professionals or Black Power activists? Or, was the ILWU-Alioto alliance nothing

more, as one San Francisco-based scholar-activist put it, “a classic case of selling out the class for narrow material benefits”?²¹¹

¹ Bayard Rustin, “From Protest to Politics: The Future of the Civil Rights Movement,” *Commentary*, February 1965, accessed from internet: <http://www.commentarymagazine.com/article/from-protest-to-politics-the-future-of-the-civil-rights-movement/#1>.

² Kwame Ture and Charles V. Hamilton, *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation* (New York: Vintage Books, 1992; originally published by Random House in 1967), 80-81.

³ “D.G. Comments,” *Sun-Reporter*, October 21, 1967.

⁴ Rustin, “From Protest to Politics.” See also, Bayard Rustin, “Black Power and Coalition Politics,” *Commentary*, September 1966.

⁵ Ture and Hamilton, *Black Power*, esp. Chapter Four.

⁶ Leonard N. Moore, “Carl Stokes: Mayor of Cleveland,” in David R. Colburn and Jeffrey S. Adler, *African-American Mayors: Race, politics, and the American City* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2001), 80.

⁷ By focusing on the political activities of black trade unionists, I offer a broader conception of San Francisco’s black political leadership than have previous scholars. For example, political scientist Richard Young narrowly defined the city’s black political leaders as politicians, who were a “homogeneous group” of mostly “successful lawyers. Based on his analysis, there was “virtually no overlapping of personnel” between “politicians and protest leaders.” This chapter suggest otherwise. Richard Young, “the Impact of Protest Leadership on Negro Politicians in San Francisco,” *The Western Political Quarterly* Vol. 22, No. 1 (March 1969): 94-111. See also, Broussard, *Black San Francisco*. For a more expansive look at black urban politicians during this period, see David R. Colburn and Jeffrey S. Adler, *African-American Mayors: Race, politics, and the American City*.

This chapter also makes a point to follow the local political activism of black trade unionists in the 1960s – after the earlier phase “civil rights unionism” appeared defunct. Historians who have done an excellent job examining the activism of black trade unionists in the 1940s and early 1950s have tended to gloss over their participation in liberal politics during the 1960s while devoting much more attention to Black Power activists of that era. See Robert O. Self, *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003); Matthew J. Countryman, *Up South: Civil Rights and Black Power in Philadelphia* (Cambridge, A: Harvard University Press, 2003).

⁸ For general works on the decline of liberalism in the late 1960s, see Allen J. Matusow, *The Unraveling of America: A History of Liberalism in the 1960s* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1986); Steve Fraser and Gary Gerstle, *The Rise and Fall of the New Deal Order, 1930-1980* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989); Alan Brinkley, *Liberalism and Its Discontents* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998). For a local case study that focus more on race, see Heather Ann Thompson, *Whose Detroit? Politics, Labor, and Race in a Modern American City* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2001). For a perspective that stresses the limits of organized labor and racial liberalism during this period, see David M. Lewis-Coleman, *Race Against Liberalism: Black Workers and the UAW in Detroit* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2008).

⁹ Max Frankel, "The Season of Discontent: A Political Tour of America," *New York Times*, November 24, 1967, 32.

¹⁰ William Issel, *Church and State in the City: Catholics and Politics in Twentieth-Century San Francisco* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2013), Chapter Two; William Issel, "Liberalism and Urban Policy in San Francisco from the 1930s to the 1960s," *The Western Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 22, No. 4 (November 1991): 431-450.

¹¹ Paul T. Miller, "The Interplay of Housing, Employment, and Civil Rights In the Experience of San Francisco's African American Community, 1945-1975," PhD Dissertation, Temple University, 2008, Appendix C, Interview with "Anthony Anderson," 383.

¹² Carlton Goodlett, Interview by Robert Wright, November 19, 1968, Ralph Bunche Collection, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, 3-4; Thomas Fleming, "Some Reflections on Black History: Party 43," *Sun-Reporter*, December 12, 1966.

¹³ Goodlett Interview, 19.

¹⁴ Thomas W. Devine, *Henry Wallace's 1948 Presidential Campaign and the Future of Postwar Liberalism* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2013), 62, 82.

According to David Jenkins, who was instructed by the CP to revive the IPP in San Francisco, the Progressive Party in the Bay Area was "almost totally in the hands of the CP." Jenkins Oral History, 175.

¹⁵ Goodlett FBI File, 4-5; "Carlton Goodlett Represented Self, Not NAACP at Rally," *Tri-County Bulletin*, July 31, 1947, in NAACP Region I Records, Carton 93, Folder 4; Goodlett Interview, 20.

¹⁶ "Carlton Goodlett Represented Self, Not NAACP at Rally," *Tri-County Bulletin*, July 31, 1947, in NAACP Region I Records, Carton 93, Folder 4. Goodlett maintained that he ended up voting for Harry Truman in 1948. Goodlett Interview, 20.

¹⁷ Paul T. Miller, "The Interplay of Housing, Employment, and Civil Rights In the Experience of San Francisco's African American Community, 1945-1975," PhD Dissertation, Temple University, 2008, Appendix C, Interview with "Anthony Anderson," 386.

¹⁸ "Negroes Play Prominent Role at New Party's Convention," *Chicago Defender*, July 31, 1948.

¹⁹ "Local 6 Sparks Campaign," *People's World*, January 27, 1948; "ILWU Will Help Form New Party," *People's World*, April 6, 1948; Henry Mariott has the Answers" *People's World*, April 8, 1948; "Warehouseman on IPP Ticket," *People's World*, October 22, 1948; "Noon Rally Presses Fight for Seamen's Jobless Pay," *People's World*, May 18, 1949.

²⁰ "Warehouseman on IPP Ticket," *People's World*, October 22, 1948.

²¹ On the William Malone political machine, see John Jacobs, *A Rage for Justice: The Passion and Politics of Philip Burton* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1995), 18-36.

²² Mason Roberson, "The Negro Vote," *People's World*, October 8, 1948; "IPP Steps up Campaign," *People's World*, October 21, 1948.

²³ "Board Assailed: S.F.'s Refusal to Appoint Registrars is Protested," *People's World*, January 29, 1948.

²⁴ "Registration Drive Among Minorities Promised," *People's World*, January 22, 1948; "Board Assailed: S.F.'s Refusal to Appoint Registrars is Protested," *People's World*, January 29, 1948; "Ashe Gets Rash: Calls Negro Registration Campaign a 'Waste of Time'," *People's World*, February 5, 1948.

²⁵ Henry Mariott has the Answers” *People’s World*, April 8, 1948; “Warehouseman on IPP Ticket,” *People’s World*, October 22, 1948; “Noon Rally Presses Fight for Seamen’s Jobless Pay,” *People’s World*, May 18, 1949.

Historian Thomas Devine argues that Communists within the Progressive Party strategically – and effectively – complained of red-baiting as a means “to silence potential critics and to stifle substantive debate.” Devine, *Henry Wallace’s 1948 Presidential Campaign and the Future of Postwar Liberalism*, 149.

²⁶ “Henry Mariott has the Answers,” *People’s World*, April 8, 1948.

²⁷ “One-third of S.F. Negroes Jobless; IPP Maps Fight,” *People’s World*, September 2, 1948.

²⁸ John H. Mollenkopf, *The Contested City* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983), 160. “S.F. Slum Clearance Program Criticized at Mass Meeting,” *People’s World*, June 5, 1948.

²⁹ “Urban Plan Opponents Map Battle,” *People’s World*, July 9, 1948; “Plan Battle Pledged,” *People’s World*, July 14, 1948; Mason Roberson, “Trickery Charged,” *People’s World*, July 15, 1948; “Group Set Up to ‘Purify’ Housing Plan,” *People’s World*, July 19, 1948; “Supervisors Pave Way for ‘Clearing’ Fillmore,” *People’s World*, July 20, 1948; “New Fight on Housing in Fillmore,” *People’s World*, July 22, 1948; “‘Redevelopment’ CIO Charges Sellout as Board Passes Plan,” *People’s World*, August 12, 1948; “Fillmore Petitions Ask Homes,” *People’s World*, August 26, 1948; “Candidate Blasts S.F. Homes Plan,” *People’s World*, September 1, 1948; “Candidate Tells Urban Plan Stand,” *People’s World*, September 11, 1948; “Warehouseman on IPP Ticket,” *People’s World*, October 22, 1948; “Mayor Under Fire on Urban Plan,” *People’s World*, September 18, 1948.

³⁰ On the lack of black turnout for Wallace, see Devine, *Henry Wallace’s 1948 Presidential Campaign and the Future of Postwar Liberalism*, Chapters Nine and Ten.

³¹ “Mariott Thanks His Backers,” *People’s World*, November 9, 1948; “S.F. Precinct Tallies Bare Clear Class Line,” *People’s World*, November 4, 1948.

³² “Mariott Thanks His Backers,” *People’s World*, November 9, 1948; “S.F. Precinct Tallies Bare Clear Class Line,” *People’s World*, November 4, 1948. Kenneth Starr puts the number of African Americans living in the Fillmore district in 1947 at 35,000. Kevin Starr, *Golden Dreams: California in an Age of Abundance, 1950-1963* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 122.

³³ Ted Kalman, “IPP Provides a New Kind of Service in Fillmore,” *People’s World*, June 16, 1950.

³⁴ Robert M. Lichtman, *The Supreme Court and McCarthy-Era Suppression: One Hundred Decisions* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2012), 246, n. 53.

³⁵ Self, *American Babylon*, 79-80.

³⁶ “Steve Murdock, ‘New ‘Balance of Power’,” *People’s World*, February 4, 1949.

³⁷ “Fighting Plans Mapped by IPP for SF Voters,” *People’s World*, January 23, 1950.

³⁸ “Group Formed to Run Negro for Supervisor,” *Sun-Reporter*, June 16, 1951; “Minority Group Acts to Elect Supervisor in San Francisco,” *Sun-Reporter*, June 23, 1951; “New Group Seeks Election of Negro as Supervisor,” *People’s World*, June 26, 1951.

³⁹ Carl Williams, “Negro Leader Knows How Government Should Work,” *People’s World*, October 8, 1947; Broussard, *Black San Francisco*, 55.

⁴⁰ “AFL Endorses Negro Candidate,” *People’s World*, October 4, 1947; “AFL, CIO Leaders Pledge Labor Backing for Haynes,” *People’s World*, October 9, 1947; “Democrats Endorse Dr. Haynes,” *People’s World*, October 23, 1947.

⁴¹ “It’s Havenner in Fillmore,” *People’s World*, October 30, 1947.

⁴² “AFL Politicos Duck Negro Candidate,” *People’s World*, September 11, 1951.

⁴³ The Committee on African American Parity of the Human Rights Commission of San Francisco, “The Unfinished Agenda: The Economic Status of African Americans in San Francisco 1964-1990,” February 1993, 17.

⁴⁴ Steve Lawson, *Running for Freedom: Civil Rights and Black Politics in America Since 1941* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991), 32; Broussard, *Black San Francisco*, 236; Carlton Goodlett Interview.

⁴⁵ Albert Broussard, *Black San Francisco: The Struggle for Racial Equality in the West, 1900-1904* (Topeka: University Press of Kansas, 1993), 237. Broussard used the phrase specifically to the period 1950-1954, however he also notes that there was minimal change from 1954 to the mid 1960s.

⁴⁶ Goodlett FBI File, 39-78.; Goodlett Oral History, 25-28.

⁴⁷ Goodlett FBI File, 81; *Freedomways*, Volume 3, Number 2 (Spring 1963): 170.

⁴⁸ Goodlett Interview, 9-10.

⁴⁹ Goodlett FBI File. 81; “Hopes and Heartaches of the Negro,” *Time*, May 11, 1953, 58.

⁵⁰ Keith Eickman, Interviewed by Harvey Schwartz, August 14, 1981, ILWU-NEH-UC Berkeley Oral History Project, ILWU Archives, San Francisco.

⁵¹ Frederick M. Wirt, *Power in the City: Decision Making in San Francisco* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1974), 10-11.

⁵² Curtis McClain, Interview by Robert E. Martin, July 11, 1969, Ralph Bunch Collection, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, 21.

⁵³ *Sun-Reporter*, June 13, 1964.

⁵⁴ Richard S. Hobbs, *The Cayton Family Legacy: An African American Family* (Pullman, WA: Washington State University Press, 2002), Chapter 9.

⁵⁵ NCDC Minutes, May 26, 1962.

⁵⁶ Revels Cayton, “Local 6 Adopts Wage and Unity Program,” *Sun-Reporter*, March 19, 1960.

⁵⁷ Self, *American Babylon*, 87-93.

⁵⁸ Minutes of the Northern California District Council, ILWU, December 19, 1959, ILWU Library, San Francisco (hereafter referred to as NCDC Minutes); NCDC Minutes, March 26, 1960.

⁵⁹ James Richardson, *Willie Brown: A Biography* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996), 76-77.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, Jones quote appears on p.77.

⁶¹ David Jenkins, “The Union Movement, the California Labor School, and San Francisco Politics,” an oral history conducted in 1987 and 1988 by Lisa Rubens, Regional Oral History office, the Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, 1993, 241.

⁶² Willie Brown, Jr., *Basic Brown: My Life and Our Times* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2008), 77.

⁶³ NCDC Minutes, March 31, 1962.

⁶⁴ David Jenkins Oral History, 224-225.

⁶⁵ Jenkins Oral History, 241.

⁶⁶ NCDC Minutes, May 26, 1962.

⁶⁷ Cayton Interview With Hobbs, 175-176. In his memoirs, Brown credits Goodlett and Phil Burton as the most important influences in his first campaign. Although he does not mention Cayton by name, Brown credits the "black community and leftish labor unions" with playing a significant role. Brown, *Basic Brown*, 85.

⁶⁸ *Sun-Reporter*, May 19, 1962; NCDC Minutes, May 26, 1962.

⁶⁹ San Francisco Negro American Labor council Quarterly Newsletter, June 1962, Volume 1, Number 2, Reel 7, Richard Parrish Papers, Additions, Schaumburg Library and Research Center, New York.

⁷⁰ "Labor Leader Addresses NALC," *Sun-Reporter*, August 11, 1962; "Negro Trade Unionists Plan Open Meet on Jobs and Politics," *Sun-Reporter*, September 22, 1962.

⁷¹ "Negro Workers Political Meet Wins Support," *Sun-Reporter*, September 29, 1962.

⁷² "Negro Workers Discuss Nov. Elections," *Sun-Reporter*, October 6, 1962.

⁷³ NCDC Minutes, July 14, 1962.

⁷⁴ *Sun-Reporter*, June 9, 1963; August 11, 1962.

⁷⁵ "Comments by D.G.: Labor's Bias Hit," *Sun-Reporter*, April 11, 1964.

⁷⁶ *Sun-Reporter*, June 9, 1963.

⁷⁷ Jenkins quoted in Rigelhaupt, "Education for Action," 366.

⁷⁸ *Local 10 Bulletin*, October 25, 1963.

⁷⁹ NCDC Minutes, May 25, 1963.

⁸⁰ NCDC Minutes, September 28, 1963; October 26, 1963; *Local 10 Bulletin*, October 25, 1963; David Jenkins Oral History, 232.

⁸¹ *Sun-Reporter*, May 18, 1963.

⁸² *Sun-Reporter*, April 28, 1963.

⁸³ *Sun-Reporter*, August 24, 1963.

⁸⁴ Moore finished 10th in a field of 17 candidates with approximately 60,689 votes. The top six vote-getters were elected to the Board. *Sun-Reporter*, November 9, 1963.

⁸⁵ *Local 10 Bulletin*, November 15, 1963.

⁸⁶ William Issel, *Church and State in the City: Catholics and Politics in Twentieth-Century San Francisco* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2013), 89.

⁸⁷ *Local 10 Bulletin*, September ?, 1963.

⁸⁸ *Sun-Reporter*, November 9, 1963.

⁸⁹ *Sun-Reporter*, November 9, 1963.

⁹⁰ "Comments by D.G.: Mess at City Hall," *Sun-Reporter*, June 13, 1964; Albert Broussard, *Black San Francisco*, 241-242.

⁹¹ The rift between Moore and ILWU leaders also led to tension between Curtis McClain, a close friend of Moore, and Jenkins, Bill Chester, and LeRoy King. Jenkins Oral History, 222-223.

⁹² On the San Francisco CORE chapter, see Daniel Crowe, "The Origins of the Black Revolution," 119-129.

⁹³ Lee Soto, "CORE Tactics for Creative Tension," *Sun-Reporter*, April 11, 1964.

⁹⁴ Richard Williams, "2000 Hear Gloria Richardson At Mass Freedom Rally Here," *Sun-Reporter*, August 3, 1963.

⁹⁵ David Wellman, "Negro Leadership in San Francisco." MA Thesis, University of California at Berkeley, 1966 30, 32.

⁹⁶ Wellman, "Negro Leadership in San Francisco," 37-38.

⁹⁷ Crowe, "The Origins of the Black Revolution," 129; Stan Crockett, "SF Civil Rights Groups Unite," *Sun-Reporter*, July 27, 1963; For a detailed account of these demonstrations, see Miller, "The Interplay of Housing, Employment, and Civil Rights," 190-205.

⁹⁸ Miller, "The Interplay of Employment, Housing, and Civil Rights," 187-190.

⁹⁹ "Sheraton-Palace Victory Cadillac, PGE Next," *Sun-Reporter*, March 14, 1964.

¹⁰⁰ "Shelley Suspicious of Some Pickets," *San Francisco Chronicle*, March 3, 1964.

¹⁰¹ "Thomas C. Fleming's Weekly Report," *Sun-Reporter*, August 22, 1964.

¹⁰² "Lapham Hits Shelley Over Palace Pact," *San Francisco Chronicle*, March 9, 1964.

¹⁰³ James H. Laskay to John Shelley, March 10, 1964, Box 1, Folder 7, Mayoral Papers of John Shelley, San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library, San Francisco, CA.

¹⁰⁴ John Shelley, "Civil Rights Letter," April 1, 1964, Box 1, Folder 7, Shelley Papers.

¹⁰⁵ Matusow, *The Unraveling of America*, 244.

¹⁰⁶ Matusow, *The Unraveling of America*, 245, 260.

¹⁰⁷ This paragraph is mainly drawn from Ralph M. Kramer, *Participation of the Poor: Comparative Community Case Studies in the War on Poverty* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1969), Chapter 2; On the San Francisco poverty program, also see Allen J. Matusow, *The Unraveling of America: A History of Liberalism in the 1960s* (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1986), 260-262; Frederick M. Wirt, *Power in the City: Decision-Making in San Francisco* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1974), 260-265; Crowe, *Prophets of Rage*, Chapter 4.

¹⁰⁸ Daniel Crowe, "The Origins of the Black Revolution: The Transformation of San Francisco Bay Area Black Communities, 1945-1969," PhD Dissertation, University of Kentucky, 1998, 194.

¹⁰⁹ Crowe, "The Origins of the Black Revolution," 193-195.

¹¹⁰ Testimony of James A. Richards, Hearing before the United States Commission on Civil Rights, San Francisco and Oakland, CA, May 1-6, 1967 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1967), 284-285.

¹¹¹ Crowe, "The Origins of the Black Revolution," 195.

¹¹² "San Francisco Poverty Tour With Robert Kennedy," archival newsfilm, aired May 10, 1967, CBS5-KPIX, San Francisco Bay Area Television Archive, San Francisco State University.

¹¹³ Goodlett quoted in Kramer, "Participation of the Poor," 30.

¹¹⁴ "Baptist Ministers' Statement," *Sun-Reporter*, January 1, 1966.

¹¹⁵ Wellman was in Shelley's office when such a phone call took place. Wellman, "Negro Leadership in San Francisco," 15.

¹¹⁶ Freeman quoted in Miller, "The Intersection of Housing, Employment, and Civil Rights," 195.

¹¹⁷ Wellman, "Negro Leadership in San Francisco," 20; NCDC Minutes, March 21, 1964, ILWU Records.

¹¹⁸ NCDC Minutes, May 23, 1964, July 31 and October 30, 1965, ILWU Records.

¹¹⁹ NCDC Minutes, August 26, 1967.

¹²⁰ NCDC Minutes, August 26, 1967.

¹²¹ NCDC Minutes, August 26, 1967.

¹²² John Jacobs, *A Rage for Justice: The Passion and Politics of Phillip Burton* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 170-171.

¹²³ Earl C. Behrens, "Morrison Jumps into Mayor Race," *San Francisco Chronicle*, 13 September 1967.

In his study of the East Bay during the postwar decades, historian Robert Self argues that "homeowner populism brought property taxes to the fore of local politics." As a growing force in California politics, the "small taxpayer" represented "both the possibility of an inclusive progressive politics of the 'little guy' and an exclusionary racism mobilized against blacks." Self, *American Babylon*, esp. Chapter 3; quotes appear on pages 101 and 104.

¹²⁴ "Dobbs Calls for War on Crime," *San Francisco Chronicle*, 6 November 1967.

¹²⁵ "Dobbs Says S.F. Police 'Handcuffed'," *San Francisco Chronicle*, 2 August 1967.

¹²⁶ Russ Cone, "Shelley's Troubled Term as Mayor," *San Francisco Sunday Chronicle & Examiner*, 10 September 1967.

¹²⁷ See the *San Francisco Chronicle* and *San Francisco Examiner*, September 8 and 9, 1967.

¹²⁸ Jacobs, *A Rage for Justice*, 168.

¹²⁹ "A Soft Spoken Fighter," *San Francisco Chronicle*, 13 September 1967.

¹³⁰ *San Francisco Chronicle*, September 12, 1967, October 4, 1967, October 10, 1967, October 17, 1967, October 20, 1967, October 25, 1967.

¹³¹ Michael Harris, "Goodlett and Burton for Morrison," *San Francisco Chronicle*, 16 September 1967; "Morrison Backed by J. Burton," *San Francisco Examiner*, 22 September 1967.

¹³² "Willie Brown Deplores Union Stand," *San Francisco Chronicle*, 26 September 1967.

¹³³ David Jenkins Oral History, 232-234.

¹³⁴ Goodlett FBI File, 112-115. Goodlett had convened the press conference outside of the British Consul General's office in downtown San Francisco to discuss his protest over the British government's refusal to allow him into the country while he was travelling in Europe attending peace conferences. Explaining England's position, Lord Privy Seal Edward Heath had referred to Goodlett as one of several "distinguished and well-meaning idealists" who the Communist-led World Council for Peace welcomed "in order to camouflage the Communist influence behind the organization."

¹³⁵ Carlton Goodlett, "An Open Letter to My Son," *Sun-Reporter*, January 5, 1963; Thomas Fleming, "S.F. Delegates Stage 'Walk-Out' at CDC," *Sun-Reporter*, April 6, 1963; Thomas Fleming, "Pickets Protest Brown's Inaction," *Sun-Reporter*, April 20, 1963.

¹³⁶ Goodlett Interview, 18.

¹³⁷ "Dr. Goodlett's Speech," *Sun-Reporter*, February 26, 1966.

¹³⁸ Goodlett Interview, 19.

¹³⁹ Goodlett FBI File, 168.

¹⁴⁰ Paul Hofmann, "New Liberal-Radical Coalition Maps 'Good Society' Platform," *New York Times*, June 11, 1966; Paul Hofmann, "Coalition to Seek Candidate for '68," *New York Times*, June 13, 1966.

¹⁴¹ James Strong, "New Pol's 'Peace' is Violent," *Chicago Tribune*, September 3, 1967; "New Pol Convention is a Confused Scene," *Chicago Tribune*, September 2, 1967; Chesly Manly, "'New Politics' Convention to Open Here," *Chicago Tribune*, August 27, 1966.

¹⁴² Walter Goodman, "When Black Power Runs the New Left," *New York Times*, September 24, 1967, 257.

¹⁴³ Goodlett FBI File, 168.

¹⁴⁴ *The Spokesman*, October 1967.

¹⁴⁵ *Sun-Reporter*, September 16, 1967.

¹⁴⁶ *Sun-Reporter*, September 23, 1967.

¹⁴⁷ Issel, *Church and State in the City*, 221-223.

¹⁴⁸ Jacobs, *A Rage for Justice*, 170.

¹⁴⁹ The timing of Shelley's withdrawal and Alioto's entrance into the race raised suspicions among Morrison's supporters, especially the Burton brothers, who claimed that Shelley, Alioto, and McAteer's wealthy backers had struck a deal. Shelley himself would endorse Alioto within days of his candidacy. Jack Welter, "J. Burton Pops Off – Not Out," *San Francisco Examiner*, 8 September 1967; Earl C. Behrens, "Morrison Jumps into Mayor Race," *San Francisco Chronicle*, 13 September 1967; "Morrison Repeats Charge of Shelley – Alioto 'Deal'," *San Francisco Chronicle*, 4 November 1967. John Jacobs also supports the claim that Shelley and McAteer's financial backers engineered the move. Jacobs, *A Rage for Justice*, 172.

¹⁵⁰ “Alioto at Rally in Union Square,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, 7 November 1967.

¹⁵¹ Kevin Mattson, *When America Was Great: The Fighting Faith of Postwar Liberalism* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 6.

¹⁵² Alioto alluded to this theme and used these phrases in speeches and public statements throughout his two terms as Mayor. See, Joseph L. Alioto, “Inaugural Address,” January 8, 1968, Joseph L. Alioto Papers, Box 17, Folder 35, SFHC, SFPL; Joseph L. Alioto, “Report on the State of Affairs of the City,” October 4, 1971, Joseph Alioto Papers, Box 17, Folder 59, SFHC, SFPL.

¹⁵³ “Alioto to Assess Crime Laws,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, 21 October 1967; “Mayoral Candidates on Crime, Culture, Housing,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, 10 October 1967.

¹⁵⁴ Michael Harris, “Alioto Gives a Talk For Shelley,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, 27 September 1967.

¹⁵⁵ Earl C. Behrens, “Dobbs, Alioto in Counter Accusations,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, 22 September 1967.

¹⁵⁶ Tom Wicker, “In the Nation: Making Sense in San Francisco,” *New York Times*, December 7, 1967, 46.

¹⁵⁷ “League of Civic Clubs for Alioto,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, 1 October 1967; “Political Roundup,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, 19 October 1967.

¹⁵⁸ Jacobs, *A Rage for Justice*, 172.

¹⁵⁹ Dick Meister, “Unions Can’t Pick Their Men for the Elections,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, 7 October 1967.

¹⁶⁰ Ray Christiansen, “Alioto’s Labor Chances,” *San Francisco Sunday Examiner & Chronicle*, 10 September 1967.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Dick Meister, “Pitch to Labor in Mayor’s Race,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, 21 September 1967. Don Carter, “Alioto Harangues COPE; Morrison, Dobbs Await Action,” *San Francisco Examiner*, 21 September 1967.

¹⁶³ Dick Meister, “Alioto Gets More Help From Labor,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, 20 September 1967. Don Carter, “Alioto Harangues COPE; Morrison, Dobbs Await Action,” *San Francisco Examiner*, 21 September 1967.

¹⁶⁴ See, for example, Ture and Hamilton, *Black Power*, Chapter 3.

¹⁶⁵ *Sun-Reporter*, check date, 1967.

¹⁶⁶ Carlton Goodlett, “D.G. Comments,” *Sun-Reporter*, October 21, 1967.

¹⁶⁷ “Willie Brown Deplores Union Stand,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, 26 September 1967.

¹⁶⁸ *San Francisco Chronicle*, September 9, 1967.

¹⁶⁹ Dick Meister, “Alioto Wins the Support of ILWU,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, 19 September 1967.

¹⁷⁰ NCDC Minutes, November 12, 1966.

¹⁷¹ A number of scholarly works chronicle the emergence of opposition to liberal racial policies in northern and western cities. See, for example, Matusow, *The Unraveling of America*; Ronald P. Formisano, *Boston Against*

Busing: Race, Class, and Ethnicity in the 1960s and 1970s (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991 and 2004); Jonathan Reider, *Canarsie: The Jews and Italians of Brooklyn Against Liberalism* (Harvard University Press, 1985); Thomas J. Sugrue, "Crabgrass-Roots Politics: Race, Rights, and the Reaction Against Liberalism in the Urban North, 1940-1964," *Journal of American History*, Vol. 82, No. 2 (September 1995): 551-578.

¹⁷² NCDC Minutes, November 12, 1966.

¹⁷³ NCDC Minutes, August 26, 1967.

¹⁷⁴ NCDC Minutes, November 12, 1966.

¹⁷⁵ *Local 10 Bulletin*, October 19 and 27, 1967.

¹⁷⁶ *San Francisco Chronicle*, September 19, 1967.

¹⁷⁷ Michael Harris, "Alioto Moves in as Shelley Quits," *San Francisco Chronicle*, 9 September 1967; Leroy King Interview.

¹⁷⁸ Joseph Alioto Interview with Robert Cherny, in authors possession.

¹⁷⁹ Joseph Alioto Interview.

¹⁸⁰ LeRoy King Interview; David Jenkins Oral History; Hobbs, *The Cayton Legacy*, 199.

¹⁸¹ NCDC Minutes, October 28, 1967, ILWU Archives.

¹⁸² LeRoy King Interview; NCDC Minutes, September 20, and October 28, 1967; David Jenkins Oral History, 233.

¹⁸³ For an example of a critique, see Stanley Weir, "USA – Labor in Revolt," *International Socialist Journal* (April-June 1967), reprinted on San Francisco's Digital Archive, http://foundsf.org/index.php?title=B_Men_and_Automation.

¹⁸⁴ NCDC Minutes, September 30, 1967; "Archie Brown: Communist Party Labor Leader," *Los Angeles Times*, November 26, 1990.

¹⁸⁵ NCDC Minutes, September 30, 1967, ILWU Archives.

¹⁸⁶ NCDC Minutes, August 26, 1967. "B men" were not full ILWU members but worked under its jurisdiction until they could earn promotion to "A" status. In 1963, 82 "B" men (80 percent of who were black) were deregistered for allegedly violating dispatch rules, although they claimed that Bridges fired the workers "political" reasons. Fifty of those B men ended up suing the ILWU and PMA for \$5,600,000. The B Men were supported by a group that they helped form called the Longshore Jobs Defense Committee. It listed such progressive luminaries as Paul Jacobs, Bayard Rustin, Michael Harrington, Seymour Martin Lipset Norman Thomas, and Herbert Hill among its members. Harry Bridges and the ILWU vehemently denied any wrongdoing and called allegations of racial discrimination on the union's part a "disgrace." The legal battle lasted seventeen years and ended in the ILWU and PMA's favor after several court rulings and when the United States Supreme Court refused to accept the case in 1980. Stan Weir, *Singlejack Solidarity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), 39-67. Harry Bridges, "On the Beam," *The Dispatcher*, July 30, 1969.

¹⁸⁷ NCDC Minutes, August 26, 1966; NCDC Minutes November 12, 1966.

¹⁸⁸ NCDC Minutes, September 30, 1967.

¹⁸⁹ *Sun-Reporter*, October 21, 1967, October 28, 1967.

¹⁹⁰ “Ministers Declare Support of Morrison,” *Sun-Reporter*, October 28, 1967.

¹⁹¹ *Sun-Reporter*, September 30 and October 14, 1967. Quoted passage appears in Carlton Goodlett, “D.G. Comments,” *Sun-Reporter*, October 21, 1967.

¹⁹² Carlton Goodlett, “D.G. Comments,” *Sun-Reporter*, October 21, 1967.

¹⁹³ Editorial, “Negro Vote is Not for Sale,” *Sun-Reporter*, October 14, 1967; Editorial, “Awaiting Labor’s Explanation,” *Sun-Reporter*, September 30, 1967.

¹⁹⁴ Thomas C. Fleming, “Weekly Report,” *Sun-Reporter*, November 4, 1967.

¹⁹⁵ *Assignment Four – Hunters Point: A View From the Hill*, KRON, aired October 5, 1969, <https://diva.sfsu.edu/bundles/206166>.

¹⁹⁶ Editorial, “Politics in Negro Community,” November 26, 1966.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁸ “An Interview With Chief of Staff David Hilliard,” *The Black Panther*, April 20, 1969.

¹⁹⁹ Information on the 1967 Municipal Elections are from the following sources: San Francisco Election Records, Registrar of Voters, City and County of San Francisco; Jerry Burns, “How City’s Precincts Voted,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, 9 November 1967; Russ Cone, “Victor Scores Even in Dobbs Strongholds,” *San Francisco Examiner*, 8 November 1967.

²⁰⁰ Political scientist Frederick M. Wirt wrote that “liberal Republican leaders privately Frederick M. Wirt, “Alioto and the Politics of Hyperpluralism,” *Trans-action*, (April, 1970): 48.

²⁰¹ “How Marks Was Elected,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, 17 August 1967.

²⁰² David Jenkins Oral History, 282-283.

²⁰³ Morrison quoted in Peter Wiley and Robert Gottlieb, *Empires in the Sun: The Rise of the New American West* (New York: G.P. Putnam, 1982), 99.

²⁰⁴ David Jenkins Oral History, 252-253.

²⁰⁵ *Sun-Reporter*, November 13, 1971.

²⁰⁶ LeRoy King Interview.

²⁰⁷ Editorial, “Congratulations and a Challenge,” *Sun-Reporter*, November 11, 1967.

²⁰⁸ Goodlett quoted in Dick Meister, “Labor Power,” *San Francisco Bay Guardian*, December 23, 1970.

²⁰⁹ LeRoy King Interview.

²¹⁰ Steven F. Lawson, *Running for Freedom*, 39.

²¹¹ Chris Carlsson, “the Progress Club: 1934 and Class Memory,” in James Brooks, Chris Carlsson, and Nancy J. Peters, eds., *Reclaiming San Francisco: History, Politics, and Culture* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1998).

CHAPTER FIVE

SURVIVING THE URBAN CRISIS: THE ILWU AND RACIAL POLITICS DURING THE ALIOTO YEARS

“Like every other major American city, San Francisco is embroiled in the urban crisis,” Joseph Alioto announced in his annual *Report on the State of Affairs of the City* on October 4, 1971.¹ But “unlike many of those cities,” he immediately added, “San Francisco shows some healthy signs of being able to survive it.” Alioto made those remarks near the completion of his first mayoral term as he was engaged in a difficult campaign for reelection. The Democratic mayor’s campaign slogan, “It’s a tough job and Alioto’s doing it!,” reflected his repeated assertion that, while not avoiding the urban crisis entirely, he had managed to pilot San Francisco through the turbulent waters of racial unrest and economic dislocation that had wreaked far greater havoc elsewhere. To be sure, San Francisco suffered from a shrinking tax base, loss of blue-collar jobs, crime, and racial tensions that continued to simmer in the aftermath of the 1966 Hunters Point riot. But as Alioto proudly claimed, there did “not exist in San Francisco the sullen apathy of a Detroit of the sheer hopelessness or a Newark of the massive abandonment of other big American cities.” According to Alioto, the key to San Francisco’s success, aside from his own decisive leadership, was the “great urban coalition” that he had forged during and immediately following his first campaign in 1967. By incorporating key segments of the religious, business, labor, and minority communities, Alioto believed that he had discovered the key to combating the urban crisis while reinvigorating Democratic Party liberalism at the urban level.

The International Longshoremen’s and Warehousemen’s Union (ILWU) was perhaps the most novel, and in some ways pivotal, piece of Alioto’s urban coalition. “The ILWU plays a central role in the administration of this town” Alioto’s executive secretary, John DeLuca,

announced at the union's biennial convention in 1973. "And it does so in a grass-roots' way."²

The ILWU experience in San Francisco suggests that historian Nelson Lichtenstein's observation that the political role of organized labor in the United States had been reduced to "a sort of militant interest group politics" by the 1960s did not necessarily apply at the municipal level.³ As the previous chapter discussed, the ILWU's newfound political power coincided with African Americans' pursuit of political representation and the stirrings of the Black Power movement. Both of these developments took place amid the efforts of local, state, and federal governments to address the urban crisis. The role of the ILWU in San Francisco presents an example of progressive labor leaders and African Americans who combatted urban problems from within the liberal establishment.⁴ When Joseph Alioto entered office in January 1968, he especially sought to ease the racial tensions that had helped bring down the administration of his Democratic predecessor, John Shelley. And in doing so he accorded the ILWU an important role in his administration. Between 1968 and 1976, the union's white and black leaders, who for decades had considered themselves the vanguard of black and working-class causes, would have to reconcile Alioto's centrism with the more radical demands that emanated from the city's progressive and black power activists. By examining four areas of racial politics during Alioto's mayoralty – racial minorities' participation in government; redevelopment and "urban renewal;" "law and order" and police brutality; and school desegregation and busing – this chapter provides fresh insight on how organized labor and urban Democrats responded to racial problems associated with the urban crisis in the late 1960s and 1970s. Although the ILWU was able to make a positive impact on race relations in San Francisco, by becoming protective of their newfound political influence and aligning their politics behind Alioto's centrist liberalism, the union's leaders, and its African American leaders in particular, distanced themselves from many

of the working-class and poor black San Franciscans whose interests they claimed to represent.

Bringing in Black Labor and the Black Poor

Likening the black freedom struggle to the labor movement of the 1930s, a few months into his first term Joseph Alioto boldly predicted that “San Francisco can be the first city to say we made it, we solved the race thing.”⁵ Even before he took office, Alioto sought to demonstrate that his administration would change the way that City Hall related to the city’s minority population. Stating that the “ghetto never comes to the Opera House,” where the January mayoral inauguration traditionally took place, in December he promised to “take the inauguration to the ghetto” by repeating the oath-taking ceremony in Hunters Point and the Mission district (which was fast becoming home to the city’s expanding Latino population).⁶ The morning after the election, Alioto invited Bill Chester, Revels Cayton, LeRoy King, and David Jenkins to his house and assured them that he would stand by the agreement he had made with the ILWU leaders several months earlier to involve them in decisions relating to appointments and policy issues that concerned African Americans and racial minorities. A short time later he named Cayton his Deputy for Social Programs, making him the first African American ever appointed to a mayor’s cabinet in San Francisco.⁷ Toward the end of his first year in office, Alioto asserted that Bill Chester was the “dominant influence” in all of his appointments, and a year later Chester confirmed that the two sides “collectively” selected African American commissioners.⁸

Consulting with black trade unionists such as Chester was one way that Alioto sought to break out of the “City Hall syndrome” of relying solely on bureaucrats to solve social problems.⁹ Alioto not only solicited their input, but he also encouraged them to serve as a conduit between

working-class black San Franciscans and City Hall.¹⁰ While he worked with black trade unionists from various unions, Alioto relied most heavily on those in the ILWU. “Mayor Alioto really made sure that Chester was always up there in front,” labor journalist and *Dispatcher* editor Sidney Roger recalled. “He was very important because he was in the ILWU, and the ILWU and the longshoremen had such an incredibly good and deserved reputation in the black community.”¹¹ In 1972 the *San Francisco Examiner* reported that LeRoy King, Bill Chester, and Revels Cayton advised Alioto on all decisions “about San Francisco’s black communities” and that Chester, who actually lived in the suburb of San Mateo, was “the most powerful black man in the city.”¹² The *Examiner* did not provide specifics, and as this chapter will show their influence on the mayor’s racial policies was not as extensive as the paper suggested or as they themselves liked to believe. Nevertheless, Alioto accorded black labor leaders a role in his administration far greater than anything that they, or black San Franciscans in general, had ever experienced.

Working with black ILWU members, Alioto made an unprecedented number of minority appointments to municipal posts, most of them coming from the ranks of labor and especially the ILWU. In addition to including Revels Cayton in his cabinet, he appointed Bill Chester to the Bay Area Rapid Transit board and made Joe Mosley, an ILWU dispatcher, and Wilbur Hamilton, a pastor and former ILWU shipping clerk, the first African Americans to serve on the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency. Joe Johnson, a veteran of the black labor left who had figured prominently in the Marine Cooks and Stewards union, the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) Negro Labor Committee, and the National Negro Labor Council during the 1940s and 1950s, became Alioto’s “youth coordinator.” After his first round of appointments, Alioto would also bring black female trade unionists, such as International Ladies Garment Workers Union

(ILGWU) leader and Labor Assembly stalwart Mattie Jackson, who he appointed to the Board of Permit Appeals, into city government.¹³ “In a sense, it wasn’t a machine, but it certainly was a political apparatus because in every agency, blacks felt that we were the center, so to speak, of the city,” David Jenkins later explained. “There was an awareness throughout the entire city about this shift in emphasis.”¹⁴ Appearing on NBC’s *Meet the Press* in 1969, Alioto was not exaggerating when he boasted that in San Francisco “the black people have never had so much participation in city government.”¹⁵

Alioto’s incorporation of black trade unionists into his administration exacerbated political divisions that surfaced during the 1967 campaign. Black professionals and politicians such as Willie Brown suddenly found themselves with less political influence at the municipal level. Still seething that the ILWU did not go along with Jack Morrison’s candidacy in 1967, Carlton Goodlett, whose increased espousal of black nationalism kept him more firmly on the black left than his erstwhile allies in the labor movement, expressed disapproval that so many of Alioto’s appointments went to black trade unionists and not to “black professionals, such as teachers, doctors, lawyers, dentists, and preachers.” A *Sun-Reporter* editorial mused that Alioto seemed “to believe that the ILWU, and particularly its black members, are the only persons in San Francisco capable of rendering constructive service to the city commissions.” Goodlett, who desired the political influence that black trade unionists had acquired, questioned whether those trade unionists were intellectually qualified for their city posts.¹⁶ When Alioto ran for reelection in 1971, Goodlett joined black professionals and other black opponents of the mayor to form a rival organization, called the Black Leadership Forum, and supported Alioto’s chief liberal challenger – Dianne Feinstein (A fistfight nearly broke out between LeRoy King and Supervisor Terry Francois at one Forum meeting when King tried to bring in a group of Alioto supporters).¹⁷

Black trade unionists countered the challenge posed by the Black Leadership Forum by asserting that the Labor Assembly for Community Action (a city-wide group of black trade unionists, see chapter two) better represented the interests of the black working class. Invoking decades of the ILWU's brand of progressive interracial unionism, Chester argued that the "political and economic strength of the Black community of San Francisco lies in the labor movement with its thousands of skilled and unskilled jobs and decent living wages."¹⁸ Alioto was also convinced that the political power in the black community lay with the Labor Assembly and the ILWU. After his reelection in 1971, he quipped that if black professionals "choose twice to align themselves against me and lose ignominiously both times, why should I assume there's any leadership left in those people?"¹⁹

Alioto also appointed several white ILWU leaders with deep ties to the region's Old Left to city positions, ushering in what political scientist Frederick Wirt called "new labor power in an old labor town."²⁰ He made David Jenkins a "labor consultant" to the Redevelopment Agency, and caused a stir when he appointed Harry Bridges, leader of the 1934 waterfront strike, to the port commission. Jenkins, who had been out of the Communist Party for several years and had figured prominently in Jack Shelley's 1963 campaign, believed that "the curse was off me to some extent of being a former Communist."²¹ Yet Alioto later reminisced that he received criticism for appointing so many "communists" to city posts and that officials from the powerful craft unions complained that the ILWU was getting too many appointments. According to Jenkins, "the plumbers said, 'How come all these commies are getting jobs?' Alioto would say, 'Well, they were the guys who helped elect me.'"²² Alioto himself was a product of the city's anticommunist Catholic Action movement of the 1930s.²³ However, he maintained that the 1934 waterfront strike had been justified and that the "witch hunt" to deport Bridges "was an

outrage.”²⁴ Alioto’s incorporation of organized labor – especially its left flank and black trade unionists – was part reward for campaign work but also stemmed from his genuine belief, informed by his New Deal political outlook, that the labor movement was “the indispensable [sic] dynamo in our society.”²⁵ By reinvigorating the New Deal coalition, Alioto hoped to curtail the urban crisis in San Francisco.

Giving a “Black Pro-Labor Face” to “White Racist Slum Clearance”?

Appointment to municipal commissions and agencies provided ILWU leaders with a new opportunity to shape urban policy on issues in which they had been active for decades and which were sources of racial tension during Alioto’s administration. Redevelopment provides a case in point. Since World War II, the ILWU had held a keen interest in urban redevelopment, especially as it pertained to the Western Addition. Even as black members of Locals 10 and Local 6 earned enough to afford rents or to purchase a home in other parts of the city, thousands remained in the Western Addition in the postwar decades because of racial discrimination. A 1958 study conducted by the San Francisco Council for Civic Unity (CCU) concluded that “employment attitudes and practices” were “more liberal than those concerning housing.”²⁶ White homeowners’ resisted racial minorities’ efforts to purchase homes in their neighborhoods, while landlords regularly refused to rent to non-whites (classified advertisements for apartments often specified that applicants needed to be white). In a city in which the Giants’ star center fielder Willie Mays was initially denied purchase of a home because of his skin color in 1957, black workers’ prospects of buying or renting a home outside of the Western Addition or Hunters Point were bleak.²⁷ According to the CCU, the problem extended beyond white homeowners to include the “power centers in housing – brokers, builders, and lenders” who refused to do business with

racial minorities.²⁸ “The anomaly existed where you would see black longshoremen and warehousemen driving Cadillacs and going to substandard housing because that decent housing just didn’t exist,” David Jenkins recalled.²⁹ Discrimination in housing was not officially outlawed until 1967, when the United States Supreme Court upheld a California ruling that a 1964 ballot measure that overturned the state’s 1963 fair housing act was unconstitutional.

Because so many of its members seemed confined to the area, the ILWU was concerned with the impact of redevelopment plans on the Western Addition’s working-class and minority residents. Along with black ministers, Carlton Goodlett, progressive liberals, and Communists, the ILWU opposed the city’s plans for “slum clearance” in the Western Addition after the war (see chapter 4). The area’s dilapidated housing stock was in need of rehabilitation, but residents worried that their homes would be replaced by expensive dwellings and business expansion from the city center. Such fears appeared justified in the early stages. The first phase of the Western Addition redevelopment project, known as “A-1,” commenced in 1956 and entailed the relocation of 2,555 households and 350 businesses over an area comprising 108 acres.³⁰ By the time redevelopment began, eighty percent of these residents were racial minorities. More than ninety percent of them were renters, and the racial discrimination that they encountered in the private housing market exacerbated the relocation problems stemming from the city’s exceptionally low vacancy rate (whereas most cities of comparable size had a vacancy rate of 5 percent, San Francisco had one of approximately 1.4 percent). San Francisco Redevelopment Agency (SFRA) workers tasked with finding housing for displaced residents struggled to find rental listings that would accept nonwhites and which met the agency’s basic standards as safe, sanitary, and decent. By December 1959, the SFRA had relocated 856 of 1,900 families in the project area. Of these, 315 moved into either low-rent public housing or private housing that the

agency considered substandard. Many of these units were illegally converted dwellings located immediately adjacent to the project area, in which families “doubled up.”³¹

Although the ILWU could not stop redevelopment from proceeding in a manner that seemed to hold little regard for poor and minority residents, it was able to impose its own vision of redevelopment on part of the process. If its members were going to live in the Western Addition, then the ILWU wanted them to live in nice, affordable, and integrated communities. Louis Goldblatt, secretary treasurer of the ILWU, had already begun looking into the idea of using the union’s pension fund to build low-cost housing when M. Justin Herman, SFRA director, approached the ILWU about a chunk of redevelopment land that had been set aside for moderate-income apartments. Herman had already concluded that the city could not “proceed to extend its redevelopment areas, particularly in the central sector of the city,” unless it considered the “building of housing inventory for ... minorities and other families or modest or low incomes.”³² Shortly thereafter the ILWU and the Pacific Maritime Association (PMA) formed the ILWU Longshore Redevelopment Corporation and was able to obtain the land.³³ In 1962 construction began on the St. Francis Square cooperative apartments, which historian Jess Rigelhaupt describes as an attempt by the ILWU to “build a community in its own image.”³⁴ St. Francis Square, which was completed in 1963, was fully integrated and included playgrounds as well as the Buchanan Street YMCA. The garden-style project contained 322 one, two, and three-bedroom units that required between \$410 and \$610 (\$3,129 and \$4,655 in 2013 dollars) down payment and a monthly mortgage payment of between \$84 and \$140 (\$641 and \$1,068 in 2013 dollars).³⁵ Its initial resident composition was 55 percent white, 25 percent black, 20 percent Asian-American, and included several interracial couples.³⁶ Ironically, some union members earned too much to qualify for an apartment, while at the same time units were priced too high

for the poorest inhabitants of the Western Addition who were forced out of their homes. Yet the opening of St. Francis Square enabled African Americans such as LeRoy King, who had been among those displaced by A-1 redevelopment and to encounter racial discrimination in the city's housing market, to obtain decent housing in the Western Addition. Revels Cayton, who had devised the plan for integrating the apartments and could no longer perform warehouse work because of back problems, moved in as well and became the cooperative's first manager.³⁷

Residents such as King and Cayton sought to imbue St. Francis Square with a social mission. King, who as of 2013 still lives at the "Square," described this mission in 1967 as an attempt "to build the kind of housing and community life that are so needed in order to make our city a decent, better place in which to live and work."³⁸ As manager, Cayton worked to build ties between St. Francisco Square and the Western Addition community by urging residents to become involved in the area's schools, churches, and the Buchanan YMCA. He also organized beatification projects and social events, such as a Friday night bowling league, that were aimed at cultivating a sense of community among the project's residents.³⁹ St. Francis Square earned nation-wide recognition and awards as it became a national model of affordable integrated housing in the middle of a designated slum. Two years after it opened its doors Wolf Von Eckardt, architecture critic for the *Washington Post*, wrote that "there is no more delightfully handsome moderate-income urban renewal effort anywhere in the country than St. Francis Square."⁴⁰ Louis Goldblatt, the ILWU secretary-treasurer who headed the project, called St. Francis Square "one of the best things [the ILWU] ever did."⁴¹

St. Francis Square further anchored the ILWU's presence in the Western Addition, and union members joined the efforts of community, civic, and civil rights groups to challenge the SFRA's control over redevelopment policy. The SFRA had endured criticism from the start, but

an organized opposition began to emerge in 1963 and 1964 as it unfurled plans for the second phase of its Western Addition plan. The agency's "A-2 Plan," as it was called, entailed the demolition of 4,492 of the 276-acre area's 6,900 housing units, most of which were occupied by African Americans in the Fillmore district. According to agency estimates, approximately 8,000 people would be displaced by the project.⁴² Plans included the construction of nonresidential buildings, including the ILWU's new four-story headquarters.⁴³ Japanese-American and African American groups, led by the United San Francisco Freedom Movement (UFM), announced that they "would not be moved."⁴⁴ The ILWU supported the effort. Affirming the principal "an injury to one is an injury to all," in January 1964 Local 6 urged the hundreds of ILWU members living in the Western Addition "to join with all other tenants" in the redevelopment A-2 project area "in a mass refusal to budge from present dwellings until each and every family in the area has been provided with a home fit to live in at a price they can afford."⁴⁵ Local 6 proposed partnering with the UFM in forming a "Tenants League of Resistance" to "bargain formally with the Redevelopment Agency."⁴⁶ The protests prompted Mayor Jack Shelley and Herman to promise a more humane approach to redevelopment. The SFRA would stop "massive bulldozing of wide areas into vacant fields of rubble," give greater assistance for those displaced by redevelopment, and, among other things, use St. Francis Square as a model for the construction of more moderate-income housing. But they also made clear that A-2 redevelopment would proceed without delay.⁴⁷

By the time Alioto entered office the politics of redevelopment in the Western Addition had entered a new confrontational phase that, in the words of historian William Issel, developed "in the context of ideologies of Black Power and Third World Liberation rather than under the sign 'An Injury to One is an Injury to All'."⁴⁸ In 1965, the Black Student Union at San Francisco

State became involved, basing its resistance at the Freedom House, which members of the Congress of Racial Equality established in the Western Addition. In 1967, neighborhood activists organized the Western Addition Community Organization (WACO), which focused on the A-2 project and especially the displacement of residents. Leaders included Hannibal Williams, a former bouncer who was active in the Black Student Union (BSU) as a student at San Francisco State, and Mary Rogers, a tenacious Texas native with just a ninth grade education who would raise twelve children in San Francisco. “I refused to go somewhere else because I was black,” Rogers later recalled of her activism. “I wasn’t going anywhere until I got good and ready.”⁴⁹ In April 1967 WACO announced an “all-out attack” on the SFRA in the form of picketing the SFRA site office, holding large-scale community meetings, and physically shutting down construction sites by sitting down in front of bulldozers.⁵⁰ It also pursued legal channels and won a federal injunction that prevented the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) from releasing additional funds for the project until the SFRA could present a more acceptable relocation plan (the injunction was lifted after just four months when HUD accepted a slightly revised plan from the SFRA). “It didn’t give us an absolute right to stop them but it did give us consultative rights,” Hamilton recalled of the legal case.⁵¹ WACO’s activism was a constant thorn in the side of SFRA director M. Justin Herman, who denounced the organization as “a passing flurry of proletarianism.”⁵²

Meanwhile, ILWU leaders assumed their dual role as activists/bureaucrats, but their close association with Alioto was enough to alienate them from the most militant community activists. During his 1967 campaign, Alioto stood alone as the only candidate who espoused a liberal faith in the ideas behind urban redevelopment. “There’s cruelty in the fact that some of our most spectacular views are seen through the cracked windows of our most dismal slums,” he declared

in a campaign speech. Provided that “residents of the neighborhoods themselves [are] drawn into the planning process,” he believed that “urban renewal” could ensure that San Francisco would not become “an economic schizophrenic – the poor in their slums and the rich in their luxury towers.” Thus whereas Jack Morrison’s platform had called for a halt to redevelopment because of its adverse effects on poor people and minorities, and Harold Dobbs opposed it as part of his campaign to reign in city spending, Alioto pledged to move forward with Redevelopment in the Western Addition and other parts of the city. This position was popular with organized labor, the ILWU included, because it promised more jobs (especially in the construction industry). In an attempt to mollify the repeated objections of community activists, Alioto the candidate stated that there “should be sufficient planning so that what takes the place of slums doesn’t turn out to be slums with plumbing,” adding that there “ought not to be a bulldozing mentality.”⁵³ To some extent this had been assured by the WACO lawsuit, which resulted in the construction of more subsidized housing, the monitoring of displacement – and the prevention of involuntary displacement.⁵⁴ Nevertheless, once in office Alioto alienated neighborhood activists by strongly backing to M. Justin Herman, who was determined to push forward with A-2 without delay.⁵⁵

ILWU leaders hoped that they could use their newfound political influence to shape redevelopment policies during the Alioto administrations. Their main avenue for doing so was through appointments and patronage. According to Dave Jenkins, who became a labor consultant for the SFRA, “The ILWU, Bill Chester, LeRoy King ... lobbied, so that half the agency personnel was black” and was the “best and most important black agency in the city.”⁵⁶ Among those appointments was Wilbur Hamilton, an ILWU member and Pentecostal minister in the Western Addition, who Alioto appointed to the SFRA board. Significant as Alioto’s black appointees to the SFRA were, they were greeted with suspicion by militant activists in the

Western Addition. “We thought that anybody who went to work for the agency was the enemy,” Hannibal Williams explained.⁵⁷ Hamilton, who first met Williams when he was blocking a bulldozer at a construction site, later recalled that the WACO leader “berated me and named me as an enemy.”⁵⁸ Some of the city’s progressive activists have since similarly viewed the ILWU’s entrance into the SFRA bureaucracy as evidence that the union had sold out its principles. San Francisco-based scholar and activist Chris Carlsson, for example, argues that Hamilton gave “a black, pro-labor face to the essentially white racist ‘slum clearance’ plan devised in the boardrooms of downtown San Francisco.”⁵⁹

Yet such appraisals do not fully consider the structural limitations of redevelopment politics as well as what Hamilton and others did accomplish. Hamilton agreed with neighborhood activists who claimed that urban renewal – during its early stages, amounted to “black or other minority removal.”⁶⁰ In contrast to the villainous portrayal that progressive activists sometimes provide of the former SFRA director, Hamilton thought Herman was “a bright man” and “a visionary” who simply failed to fully grasp the deleterious impact that redevelopment could have on people. Hamilton often sided with community activists, and when he criticized SFRA policy at one public meeting Herman angrily responded that “If you are so damned dissatisfied with what’s going on, why don’t you come out to the Western Addition and run the program.”⁶¹ Hamilton accepted Herman’s challenge and became director of the A-2 project, serving with distinction until he was promoted to assistant executive director of the agency after the sudden death of Herman in 1971. “Wilbur did a good job trying to make sure they got back and into affordable housing,” LeRoy King said of Hamilton’s efforts to help residents displaced by the A-2 project.⁶² Over time Hamilton even earned the respect and friendship of Hannibal Williams, and eventually he became the first African American to head

the SFRA.⁶³

ILWU leaders and black trade unionists sought to influence redevelopment in other ways as well. Along with ministers who formed the church half of the black church-labor political coalition, they sought sponsorships for housing cooperatives modeled on St. Francis Square. Jenkins, Hamilton, and other ILWU leaders involved in redevelopment helped persuade the agency “to look for trade union and church sponsors” that would have “full participation in the design and character of the housing.”⁶⁴ In 1971 and 1972 the Labor Assembly for Community Action, the black trade unionist group formed by ILWU members in the 1960s, sponsored the construction of the Loren Miller Homes, which consisted of 107 moderate and low income cooperative townhouse apartments in the Western Addition Redevelopment Area. Bill Chester proudly noted that the Loren Miller Homes, which were also the first resident-owned housing cooperative in A-2, were “the only town house apartments designed for fully-integrated living by moderate and low-income groups.”⁶⁵ Chester and LeRoy King, who as a resident of St. Francis Square was active in Western Addition community politics, also participated in the Western Addition Conference (WAC), a counterpart to WACO. Unlike many of his ILWU counterparts, King had refused offers to join a city commission so that he could remain “an agitator in the community.” He was familiar with community activists in the Western Addition, and his wife worked with Mary Rogers in protests against racial inequality in the city’s schools.⁶⁶ The WAC formed in the spring of 1968 and consisted of representatives from the Baptist Ministers Union, ILWU, EOC Neighborhood Action Councils, Welfare Rights Organization, and several other community-based organizations. In a veiled reference to WACO’s influence, the WAC claimed that “no single organization or single individual can speak for the entire Western Addition community.” And while it was “in sharp disagreement” with many SFRA policies, WAC also

was “tired of being caught in the middle, between public agencies and organizations purporting to speak for the entire community.” It sought many of the same things that WACO was fighting for, including low and moderate priced housing, a “sensitive and independent relocation policy,” equality of educational opportunities, the establishment of an Afro-American Cultural Center, and the “maximum participation in the political, social, civic and economic life of the city, the “maximum employment” of black A-2 residents on redevelopment projects.⁶⁷ But it eschewed WACO’s confrontational style.

The effort of WAC to develop a community-wide organization culminated in the Western Addition Project Area Committee (WAPAC), which formed in 1969 to “act as a community representative in all matters pertaining to Urban Renewal and to provide for citizen participation in the formation and implementation of Urban Renewal programs” in the Western Addition. WAPAC, which obtained funding through HUD and was made an appendage of the SFRA, consisted of community and civil rights groups, with LeRoy King representing black trade unionists and the ILWU on its board. Although some hoped that such an organization would curb WACO’s influence and militancy, WACO was strongly represented on the WAPAC board in its early years, and Hannibal Williams served as its head (making him the leader of both organizations).⁶⁸ While it managed to present a united front before the SFRA on some occasions, WAPAC’s effectiveness was compromised by internal divisions, especially between its WACO representatives and more moderate members, including black ministers and trade unionists.⁶⁹

The influence that the ILWU and black trade unionists had within Alioto’s administration and the SFRA actually dovetailed with the efforts of Western Addition residents to mitigate some of the worst effects of urban redevelopment on poor and minority San Franciscans. One measure of this was the volume of subsidized housing that was constructed under the agency’s

auspices – twice the number that the A-2 plan originally entailed.⁷⁰ Looking back on this period, Wilbur Hamilton thought it “naïve to say that blacks were better off thirty years ago – especially where housing is concerned.” Had it not been for redevelopment, he speculated that “the Victorian craze of the 1960s would have driven every black person from the Western Addition.”⁷¹ Yet the human costs were still high. Between 1960 and 1970, the total number of housing units in the Western Addition fell from 12,334 to 10,306. For the same period, the black population of the area decreased from 14,631 to 10,926.⁷² “We slowed the agency down,” Hannibal Williams, who would end up serving as a SFRA commissioner in the 1970s, concluded. “[B]ut in the end, Urban Renewal became what we feared it would: Black Removal.”⁷³ Jenkins also concedes that there was a degree of removal in renewal, but highlighted the “thousands who moved back into infinitely superior places as against the slum and broken-down housing that existed in the Fillmore.” Moreover, he contends that many of the blacks who were removed were ILWU members who were now able to take advantage of a more open housing market in the late 1960s and 1970s as they moved into racially integrating neighborhoods such as the Haight-Ashbury and Ocean-Merced-Ingleside (OMI) districts.⁷⁴ The political and economic forces behind urban redevelopment may have been too strong for Hamilton, Jenkins, and other ILWU representatives working within the SFRA to radically alter its policies and plans. Nevertheless, in the area of redevelopment, it is fair to conclude that the human cost of redevelopment would have been higher had it not been for the ILWU’s involvement in redevelopment politics.

Gestapo Tactics?

As with redevelopment, the ILWU had concerned itself with police brutality since the

postwar years, when its black members often complained of unfair treatment at the hands of the police. And when the ILWU gained political influence with Alioto's election, its leaders sought to improve community-police relations through their access to political appointments. Alioto would later credit the ILWU with helping ease tensions between San Francisco's black population and its police department. In an interview conducted more than a decade after he left office, Alioto recalled a phone call he received from Lyndon Johnson after Martin Luther King was assassinated in April 1968 in which the president noted that San Francisco was "the only major city not burning." According to Alioto, the ILWU "played a significant role in keeping the peace" because black ILWU leaders, who he met with the day after King's murder, "were visible in government."⁷⁵ The ILWU's most significant contribution to improving police-community relations would be convincing Alioto to appoint Washington Garner to the police commission. But as with volatile issues such as redevelopment, ILWU leaders would be criticized by some for its close association to a "law and order" mayor while also finding its ability to influence Alioto on police issues significantly limited.

As the previous chapter noted, the three-candidate mayoral race in 1967 enabled Alioto to carve out a middle-ground on the issue of crime and police brutality that gave lip-service to both "law and order" as well the citizenship rights of San Franciscans under the law. Once in office, however, he found his middling position attacked from all sides. In his first major statement on crime and race relations after taking office, Alioto promised to maintain the precarious balance between "law and order" and civil rights that he struck during his campaign. The occasion for his remarks was the release of the Kerner Commission report, which classified the Hunters Point riot in 1966 as a "serious riot" and which highlighted police brutality as a source of racial unrest. While reiterating his pledge to uphold the law, Alioto assured residents that he did "not intend to

have an armed garrison in San Francisco.” Instead, he informed San Franciscans that they could expect his administration to “recognize the social implications and work very, very hard on jobs, housing, and education.”⁷⁶ Such statements elicited protests from San Franciscans who considered the mayor as too soft on crime, and his office regularly received letters from residents who questioned his “social” focus. After his wife was “insulted” by three men on Market Street, one angry San Franciscan telephoned Alioto’s office to complain that the Mayor was to blame because of his “permissive attitude to blacks, crime, etc.”⁷⁷ Having been burglarized twice and mugged once, a man identifying himself as a “liberal Democrat” and not a “law and order Republican” warned the mayor that the city would continue to deteriorate “unless middle class families are convinced that their lives and property are not constantly in danger.”⁷⁸ After an incident in which two police officers were shot, one resident asked Alioto “how many more must be injured or murdered before the facts will force a change in your policy of ‘hands off,’ ‘politics first’,” adding that it was his “hope you are not under the illusion that your present policy is going to solve the minority or crime problems of San Francisco.”⁷⁹ Yet while such citizens demanded a greater commitment to law and order, Alioto was more frequently assailed for the San Francisco Police Department’s (SFPD) racism and use of excessive force.

Alioto inherited a police department whose racial practices had severely strained relations with the city’s minority population. Black San Franciscans had complained about police brutality and racial discrimination in law enforcement since World War II. The sudden emergence of a sizeable black population during and after the war had resulted in an increase in black criminals and youth gangs, and black residents wanted the protection that police were supposed to provide. But what they often received was harassment and beatings at the hands of San Francisco’s almost exclusively white police department. Black San Franciscans of various class and status

positions complained of police harassment, brutality, and discrimination throughout the 1950s and early 1960s.⁸⁰ “We only demand equal treatment,” Goodlett declared after an incident in 1959 in which he was arrested after police accosted him while unloading presents from the trunk of his car.⁸¹ When the U.S. Civil Rights Commission held hearings in San Francisco the following year, a good deal of time was devoted to discussing the police department’s litany of racial abuses.⁸²

Responding to civic pressure, complaints filed by the local NAACP, and the negative publicity generated by the 1960 civil rights hearings, in 1961 San Francisco became the second city in the nation to establish a police-community relations unit (CRU). Dante Andreotti, a district commander with a reputation for being fair and even-tempered (in twenty years of service he had never drawn his gun during an arrest), was selected to organize and run the new unit. Although he had not sought the position nor expressed interest in police-community relations, Andreotti worked hard to mold the unit into a vehicle for changing the image of the police department among the city’s minority population – even using it as a part-time job-finding agency for ex-convicts. The CRU also helped civilians file complaints against officers who they felt had acted improperly, which after 1965 were supposed to be handled by the Bureau of Complaints, Inspection, and Welfare.⁸³ In its first six years of operation the CRU earned national accolades as it managed to open a small but healthy line of communication between the city’s minority population and its police department.⁸⁴ However, the rest of the police department held what some derided as the “Commie Relations Unit” in low esteem and resented its advocacy on behalf of minorities.⁸⁵ According to a 1969 report, every black officer in the CRU had “experienced ‘brutalizing’ at the hands of his brother officers,” while a white officer in the unit told of being called a “Nigger-lover” by his peers.⁸⁶ Frustrated with the disdain that the SFPD

rank-and-file held for the CRU, Andreotti left San Francisco “in despair” in 1967 to take a job with the Department of Justice community relations section in Washington, D.C.⁸⁷ The CRU further suffered in Andreotti’s absence, and by the time Alioto entered office its low esteem reflected the growing hostility between the police department and minorities, student activists, and hippies.

The problems of the CRU also stemmed from the long history of racial discrimination within the SFPD itself. Prior to World War II the city had never had a black police officer. After employing three black officers to help police the mass influx of black migrants during the war, the city hired its first permanent black policeman, Richard Finis, in 1948. Two years later five of the department’s 1,579 officers were black (.3 percent, whereas blacks comprised seven percent of the city’s population in 1950). By 1970 just five percent of the force was black (85 officers).⁸⁸ Black police officers were assigned to black neighborhoods – typically the remote Hunters Point, and they regularly encountered racism and discrimination within the department. A *Sun-Reporter* series about the city’s five black policemen in 1953 found that they were “segregated” in the Hunters Point district and were not “floated” to other beats to gain experience as were their white counterparts. In the few cases in which they were needed to fill in and patrol another beat they would usually be placed on a midnight shift so as to minimize their public exposure. The black officers were not assigned to radio cars, and walked their beats on foot unless they drove their own cars (which they sometimes did).⁸⁹ “I don’t think I knew any black kids back then who grew up wanting to be a cop,” recalled Earl Sanders, an African American who joined the force in 1964. Sanders says he took to police work “like a fish to water,” but the “bullshit that surrounded it ... was another story.”⁹⁰ Unequal treatment of black officers remained entrenched in SFPD culture during the 1960s. Black officers were given the worst assignments and passed over for

promotion. According to Sanders and Richard Hongisto, a white officer who worked in the CRU, white officers used racial slurs with impunity when referring to their black counterparts. Such treatment made it difficult for African Americans to remain on the force, and Richard Finis himself resigned in 1963 because the SFPD's hostile racial environment.

When it came to racism within the police department and police brutality, the ILWU and black trade unionists exerted little influence on Joseph Alioto. The ILWU had been an outspoken critic of police brutality and racism since World War II and the immediate postwar years, a time in which many of its black members complained of being unjustly arrested (see chapter two). Union leaders would discover that changing the culture of the policing in San Francisco would be nearly as difficult working within the establishment as it was working from the outside. The greatest contribution of black labor leaders was ensuring that Alioto appointed an African American to the police commission, a three-person civilian body that had oversight over the chief of police. Together with the chief, the commission created departmental policies. After consulting with black ILWU leaders, in 1968 Alioto appointed Dr. Washington Garner to the commission – a “progressive” favored by the ILWU and one of only two black appointees during Alioto's first term who did not come from the ranks of organized labor.⁹¹ “I'm not saying having one black on the police commission is an earth-shaking reform,” Richard Hongisto, who had fought racism within the department as a patrolman and as a member of the CRU, explained after Alioto was reelected in 1971, “but any fool will tell you it's never been done before in this city.”⁹² In fact, it would be several years before African Americans would gain appointment to police commissions in many other major cities such as New York, Philadelphia, and Detroit.⁹³ A respected physician, Garner was not an especially controversial appointment. However, he did cause an uproar from white conservative groups in 1970 when he awarded attorney Charles

Garry, a good friend whose clients included the Black Panthers and *Los Siete*, a gold police star that made him an honorary member of the police department.⁹⁴ Far from a radical when it came to civil rights, Garner was a strong advocate for black police officers and used his position on the commission to support their fight against racism within the department.

Like their counterparts in other large cities such as Chicago, black officers in the SFPD – joined by a few liberal whites – banded together to challenge the racist culture of the department. In 1968 Hongisto, Sanders, and other black officers formed the Officers for Justice (OFJ) as an alternative to the conservative Police Officers Association (POA), which had been the sole representative organization for the city’s police officers. The OFJ denounced the all-white POA leadership as racist and unwilling to address the problems facing both black officers and the city’s minority residents. OFJ members pledged “to elevate the Black policeman in the Black community to the same image status enjoyed by the White policemen in the White community; that is, a protector of the citizenry, and not a brutal oppressor.” The OFJ pledge added that it was “impossible to operate within the framework of the other Police Association,” and announced its members’ refusal “to permit ourselves to be relegated to the role of brutal pawns in a chess game affecting the communities in which we serve.”⁹⁵ The OFJ injected black power politics into the police department. Declaring that “there can be no peace in this city until conditions within the police department are radically changed,” it called for a series of reforms that including the recruiting of “Third World community people” as inspectors in the police academy and creating “a model police station in the black community to be manned and operated only by those officers meeting the approval of the community.”⁹⁶ The POA refused to recognize the legitimacy of the OFJ and opposed its proposed reforms.⁹⁷ Alioto at first viewed the OFJ with trepidation because he feared the POA backlash – although he claimed to worry that it might give the appearance of

a “segregated unit.” But Washington Garner supported the OFJ and successfully lobbied the police commission to officially recognize the group.⁹⁸ Alioto eventually accepted the OFJ as a legitimate representative of minority police officers, and in November 1970 he vetoed a POA-backed law that would have made the POA the sole bargaining agent for the police department.⁹⁹

Among the OFJ’s top objectives was the strengthening of the floundering CRU by making it responsible to the police commission instead of the police chief and by appointing one of their own, Rodney Williams, to lead the unit. Other black community leaders joined them, with Hamilton Boswell, the influential reverend at the Jones Methodist Church, suggesting that the appointment of a black officer to head the CRU might begin to reverse the condition in which “any little towheaded boy who happens to be a cop can pull a gun and shoot a black man.”¹⁰⁰ By this time Alioto had already begun pressuring the police department to do something about the CRU. Shortly after taking office he called for the removal of Andreotti’s successor, Lieutenant August Bruneman, after rumors circulated of a racist comment that the former head of the dog patrol unit had made. In his place Police Chief Thomas Cahill appointed another white Lieutenant, William Osterloh, whose well-meaning but academic approach to the CRU’s mission proved ineffective.¹⁰¹ Alioto at first preferred the appointment of a police captain to replace Osterloh (no African American held that rank), but Washington Garner urged Chief Cahill to appoint Rodney Williams. According to Garner, Cahill scoffed at the notion, telling him that “the whole police department would explode” if he appointed a black patrolman to head the CRU.¹⁰²

But events quickly turned the tide in Williams’ favor. Shortly before Osterloh resigned the post, an *Atlantic Monthly* article detailed for a national readership the CRU’s mounting problems and highlighted the hostility of white officers toward the unit.¹⁰³ The article’s appearance coincided with a spate of brutality charges that African Americans brought against

the police, and in a KRON television special on Hunters Point, CRU officer Palmer Jackson remarked that most young people in Hunters Point thought of the unit as a “sham.”¹⁰⁴ These events prompted Alioto to support the appointment of Rodney Williams. Chief Cahill received further pressure from the police commission after Garner convinced another commissioner to back Williams, who was appointed after meeting in private with Cahill. Yet whereas his predecessors had each held the rank of Lieutenant, Williams was a patrolman. The OFJ demanded that the department promote Williams, who had been on the force for fifteen years. Williams eventually did get a promotion, but only to the rank of Assistant Inspector (which ranked just above patrolman). For Williams and the OFJ, this was yet another symptom of the department’s racist culture, and in 1973 the OFJ filed a lawsuit against the city, SFPD, and the Civil Service Commission. During the proceedings, which lasted the remainder of the decade, Garner, Hongisto, and Andreotti each issued statements chronicling the department’s long history of racism. Williams eventually stepped down from the CRU to work full-time on the lawsuit.¹⁰⁵

Relations between the police department and minority residents remained as strained as those between whites and blacks within the department. Under Williams’ leadership, the CRU fought a Sisyphean battle to change the culture of the police department. But its staff of fifteen (mostly minority) officers remained isolated from the rest of the department and had little influence over police policy. And police-community relations continued to suffer. By 1973, midway through Alioto’s second term, the department was receiving an average of 100 civilian complaints each month.¹⁰⁶ One reason for the continued influx of civilian complaints and the difficult conditions under which the CRU operated was the “law and order” aspect of Alioto’s approach to crime, the center of which was the Police Tactical Squad. Like similar outfits in New

York, St. Louis, Philadelphia, Washington, D.C., and Milwaukee, the San Francisco “Tac Squad,” which the department had first established late in 1967 before Alioto took office, was intended to be an elite mobile force that could swiftly move in to a scene at the first sign of trouble. Its thirty-five members, several of who were Vietnam veterans, were trained in crowd control, judo and karate, and were equipped with a curved baton, short club, and a chemical spray container. The Tac Squad operated in eight-person units that rode four to a squad car so that they could arrive in force when needed.¹⁰⁷ Some police officials credited the Tac Squad with preventing riots in multiple instances by dispersing volatile crowds, but other officers and many residents felt that the squad was “more prone to use unnecessary force than other officers.”¹⁰⁸ In its first year and a half, the Tac Squad came under widespread scrutiny for the use of excessive force – especially in its treatment of African Americans. In one instance Tac Squad members clubbed a black police officer. In another, an officer maced three black women as they sat handcuffed in a paddy wagon – even though they had first placed a call to the police after a drunk driver drove into their parked car.¹⁰⁹ The Tac Squad did not only attack minorities. In several instances it roughed up biracial groups of peace activists, student protesters, and hippies in the Haight-Ashbury neighborhood.¹¹⁰ One veteran police officer warned that the city had “created a monster by selecting battle veterans” for the job, while a longtime SFPD inspector referred to Tac Squad members as “sadists.”¹¹¹

In the realm of police-community relations, the Tac Squad did more than anything else to strain relations between Alioto and black San Franciscans. Alioto had supported the creation of a mobile tactical force during the 1967 campaign while at the same time criticizing the “police-dog mentality” of his more conservative opponent, Harold Dobbs. But the acts of the Tac Squad now appeared to belie his repeated promise to uphold the rights of rights of city residents before the

law. In March 1969 a group calling itself “Concerned Black Women” formed to protest police brutality and the practices of the Tac Squad in particular. The group, which consisted of some of the city’s most prominent black women – including Bill Chester’s wife, charged that racism was prevalent in the way the SFPD conducted its affairs.¹¹² Another group calling itself “Citizens Against the Tac Squad,” which included Carlton Goodlett among its leaders, also waged a campaign to abolish what it called the “most backward and brutal aspect of the police department.”¹¹³ In a 1971 report that was otherwise criticized by the *Sun-Reporter* for failing to address police racism, the San Francisco Committee on Crime recommended that the department disband the Tactical Squad because it diverted resources from the districts, caused friction within the department, and because of the “citizen hostility...particularly in minority communities” that the unit created.¹¹⁴ Upon forming the committee in 1968, Alioto promised its chairmen that it would be a “serious endeavor” rather than the fulfillment of one of his campaign promises, and that he would give the committee’s recommendations serious consideration. Yet he stood by the Tac Squad. “Even the Lord in selecting twelve disciples only got eleven good ones,” Alioto reasoned as the police commission conducted hearings on Tac Squad abuses.¹¹⁵

One reason for Alioto’s steadfast support of the Tac Squad in the face of widespread criticism was his near obsession with controlling black militants and minimizing any influence the Black Panther Party (BPP) had in San Francisco. Alioto refused to recognize the Panthers as a political or social organization, and he made a point to distinguish its members from the “strong militants in the black community” who were “fighting their claims within the system.”¹¹⁶ To Alioto, the Panthers militancy and black nationalism were anathema to the liberal urban coalition that he envisioned for San Francisco. He also associated the BPP with violence and a threat to his ability to maintain law and order in the city. Alioto regularly derided the BPP as “a

gang of hoodlums and gunmen,” and fully backed the repeated efforts of the police department to crack down on the group.¹¹⁷ Panther leaders, for their part, were equally disparaging of Alioto, who they considered a fascist and evidence of liberals’ disregard for the demands of black and minority residents. BPP leader Bobby Seale compared the Tac Squad to Adolph Hitler’s Brown Shirts, and criticized “Mafioso Alioto” for using the SFPD to harass the BPP. San Francisco police raided the BPP Fillmore street headquarters on several occasions. According to Seale, twelve Panther members were arrested during the summer of 1969 for simply selling the party newspaper.¹¹⁸

Alioto also hoped that his alliance with black labor activists and other community leaders would isolate the Panthers in the public mind and weaken the group’s ability to recruit young African Americans in the Western Addition and Hunters Point. Part of this strategy involved recruiting young militant poverty workers into his urban coalition. Alioto managed to recruit young black men from Hunters Point by paying them for campaign work and then working to maintain the flow of poverty funds to the area, which he obtained with the help of the area’s veteran black female activists. “We made a studied attempt to corral the younger tough element and channel their energies,” Alioto explained, alluding to both the jobs and leadership roles that City Hall provided young poverty workers.¹¹⁹ The most influential (and controversial) of these young men was Adam Rogers, who had grown up in Hunters Point, was a member of Young Men for Action and served on the area’s Economic Opportunity Council. A KRON television report described Rogers as an “anti-establishment” “former hoodlum with a criminal record” who identified with “Black Power” and “sympathized with militant groups,” while an acquaintance remembered him as “240 pounds of “Whip Ass” with a San Quentin background.” He had been shot by police during the 1966 riot and had for a time attended BPP meetings in

Hunters Point. “We have to go through the political system,” Rogers said in 1969, because “muscle” could only get black militant so far.¹²⁰ His work with the EOC, the Hunters Point Model Cities Commission, and as head of Redevelopment Security for Bayview-Hunters Point eventually earned him the wrath of the BPP, which derided him as “Alioto’s nigger in the Hunters Point area” who “was put in the position of being in control of the little bit of money and the few jobs that were sent into the area to pacify the potentially revolutionary and rebellious niggers.”¹²¹ Rogers was involved in a number of physical confrontations while working in Hunters Point, and when he was shot in the neck and back in 1970 some suspected the Panthers.¹²² Alioto’s poverty politics in Hunters Point were often divisive in the community, as evidenced in the Hunters Point Model Cities Commission election in 1972 in which Rogers and Alex Pitcher, another community activists allied with Alioto, were voted off the board.¹²³ But the general weakness of the BPP in San Francisco suggested that his policies were effective in thwarting its ability to recruit new members. Alioto took great pride, as he told a congressional select committee on crime in 1969, that Eldridge Cleaver blamed him for destroying the “revolutionary morale of the people in Hunters Point by pumping small amounts of money into the area and promising more.”¹²⁴

Alioto’s hatred for the Black Panthers and support of the police department’s Tac Squad made it difficult for the ILWU and black trade unionists to fulfill its role as conduit between the black community and City Hall. Alioto’s vocal support for the controversial tactical unit also created friction with his allies in the ILWU, and as they would on certain occasions, union leaders tried to convince the mayor to reconsider his position. In January 1968 the ILWU Legislative Committee met with Alioto to discuss “police brutality,” and in December its regional political arm, the Northern California District Council, adopted a resolution condemning

the Tac Squad, which had “been used to brutally assault peace demonstrators, students, and even people in neighborhoods,” and publicly calling for its dissolution.¹²⁵ “Students, black people in the ghettos, peace workers and draft resisters are the special targets of the Tactical Squad now,” the ILWU women’s auxiliary wrote the police commission in calling for the elimination of the unit. “In time of strike it may be our husbands and sons in the ILWU and our own members who will have their heads beaten.”¹²⁶ Despite his respect of the ILWU, Alioto continued to stand behind his police force and the tactical squad. And ILWU leaders would struggle to balance their attachment to the mayoral administration with their support for labor, peace, student, and civil rights activists who, on several occasions, would find themselves squaring off with the Tac Squad.

Alioto’s support for the Tactical Squad placed ILWU leaders in a particularly difficult position during the San Francisco State College student and faculty strike, which lasted from November 6, 1968 until March 21, 1969. Demanding the establishment of a black studies program, more black faculty, and increased black and nonwhite student enrollment and scholarships, students belonging to the Black Student Union and the Third World Liberation Front began picketing the college on November 6, 1968.¹²⁷ The students were joined by faculty belonging to the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), who were sympathetic to their cause and who felt that the campus administration was infringing on the rights of both teachers and students. Reluctant to empower a political rival while insisting that the strike be handled locally by his liberal urban coalition, Alioto, who was eyeing a run for governor, refused Governor Ronald Reagan’s offer of state assistance.¹²⁸ He respected the right of the AFT to strike but was weary of the BSU, which was led by prominent black power advocates and had ties to the Black Panthers.¹²⁹ This was one instance in which Alioto hoped that his alliance with the ILWU could

pay dividends by bringing the conflict to a peaceful and speedy resolution. He selected Bill Chester and Revels Cayton to join other religious and labor leaders on a special citizens committee that worked behind the scenes to end the strike.¹³⁰ The ILWU was in a unique position to deal with all sides of the strike. In addition to its ties to Alioto and the black community, it had endorsed the AFT strike and had many members whose children attended San Francisco State.

The striking students initially dismissed the committee as “nothing more than a new way with which Alioto hopes to break the strike,” and signaled out Chester as a “pie card leader” who was “working with management.”¹³¹ As usual in matters relating to Alioto, Carlton Goodlett was also weary of ILWU involvement. By the time of the student strike, Goodlett had grown closer to the region’s black power movement. In a 1968 interview he likened Stokeley Carmichael and H. Rapp Brown to the abolitionist John Brown, and although he did not agree with the Black Panther Party on all matters, he considered it a “vibrant protest against racialism in America.” He had introduced attorney Eldridge Gerry to the Black Panthers and served as co-chairman of the Huey P. Newton Defense Fund and a sponsor of the International Committee for the Defense of Eldridge Cleaver. The *Sun-Reporter* gave mostly favorable coverage to the black power movement. Goodlett promised that “we’re never going to desert [young black militants], we’re going to support them, we’re going to engage in a group discussion and when we disagree with them, we’ll, in many instances, do it privately and if we’re forced to, do it publicly.”¹³² Goodlett spoke at several BPP-sponsored rallies and conferences during this period, and according to FBI sources had even tried to broker a peace between the Los Angeles-based US organization and the Panthers early in 1969.¹³³ In fall and winter of 1968 and 1969 Goodlett was a fixture on the San Francisco State picket lines, where he could be seen brandishing a megaphone and heard

shouting “power to the people.”¹³⁴ Although he had “some serious questions about what these kids are doing,” he called upon black leaders to support the strike because “those in power want to destroy these kids ... [and] we can’t let them.”¹³⁵ A month into the strike a *Sun-Reporter* article questioned what role the ILWU would play in the committee because it had yet to offer support to the striking students. “No one can say for certain whether I.L.W.U.’s failure to respond to the student call for support is related to the presence of a number of union officials in the Mayor’s official family,” the paper opined.¹³⁶

But the ILWU was sympathetic to the BSU cause. While its black members did not identify as closely with the black power movement as Goodlett, many still felt that they had something to offer the poor and working-class young blacks who embraced black nationalism. In 1967 the ILWU adopted a policy statement supporting the concept of “Black Power,” and a few days after the strike began it invited a representative of the Black Panthers to speak at a meeting of its Northern California District Council.¹³⁷ In January 1969 Local 10 helped start a trade union subcommittee as part of the Community Conference to Support the San Francisco State Strike.¹³⁸ Eventually, Alioto’s committee was able to open a dialogue with the students and convinced them that they would in fact need to compromise some of their “non-negotiable” demands. “[W]e used our trade union experience and pointed out to students that there’s no such things [sic] as non-negotiable demands,” recalled Chester, who co-chaired the committee.¹³⁹ Curtis McClain, who walked alongside striking students on several occasions as a member of both Local 6 and the Human Rights Commission (HRC), said that the students respected the ILWU and “would listen to us.”¹⁴⁰

From Bill Chester’s perspective, the ILWU’s role in bringing the strike to a conclusion exemplified the important role that the union and black trade unionists could play in mediating

between City Hall and black San Francisco. A few months after the strike's conclusion, he proudly pointed out to interviewer Robert Martin, "You notice that there was no national guard over here, and you didn't have any helicopter shooting and so forth. We wouldn't permit that."¹⁴¹ Yet Chester's enthusiasm elided the instances of violence that occurred while illuminating the growing chasm between veteran black labor activists and younger black militants. Hundreds of picketing students and activists, including Carlton Goodlett, were arrested during the strike. And news footage captured images of club-wielding Tac Squad members chasing and beating student demonstrators for intimidating non-striking students and vandalizing school property.¹⁴² Amid outcry from students and civil rights activists, Alioto stood behind the squad's violent handling of the students. McClain himself joined other activists, including members of the Officers for Justice, in condemning police tactics at San Francisco State.¹⁴³ And when asked what color armbands HRC members should wear so that they could be clearly identified on the picket lines, he quipped, "Black is beautiful, but they can't see it."¹⁴⁴ David Jenkins, who walked the picket line along with his daughter – a student at San Francisco State, recalled that "Alioto knew we opposed his policy," but also added that the ILWU was still "accused of selling our souls" because of its ties to the administration.¹⁴⁵ Yet evidence suggests that the union was not completely implicated in Alioto's handling of the strike and the subsequent police conduct. For instance, when Revels Cayton tried to help one arrested BSU member get a favorable hearing before a judge, the BSU central committee praised his "friendship and brotherhood in the midst of repression."¹⁴⁶ Black labor activists of the Old Left could find common ground with the New Left and the Black Power movement, although they increasingly found themselves constrained by their participation within the city's governing liberal coalition.

Such constraints were most dramatically evident during the "Zebra murders" of 1973-

1974, which punctuated the tumultuous relationship between the SFPD and the city's black residents that lasted throughout Alioto's two terms in office. In October 1973, Richard and Quita Hague were out for an evening stroll down scenic Telegraph Hill when a group of men brutally attacked them with a machete, killing Quita and leaving Richard for dead. Over the next six months, the same group of men were thought to be responsible for the execution-style murders of fourteen other San Franciscans in addition to seriously wounding several others. Witnesses described the attackers as black, whereas most of the victims were white. The brutal and random nature of the crimes put San Franciscans on edge. Most of the attacks took place before 10 p.m. and occurred in various parts of the city. In most instances, victims were engaged in mundane activities such as walking down the street, doing laundry at a laundromat, talking on a payphone, and unloading a car, when an attacker quickly approached and fired several shots – all from a .32 caliber pistol. The police set up a special unit to investigate the attacks, which became popularly known as the “Zebra murders” because of the police radio frequency “Z” that was used exclusively for the investigation.

By April 1974 the police had yet to crack the case, and a new wave of suspected Zebra attacks added a heightened sense of urgency. Claiming that the “situation was so extraordinary” that it required “extraordinary means,” in mid-April Alioto instructed the police to stop and question young black men who fit the descriptions of the suspects.¹⁴⁷ On the first night of the police sweeps, about one hundred black men were stopped by police, none of who produced any leads. Alioto immediately repudiated “the notion that any possible racial implication” in the “stop-search” program, while Police Chief Charles Barka assured the media that the officers used the “utmost courtesy and thoughtfulness” when conducting the searches.¹⁴⁸ The department also assigned thirty black policemen to the Zebra unit, which was headed by inspectors Rotea

Guilford and Earl Sanders, the latter a founding member of the Officers for Justice. But African Americans all across the Bay Area protested what Jesse Byrd, an OFJ member, called “gestapo-style tactics.” The Black Panther Party similarly accused Alioto of rounding up blacks “like Hitler rounded up the Jews.” A group called Black Women Organized for Action criticized Alioto for creating a “police state” in black communities. Reverend Cecil Williams of the Glide Memorial Church warned that the program created “greater possibility” for “a race war.” State Assemblyman Willie Brown, the city’s most prominent black politician and a critic of Alioto, predicted that the program would “force the real killer into hiding while seriously depriving a vast number of San Franciscans of their rights.” Supervisor Terry Francois added that the stop-search program made San Francisco look “absolutely ridiculous on television.” Carlton Goodlett was among the most outspoken critics of the sweeps, declaring at one point that no member of his family would ever submit to a police search. Local NAACP leaders also condemned the program and partnered with the American Civil Liberties Union in a lawsuit on behalf of six men who were searched by police. Meanwhile, the mailrooms at the *Sun-Reporter* and the *Oakland Post*, another black newspaper, filled with letters from outraged readers.¹⁴⁹ “People in the black community, the vast majority of who wanted to be helpful in catching the Zebra killers, thought they were being turned into targets,” Sanders later wrote, adding that he and Guilford tried to keep a watchful eye on the police tasked with performing the sweeps. “They felt betrayed.”¹⁵⁰

As was his typical fashion, Alioto unapologetically stood by the stop-search policy in the face of widespread criticism from black leaders – pointing out that police had stopped hundreds of white men who resembled composite drawings of the so-called “Zodiac” killer, who had waged a similar murder spree in the Bay Area a few years earlier. He also expected his black advisors to mitigate charges that he was advocating a racist policy. From his position on the

police commission, Washington Garner supported the stop-search program, pleading with black San Franciscans, “If you are stopped, we ask you, don’t resent it.”¹⁵¹ When Alioto called a press conference to address the sweeps, he was flanked by several of his black appointees. “None of the blacks appeared happy and all struck the writer that they would have been far happier to be somewhere else than standing in a semi-circle behind Joseph Alioto,” Tom Fleming quipped. According to Fleming, Alioto spent considerable time responding to Carlton Goodlett’s criticism of the police sweeps, reminding the press of his strong showing in black precincts in spite of Goodlett’s vocal support for Jack Morrison in 1967 while asserting that the black appointees standing behind him “were the leaders of San Francisco blacks.”¹⁵²

Alioto’s ILWU contingent, along with Joe Johnson, were conspicuously absent from the press conference, suggesting a silent protest to the way that his administration had handled the crisis. When it came to police-brutality and easing police-community relations in San Francisco, the ILWU was responsible for some improvements. Yet as the controversies over the Tac Squad and the police department’s handling of the zebra murders suggest, the ability of ILWU leaders to influence Alioto on the issue was mainly limited to appointees to the police commission.

A “Conspiracy of Silence”?

Although ILWU leaders would often find themselves at odds with Alioto and harshly criticized for their close ties with the mayor, they were unwilling to sacrifice their political influence by breaking their alliance. Referring to veteran black labor activists who gained political power in under Alioto, David Jenkins explained that the “black Left understood immediately that for them to play any role, they had to make compromises.” As Revels Cayton entered municipal government under Shelley and Alioto, Jenkins claims that he began to

“reevaluate his militancy.”¹⁵³ Indeed, throughout Alioto’s administrations, Cayton became extremely cautious when it came to jeopardizing the political power that he ILWU had obtained. This was also true of Bill Chester, who “was wheeling and dealing all over the city” and, in Jenkins’ opinion, “went too far in many cases” in compromising the official ideological positions of the ILWU.¹⁵⁴ In 1968 one FBI informant described Chester as a “braggart” who, during the 1967 campaign, boasted of the influence he would wield if Alioto were elected.¹⁵⁵ Under Alioto, Jenkins argues, Chester became a “middle of the road black political figure” who sometimes drifted “right of center” when he felt it made smart political sense.¹⁵⁶ This was not true for all black leftists in the union. For example, Ella Hill Hutch, a former Communist who migrated to San Francisco during World War II and obtained a clerical job with the ILWU in 1953, disapproved of the union’s alliance with Alioto. Hutch, who lived in the Western Addition and had helped reinvigorate San Francisco’s militant Congress of Racial Equality chapter in the early 1960s and co-founded Black Women Organized for Political Action in 1968, remained allied with the progressive wing of the San Francisco Democratic Party – choosing to stick with Willie Brown and the Burton brothers instead of Alioto (in doing so, she joined other white old leftists in the union, such as Archie Brown and John Figueroa). Bill Chester and LeRoy King did not approve of her political dissent, and when Hutch began to run for elective office herself in the early 1970s, the ILWU refused to endorse her.¹⁵⁷ The fact that Hutch would still find elective success, eventually becoming the first African American elected to the Board of Supervisors in 1977, points to dissent within the union and black San Franciscans more generally towards the politics of ILWU leaders who participated in Alioto’s administration. The willingness of these leaders, particularly Revels Cayton, Bill Chester, and LeRoy King, to compromise official ILWU positions and play politics with racial issues was most evident between 1969 and 1971, when the

issue of school busing divided the city among multiple racial and political lines and became one of the central issues in Alioto's reelection.

The specter of busing to combat *de facto* school segregation in San Francisco had inflamed debates since 1962, when civil rights groups first called upon the Board of Education to recognize race as a factor in school policymaking and to take affirmative steps to alleviate racial imbalance in the city's schools. The notion that *de facto* segregation existed in San Francisco's public schools was not new. Two years earlier Mayor George Christopher told the United States Civil Rights Commission that "the concentration of minority citizens in certain residential districts ... has the effect of a similar concentration of minority students in the schools in those districts."¹⁵⁸ In response to pressure from civil rights groups, the Board of Education acknowledged that the city's neighborhood school policy, which had been in place since 1936, had resulted in a level of "racial imbalance" that could be viewed as *de facto* segregation.¹⁵⁹ In 1963, an Ad Hoc Committee consisting of three school board members issued a report recommending that "the Board should seek means to alleviate racial concentrations in the schools under its management" and that "the factor of race be included in the criteria used in establishing new attendance zones or in redrawing existing boundaries as the need arises." A subsequent racial census of the city's public schools, released in 1965, determined that while seventy-six percent of black children attended racially mixed schools, forty-three percent of elementary schools were "racially imbalanced." Whereas African Americans comprised twenty-eight percent of the student population, they made up more than fifty percent of the student body in twenty-four of the city's ninety-five schools, less than ten percent in four, and more than ninety percent in seven others.¹⁶⁰

As the school board incrementally moved to confront the issue of racial imbalance, it

maintained its commitment to the neighborhood school pattern and explicitly opposed the use of quotas and busing to achieve integration.¹⁶¹ Pro-integration groups, and the NAACP in particular, also claimed to support the concept of the traditional neighborhood school during these early debates. San Francisco NAACP president Terry Francois assured anxious parents at a volatile school board meeting in 1962 that his organization did not “advocate transportation of students from one neighborhood to another, for the sole purpose of achieving integration.”¹⁶² Yet such assurances meant little to white parents to whom integration meant sending their child on a bus to the Western Addition or Hunters Point. “No one seems to have the intention to bus children,” a mother of four elementary school children observed shortly after Francois spoke on the matter. “But at the same time it is also stated that children should be distributed through every school in San Francisco on a race ratio ... how is this possible without some form of public or private transportation?”¹⁶³

It was a question that eluded a clear answer, and one that led to the politicization of white parents, especially the mothers of public school children. In August of 1962 a group of parents and neighborhood activists formed the Citizens Committee for Neighborhood Schools (CCNS). Declaring that “those schools are best which are close to home,” the CCNS sought to mobilize grass-roots support in defense of the neighborhood school concept.¹⁶⁴ The group drew its greatest strength from the West of Twin Peaks neighborhoods, which were home to mostly white, middle-class professionals but which were situated in relative close proximity to integrated and nonwhite parts of the city. Its members included conservative activists, such as its vice-president, Marjorie Lemlow, a member of the John Birch Society who would lead the anti-busing movement later in the decade. But there were also some liberals among its ranks, such as Leon Markel, who, as a Republican Party activist, had been a former member of the Council for Civic

Unity and a proponent of California's 1959 Fair Employment Practices law. CCNS was careful to avoid explicit mention of race, although it seems to have attracted its share of racists. At one of its first meetings Lemlow felt it necessary to request that anyone wanting "to use our organization as a vehicle against Negroes" to "either be quiet or leave."¹⁶⁵ Liberal members such as Markel were not completely opposed to minority students entering their neighborhood's predominantly white schools. The common sentiment that united the CCNS, as Markel stated at a 1965 conference, was that "we cannot bus *into* the ghetto" (my emphasis).¹⁶⁶

As Markel's comments suggests, by the middle of the decade busing was being discussed as a possible means by which to achieve better racial balance. By the time Joseph Alioto entered the mayor's office in 1968, the neighborhood school movement offered little room for the liberal influences of people like Markel. In 1965, twenty-one civic groups – including the NAACP – formed the Coordinating Council for Integrated Schools, which sought to place increased pressure on the school board to address the continued racial imbalance in the city's public schools.¹⁶⁷ Meanwhile, a vocal group of NAACP activists began to view busing as the only feasible solution.¹⁶⁸ Two years later Mayor Jack Shelley replaced Superintendent Harold Spears, who had been vocally opposed to busing and had done little to facilitate school desegregation since it became a major issue in 1962, with Robert Jenkins, who had previously presided over the "limited" desegregation of Pasadena's school system.¹⁶⁹ Shelley also appointed three liberals to the school board, including Dr. Zuretti Goosby, a progressive African American from the Western Addition, who each supported the use of busing to achieve desegregation.

Although these developments did little to accelerate the pace of desegregation or make busing an inevitability, conservative neighborhood activists reacted with a heightened sense of urgency. Two new groups more closely associated with the "New Right" eclipsed the CCNS.

Blending concerns over education with growing unrest over rising taxes, Parents and Taxpayers, which also had a chapter in New York City, sought to defend the right and “duty” of parents “to assure that their children are reared and educated in familiar surroundings and receive a proper and adequate education.”¹⁷⁰ The group anticipated that any attempt to reassign children to schools outside of their immediate neighborhood would also incur added costs for taxpayers. Similarly, Mothers Support Neighborhood Schools (MSNS) was committed to keeping education close to the home, warning that “if we allow the buses to transport our children from the family and the neighborhood then we open the door to the forces of totalitarianism.”¹⁷¹ The group was led by Marjorie Lemlow and Alice Vipiana, another conservative activist who helped manage Barry Goldwater’s San Francisco campaign headquarters in 1964 and campaigned for Ronald Reagan in 1966.¹⁷² MSNS viewed the desegregation/busing issue as part of a larger struggle against the school system’s excessive liberalism. They took particular aim at San Francisco educators, some of whom “may be the very activists who have been causing the rebellions on the campuses” and who were determined to brainwash children through “group criticism,” role-playing, sex education, and other experimental curricula.¹⁷³ Both Parents and Taxpayers and MSNS lamented the departure of Superintendent Spears and vehemently opposed Shelley’s liberal appointments to the school board. And as the board finally began to consider limited busing plans in 1968 and 1969, both groups intensified their activism.

The heightened militancy of white parents coincided with growing black demands for better community schools. Throughout the 1960s, black Americans living in inner cities increasingly called for greater control over community institutions such as schools.¹⁷⁴ Whereas NAACP leaders had declared that “ghetto schools are educationally indefensible,” as early as 1965 polls conducted by the school district indicated that black parents in the Western Addition

and in Bayview-Hunters Point preferred better neighborhood schools to busing their children into other, potentially hostile, areas.¹⁷⁵ Regardless of what they felt about busing, black parents frequently protested that the quality of education in their neighborhood schools – resulting from old and dilapidated structures and white teachers who were insensitive to their children – was not equal to that in white neighborhoods. This sentiment was strongest in the geographically remote Bayview-Hunters Point, where community groups actively campaigned for bond issues to build two new schools in the district and sought federal funds to hire community aides and to establish parent-teacher councils at each primary school.¹⁷⁶ As a result of these demands, which the NAACP reluctantly supported as a way to assert its own strength in the area, several neighborhood schools were built in Hunters Point after the bond measure passed (ironically, the NAACP would later cite their construction as evidence that the school district had actively perpetuated racial segregation).¹⁷⁷ Like their white counterparts, African American parents grew increasingly militant as the school desegregation controversy escalated. In one instance, mothers of the Hayes Valley Schools Committee (HVSC) boycotted John Muir Elementary School after several of their children complained that the white principal and a white teacher had made racist remarks. During the boycott, which lasted several weeks, the HVSC set up a Freedom School and, on one occasion, tried to enroll John Muir students at Commodore Sloat (a predominantly white elementary school in the West of Twin Peaks district).¹⁷⁸ African American mothers also protested against busing at the stormy school board meetings in 1968 and 1969. Responding to MSNS protests at the February 1968 meeting, one HVSC representative explained that her group did not “want our children bused any more than you do,” but wanted “neighborhood schools too, with a curriculum geared to Black people.”¹⁷⁹ At another meeting, Mary Rogers, a Western Addition community activist, declared that “we black mothers will not tolerate any decision

made by the board to bus our children in to areas where they are not wanted – and more important – into areas where we don’t want our children. We want beautiful black children in our neighborhood schools.”¹⁸⁰

Robert Jenkins hoped that he could convince parents to agree to a desegregation plan that involved limited busing. Jenkins’ proposal was based on what he called “educational quality/equality,” in which desegregation would be combined with new and innovative approaches to teaching and an expanded curriculum that included “ethnic studies.” As it was ultimately approved in 1970, the plan entailed integrated primary “school complexes,” which would operate as “subdistricts.” The first two complexes were slated for the Richmond and South Park districts, both predominantly middle-class areas with a modicum of residential integration, and the longest bus rides were estimated to take fifteen minutes.¹⁸¹ Because the plan only involved “limited” busing, the *Sun-Reporter* urged the Board of Education “to implement this plan as soon as possible, and to go forward and complete the job on a citywide basis.”¹⁸² Supervisor Dianne Feinstein, who would run against Alioto on the busing issue in 1971, supported the school complex plan while stating her opposition to “massive” busing to achieve racial balance.¹⁸³ Along with the NAACP, the *Sun-Reporter*, Assemblyman Willie Brown, the San Francisco Teachers Union, the Catholic Interracial Council, and the new liberal school board appointees, many parents in the proposed complex districts responded favorably to the “quality/equality” concept as the idea was studied and debated between 1968 and 1970. They formed themselves into new parent advisory councils to help smooth the implementation of the complex plan.¹⁸⁴ “The proponents of busing are not interested in their children attending schools just so that they might associate with white children,” wrote *Sun-Reporter* columnist Tom Fleming, who supported the school complex plan and its busing component. “They simply want

their children to attend schools where the physical plant of the schools have not reached where the buildings are fit perhaps for livestock to inhabit, and are not staffed by malcontents who are totally insensitive to the needs of the children to receive what is called a quality education.”¹⁸⁵

As one black mother who supported the complex plan explained, “integration is also a necessary ingredient in achieving quality education.”¹⁸⁶ Black parents in Hunters Point and black power groups such as the Black Panthers, who sought to improve education for black children through “community control” of neighborhood schools, did not protest the complex plan since it did not affect their district. “Prospects for the venture seemed remarkably good,” David Kirp has written,” adding that “at the beginning of 1970 it seemed that a peaceful revolution, achieved through the political process, was at hand.”¹⁸⁷

But Parents and Taxpayers and MSNS reacted with outrage. At one volatile school board meeting, a Parents and Taxpayers member warned that without proper organization “minorities can overrun us.”¹⁸⁸ On another occasion a contingent of 100 angry MSNS members stormed a school board meeting carrying signs that read “Books not Buses”; “They’re our children – ask the parents”; and “If buses come in, Jenkins goes out.” The mothers found an unexpected ally in members of the Teamsters, who, according to one account, joined them “to oppose- with their presence and later, apparently, with their fists – a proposal to integrate schools through bussing.”¹⁸⁹ “We will go down fighting,” one Teamster declared at the meeting, in which several African Americans, along with a *Chronicle* photographer, were physically assaulted and a group of eight black mothers, also opposed to busing, had to be escorted out of the meeting by police after they were accosted by a group of anti-busing white men. According to the *Sun-Reporter*, anti-busing activists outnumbered those who supported busing – mostly students and teachers – by a margin of three to two of the approximately 800 people in attendance.¹⁹⁰ As tensions

mounted between proponents and opponents of the school complex plan over the next several months, the *Sun-Reporter* called upon Alioto to intervene by supporting the Board of Education. “Although he has proved to be lukewarm on the idea of bussing,” an editorial stated, “he certainly must admit that no alternative plan has been brought forward.” The editorial also suggested that Alioto might be able to convince the “anti-bussing faction” to support the plan as well.¹⁹¹

It was in this polarizing atmosphere that Alioto sought to intervene in the school desegregation controversy by capturing the anti-busing movement and making it compatible with his brand of urban liberalism. Alioto had remained on the sidelines prior to the school board’s approval of the school complex plan in 1970 (although critics claimed that he should have taken action to change the neighborhood school policy while serving on the school board in the 1950s). Since being retained by the school board in its litigation with the NAACP in 1962, Alioto had supported several measures to address the racial imbalance in the city’s schools, including the redrawing of school districts and the *voluntary* busing of students.¹⁹² He also was impressed with the “quality/equality” concept. But he could not condone – morally nor politically – the *involuntary* busing of first, second, and third graders away from their neighborhood schools to achieve racial integration, even it entailed busing over short distances. Alioto considered busing a “measure of last resort” whose time had yet to arrive. It was, he argued, “confusing”, “disruptive”, and an “emotionally charged issue” that obscured the ultimate goal of providing all children with a quality education.¹⁹³ Such statements earned him plaudits from anti-busing activists, and a new group called “Concerned Parents” praised Alioto’s “courageous stand on the subject of busing.”¹⁹⁴ At the same time Alioto was unwilling to let those activists dictate the course of events. Thus he also opposed the campaign waged by anti-busing groups and

conservative Supervisor John Barbagelata to put the issue of “compulsory busing” on the November ballot. Alioto predicted (incorrectly, as it would turn out) that the ballot measure, which ultimately appeared as Proposition H and resulted in a symbolic victory for the anti-busing movement, would further ignite racial animosities.¹⁹⁵ But so too would busing plans. Drawing an equal mixture of jeers and cheers, Alioto angrily admonished board members at a raucous 1970 meeting that they were inviting “destructive turmoil” if they moved forward with the school complex plan. As he raised his voice to a fever pitch, he closed his remarks by exclaiming, “I don’t know how I can make you understand that you are walking into a storm that you can avoid!”¹⁹⁶

With his reelection a year away, Alioto was keenly aware that busing had the potential to alienate both black and white voters. He recognized that busing was precisely the type of issue that was driving the “silent majority,” “middle America” and the “forgotten man” away from the Democratic Party. Tom Fleming critically mused that Alioto “had perhaps been impressed with the term silent majority which was a weapon used by Richard Nixon and Strom Thurmond.”¹⁹⁷ But Alioto would have vehemently disagreed. “There has been a tendency in some eastern cities, and one which we must carefully guard against here, for some whites to become alienated as government concentrates on the problems of minorities,” he stated in a 1969 speech that addressed busing. “They feel that government does for others what it isn’t doing for them.”¹⁹⁸ As he did on numerous occasions when dealing with other issues, Alioto sought out a different path for San Francisco. By positioning himself in the vanguard of the busing opposition, he hoped that he could guide the “Moderate Majority,” as one letter-writer to the *San Francisco Chronicle* called it, through a rational and tame course of resistance.¹⁹⁹ Thus, he convinced Concerned Parents to seek a legal remedy by filing suit in the California Supreme Court to prevent

implementation of the school complex plan rather than aggressively confront their adversaries at school board meetings.²⁰⁰ Meanwhile, the school district, which by 1970 was beset with a number of crises ranging from budgetary problems, a teachers strike, demands from Spanish-speaking parents for bilingual education, and a report calling for sixty-two schools to be either closed or remodeled because they were not fit to withstand an earthquake, moved forward with the Richmond Complex nonetheless. “The complex did demonstrate that desegregation within a relatively homogeneous extended neighborhood could work and permitted teachers to try out new instructional methods and materials,” David Kirp has concluded. “But the complex did not meet the expectations of its creators.”²⁰¹

Alioto’s attempt to tame the white backlash generated a backlash of its own among liberal and civil rights groups. The NAACP, *Sun-Reporter*, pro-integration parent organizations, and liberal members of the school board criticized the mayor for his brazen public intervention in the matter. In a public letter, Percy Steele, executive director of the Bay Area Urban League, warned the mayor that his “actions are being interpreted as racist in intent and there is no question about the fact that you have generated the racists in our community to prevent our making the badly needed progress toward an Open Society.”²⁰² The *Sun-Reporter* considered Alioto’s anti-busing stance evidence of his deep-seated racism.²⁰³ Whereas eight months earlier it had called on the mayor for leadership, it now condemned him for “his intrusion into the very sensitive area of educational policymaking.”²⁰⁴ Jack Morrison, the progressive supervisor who Alioto defeated in 1967, surmised that Alioto was attempting to “appeal to the forgotten man; that is, to the legions of the lower middle class who yearn, so it is assumed, for the golden summer afternoons of a mythological American past.”²⁰⁵ Criticism from progressive liberals was enough to raise the concern of Alioto’s staff, who warned that his defiant position on busing was

not worth the political risks. By opposing the school complex program, one aide worried that he would further divide the community and entice President Nixon “to bring an action under Title VI (Civil Rights Act) against a big city northern school system with a Democratic Mayor who opposes busing” (emphasis in original). Even worse, he risked compromising his own liberal values while alienating his liberal base with his reelection looming on the horizon. “A leader who shifts his position to placate ‘middle America’, rather than lead it, will have to keep shifting to the right or be dumped by ‘middle America’,” this particular advisor explained as he urged Alioto to support the complex plan. “Your instincts are progressive and so is your past record,” he pleaded. “Lead now, talking and listening to Middle America, but not being led by it,” (emphasis in original).²⁰⁶ Such counsel was too little and too late. Alioto was committed to his position, and in the summer of 1970 the local NAACP, frustrated at the slow pace of desegregation after eight years and bristling at Alioto’s intransigence, filed a lawsuit in federal court seeking the complete desegregation of the city’s elementary schools. “I had hoped that we might avoid this, but the mayor has turned desegregation into a political and emotional battleground,” local NAACP president Charles Belle informed Robert Jenkins. “We’ll get an instant solution in federal court.”²⁰⁷

The NAACP suit hastened the climax of the school busing controversy in San Francisco. In April 1971, Federal District Court Judge Stanley Weigel ruled in the NAACP’s favor and ordered the desegregation of San Francisco’s elementary schools, making it the second city in the nation and the first outside the South to implement a court-ordered busing plan to achieve school desegregation. He gave both the district and the NAACP a mere six weeks to figure out how to accomplish this for the forthcoming school year.²⁰⁸ In contrast to subsequent busing plans in other cities that primarily shuttled students from black “ghetto” schools into “white-ethnic”

working-class neighborhoods and vice versa, the “Horseshoe Plan,” as the San Francisco plan was called, created seven school zones that covered the entire city. Some parents embraced the plan, and the *San Francisco Chronicle* featured the peculiar sight of affluent white parents happily preparing to send their children to schools that had been attended by predominantly poor nonwhite students the year before.²⁰⁹ Parents who formed councils to help facilitate bussing felt that the pro-busing parents were in the majority.²¹⁰ But opponents to the plan could be found among parents of every race and ethnicity throughout the city. Many black parents in Hunters Point were reluctant to allow their children to be bused across town, and a vocal contingent of Chinese-American parents and community leaders vehemently opposed any program that might undermine the language and cultural instruction their children received in Chinatown schools.²¹¹ Alioto also vocally opposed the order, wondering aloud why bussing “has to be thrust on the people in a compact city like San Francisco” when “99 percent of the Chinese, 78 percent of the black community and 75 percent of the Chicano community is against bussing.”²¹² The scope of the plan made it easier for Alioto and bussing opponents of various political ilk to shift the discursive framework of the debate away from civil rights and integration and towards issues of parent and community rights, child safety, and quality education.

Alioto hoped to challenge the bussing plan while controlling the extreme wing of the anti-bussing movement that openly discussed plans to defy the order. In Marjorie Lemlow’s opinion, the totalitarian state of the MSNS’s nightmares had finally arrived. “Do we disobey the law for our children and our families,” she asked a crowd of like-minded parents, “or do we allow the social planners to take over?”²¹³ The answer was clear. Lemlow and others sought to oppose bussing on two fronts. First, MSNS, Parents and Taxpayers, and Concerned Parents partnered a second time with John Barbagelata on a ballot initiative, this one to make the school board

elective rather than appointive. This was the type of orderly protest that Alioto approved. Thus while he devoted considerable energy to strengthening the mayor's office in other areas, he endorsed the ballot measure – which would have removed an appointive power from his desk. In the meantime, he appointed two moderates opposed to busing – one of whom became the first Chinese-American to serve on the board – to replace pro-busing liberals Alan Nichols and Laurel Glass.²¹⁴ Alioto was more concerned with the second avenue of anti-busing protest. During the summer MSNS partnered with a new group called WALK (We All Love Kids) to organize a school boycott in the fall. In the days before the busing order was to take effect in September, Alioto, who encouraged angry parents challenge to Judge Weigel's order in the courts instead of in the streets, told parents that they had two options: send their children to school or peacefully keep them at home. Alioto guaranteed the safety of all children and used his influence among busing opponents to discourage physical acts that might provoke disorder. "Violence is more than hitting someone, or blowing something up," he warned. "If three people are standing so that they prohibit me from passing, that's violence. And if they are standing in front of a school bus, that I would consider violence." But he was also careful to add that "if they took a child who doesn't want to be bused and flung him on a bus, that's violence too."²¹⁵

Just as he had with his support for the Tac Squad and police conduct during the San Francisco State strike, Alioto's public stance against busing placed ILWU leaders in an uncomfortable position. As the controversy over school integration unfolded during the late 1960s, the ILWU joined other liberals by endorsing school busing as a national issue and were prepared to support it at the local level. The issue was further complicated by the fact that the beginning of the court-ordered busing plan coincided with Alioto's reelection campaign in the fall of 1971, in which the ILWU was to play a large part just as it had in 1967. The question over

whether to try to convince Alioto to vocally support the busing plan or break with him on the busing issue created intense debates within ILWU leadership. At first the union showed signs of splitting with the mayor. After the stormy school board meeting in February 1969 in which Teamster union members allegedly attacked pro-busing audience members, ILWU leaders called on Alioto to investigate “the meeting and the attack by goons.”²¹⁶ The ILWU went on record supporting the school complex plan in 1969 and sent representatives to school board meetings at which the complex plan and busing was discussed. The ILWU supported busing, Curtis McClain explained in the summer of 1969, because it would produce “a better integrated classroom” and a “better understanding” among students of different racial backgrounds.²¹⁷ ILWU members later picketed City Hall in protest when Alioto spoke out against the plan in 1970.²¹⁸ David Jenkins, who regularly spoke publicly in favor of busing plans, remembers challenging Alioto’s stance on busing at one community meeting, after which the mayor “hit me on the back and said, ‘It takes two to tango’.” But the incident led to a tense confrontation between Jenkins and Revels Cayton, who, along with Bill Chester and LeRoy King, did not think busing was “a life and death issue” and did not think the ILWU should publicly oppose Alioto’s stance, let alone break their political alliance. “Why are you endangering all of us who have power by fighting with him,” Cayton fumed.²¹⁹ Cayton considered the complexity of the issue and likely recognized that many black, Latino, and Chinese-American parents opposed busing as well, and that Alioto did not advocate defying the court order. Following Cayton’s lead, from that point on the ILWU mostly refrained from publicly discussing busing and were even willing to use the issue as a political football. LeRoy King attacked Alioto’s chief liberal opponent, Board of Supervisors president Dianne Feinstein, who had decided to enter the race because of her disapproval of Alioto’s opposition to busing. Feinstein had accused Alioto of using the busing issue to “curry political favor,” and

warned against “a war in the streets with children caught in the crossfire of bigotry, irrationality, and intolerance.”²²⁰ But in a public letter circulated by the Labor Assembly for Community Action, King denounced Feinstein as a hypocrite for attacking Alioto’s position while sending her own daughter to a private school (although her daughter was 14 and therefore would not have been included in the busing plan).²²¹

Ever-vigilant of his black political rivals, Carlton Goodlett relentlessly attacked the decision of the ILWU and black trade unionists to stand by Alioto throughout the busing controversy and to once again spearhead his campaign in the city’s black precincts. Goodlett had expressed some ambivalence toward busing in the preceding three years, but he had supported the school complex plan and Judge Weigel’s busing order. And although some black parents opposed city-wide busing, Goodlett equated opposition to busing with racism and bigotry.²²² As one *Sun-Reporter* editorial put it, “Busing has now become a code word for ‘Keep blacks out of our schools’ just like the term law and order really means ‘Keep blacks in their place’.”²²³ Meanwhile, the *Sun-Reporter* assailed Alioto for failing to lead and for capitulating to the forces of racism, equating him with anti-busing Republicans Ronald Reagan and Richard Nixon.²²⁴ A *Sun-Reporter* editorial considered the mayor’s anti-busing position “by far the most vicious sin committed ... against the Black community.”²²⁵ As ILWU leaders and black trade unionists refrained from challenging Alioto on busing in 1970 and 1971, the *Sun-Reporter* regularly challenged them to make their position public. “This is one of the first important controversies involving racism in San Francisco in which the ILWU, from its international officers to its articulate membership, has developed what approaches a deafening conspiracy of silence,” one editorial charged.²²⁶ “During the four Alioto years, where have been the voices of the Labor Assembly for Community Action and the ILWU’s black appointees on every crucial issue?”

asked another editorial.²²⁷ Goodlett hoped that Alioto's anti-busing stance and black trade unionists' acquiescence would restore the balance of political power in the black community. Goodlett and other black professionals endorsed Dianne Feinstein, who opposed Alioto and anti-busing activists with "courage and forthrightness." Moreover, Goodlett felt that she would "desert 'old croney-ism' and search for new leaders."²²⁸

But Goodlett was no more successful in preventing Alioto's reelection than the mayor was in stopping the buses from rolling on September 13, 1971. Marjorie Lemlow later lamented that "Heartless computers separated children from home environment."²²⁹ But there was no violence (only mix-ups) when the buses began transporting schoolchildren to their new schools. And although 41 percent of the city's primary students stayed home on the first day of school, they quickly began attending classes over the course of the next few weeks (although approximately 1,000 Chinese-American parents kept their children home for more than a year). Newspapers across the country reported with some surprise on the calm and peacefulness that prevailed during the first days of busing in San Francisco, with the *New York Times* observing that there was "not even a hint of violence."²³⁰ Alioto could take pride and satisfaction that San Francisco avoided some of the violent clashes over busing that took place in other northern cities, such as Pontiac, Michigan and Boston.²³¹ That outcome also likely made the ILWU and black trade unionists more comfortable with their decision to stand by the mayor. That November Alioto easily defeated his two main challengers on the left and the right, Feinstein and Republican Harold Dobbs, respectively. If anything, his handling of the busing issue helped him defeat Dobbs, who finished second and had sought to capitalize on white opposition to busing.²³² Yet, thanks again to black ILWU leaders, Alioto still polled well in black precincts.²³³ Busing was a messy issue that defied the simple morality play of other civil rights issues such as police

brutality. For black ILWU leaders, it was not worth breaking with Alioto and risking losing political power. Just as Goodlett had alleged, they chose to remain silent on the issue. The convinced themselves that this was necessary in order to exert their influence in other areas, although they also clearly had become protective of their role as political brokers and were not willing to give it up.

A Mixed Legacy

As 1970 drew to a close, longtime San Francisco labor reporter Dick Meister critically noted that the ILWU, which had “previously stood outside City Hall taking Marxist [*sic*] pot-shots, have gone inside eagerly to join a mayor who is ...essentially conservative.” Yet he also acknowledged that ILWU officials, along with other labor leaders in Alioto’s administration, believed that their influence had “resulted in gains that otherwise would have been impossible.”²³⁴ Looking back at this period several decades later, David Johnson, a onetime member of the Negro American Labor Council and the Labor Assembly for Community Action, stated that the ILWU and its black activists were “responsible for the shift of San Francisco from a conservative town to a liberal place.”²³⁵ Former ILWU leaders’ reflections on the Alioto years evoke a similar tension between the union’s left-wing heritage and its political ambitions. “I think that Alioto was one of the greatest mayors ... no question about it,” LeRoy King commented more than two decades after Alioto left office. “He followed through ... We broke through.”²³⁶ On the other hand, King’s longtime friend and fellow Local 6 member, Keith Eickman, had a more jaundiced view of the alliance with Alioto. “He used [the labor movement], and to a degree we all used him,” Eickman averred in 1981. “But I think in the long run, he came out best.”²³⁷

The union's greatest contribution to race relations in San Francisco during these years was its role in bringing African Americans, and racial minorities more generally, into municipal government. As King suggested, the dramatic increase in black participation in city agencies and commissions in the late 1960s and early 1970s was significant even in a city with a liberal reputation such as San Francisco. Representation in city government had ranked high among the goals of black political activists – radicals and moderates alike – for several decades. One measure of this significance of Alioto's black appointments was a 1970 study of racial attitudes in fifteen major American cities in which black San Franciscans ranked only behind three other cities – including Cleveland and Gary, Indiana, both of which had black mayors – in satisfaction with their mayor.²³⁸ In this respect, the black labor leaders who helped elect Alioto did much to advance the cause and shape the character of black political influence in San Francisco. "We broke down doors; we changed the face of city hall," David Jenkins recalled. "This was done by Alioto, with Revels Cayton and Chester as consultants."²³⁹ Moreover, it is worth noting that in San Francisco, the first major influx of African Americans into municipal government came not from the professional or business ranks, but from that of organized labor. As one ILWU leader pointed out in 1970, whereas the few previous African-Americans who obtained any municipal posts were all "middle-class blacks," the ILWU had "brought in black labor and the black poor."²⁴⁰ Justifying the decision to partner with Alioto, David Jenkins added that the union "had the advantage of picking progressive people; blacks, particularly, by the hundreds came into jobs."²⁴¹

There is no question that the ILWU and black trade unionists, in concert with Alioto, changed the face of San Francisco government. Yet as their critics frequently pointed out, the labor leaders who obtained these positions derived material and political benefits from these

appointments. Moreover, aside from these appointments, black trade unionists' opportunities to effect change, and to push San Francisco's governing liberal coalition to the left, were limited. Whereas they were able to combat some of the worst effects of redevelopment, on other issues, such as in Alioto's support of the police Tactical Squad and his vocal opposition to busing, they appeared to have no influence at all. In this sense, as Eickman intimated, Alioto benefited the most from the partnership. His labor appointments and black labor advisors helped to defuse racial tensions, while giving the appearance of African-American support for his stances on controversial issues such as busing. Alioto used this to make the claim that race relations in San Francisco were better than in other major cities and that it was surviving the urban crisis.

San Francisco may not have experienced the same level of crisis as Detroit, Newark, or even New York, but racial tensions still existed in the city. The ILWU, and African American trade unionists more generally, found themselves exposed to criticism for their close alliance with Alioto. In the two decades following World War II, the ILWU, and to a lesser extent other unions with large black memberships such as the Transport Workers Union Local 250 and Laborers Local 261, had considered themselves as representatives of the black working class. But by the late 1960s black power activists in particular considered black trade unionists as part of the establishment and thus out of touch with the need of the majority of black San Franciscans. The next chapter explores the attempts of the most notorious black power group in the region, the Black Panther Party, to wrestle control of one of the city's strongest unions from its liberal black leadership.

¹ Joseph L. Alioto, *Report on the State of Affairs of the City*, October 4, 1971, 1-2, Box 17, Folder 59, Series 5, Joseph L. Alioto Mayoral Papers, San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library, San Francisco, CA.

² Proceedings of the Twentieth Biennial Convention of the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union, April 30 to May 5, 1973, San Francisco, CA, p. 74.

³ Nelson Lichtenstein, "From Corporatism to Collective Bargaining: Organized Labor and the Eclipse of Social Democracy in the Postwar Era," in Steven Fraser and Gary Gerstle, eds., *The Rise and Fall of the New Deal Order, 1930-1980* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989), 122-152, quote appears on p. 123.

⁴ Most histories of the "urban crisis" focus on its structural causes or the challenges that it brought upon urban liberals from both the political left and right. See, Sugrue, *Self, Countryman*,

⁵ Flora Lewis, "He Uses '30s Methods on New Problems," *Newsday*, May 31, 1968.

⁶ Tom Wicker, "In the Nation: Making Sense in San Francisco," *New York Times*, December 7, 1967 46.

⁷ Richard Hobbs Oral History Interviews With Revels Cayton, 1976-1987, Accession Number 5483-001, University of Washington Libraries, 179-181; Hobbs, *The Cayton Family Legacy*, 199.

⁸ *The Dispatcher*, November 22, 1968; Bill Chester Interview, 41-42.

⁹ Frederick M. Wirt, "Alioto and the Politics of HyperPluralism," *Trans-action*, April 1970, 53.

¹⁰ Larry Martin, interview by author, June 26, 2009, San Francisco, CA.

¹¹ Sidney Roger conducted by Julie Shearer, 1989 and 1990, International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Oral History Series, Regional Oral History Office, University of California at Berkeley, hereafter cited as Sidney Roger Oral History, 828.

¹² *San Francisco Examiner*, March 29, 1972.

¹³ Kelly Zito, "Mattie Jackson, Community Activist, Dies," *San Francisco Chronicle*, February 20, 2009; "Mattie Jackson, Death Notice," *San Francisco Chronicle*, February 16, 2009; Mattie Jackson, "Mattie Jackson: An Oral History" conducted by Nancy Quam-Wickham in 1996, Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, 2013; My Interview With Larry Martin.

¹⁴ David Jenkins Oral History, 246.

¹⁵ Transcript, National Broadcasting Company, *Meet the Press*, June 15, 1969, Vol. 13, No. 24, 18, Alioto Papers.

¹⁶ Editorial, "Let's Look at Alioto's Record," *Sun-Reporter*, May 16, 1970.

¹⁷ LeRoy King, interview by author, November 6, 2002, San Francisco, CA; Emory Curtis, "The Political Game," *Sun-Reporter*, October 9, 1971; *San Francisco Examiner*, March 29, 1972.

¹⁸ Press Release, Labor Assembly for Community Action, October 6, 1971, Box 18, Folder 15, Alioto Papers.

¹⁹ Quoted in Frederick M. Wirt, *Power in the City: Decision Making in San Francisco* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1974), 266.

²⁰ Wirt, *Power in the City*, 173.

²¹ Jenkins Oral History, 234.

²² Joseph Alioto Interview with Bob Cherney, in author's possession; David Jenkins Oral History, 235.

²³ See William Issel, *Church and State in the City: Catholics and Politics in Twentieth-Century San Francisco* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2013), Chapter Three.

²⁴ Alioto Interview.

²⁵ Statement By Mayor Joseph L. Alioto, n.d. ca. 1968, Alioto Papers, Box 17, Folder 38.

²⁶ Council for Civic Unity, "San Francisco's Housing Market: Open or Closed? *Civil Rights Inventory of San Francisco, Part II – Housing* (1958), 37-38.

²⁷ *San Francisco Chronicle*, November 14, 1957.

²⁸ "San Francisco's Housing Market: Open or Closed?" 37-38.

²⁹ Jenkins Oral History, 245.

³⁰ Issel, *Church and State in the City*, 163.

³¹ Testimony of Frank Quinn, Civil Rights Hearings, 551; Governor's Advisory Commission on Housing Problems, "Summary of Housing in California," January 1963, 19; M. Justin Herman Testimony, Civil Rights Hearings, 534-535.

³² Testimony of M. Justin Herman, Civil Rights Hearings, 535.

³³ Carol Cuenod, "Redevelopment A-1 and the Origins of St. Francis Square," http://foundsf.org/index.php?title=Redevelopment_A-1_and_Origin_of_St._Francis_Square.

³⁴ Rigelhaupt, "Education for Action," 229.

³⁵ Cuenod, "Redevelopment A-1 and the Origins of St. Francis Square."

³⁶ Rigelhaupt, "Education for Action, 232-233.

³⁷ According to Cayton, the key to smoothly integrating St. Francis Square was bringing in white residents prior to opening up units to racial minorities. This tactic created some push-back from black families eager to obtain housing, but helped ensure that whites would not be turned off by nonwhite neighbors. Hobbs, *The Cayton Legacy*, 195-196.

³⁸ *Circling the Square*, July 1967, ILWU housing files, ILWU Library, San Francisco.

³⁹ Carol Cuenod, "Building the St. Francis Community," http://foundsf.org/index.php?title=Building_the_St._Francis_Community.

⁴⁰ Wolf Von Eckardt, "A City That Rose Again Like Phoenix: San Francisco is the World's Sweetheart," *Washington Post/Times Herald*, April 17, 1966; Thoias V. Ennis, "Architects' Institute Selects Award-Winning Buildings," *New York Times*, June 14, 1964, R1; Daryl E. Lembke, "Housing Demand Imperils California Slum Project," *New York Times*, May 14, 1964, F8; Robert C. Weaver, "Urban Renewal is Dispossessing its Critics," *Washington Post/Times Herald*, April 5, 1964.

⁴¹ Quoted in Rigelhaupt, "Education for Action," 234.

⁴² John H. Mollenkopf, *The Contested City* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983), 179.

⁴³ Issel, *Church and State in the City*, 163.

⁴⁴ Issel, *Church and State in the City*, 163-170.

⁴⁵ "ILWU Statement on Dislocation of Residents of Area #2," NCDL Minutes, January 25, 1964, ILWU Archives.

⁴⁶ "ILWU Statement on Dislocation of Residents of Area #2."

⁴⁷ Issel, *Church and State in the City*, 171-172.

⁴⁸ Issel, *Church and State in the City*, 172.

⁴⁹ Rogers quoted in *The Fillmore*, PBS Documentary, <http://www.pbs.org/kqed/fillmore/learning/people/rogers.html>.

⁵⁰ Mollenkopf, *The Contested City*, 186-88.

⁵¹ Williams quoted in *The Fillmore*, PBS Documentary, <http://www.pbs.org/kqed/fillmore/learning/people/williams.html>.

⁵² Ibid., 193; Hartman, *City for Sale*, 76-77.

⁵³ Michael Harris, "Candidates Give Views on Taxes, Race, Transport," *San Francisco Chronicle*, 20 October 1967. Michael Harris, "Alioto Moves in as Shelley Quits," *San Francisco Chronicle*, 9 September 1967. Alioto speech in folder 6, Box 1, Alioto Collection.

⁵⁴ Mollenkopf, *The Contested City*, 194.

⁵⁵ Mollenkopf, *The Contested City*, 190; Hartman, *City for Sale*, 31-32.

⁵⁶ David Jenkins Oral History, 245-246. Jenkins' position was considered part-time, and he was paid through the SFRA.

⁵⁷ From Williams' perspective, the appearance of African Americans in the SFRA was a result of WACO's protests. The ILWU clearly had the influence on who was appointed, but Alioto and the SFRA was likely motivated in part by the appearance of WACO. Williams quoted in *The Fillmore*, PBS Documentary, <http://www.pbs.org/kqed/fillmore/learning/people/williams.html>.

⁵⁸ *The Fillmore*, PBS Documentary, <http://www.pbs.org/kqed/fillmore/learning/people/hamilton.html>.

⁵⁹ Chris Carlsson, "Redevelopment and Patronage Politics," [http://www.foundsf.org/index.php?title=Aframer1\\$wablues\\$patronage_itm.html](http://www.foundsf.org/index.php?title=Aframer1$wablues$patronage_itm.html). Chester Hartman is especially critical of Jenkins and the ILWU for supporting Alioto in *City for Sale: The Transformation of San Francisco* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002).

⁶⁰ Testimony of Wilbur Hamilton, *Recent Developments, New Opportunities in Civil Rights and Women's Rights: A Report of the Proceedings of the Western Regional Civil Rights and Women's Rights Conference IV, Sponsored by the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights in San Francisco, California, June 1977* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1978), 54-55.

⁶¹ Hamilton Quoted in *The Fillmore*, PBS Documentary, <http://www.pbs.org/kqed/fillmore/learning/people/hamilton.html>.

⁶² Harvey Schwartz, ed., "LeRoy King, the Equal Rights Struggle and Labor Politics," *The Dispatcher*, April 2003.

⁶³ “Wilbur Hamilton: Amid all the Confusion one Factor is Certain,” *Sun-Reporter*, December 16, 1976; *The Fillmore*, PBS Documentary, <http://www.pbs.org/kqed/fillmore/learning/people/hamilton.html>.

⁶⁴ David Jenkins Oral History, 245.

⁶⁵ “New Homes in Fillmore,” *Sun-Reporter*, February 13, 1971; “Loren Miller Soon to Open its Doors,” *Sun-Reporter*, April 8, 1972.

⁶⁶ LeRoy King Interview.

⁶⁷ Western Addition Conference Policies and Program, May 4, 1968, Box 9, Folder 30, Alioto Papers.

⁶⁸ Robert Lewis to Joseph Alioto and Revels Cayton, March 27, 1969, Box 9, Folder 28, Alioto Papers; Marion Faye, “A-2 Housing: Western Addition Power and Unity,” *Sun-Reporter*, January 11, 1969, 2; “WA Residents Organize Project Area Committee,” *Sun-Reporter*, January 25, 1969, 8; “WAPAC Funded,” *Sun-Reporter*, September 27, 1969; Mollenkopf, *The Contested City*, 193-194.

⁶⁹ “Wrangling Over WAPAC,” *Sun-Reporter*, May 16, 1970; “Will WACO be Wrecked,” *Sun-Reporter*, June 6, 1970;

⁷⁰ Mollenkopf, *The Contested City*, 200-201.

⁷¹ Hamilton quoted in James Lance Taylor, “Black Churches, People’s Temple, and Civil Rights Politics,” in R. Drew Smith, ed., *From Every Mountainside: Black Churches and the Broad Terrain of Civil Rights* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2013), 91-92.

⁷² Mollenkopf, *The Contested City*, 200-201.

⁷³ Williams quoted in *The Fillmore*, PBS Documentary, <http://www.pbs.org/kqed/fillmore/learning/people/williams.html>.

⁷⁴ David Jenkins Oral History, 245.

⁷⁵ Robert W. Cherny Interview With Joseph Alioto, tape recorded interview in author’s possession.

⁷⁶ Statement by Mayor Joseph L. Alioto on report of President's Commission on Civil Disorders, March 1, 1968, Alioto Papers, Box 17, Folder 19.

⁷⁷ Bill Roddy to John DeLuca, August 5, 1969, Alioto Papers, Box 5, Folder 4.

⁷⁸ Donald McDaniel to Joseph Alioto, January 10, 1972, Box 12, Folder 22, Alioto Papers.

⁷⁹ Carl L. Tilley to Joseph Alioto, January 24, 1972, Box 12, Folder 22, Alioto Papers.

⁸⁰ Crowe, “The Origins of the Black Revolution,” 81-90.

⁸¹ “Goodlett Arrest Raises Police Race Training Issue,” *Sun-Reporter*, August 1, 1959.

⁸² Testimony of Joseph Kennedy, Hearings Before the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, January 25 and 26, 1960, San Francisco (Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1960), 746. Kennedy’s testimony discussed several instances and variations of police harassment and discrimination.

⁸³ *Strictly Ghetto Property*, 72.

⁸⁴ Richard Severo, “Police Can’t Take Work as ‘Routine,’” *Tuscaloosa News*, July 4, 1966; “Expert Says Departments Must Respect Complaints,” *Milwaukee Journal*, April 17, 1966; James O. Clifford, “Police Veterans

Help Idle People Get Jobs,” *The Citizen-Adviser* (Auburn, NY), February 27, 1967; Alvin A. Rosenfeld, “The Friendly Fuzz,” *The Nation*, April 21, 1969.

⁸⁵ Bertrem J. Levine, *Resolving Racial Conflict: The Community Relations Service and Civil Rights, 1964-1989* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2005) 129-132.

⁸⁶ “Police Community Relations Aired in National Magazine,” *Oakland Post*, February 27, 1969.

⁸⁷ Marjorie Heins, *Strictly Ghetto Property: The Story of Los Siete de la Raza* (Berkeley CA: Ramparts Press, 1972), 69-70.

⁸⁸ W. Marvin Dulaney, *Black Police in America* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1996), 76-77; William M. Kephart, *Racial Factors and Urban Law Enforcement* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1957), 135-138.

⁸⁹ The series was written by L. Baynard Whitney and appeared in the *Sun-Reporter*, January 10, 17, 24 and February 7, 1953.

⁹⁰ Sanders quote appears in Prentice Earl Sanders and Bennett Cohen, *Zebra Murders: A Season of Killing, Racial Madness, and Civil Rights* (New York: Skyhorse Publishing, 2006).

⁹¹ LeRoy King Interview; David Jenkins Oral History, 247.

⁹² “The Guardian Interview: Sheriff-elect Richard Hongisto,” *San Francisco Bay Guardian*, December 22, 1971. In 1970 the *Sun-Reporter* suggested that the appointment of Dr. W.E. Garner to the Police Commission was the only high point of Alioto’s term. “Lets Look at Alioto’s Record,” *Sun-Reporter*, May 16, 1970.

⁹³ Benjamin Ward, New York City’s First Black Commissioner, Dies at 75,” *New York Times*, June 11, 2002; 161

⁹⁴ Thomas C. Fleming, “ ‘I Pick My Own Friends,’ Says Police Commissioner Garner,” *Sun-Reporter*, January 24, 1970.

⁹⁵ Bill Mitchell, “Officers for Justice Meet,” *Sun-Reporter*, May 24, 1969; Tom Fleming, “SF Police Charged With Racism,” *Sun-Reporter*, February 15, 1969.

⁹⁶ “Black Cops Demand Reform,” *Sun-Reporter*, February 8, 1969.

⁹⁷ “Officers for Justice Make Charter Plea,” *Sun-Reporter*, August 30, 1969; “Thomas C. Fleming’s Weekly Report,” *Sun-Reporter*, September 20, 1969.

⁹⁸ W. Marvin Dulaney, *Black Police in America* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1996), 76-77.

⁹⁹ “Officers for Justice Demand Recognition,” *Sun-Reporter*, December 5, 1970; Editorial, “Role F Police Needs Examination,” *Sun-Reporter*, November 21, 1970.

¹⁰⁰ “Ridley Says Blacks ‘Up Against the Wall’,” *Oakland Post*, April 24, 1969.

¹⁰¹ LeRoy Williams, “Police-Community Relations Unit: A Racist Victory in the Offing?” *Sun-Reporter*, March 22, 1969; “Bring Back Andreotti,” *Sun-Reporter*, April 12, 1969.

¹⁰² Peter Magnani, “SFPD Teeming With Racism, Court Told,” *Sun-Reporter*, November 3, 1977.

¹⁰³ “Police Community Relations Aired in National Magazine,” *Oakland Post*, February 27, 1969.

¹⁰⁴ “Cahill to Give P-C Relations Unit a Shakeup,” *Oakland Post*, April 10, 1969; *Assignment Four – Hunters Point: A View From the Hill*, KRON, aired October 5, 1969, <https://diva.sfsu.edu/bundles/206166>.

¹⁰⁵ Peter Magnani, “Teeming With Racism, Court Told,” *Sun-Reporter*, November 3, 1977.

¹⁰⁶ “Assignment Four – The People and the Police in San Francisco, KRON-TV, 1973, San Francisco Bay Area Television Archive, San Francisco State University.

¹⁰⁷ San Francisco Committee on Crime, Report on Police Department, Part II, 91-92.

¹⁰⁸ San Francisco Committee on Crime, Report on Police Department, Part II, 92, 96.

¹⁰⁹ Thomas Fleming, “Questions Unanswered in Fuller Case,” *Sun-Reporter*, April 19, 1969.

¹¹⁰ Heins, *Strictly Ghetto Property*, 70.

¹¹¹ “Crime Squads Found in Many US Cities,” *The Milwaukee Journal*, September 10, 1969.

¹¹² “Black Women Criticize Police Department,” *Sun-Reporter*, March 15, 1969.

¹¹³ “Citizens Group Seeks to Abolish the Tac Squad,” *Sun-Reporter*, March 1, 1969.

¹¹⁴ San Francisco Committee on Crime, Report on Police, Part II, 91-99.

¹¹⁵ Alioto quoted in *Strictly Ghetto Property*, 71.

¹¹⁶ News footage, CBS5-KPIX, April 28, 1969, San Francisco Bay Area Television Archive.

¹¹⁷ Statement by Joseph L. Alioto, Select Committee on Crime, House of Representatives, July 29, 1969, 5-6, Alioto Papers. The Grand Jury rejected Alioto’s request to investigate the Panthers because it found insufficient evidence of a conspiracy to kill police officers.

¹¹⁸ Newsreel footage, KPIX TV, San Francisco, August 4, 1969, San Francisco Bay Area Television Archive, San Francisco State University.

¹¹⁹ Wirt, *Power in the City*, 266-267.

¹²⁰ *Assignment Four – Hunters Point: A View From the Hill*, KRON, aired October 5, 1969, <https://diva.sfsu.edu/bundles/206166>.

¹²¹ “Adam Rogers – Alioto’s Parrot in Hunters Point,” *The Black Panther*, March 21, 1970.

¹²² *Assignment Four – Hunters Point: A View From the Hill*, KRON, aired October 5, 1969, <https://diva.sfsu.edu/bundles/206166>; William Delaney, *Black and Blue*, 46; Gunman Sought in Adam Rogers Shooting,” *Sun-Reporter*, March 14, 1970.

¹²³ “Community Chooses in Model Cities Election,” *Sun-Reporter*, February 26, 1972.

¹²⁴ Statement by Joseph L. Alioto, Select Committee on Crime, House of Representatives, July 29, 1969, 5-6, Alioto Papers.

¹²⁵ NCDC Minutes, December 21 1968.

¹²⁶ Quoted in Vivian McGuckin Raineri, *The Red Angel: The Life and Times of Elaine Black Yoneda* (International Publishers, Co. Inc., 1991), 271.

¹²⁷ "'Of This Generation': The New Left and the Student Movements," in Alexander Bloom, ed., *Long Time Gone: Sixties America Then and Now* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2001) 39.

¹²⁸ Issel, *Church and State in the City*, 227-228.

¹²⁹ Peniel Joseph, *Waiting 'til the Midnight Hour: A Narrative History of Black Power in America* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2006), 214-215. For a more detailed analysis of the BSU strike at San Francisco State, see Martha Biondi, *The Black Revolution on Campus* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2012), Chapter 2.

¹³⁰ "Citizens Committee on San Francisco State College," Box 12, Folder 12, Alioto Papers (this folder also contains meeting minutes and reports on the committee's activities in resolving the strike); Issel, *Church and State in the City*, 228.

¹³¹ San Francisco State College Student Strike Committee, "No Deals, Mayor Alioto," Box 12, Folder 12, Alioto Papers.

¹³² Goodlett Interview, 15-16; 30-31.

¹³³ Goodlett FBI File, 86-98.

¹³⁴ Goodlett can be seen in the footage in Saul Rouda and David Dobkin, *On Strike*, documentary film, 1969.

¹³⁵ *San Francisco Examiner*, December 6, 1968; Goodlett FBI File, 164.

¹³⁶ Reginald Major, "Faculty and Labor in the SF State Crisis," *Sun-Reporter*, December 21, 1968.

¹³⁷ NCDC Minutes, November 23, 1968, ILWU Records; "Statement of Policy on Civil Rights and Black Power," ILWU Seventeenth Biennial Convention, San Francisco, CA, April 3-7, 1967, ILWU History File – Minorities – Blacks – 1960-, ILWU Archives. The Statement specified "Black Power" as: The growth of Negro political power; the building of Negro economic power; the improvement of the Negro self-image; the development of Negro leadership; the encouragement of federal law enforcement; the mobilization of Negro consumer power. It also explained that the ILWU "in no way means to depart from the principle and use of labor power, which is the united strength of all workers, of all colors, races, beliefs and national origins."

¹³⁸ NCDC Minutes, February 24, 1968, December 21, 1968, March 1, 1969; "Community Strike Support," *Sun-Reporter*, January 25, 1969.

¹³⁹ Bill Chester Interview, 37. Chester also played a prominent role helping with the teacher strike. NCDC Minutes, January 18, 1969, ILWU Records.

¹⁴⁰ Curtis McClain Interview, 17; NCDC Minutes, March 1, 1969, ILWU Records

¹⁴¹ Bill Chester Interview, 40.

¹⁴² Footage can be viewed in Saul Rouda and David Dobkin, *On Strike*, documentary film, 1969.

¹⁴³ "Black Policemen Endorse Student Demands," *Sun-Reporter*, January 18, 1969.

¹⁴⁴ "Rights nits to 'Observe' S.F. State," *San Francisco Chronicle*, January 10, 1969.

¹⁴⁵ David Jenkins Oral History, 274.

¹⁴⁶ Ben Stewart to Revels Cayton, December 3, 1969, Box 12, Folder 12, Alioto Papers.

¹⁴⁷ Alioto quoted on the Today Show, April 18, 1974, NBC Universal Archives, http://www.nbcuniversalarchives.com/nbcuni/clip/5112796586_005.do?assetId=clip_9632082.

¹⁴⁸ “Blacks Protesting S.F. Police Sweep,” *New York Times*, April 19, 1974, 5.

¹⁴⁹ “Blacks Protesting S.F. Police Sweep,” *New York Times*, April 19, 1974, 5; “Zebra Search Continues Despite Admission of Failure,” *Sun-Reporter*, April 27, 1974; “Bay Area: Citizens Say,” *Oakland Post*, April 28, 1974.

¹⁵⁰ Sanders and Cohen, *The Zebra Murders*, 207.

¹⁵¹ Sanders and Cohen, *The Zebra Murders*, 206.

¹⁵² Thomas C. Fleming, “The Mayor and the Black Community,” *Sun-Reporter*, April 27, 1974. Four black men belonging to the Nation of Islam were eventually arrested and convicted for the Zebra murders and assaults. The four still maintain their innocence. Na’Im Shah, “The Tragedies Surround the Zebra Case,” *Los Angeles Sentinel*, August 13, 2009.

¹⁵³ Jenkins Oral History, 226.

¹⁵⁴ Jenkins Oral History, 242; 262.

¹⁵⁵ Chester FBI File, Memorandum, February 20, 1968.

¹⁵⁶ Jenkins Oral History, 242; 262; 287.

¹⁵⁷ Jenkins Oral History, 264. “Blacks Continue to Vote for Democrats,” *Sun-Reporter*, November 9, 1974; “Ella Hill Hutch, ‘Community Ombudswoman,’” *Sun-Reporter*, September 1, 1977. In 1977 Hutch became the first African American elected to the Board of Supervisors and the first black female to serve on the Board. “Ella Hutch Hill Wins the First Round,” *Sun-Reporter*, November 10, 1977.

¹⁵⁸ Statement of George Christopher, Civil Rights Commission Hearings, 1960, 477-478.

¹⁵⁹ Since 1936 the school board had adhered to a neighborhood school policy, which required it to consider two factors when drawing and redrawing school boundaries: proximity and safety. When first confronted with requests to consider race as a factor when drawing school boundaries, school Superintendent Harold Spears rejected the claim that racial segregation existed and defended the school board’s colorblind approach to education policy. After increased pressure from civil rights groups, in 1963 the school board officially acknowledged that racial segregation existed in the city’s public schools. Harold Spears, “Superintendent’s Report of June 19, 1962: the Proper Recognition of a Pupil’s Racial Background in the San Francisco Unified School District, Box 93, Records of the San Francisco Unified School District, SFHC, SFPL, San Francisco, CA; David Kirp, *Just Schools*, 85-87.

¹⁶⁰ David Kirp, *Just Schools: The Idea of Racial Equality in American Education*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1982, 88-89; Doris Fine, *When Leadership Fails: Desegregation and Demoralization in the San Francisco Schools* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, Inc., 1986), 37.

¹⁶¹ *Report of the Ad Hoc Committee of the Board of Education to Study Ethnic Factors in the San Francisco Schools*, 7-9, Box 93, Records of the SFUSC, SFHC, SFPL.

¹⁶² “Reporter’s Transcript of Meeting,” San Francisco Board of Education, September 18, 1962, p. 22, Box 93, Records of the San Francisco Unified School District, SFPL.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 144.

¹⁶⁴ Carolyn Anspacher, “School Board Asks Talks on Central,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, August 17, 1962.

¹⁶⁵ Ronald Moscowitz, "S.F. School Racial Study Opposed," *San Francisco Examiner*, August 30, 1962.

¹⁶⁶ "Human Rights Commission of San Francisco and the Ad Hoc Committee of the San Francisco Board of Education Joint Conference on Racial and Ethnic Distribution in San Francisco Schools," Thursday, August 26, 1965, 18-19, Box 93, Records of SFUSD, SFHC, SFPL.

¹⁶⁷ Kirp, *Just Schools*, 88; Fine, *When Leadership Fails*, 33.

¹⁶⁸ Fine, *When Leadership Fails*, 38.

¹⁶⁹ Kirp, "School Desegregation in San Francisco," 115.

¹⁷⁰ Transcript, "Human Rights Committee of the City and County of San Francisco and Ad Hoc Committee of the San Francisco Board of Education Joint Conference on Racial and Ethnic Distribution in San Francisco Schools," Monday August 26, 1965, 55, Box 93, Records of SFUSD, SFHC, SFPL. On the New York chapter of Parents and Taxpayers, see Fred Powledge, "Busing Still an Issue," *New York Times*, January 13, 1965.

¹⁷¹ "Sensitivity Training," San Francisco: Mothers Support Neighborhood Schools, Inc., 1968, Wilcox Collection, University of Kansas Libraries, quote appears on p. 3.

¹⁷² Vipiana's biographical information can be found on the website for the Marin County Republican Party, <http://www.maringop.org/about.html#vipiana>.

¹⁷³ "Sensitive Training," 3; NBC Evening News, April 11, 1969, Vanderbilt Television Archives, Vanderbilt University, Tennessee.

¹⁷⁴ See, Alan A. Altshuler, *Community Control: The Black Demand for Participation in Large American Cities* (New York: Pegasus, 1970), 13-17; A. Donald Bourgeois, "Community Control and Urban Conflict," *Theory Into Practice* Vol 8, No. 4 (October 1969): 243-246; Norman I. Fainstein and Susan S. Fainstein, "The Future of Community Control," *The American Political Science Review* Vol. 70, No. 3 (September 1976): 905-923; A. Donald Bourgeois, "Community Control and Urban Conflict," *Theory Into Practice* Vol. 8, No. 4 (October 1969): 243-246; Joseph Rodriguez, "Transit and Community Power: West Oakland Residents Confront BART," *Antipode* 31, No. 2 (1999): 229-242

¹⁷⁵ Fine, *When Leadership Fails*, 38; Transcript, "Human Rights Committee of the City and County of San Francisco and Ad Hoc Committee of the San Francisco Board of Education Joint Conference on Racial and Ethnic Distribution in San Francisco Schools," Monday August 26, 1965, 20, Box 93, Records of SFUSD, SFHC, SFPL.

¹⁷⁶ Kirp, *Just Schools*, 90; Fine, *When Leadership Fails*, 38.

¹⁷⁷ Kirp, *Just Schools*, 88, 94.

¹⁷⁸ "John Muir Boycott to Continue," *Sun-Reporter*, March 11, 1967; "School Boycotters' Raid," *San Francisco Chronicle*, March 17, 1967; "Mothers' Vigil' at Muir School," *San Francisco Chronicle*, March 28, 1967.

¹⁷⁹ "School Board Uproar," *Sun-Reporter*, February 10, 1968.

¹⁸⁰ "School Board Meeting Disrupted," *Sun-Reporter*, March 1, 1969.

¹⁸¹ Kirp, *Just Schools*, 90-91.

¹⁸² Editorial, "School Integration Now," *Sun-Reporter*, June 7, 1969.

¹⁸³ Dianne Feinstein Warns Landlords Against Rent Hikes," *Sun-Reporter*, July 18, 1970.

¹⁸⁴ "Black Parents Fight for Busing," *Sun-Reporter*, April 11, 1970; Kirp, *Just Schools*, 91.

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- ¹⁸⁵ “Thomas C. Fleming’s Weekly Report,” *Sun-Reporter*, April 5 1969.
- ¹⁸⁶ “A Black Mother Views S.F. School System,” *Sun-Reporter*, April 5, 1969.
- ¹⁸⁷ Kirp, *Just Schools*, 92.
- ¹⁸⁸ “School Board Meeting Disrupted,” *Sun-Reporter*, March 1, 1969.
- ¹⁸⁹ “School Board Uproar – No One Wants Busing,” *Sun-Reporter*, February 10, 1968; Peter Schrag, “The Forgotten American,” *Harper’s*, August 1969, 27-34.
- ¹⁹⁰ “Insults and Violence: School Board Meeting Disrupted,” *Sun-Reporter*, March 1, 1969; “Good Squad: No Arrests Made in School Board Beatings,” *Sun-Reporter*, March 8, 1969.
- ¹⁹¹ Editorial, “Let’s Follow Through on Schools,” *Sun-Reporter*, June 14, 1969.
- ¹⁹² Kirp, *Just Schools*, 93.
- ¹⁹³ Statement By Mayor Joseph L. Alioto, January 29, 1970, Box 15, Folder 25, Alioto Papers.
- ¹⁹⁴ “Parents Group Lauds Alioto,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, February 1, 1970;
- ¹⁹⁵ “Busing is not on Ballot yet,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, February 6, 1970; Jerry Burns, “Alioto Offers Deal on School Busing,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, February 10, 1970.
- Proposition H was worded as follows: “Shall the San Francisco Unified School District assign or move elementary schoolchildren to schools outside their immediate neighborhood without parental consent?” The “Yes” vote was 39,484; the “No” vote was 132,007. Testimony of Margorie Leimlow, 1397.
- ¹⁹⁶ NBC New: The Huntley Brinkley Report, February 25, 1970, Vanderbilt Television News Archive, Vanderbilt University, Tennessee.
- ¹⁹⁷ “Thomas C. Fleming’s Weekly Report,” *Sun-Reporter*, February 21 1970.
- ¹⁹⁸ Joseph L. Alioto, “Speech to City Commissioners and Committee Members,” June 9, 1969, 4, Alioto Papers, Box 17, Folder 20, SFHC, SFPL.
- ¹⁹⁹ Roger Nichols to Editor, *San Francisco Chronicle*, August 22, 1971.
- ²⁰⁰ Kirp, *Just Schools*, 93.
- ²⁰¹ Kirp, *Just Schools*, 98-99.
- ²⁰² Percy H. Steele, “Alioto Wrong,” *Sun-Reporter*, March 14, 1970.
- ²⁰³ Editorial, “Alioto Brews A Racial Nightmare,” *Sun-Reporter*, June 13 1970
- ²⁰⁴ Editorial, “Busing Controversy Continues,” *Sun-Reporter*, February 14, 1970.
- ²⁰⁵ Jack Morrison, “Critiques of the mayor, the supervisors and their ‘forgotten men’,” *San Francisco Bay Guardian*, April 17, 1970.
- ²⁰⁶ “Draft of Suggested Position,” nd, Alioto Papers, Box 15, Folder 25, SFHC, SFPL.
- ²⁰⁷ Kirp, *Just Schools: The Idea of Racial Equality in American Education* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1982), 93-94.

²⁰⁸ Weigel issued the decision a week after the United States Supreme Court ruled in *Schwann v. Charlotte-Mecklenberg Board of Education*. According to David Kirp, Weigel, who was extremely sympathetic to the plaintiff's argument throughout the proceedings, wanted that decision in hand before issuing his decision. See Kirp's analysis of the ruling and the process of adopting a desegregation plan, *Just Schools*, 94-107.

²⁰⁹ "The Parents Who Support Busing," *San Francisco Chronicle*, September 6, 1971; Ron Moskowitz, "S.F.'s Pro-Busing Parents," *San Francisco Chronicle*, September 8, 1971.

²¹⁰ "Parents Support Busing," *Sun-Reporter*, September 11, 1971; "Dudley Stone Parents Night," *Sun-Reporter*, September 25, 1971.

²¹¹ "A Negro Mother's Case Against School Busing," *San Francisco Examiner*, March 6, 1970; Newspaper coverage featured regular coverage of Chinatown protests. See, for example, Maitland Zane, "A Chinatown Plan for 'Freedom Schools,' Told," *San Francisco Chronicle*, September 9, 1971. See also, Kirp, *Just Schools*, 103-104.

²¹² Marshall Schwartz, "Mayor Tears Into Integration Plan," *San Francisco Chronicle*, June 5, 1971; The poll conducted by the Multi-Media Research and Development Company was published in the *San Francisco Examiner & Chronicle*, August 29, 1971. The poll indicated Chinese opposition at 92%, black opposition at 56%, and Latin-American opposition at 59%.

²¹³ "Parents Vote to Boycott Schools," *San Francisco Chronicle*, September 1, 1971.

²¹⁴ Nichols did not seek reappointment but Glass did, and Alioto's refusal to reappoint her sparked protests. Biographical information on the two men chosen to replace them, George Chinn (the first Chinese-American to serve on the Board) and r. Eugene Hopp are available in the Records of the SFUSD, Box 3, Folder 14.

²¹⁵ Ron Moskowitz, "Alioto Guarantees Pupils' Safety," *San Francisco Chronicle*, September 9, 1971; "Alioto Urges Busing Foes to Cool It," *San Francisco Chronicle*, September 8, 1971; Handwritten Speech, nd, Alioto Papers, Box 18, Folder 9.

²¹⁶ NCDC Minutes, March 1, 1969.

²¹⁷ NCDC Minutes, March 1, 1969; Curtis McClain Interview by Robert Martin, July 11, 1969, 23-24.

²¹⁸ "S.F. School Board Debate," *Sun-Reporter*, June 7, 1969; Sashi Dalal, "Protest Against Alioto's Move," *Sun-Reporter*, February 14, 1970.

²¹⁹ Jenkins Oral History, 226.

²²⁰ "San Francisco's Effort is Massive for Peaceful Busing of Youngsters," *Oakland Post*, September 16, 1971.

²²¹ LeRoy King Interview. Excerpts of the letter appear in a press release for the Labor Assembly for Community Action, October 6, 1971, Box 18, older 15 Alioto Papers.

²²² "D.G. Comments," *Sun-Reporter*, May 7, 1970.

²²³ Editorial, "On Education," *Sun-Reporter*, May 30, 1971.

²²⁴ See, for example, Editorial, "Busing – The Gathering Storm," *Sun-Reporter*, February 7, 1970; Editorial, "Busing Controversy Continues," *Sun-Reporter*, February 14, 1970; "Thomas C. Fleming's Weekly Report," *Sun-Reporter*, February 21, 1970; Editorial, "The Many Faces of His Honor," *Sun-Reporter*, June 12, 1971; "Thomas C. Fleming's Weekly Report," *Sun-Reporter*, September 18, 1971.

²²⁵ Editorial, "Dianne Feinstein for Mayor," *Sun-Reporter*, October 30, 1971.

²²⁶ Editorial, "Alioto Brews a Racial Nightmare," *Sun-Reporter*, June 13, 1970.

²²⁷ "The Black Labor Bandwagon," *Sun-Reporter*, October 1971.

²²⁸ Editorial, "Dianne Feinstein for Mayor," *Sun-Reporter*, October 30, 1971.

²²⁹ Lemlow Testimony, "School Busing: Hearings Before Committee of the Judiciary, House of Representatives, Ninety-Second Congress, Second Session on Proposed Amendment to the Constitution and Legislation Relating to Transportation and Assignment of Public School Pupils, Part 3," February – May, 1972, 1398.

²³⁰ NBC Nightly News, September 14, 1971, Vanderbilt University Television Archives; Wallace Turner, "Many Shun Buses in San Francisco," *New York Times*, September 14, 1971; Leroy F. Aarons, "San Francisco School Busing Starts Calmly," *Washington Post, Times Herald*, September 14, 1971; "San Francisco's Busing Boycott," *Newsday*, September 14, 1971; "San Francisco's Effort is Massive for Peaceful Busing of Youngsters," *Oakland Post*, September 16, 1971.

²³¹ "School Buses in Pontiac, Mich. Are Destroyed by Fire Bombs," *New York Times*, August 31, 1971; George Lardner, Jr. "Black and White Students Fight in Pontiac Busing Controversy, Attendance is Off at Boston School," *Washington Post/Times Herald*, September 9, 1971; "Arrest 9 Women in Busing Row at Pontiac, Mich.: Strife Marks New School Year," *Chicago Tribune*, September 8, 1971; "9 Students Hurt in Pontiac Clash: 9 Adults Arrested Trying to Block Busing Plan," *New York Times*, September 9, 1971; Peter Milius, "School Busing Foes Close Two Pontiac Plants," *Washington Post/Times Herald*, September 15, 1971; Ronald P. Formisano, *Boston Against Busing: Race, Class, and Ethnicity in the 1960s and 1970s* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991).

²³² The *San Francisco Chronicle* and *San Francisco Examiner*, both of which had endorsed Harold Dobbs in 1967, endorsed Alioto in 1971. Leroy F. Aarons, "San Francisco: The Politics of Paradise," *Washington Post/Times Herald*, October 31, 1971.

²³³ *Sun-Reporter*, November 13, 1971.

²³⁴ Dick Meister, "Labor Power," *San Francisco Bay Guardian*, December 23, 1970.

²³⁵ Quoted in, San Francisco African American Historical and Cultural Society, *Sixty-Two Heroes and Pioneers of the Western Addition*, 2010, San Francisco History Center, SFPL, available online, http://archive.org/stream/sixtytwoheroespi2000sanf/sixtytwoheroespi2000sanf_djvu.txt.

²³⁶ LeRoy King Interview.

²³⁷ Keith Eickman, President, Local 6, ILWU, Interviewed by Harvey Schwartz, August 14, 1981, ILWU-NEH-UC Berkley, Oral History Project, ILWU Archives, San Francisco.

²³⁸ Howard Schuman and Gary Gruenberg, "The Impact of City on Racial Attitudes," *American Journal of Sociology* Vol. 76, No. 2 (Sept., 1970), 243

²³⁹ David Jenkins Oral History, 283.

²⁴⁰ Quoted in Dick Meister, "Labor Power," *San Francisco Bay Guardian*, December 23, 1970.

²⁴¹ David Jenkins Oral History, 235.

CHAPTER SIX

“ALL POWER TO THE BLACK BUS DRIVERS”: ORGANIZED LABOR AND THE BLACK PANTHER CHALLENGE

*The Union-Leadership is my shepherd, I need not be aware
it allows me to lie down on pillows of ignorance for my
family's sake. It leadeth me beside still buses, streetcars,
and cable-cars, it destroyeth my initiative in learning what
all members of T.W.U. is suppose to know, it leadeth me in
the path of a parasite and an uneducated fool for politics sake.
yea though I walk through the valley of ignorance and misinformation
I will fear no evil. For the union leadership is with me. By
appropriating my union dues, it filleth my head with false security
my inefficiency runneth over. Surely the union-leadership will
care for me all the days of my ignorant life, and I shall dwell
in a fool's paradise forever.*
“23rd Psalm, Present Day Version”
Muni Black Caucus¹

Between 1969 and 1971, a small contingent belonging to the Black Panther Party (BPP) led a Caucus within the Transport Workers Union (TWU) Local 250-A, which represented cable car, bus, and streetcar operators in San Francisco's public transit system (MUNI). The Caucus was one of several militant rank-and-file groups that formed within labor unions in the late 1960s and early 1970s.² The Muni Black Caucus differed from most of its counterparts in two important respects. First, it was part of a short-lived BPP campaign to agitate within labor unions.³ Second, it emerged within a public service agency rather than in heavy manufacturing such as auto or steel. Muni was a vital municipal institution, and the racial politics of the TWU directly impacted the general public and city government. Moreover, Local 250-A had joined the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union (ILWU) and Laborers Local 261, two other unions with minority-majority memberships, in supporting Democrat Joseph Alioto in his 1967 campaign for mayor, and it was closely allied with his administration. The Muni Black Caucus challenged Local 250-A leaders – most of whom were African American – and tried to

gain influence among the union's black members by criticizing union leaders and Muni management for failing to adequately address employment discrimination and poor working conditions. But in the end most of Local 250-A's rank and file steered clear of the Caucus. This chapter explores why the caucus was unable to gain support while considering what this episode in BPP and San Francisco history reveals about the intersection of Black Power, trade unionism, and liberalism during the late 1960s and early 1970s.⁴

Race and "Dual Unionism," 1945-1969

The formation of the Muni Black Caucus in 1969 was to an extent a continuation of more than two decades of black activism within TWU Local 250-A. As chapter one discussed, African-American workers comprised an integral part of the union from its founding in 1945. Black workers had first obtained transit jobs in San Francisco during the war and found a home in the newly established TWU Local 250 (the "A" was added in 1966), which actively recruited African Americans in order to gain an advantage over its rival union, Division 1380 of the Amalgamated Association of Street and Electric Railway Employees (ATU). And when the Public Utilities Commission (PUC) attempted to fire hundreds of Muni's black platform workers in 1946 and 1947, TWU protested while Division 1380 remained silent. One legacy of the wartime era was black transit workers' preference for Local 250 over Division 1380. The number of black transit workers increased steadily during the 1950s and 1960s as San Francisco made the postwar transition from a manufacturing-wholesaling based economy to one geared towards the finance and the service sectors. While platform work no longer carried the degree of prestige among white workers that it had prior to the war, San Francisco's expanding black workforce, which found many avenues of employment closed off (see chapter two), eagerly took their place.⁵ By 1966 roughly sixty percent of Muni platform workers were African American,

and the transit system made for a conspicuous contrast with the racially restrictive police and fire departments.

Thus, the public face of Muni underwent a significant transformation in the postwar decades as African Americans became more prominent in the union hall, “gilly” rooms,⁶ and behind the controls of the city’s streetcars, buses, and cable cars. The city’s car barns were integrated, however blacks were most heavily concentrated in the Geary, Potrero, Utah-Ocean, and Kikland bus divisions as well as the Washington-Mason cable car division – each of which were located in racially integrated or predominantly white sections of the city. In the late 1940s and early 1950s, black operators and conductors gradually gained acceptance from the riding public and increasingly received commendation from passengers for their professional and courteous service. Black platform workers were regularly nominated – and occasionally chosen as recipients – of the “Muni Man of the Month,” an award that Muni began bestowing upon exceptional drivers and conductors in 1950.⁷ A 1958 study observed that the “record for safety and courtesy of Negro bus drivers and their operative ability is reported to compare quite favorably with other workers in the Municipal Railway,” and offered them as evidence to counter the claims of the Yellow Cab Company, which at the time refused to hire black drivers.⁸ Monthly issues of *Trolley Topics*, the PUC-published magazine dedicated to life in the car barns, further gave the impression that racial harmony prevailed among workers. In one example, two black operators, Ernest Washington and Hughes Meniffee, helped found the Muni baseball team in 1950.⁹ Yet at least some black workers still perceived hostility from management and some of their white co-workers. “When I walked in that door I knew what they were thinking – Here comes another one,” recalled a black driver who began working for Muni in the early 1950s. As

for white drivers, “They’d make believe they were buddy-buddy in the Gilly room, but you walk outside that Gilly room and you were nothing.”¹⁰

The steady increase in black platform workers coupled with the continued existence of two rival unions, the TWU and ATU, in the car barns, fostered an increasingly acrimonious racial politics among the transit workforce between 1945 and 1966. TWU Local 250’s record on civil rights and issues relating to black workers compared favorably to ATU Division 1380, which had historically opposed the hiring of black platform workers in the San Francisco Bay Area and along the West Coast (see chapter one), and during the two decades of “dual unionism” Local 250 continued to absorb most of Muni’s black workforce. During that time both unions wrestled over the terms of a unifying election that would crown one as the sole representative of Muni’s workforce, and as each side tried to add to its ranks black workers found themselves at the center of a tug-of-war.

The interplay between Muni’s racial politics and the ongoing battle between Local 250 and Division 1380 was evident in 1958, when Lilburn (L.B.) Delaney, an African American and the local’s vice president, was unexpectedly elevated to the local’s top post following the sudden death of its president, Aaron Barskey. A wartime migrant from Texas, Delaney was thirty-four years old when he began working as a conductor on the “H” Potrero Avenue streetcar line in 1945. His cheerful disposition earned him praise and popularity among his passengers, and by 1948 his Sutro Division co-workers had dubbed him “our courtesy expert.”¹¹ In 1946 Delaney became a shop steward, and in 1949 Mike Foley, the local’s president, appointed him to fill a vacant seat on Local 250’s Executive Board. The following year Delaney began working as an operator on the Number 5 McAllister trolley line and in December became Muni’s first African American employee to win the “Muni Man of the Month” award.¹² By most accounts Delaney

was a popular employee and union member. However, his sudden ascendance to the presidency did not sit well with some of the local's white members. Several months after Barskey's death, Jack Sherry, Local 250 secretary, informed international president Mike Quill that a "gang" of white workers were not pleased with their black president, and Delaney himself advised the TWU leader over a year later about a "struggle trying to keep the Local together due to the racial issu[e] here."¹³ Delaney may have been referring to a contingent of white workers who canceled their Local 250 memberships and signed up with Division 1380. Thus while the TWU signed up new members during Delaney's nearly two years as President, Local 250 experienced a net loss of seventy-three members.¹⁴ This brought Local 250's membership to an all-time low of 686 by September 1960. With that Delaney – whose loyalty to Quill and Sherry was reciprocated throughout his truncated term – informed Quill that it would be in the "best interest" of the local if he did not seek election to a full term as President.¹⁵ A few years later Jack Sherry advised the national office that black members were canceling their memberships and signing up with rival Division 1380 (although it is likely that some of these workers also took advantage of the open shop and remained outside both unions), which could likely have been in protest of the treatment that compelled Delaney to step down as president.¹⁶ The case of Delaney's presidency suggests that both white and black workers took advantage of the "dual unionism" that persisted in the car barns as a means of racial protest within Local 250.

For its part, Division 1380 tried its best to exploit the race issue as the two sides moved closer to a winner-take-all jurisdictional election in the mid-1960s. Both the TWU and ATU had maintained for years that the existence of two unions weakened the bargaining position of Muni's platform workers, yet attempts to settle their competing jurisdictional claims repeatedly failed to resolve the issue. After a series of negotiations to establish the terms of such an election

came up empty in 1964, a group of Muni workers formed the Action Committee for One Union. The interracial committee mainly consisted of Division 1380 members and included black workers who had recently joined the local after leaving Local 250. The Action Committee also included Division 1380's lone black official, John Squire. Having been a member of the ATU while working as a bus driver in Youngstown, Ohio, Squire joined Division 1380 when he became a Muni bus driver in 1958 and immediately became active in union and community affairs.¹⁷ Although Local 250 represented the vast majority of Muni's black workforce (80 percent, by the Committee's estimate), the Action Committee sought to exploit the local's apparent racial tensions as it agitated for a jurisdictional election that would be decided in the ATU's favor. In a weekly bulletin distributed throughout Muni's gilly rooms, the Action Committee spared no hyperbole as it hammered away at what it considered to be the racial hypocrisy of Local 250. After two of its members were barred from a Local 250 membership meeting (the workers presumably no longer belonged to Local 250), the Committee charged that the TWU was "motivated not to become a closed shop, but a 'closed society,' like Mississippi, and other such societies under the heel of a totalitarian boot." The Committee urged Local 250 members to cancel their memberships, insisting that "to continue to support such an organization under such circumstances could only be done by masochists, spendthrifts, segregationists, or clowns."¹⁸ The Action Committee's campaign against the TWU reached its climax with the publication of a three-page leaflet titled, "Local 250's Crisis in Black and White."¹⁹ In it, the Committee argued that "prejudice and black white antipathy" was at the "very center of our problem of dual unionism," and it accused Local 250 of maintaining "segregated unionism at Municipal Railway." According to the Committee, TWU officers suppressed and undermined the needs of its predominantly African American rank and file. It claimed that L.B. Delaney was

nothing more than a stooge who served “as vice-president in charge of Negro members.” In the Committee’s assessment, Delaney was the primary reason why most black Muni operators joined and remained in the TWU. The Committee’s attacks elided the ATU’s checkered racial past as well as Local 250’s defense of black workers during the period when Delaney first joined. Although hyperbolic and highly partisan, the Committee’s campaign persuaded ten Local 250 members to cancel their memberships after a few months of agitating. This was not a large number, but it was enough to raise concern among TWU officials that more would soon follow.²⁰

By the time the jurisdictional election finally took place in March 1966, Local 250 members had formed their own “Rank-and-File Committee” that was critical of the ATU.²¹ More importantly for Local 250’s prospects, a few months before the vote a thirteen-day strike waged by the TWU in New York City resulted in an impressive fifteen percent wage hike over two years for that city’s transit workers.²² Because of a 1956 city charter amendment that based Muni platform wages on the two cities with the highest wage rates, the TWU was able to take credit for a pay increase for San Francisco’s platform workers. “The tremendous gains attained in the recent strike called by the Transport Workers Union in New York, I’m sure you are aware, makes the carmen of the Municipal Railway equally the highest paid per hour transit workers in the world as of July 1, 1966,” Local 250’s president gloated to his Division 1380 counterpart.²³ Emboldened by its victory in New York City, the TWU waged an all-out campaign that cost the union \$14,345.43.²⁴ The TWU sent its most prominent African American member, Roosevelt Watts, to spearhead the campaign and help ensure that Muni’s black workforce would vote for Local 250. Watts had steadily risen through the union’s ranks since taking a job as a New York City streetcar operator in 1942 and by 1966 he had worked as an organizer and been elected to the Local 100 executive board. He would later become the first African American to serve on the

TWU International executive board and he would go down in history as the “Father of Local 250-A” for his work in the San Francisco campaign.²⁵ With Watts leading the way, Local 250 defeated Division 1380 by a count of 1,036 to 609 (at which time the TWU re-chartered the local and changed its designation from 250 to 250-A).²⁶

Having emerged victorious after two decades of battling the Amalgamated, the TWU looked forward to a new era for San Francisco’s transit workers. For the first time, Muni workers could wage a united front in a campaign for improved working conditions and fringe benefits. Moreover, the merger of Local 250 and Division 1380 meant that the near *de facto* biracial unionism that had prevailed in San Francisco’s car barns no longer existed. TWU international leaders promised to provide “militant, progressive leadership” for Local 250-A.²⁷ Yet it did not take long for racial tensions to surface in the reconfigured Local. In a special election of officers that took place shortly after the TWU victory, members returned Local 250 officials – most of whom were white – to their posts. That vote had divided between TWU and former ATU members, but by the time of the Local’s officer elections two years later in 1968 black transit workers were growing restive over the lack of black representation in union offices and supervisory positions. Several Local 250-A members had belonged to the San Francisco Negro American Labor Council earlier in the decade and were becoming active in the Labor Assembly for Community Action, a city-wide organization of black trade unionists spearheaded by members of the International Longshoremen’s and Warehousemen’s Union. These black transit workers sought a stronger social, political, and economic role for Local 250-A. Leonard Airriess, the TWU’s international representative in San Francisco, realized the salience of race in the 1968 officer election as he assessed the candidacy of Local 250-A’s incumbent president, Ed Coleman, who was white:

Coelman's [sic] campaign for re-election is non-existent...His opponents are waging a vigorous campaign, with the election only 5 days away from today I am really pessimistic of his chances...This Local should be a strong political force in the city, it should be in the forefront of the civil rights movement, (with 60% Negro membership) but it is dead politically, Coleman is not too sure where he stands on the civil rights issue. This Local Union has a great potential but he just does not have the imagination and training to realize it...²⁸

Coleman was a longtime TWU member and had a good relationship with the union's New York leadership. In 1966 he had been elected by a landslide – receiving 881 votes out of 1,099 casts – and likely took it for granted that he would win again.

But Coleman faced a serious challenge from John Squire, who had been the lone African American officer in Division 1380 and a member of the Labor Assembly for Community Action. By 1968 Squire had also served as Chairman of State Assemblyman Willie Brown's Transportation Advisory Committee and as delegates to the San Francisco Labor Council and its Committee on Political Education.²⁹ Although his previous affiliation with Division 1380 contributed to his defeat in his bid for first vice president in 1966, he remained active within Local 250-A as one of the Potrero Division's representatives.³⁰ His campaign for Local 250-A president drew upon the rank-and-file discontent that had fueled the Action Committee for One Union in 1964 and 1965. Squire's chief campaign pledge was to make the rank and file the "supreme authority" of the union by increasing communication between union officials and membership, establishing standards for full representation for miscellaneous employees who were union members, and by appointing an auditing committee directly from the rank and file.³¹ When the votes were tallied on May 10th, Squire narrowly defeated Coleman by a margin of 697 to 617.³² With L.B. Delaney easily winning reelection to the office of first vice-president, LeRoy Perkins as second vice-president, Clarence Fleming as third vice-president, Delaney Armstead as recording secretary, and Paul Raymore, Nashelle Taylor, and Hilliard Terry taking three of four

seats on the Executive Board, Local 250-A members made a statement by electing a predominantly African American leadership. It would be up to these black leaders to help the union live up to its “great potential” in San Francisco.

The new Local 250-A leaders were veteran Muni employees who were closely allied with the city’s labor movement (including other black trade unionists) and the Democratic mayoral administration of Joseph Alioto. Under its new officers, the union took steps to strengthen the union’s presence in the city’s African-American communities by jointly tackling the interrelated problems of unemployment and crime. Driver safety became an increasingly important issue for transit workers throughout the 1960s. In 1963, Muni bus drivers threatened to halt service on Bayview-Hunters Point routes because of mounting robberies and attacks on drivers and passengers.³³ Taxi drivers were already steering clear of the Western Addition and Hunters Point for the same reason, and the suspension of bus service would have created a transit crisis for most black San Franciscans.³⁴ In this case service continued, but so did attacks on Muni drivers. Then, on the night of April 9 1968, about a month before the union’s officer election and just days after the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., Martin Whitted was driving an extra run through Hunters Point when four young black men shot and killed him in a botched robbery attempt.³⁵ Whitted, a thirty year old white driver, was the first Muni employee ever to be killed while on the job. The murder thrust Muni and Local 250-A into the explosive racial politics of Hunters Point, where unemployment, crime, and black militancy were more prevalent than in any other part of the city. For the next day and a half, bus drivers halted service to Hunters Point and demanded police protection on routes that ran through that part of town. Mayor Alioto quickly intervened and placated drivers’ demand for protection while attempting to cool racial tensions.³⁶ Whitted’s wife also called for constructive rather than destructive responses by

requesting that donations be made in her husband's name to support youth work in the Hunters Point area.³⁷

Working with the mayor's office and activists in Hunters Point, Local 250-A helped launch the Transportation Assistance Program (TAP). The program was conceived by Young Men for Action, a group of Hunters Point activists that had developed close ties to Mayor Alioto, and its \$278,346 price tag was funded through local and federal grants. TAP was a novel approach to the problem linking crime, unemployment, and transportation in the nation's urban ghettos. Its objectives were five-fold:

1. To provide for the safety of bus operators and passengers and to develop a positive public relations program.
2. To successfully place the hard-core unemployed in meaningful jobs, resulting in improved community relations and better service within the Municipal Railway of San Francisco.
3. To provide additional manpower to fill continuing vacancies within the Municipal Railway.
4. To provide the opportunity for meaningful and lucrative training and employment to individuals of a low-income, minority community.
5. To establish a community relations division within the Municipal Railway to act as an effective liaison to the community.

TAP targeted low-income, minority men between the ages of twenty and thirty to fill forty transportation assistant (also called "bus monitor") positions. Assistants earned \$2.50 an hour and spent part of their training riding on buses during peak hours and helping bus drivers maintain order, enforce rules, and protect Muni property while also providing assistance to passengers and serving as Muni community relations representatives. The other part of their training consisted of academic and vocational training (including an "orientation of sound union practices") in order to prepare participants for the civil service exam and full-time Muni employment. John Squire heralded TAP as an "ingenuous idea" and pledged that Local 250-A would "cooperate in any way that we can."³⁸

By the end of 1969, TAP was fully operational and already producing results. In less than a year, Muni officials credited the program with significantly reducing vandalism and violence on buses. TWU officials were also impressed. “It has had a two-fold effect, not only have a group of drop-outs, many of whom were nothing but hoodlums, been channeled into productive work, earning \$2.50 an hour and now ready to take the Civil Service Examination, but they have had a dramatic effect on the suppression of vandalism on the busses and trolley coaches,” one union official stated. “This program has paid for itself in the reduction of damages to the property and claims for damages to passengers.”³⁹ In February 1970 the program graduated its first thirty-six assistants, who were hired as full-time bus drivers.⁴⁰ Local 250-A’s participation in TAP was precisely the type of civic and community involvement that TWU leaders – and many of its members – wanted to see from its San Francisco local.⁴¹

The Black Caucus Challenge

Even as African Americans gained leadership of Local 250-A, some of its younger members began to complain that the union was not doing enough for its membership and the city’s black community more generally. There were plenty of issues for union leaders to handle by the late 1960s. Bus, streetcar, and cable car operators often complained of poor equipment, police harassment, physical attacks, and scheduling problems such as inadequate recovery time between runs. Furthermore, although most Muni workers and union officials were African American, the vast majority of supervisors, training personnel, along with the entire PUC, were white. Black workers sometimes complained of racial discrimination in promotions, that white supervisors often treated them unfairly, that they did not receive adequate training, and they resented that management blamed the drivers and operators for Muni’s mounting problems. Finally, Muni’s work environment was in need of substantial improvements. “The offices, filthy

rooms, machine shops and vehicles in which Muni Railway employees work are inadequate, old, obsolete, dirty, dingy, and poorly maintained,” a 1973 report found. “Just the prospect of having to spend the better part of one’s day in such surroundings would be enough to sap the morale and incentive of most people.”⁴²

Local 250-A leaders did not take the problems lightly, but young militant workers did not think that they were aggressive enough when dealing with Muni management and the PUC. In January 1969 a handful of these workers formed an informal and biracial rank-and-file group that would eventually become the Black Caucus. A member of the Progressive Labor Party (PLP) who had been employed with Muni for just a few months started the group by initiating weekly meetings at which workers could discuss racism and “rotten job conditions” in the union and workplace. “The meetings provided an opportunity to knock around some ideas and grievances, but little more,” the PLP reported. “At each weekly meeting there were about eight people, but not always the same ones.”⁴³ Bay Area colleges and universities were hotbeds of New Left activism during the 1960s and early 1970s. Because of its relative high wages and good benefits, it was not unusual for a Muni operator in this period to have attended college, and some young Muni drivers brought this radicalism into Local 250-A’s ranks. Walter Riley, for example, had been active in the Black Student Union (BSU) and Students for a Democratic Society while attending San Francisco State College in the mid-1960s and helped found the Black Caucus at the University of California at San Francisco in 1968 before gaining employment as a Muni bus driver.⁴⁴

The PLP was among the most radical of the New Left groups active at San Francisco State College. The PLP was officially founded in New York in 1965 by several hundred Stalinists who had split from the Communist Party of the United States. Although most of its

members were students and people with middle-class backgrounds, the PLP sought to back up its Marxist-Leninist talk by forging a “student-worker alliance.”⁴⁵ According to a history professor who served as faculty advisor for the PLP at San Francisco State College in 1968, the group “was desperate to ‘revolutionize the classroom’ and to reach the working class, the blue collar workers.”⁴⁶ For the few who gained employment with Muni, the city’s transit workers seemed ripe for the picking. The PLP viewed the Muni rank-and-file group as “a major stepping stone” that would bridge the gap between the majority of trade unionists and those on the revolutionary left. Furthermore, it believed that since the “special oppression of Black workers often places them in the vanguard of the struggle against the bosses and corrupt union leaders,” black caucuses in particular could “spark white workers’ rank-and-file activity against the boss and union misleaders.”⁴⁷

Any plans that the PLP had for the Muni rank-and-file group were quickly crushed by the Black Panthers. A few weeks after the group’s inception, Wilbert Powe, a Black Panther Party member, and two of his friends, George Brady and Joseph “Jose” Wilson, began attending the weekly meetings. All three were bus drivers with between six and eight months experience and worked out of the Kirland Division, located in the tourist-friendly North Beach district near the waterfront and adjacent to downtown. Incidentally, most of Muni’s Asian-American drivers worked out of Kirkland, and the division was considered among the more desirable assignments because of the general safety of its routes.⁴⁸ The PLP, which considered all forms of nationalism as reactionary, was by this time a bitter adversary of the BPP.⁴⁹ Thus the arrival of Powe and his friends at caucus meetings resulted in a brief power struggle in which the BPP ultimately prevailed. By March 1969, the three Panthers had consolidated control of the Caucus and taken over its central committee. George Brady, who lived in the interracial and working-class Haight-

Asbury neighborhood, became the Caucus's chairman. "He has been d[e]scribed as a Trotskyite and carries [sic] Mao's handbook with him at all times," a union official informed Matthew Guinan, the TWU's international president. "Soft spoken and apparently well educated, he is the driving force at this time." Powe and Wilson, the official surmised, "exhibited nothing but follower tendencies."⁵⁰ As with many other young Muni operators, the three had ties to the Black Student Union (BSU) at San Francisco State College, where many early Panther recruits attended – including George Murray, a graduate student in English and the party's Minister of Education, and the Caucus sometimes used the BSU headquarters for meetings and rallies.⁵¹ Caucus members supported the BSU-led strike at San Francisco State in 1969 by walking the picket lines in their Muni uniforms.⁵²

In March the Central Committee, over the objection of its PLP members – passed a motion to affiliate the entire Caucus with the BPP. It then established a "working coalition" with the recently-formed Black Panther Caucus in the United Autoworkers Union (UAW) at the GM plant in Fremont, California and incorporated BPP rhetoric and iconography into its materials.⁵³ For example, the Caucus used the iconic clenched black fist as its emblem, adopted the slogan "All Power to the Black Bus Drivers," and it came out with a "Seven Point Program" (discussed further below). In the first report on the caucus's activities to appear in the *Black Panther* newspaper, Wilbert Powe declared that the Black Caucus "stands firmly with Bobby Seale (Chairman of the Black Panther Party) that the desires and needs of the people must be met NOW!!"⁵⁴ And when asked to explain the Caucus's relationship to the BPP in November 1969, Wilbert Powe provided the following response: "I myself am a member of the Black Panther Party, and these other brothers here on the Central Committee are very dedicated brothers and practice the Party ideology, the ten-point platform and program of the Party. That's what our

relationship is with the Party, we feel we are one, and if that shakes anybody, well right on.”⁵⁵

The Muni Black Caucus was born.

The Panthers’ capture of the PLP Caucus came at the tail-end of a turbulent six-month period for the organization. In September 1968 an Oakland jury convicted Huey Newton of manslaughter in the shooting death of a police officer. In San Francisco, news of the verdict fueled anger within Panther ranks. “In a few days there is going to be war,” a young Panther warned *New York Times* reporter Earl Caldwell in front of the BPP Fillmore Street headquarters. Inside a Fillmore Street apartment, Caldwell observed a young recruit tending to a cache of weapons that he intended to transport to Oakland.⁵⁶ Those images belied the words of Field Marshall Donald Cox, who told Caldwell that the Panthers were “trying to get people over the fear that we’re some kind of monsters.”⁵⁷ Tensions escalated two months later, when three San Francisco police officers were shot while attempting to apprehend eight Panther members who had robbed a gas station.⁵⁸ In the immediate aftermath of the shooting, Mayor Alioto demanded that the grand jury investigate “any organization which advocates the killing of policemen.” Although Alioto promised that the investigation would not be “an examination of the Black Panther Party’s political opinions,” he made no effort to conceal his disdain for the organization.⁵⁹ A week after the November shootout, he assured San Franciscans that the city’s “minority communities emphatically have repudiated the hate mongers among them,” adding that the “Panthers in no way represent San Francisco’s black community.”⁶⁰ Earl Caldwell’s observations buttressed Alioto’s claim (though not his sentiments), although he credited the Panthers with disarming some of the fear and trepidation that some African Americans felt towards them. He noted that while the Panthers had “been successful in increasing their numbers in the slums,” in cities like San Francisco they had “not been able to pull in the community

movers.”⁶¹ By the end of 1968, he wrote, it appeared that the Black Panther Party was “at a crossroads.”⁶²

This crossroads would lead the Panthers in several directions. In an effort to “weed out provocateurs and agents” from its growing membership, in 1969 the BPP expelled hundreds of members and placed a three-month moratorium on membership. Meanwhile, Panther chapters across the country launched “community survival programs,” which included providing free breakfast for schoolchildren, free health clinics, and “liberation schools” in urban black communities.⁶³ Less known were BPP efforts to agitate among black trade unionists within their unions. In an April 1969 interview, David Hilliard spoke of the “necessity of making some alliances with the working class, black white, Latin American, Orientals, and or what have you.”⁶⁴ Aside from calling upon black workers to build a “Workers Committee to Free Huey” in November 1968, the BPP had shown little interest in organizing black workers and trade unionists.⁶⁵ But a few days after Hilliard’s reference to the working class, the *Black Panther* announced that “after having concentrated previously on community affairs” the BPP was turning “toward an alliance with labor.”⁶⁶ In practice the alliance that the BPP sought was not with “labor” as much as it was with the black workers who belonged to labor unions. The unions themselves provided an institutional setting in which the Panthers could operate, but if their supporters were unable to gain control of the unions in which they operated then an “alliance” with that union was out of the question. Nevertheless, talk of an “alliance with labor” suggested a departure from Huey Newton’s and Bobby Seale’s initial decision to build the organization by enlisting young, unemployed blacks – the so-called *lumpenproletariat*. While Newton and Seale believed that these “brothers off the block” made for potential revolutionaries, other activists argued that they should focus on the concerns of black workers, who comprised the majority of

African American communities and who were more capable of leading a social movement.⁶⁷ At the very least, the Black Panther labor caucuses that appeared in 1968 and 1969 appeared to be a tacit recognition of this critique. Arguing that “only workers can free workers,” BPP Minister of Education Ray “Masai” Hewitt called upon black workers to adhere to “a constant maintenance of a correct class line” and to inject Marxist-Leninist principles into unions where workers had become “champions of reform.”⁶⁸

The idea for the BPP’s labor program came not from Hilliard or Hewitt but rather from Kenny Horston, a Panther and member of the UAW who had worked for six years at General Motors’ Fremont, California assembly plant. In October 1968 Horston organized a Black Panther Caucus to address working conditions and to “educate the working people to the political impact that the U.A.W. and other unions have on their social and economic lives.” Horston and his cohort were especially critical of union leaders, who they claimed repeatedly failed to address worker grievances – especially those brought by black and Latino workers.⁶⁹ According to Horston, BPP leaders Bobby Seale and David Hilliard both agreed that the caucus could bring “labor and the community close together.”⁷⁰ As Horston put it, “The Black community is labor itself ... So we feel that when the labor leadership or the companies oppress labor, they are, in fact, oppressing the Black community in general.”⁷¹ Horston, a Detroit native, hoped that Black Panther labor caucuses could somehow transform labor unions into radical-revolutionary activity and he had initially hoped to unite with the Detroit-based League of Revolutionary Workers to form a black community-worker alliance.⁷² “I believe we can bring the workers to the point where we can deliver one massive, destructive blow to the system,” Horston declared in May 1969. “We want to bring together the National Maritime Union, we want to bring the Steel Workers, we want to bring the S.F. Muni bus drivers and the Western Electrical Workers, and

the UAW Ford workers in Milpitas; we want to bring the Warehousemen and the Machinists, the aircraft workers – all workers together to unite in one solid union which is going to be the rule of the proletarian.”⁷³

The bus drivers, streetcar operators, and cable car gripmen and conductors of the San Francisco Municipal Railway may have stood out from Horston’s list as unlikely candidates to help lead a working-class revolution. Muni did not employ workers on the scale of auto or steel plants, and in 1969 it employed about 1,900 platform workers, approximately 1,000 of whom were African American. Moreover, by 1969 Local 250-A had a predominantly black leadership and its members were part of the city’s black blue-collar middle class and had influence at City Hall and in the San Francisco Labor Council. A study conducted early in 1971 found that Muni drivers were “not unmindful of the fact that they are among the best paid of their craft.” And while drivers on the whole felt “taken for granted” by the public and had complaints with the way management treated them, the study found that “they feel loyal to, and ‘well taken care of,’ by their union.”⁷⁴ Billy Williams, a twenty-seven year-old African American bus driver, valued the \$11,000 (\$63,000 in 2013 dollars) per year he earned and considered Muni “a good job.” According to the *Examiner* reporter who spent a day riding along with him in 1971, Williams was “a typical young Muni driver who thought that he could make a good career as a Muni employee.”⁷⁵ The Caucus leaders would also concede that Muni workers’ solid wages and level of education made them more difficult to recruit than a “brother on the street,” but they considered Local 250-A members as “politically immature” workers who were duped by the “Uncle Toms” who led the union.⁷⁶ Those union leaders, in the BPP’s view, had campaigned in 1967 “on the popularity of the black power movement” but “perpetuated the same program as the white leadership.” According to the caucus organizers, the rank and file “couldn’t see the significance

of a caucus when they felt that the union was working in the best interest of all the workers.” As Ducho Dennis, the noted Panther photographer and artist who served as advisor to the Muni Black Caucus put it, “This confusion came particularly from some older black workers who had struggled in the union for a long time in an effort to gain some leadership positions in the union.”⁷⁷ Regardless of the potential disconnect between the politics of the vast majority of Muni workers and the BPP, Wilbert Powe maintained that the Caucus’s politics were “of the rank and file exercising their right to change the system, the politics of revolution in this country, and the politics of oppressed people all over the world gaining liberation from this imperialist pig that we here in Babylon are strategically close to.”⁷⁸

Although it employed militant and revolutionary rhetoric, the Muni Black Caucus attempted to organize Local 250-A leaders around a program that mirrored basic trade union principles. Caucus leaders thought that they could “raise the level of awareness on the job” by rallying Muni workers around issues relating to workplace grievances and latent frustration with Local 250-A leadership. They also hoped to gain support among the small number of young black and white radicals who might be more receptive to their criticism of the union’s older leadership. The caucus’s stated objective, which was “to unite workers for the purpose of bringing about positive and concrete improvements in the application of laws and rules,” hardly appeared radical or revolutionary. Neither did its seven-point program, which consisted of the following:

1. The Black Caucus will attack all forms of discrimination and racism against the workers.
2. The Black Caucus is against the individual acceptance of special privileges and favoritism.
3. The Black Caucus will actively support all unions that are working in the best interest of the workers.
4. The Black Caucus will support or select members seeking political office in the union.
5. The Black Caucus rejects all rumors or hear-say not published or given the official word of the caucus.

6. The Black Caucus does not recognize the union as being above constructive criticism.
7. It is not the intent of the Black Caucus to disrupt the workings of or the grievance procedure which this union with honor has achieved in the past.

The challenge for the Muni Black Caucus was to convince Local 250-A members that their union leaders were unable – and even unwilling – to deliver on any of the first, second, third, and sixth points.

Yet in doing so the Panthers would be hindered by their own politics and seeming disregard for union rules and procedures. This was evident when the Muni Black Caucus made its first concerted effort to “raise the level of awareness” among union members in early March 1969, when Local 250-A threatened to strike over a wage dispute involving Muni’s miscellaneous workers. The dispute stemmed from the passage of Proposition G in the November 1967 municipal elections. The charter amendment solidified Muni operators’ position as some of the highest paid platform workers in the nation and overhauled employees’ fringe benefits. Proposition G delivered three extra holidays, a night-shift pay differential, a higher uniform allowance, a half hour paid lunch period on straight runs of six or more hours, improved compensation for on-the-job injuries, and several other benefits that transit workers had sought for years.⁷⁹ While negotiating a wage increase for Muni’s miscellaneous employees in February 1969, however, the Civil Service Commission (CSC) insisted that Prop. G benefits only extended to the system’s platform workers. Strictly speaking the Commission was correct. In fact, Muni’s miscellaneous employees, who numbered about 150, had raised this very issue during the Proposition G campaign because they were not explicitly mentioned in the charter amendment and thus feared (justifiably, as it turned out) that they would be “left out.”⁸⁰ TWU officials allayed these concerns prior to the election by meeting with George Grubb, General Manager of the CSC, who assured the union that miscellaneous workers would be covered.⁸¹ Local 250-A

leaders thus felt betrayed by the Commission's apparent duplicity. While union officials worked behind the scenes with their allies at City Hall to settle the matter, they also prepared the rank-and-file for the possibility of a strike. "Our members must realize that if this can be done to the Miscellaneous Employees now, it is just a sample of what will happen in July when the operators' turn comes around," John Squire advised Local 250-A's Executive Board and Division Representatives. "We cannot deviate from the trade Union position that an injury to one is an injury to all."⁸²

Squire's call for labor solidarity spurred the Black Caucus to action. While Muni's workforce was more than sixty percent black, the miscellaneous employees were mostly white supervisors (including dispatchers and inspectors). Caucus leaders were outraged at the notion that 1000 black trade unionists should risk losing their jobs for the benefit of 150 "parasites" that they did not consider as part of the working-class, and the Caucus seized upon the issue in the hope of arousing the black rank-and-file to action. In an article published in the *Black Panther*, Wilbert Powe wrote that the caucus was "fully aware of the smooth politics used by the power structure to fool the busdrivers [*sic*] into thinking that the intimated strike was in the interest of local 250-A."⁸³ Powe, Brady, and Wilson were confident that they could convince union members that their leaders were "not in any way adhering to the needs of the busdrivers in San Francisco, nor the people who depend on that transportation daily" during a union membership meeting held at the Jack Tar Hotel in early March, in which twelve hundred union members voted on whether or not to give the executive board the power to call a strike.⁸⁴ Joe Hanaberry, the TWU's International Vice President, reported afterward that "the white and black officers both of the Local and International were well received" by the membership.⁸⁵ The exception, of course, were "the Panthers," who "addressed the members calling themselves 'field niggers' and

the Union officers ‘house niggers’.” Up until this point, Hanaberry informed TWU president Matthew Guinan, “there had been very few indications of Black Panther influence amongst the members of Local 250A.” Nor was there about to be. According to Hanaberry, the Caucus’s display “brought a storm of protest from the majority of the members present at the meeting.”⁸⁶

Although most of the miscellaneous employees were white, the caucus either failed or refused to recognize that Muni’s black workers were beginning to gain access to these positions. In 1961, Jerry Brown, a Texas native who began working as a Muni bus driver in 1946, became the first African American Muni Inspector.⁸⁷ David Jones, who migrated to San Francisco from Louisiana and began working as a streetcar operator in 1946, became an Inspector in 1965 and would go on to become Muni’s first African American Claims Adjuster in 1973.⁸⁸ By 1969 Gene Henderson, who began working as a conductor in 1946, had earned promotions to Transit Service Inspector, Dispatcher, and Claims Investigator, and he would become a division superintendent in 1973. Curtis Green would climb to the top of the Muni hierarchy. The son of a railroad laborer, Green grew up in Franklin, Louisiana, attended Xavier University in New Orleans, and had served in the Pacific theater during World War II before settling in San Francisco and obtaining a job as a Muni bus driver in 1945. While maintaining a spotless driving record, Green slowly climbed the Muni ladder, serving as a dispatcher, Inspector, Assistant Chief Inspector, and Personnel Manager, before attaining Muni’s top post in 1974.⁸⁹ Having witnessed some of their co-workers move up to miscellaneous positions, most black workers did not share the Caucus’s view of the strike. And despite the Caucus’s objections, members voted to give their authorization. Nevertheless, the mass meeting had provided Caucus leaders with a platform that they now sought to exploit, and even though the strike was avoided when the San Francisco Board of Supervisors passed emergency legislation that extended Proposition G benefits to the

miscellaneous employees, Caucus members paid visits to the city's different car barns, where they distributed leaflets and sought to convince workers that their union leaders – although black themselves – were insensitive to the needs of the black rank-and-file and black San Franciscans more generally. As one leaflet put it, “Does it not appear that the ‘new regime’ is, in fact, the ‘old regime’ in black face, this time?”⁹⁰

According to Walter Riley, “interest in the caucus grew, as well as some attacks on it” as a result of its activities that March.⁹¹ Some frustrated workers welcomed the Caucus's intervention, but the majority of black Muni workers were not receptive to the BPP's message. Throughout 1969, the Muni Black Caucus made lots of noise – enough, in fact, to cause concern among TWU officials – but on the whole it struggled to attract Local 250-A's black workers. It maintained that, unlike a black caucus that had formed in a New York TWU local, it had no intention “to split the union out here or start an independent union,” but still added that “we're revolutionaries and we'll do what's necessary.”⁹² In May Joe Hanaberry reported (with relief) that “When the three mentioned as the Panther committee approach the other divisions when they are distributing leaflets they are abused verbally by the division men and their leaflets are torn up and thrown away.”⁹³ Indeed, the weakness of the Black Muni Caucus noticeably contrasts with the level of support that the League of Revolutionary Black Workers found among autoworkers in Detroit during this period.⁹⁴ At the height of its activity the Caucus numbered no more than 150 members, and it suffered a resounding defeat at the polls when it sponsored a slate of candidates in the Local's officer election in May 1970.⁹⁵ It was reputedly strong in the Kirkland bus division, where Brady, Powe, and Wilson were each based, but it had little influence elsewhere until it started organizing among cable car workers in 1970. In general, it is safe to conclude that the majority of black Muni workers did not consider themselves

revolutionary nationalists and did not respond well to such appeals. “I told them ‘Hell No’!” Larry Martin recalled. A native of Pine Bluff, Arkansas, Martin had started working as a bus driver in the Presidio Division a few years before the Caucus became active. According to Martin, he and others adhered to the concept of union solidarity. “We were going to go as one group and work on all issues, not separately,” Martin, who would eventually become president of Local 250-A and an active member of the Labor Assembly for Community Action, remembers telling the Caucus.⁹⁶

There were other factors aside from black trade unionists aversion to the BPP that impeded the Caucus’s organizing efforts. The Black Caucus’s small following was partly a result of the stiff opposition that it encountered from TWU leadership. The Local 250-A newsletter repeatedly maligned the Caucus as an “anti-union wrecking crew” and urged the “good loyal union man” to attend membership meetings in order to protect the union.⁹⁷ “It is evident that the Muni worker is just a pawn to some people; a pawn to be used to gain whatever purpose they have in mind,” the newsletter warned in December 1970. “They obviously have instructions to gain control of the transit system in this and other cities to use it for their benefit, not for the benefit of the worker, whether the worker be the Muni operator or the worker who relies on the Muni to take him to work – the worker, who cannot afford to drive a car every day, the worker who cannot afford to lose a day’s pay.”⁹⁸ Leonard Airriess, TWU international representative, was the most vehement opponent of the Black Caucus. Airriess, who was white, described the group as a “militant racist organization, organized by members and officers of the Black Panther Party,” that “has waged a campaign of vilification against the Union and its Officers, disrupted the membership meetings, terrorized the office staff and is a more determined and vicious opponent of the Union than any boss or Chamber of Commerce ever was or could be.” He added

that they were “determined, dedicated revolutionaries” with whom the union should not negotiate.⁹⁹ Union leaders responded to initial Caucus activity by adopting a rule that prohibited the distribution of flyers and literature in the union hall. And after Caucus members brought a camera and tape recorder to a union meeting, Local 250-A leaders placed a ban on such devices as well.¹⁰⁰ TWU leaders were also quick to call the police when Caucus members showed up at Local 250-A headquarters or when they interrupted union membership meetings.¹⁰¹ In June, after Caucus members had accused Local 250-A leaders of abusing their powers in its May elections, the TWU suspended the memberships of Dave Nelson, Robert Coats, John Gilbert, and Ted Walker for four years and permanently expelled George Brady. The four could keep their jobs, but they no longer could participate in union activities.¹⁰²

Yet Caucus members also had themselves to blame for their lack of rank-and-file support. Like their counterparts in Detroit, many black TWU members found the Black Caucus’s protest style to be off-putting.¹⁰³ They interrupted union meetings, used dogmatic rhetoric, and distributed leaflets that derided Local 250-A’s black leadership as “Fascists” and sometimes insulted rank-and-file members for not following the caucus’s lead. Local 250-A leaders protested that the Caucus “made it impossible for the membership of this Local Union to hold a membership meeting.”¹⁰⁴ John Squire, who was less willing to directly challenge the Caucus as Airriess, testified that “[George Brady] and his friends have always been loud, noisy and threatening. They never asked for things, they demanded them.”¹⁰⁵ In its monthly journal, the PLP, still seething over the fate of the “open caucus, democratically run by the Black workers” that it had started, viewed the Caucus’s troubles as evidence that its rival had led workers astray. In an August 1969 article co-written with two others in *Progressive Labor*, Caucus-founder Walter Riley asserted that “The BPP wanted, and got, a small, tight, ‘revolutionary’ caucus

completely controlled by the BPP, issuing leaflets, ‘calls’ and making speeches in the name of all the Black workers on the job without really representing them.”¹⁰⁶ Perhaps most importantly, aside from its seven-point program, it seemed to offer little in the way of bread-and-butter activity to offset the revolutionary rhetoric that so many members found off-putting.

Muni Black Caucus leaders also acknowledged that many black and white bus drivers who they spoke with were turned off by the name “Black Caucus.” “They asked questions such as ‘Why did you have to say Black Caucus? And why if you are supposed to be for all the workers you had to name it the Black Caucus?’”¹⁰⁷ The Caucus attempted to clarify its position in a leaflet that it distributed throughout the car barns. In it the Caucus explained that it stood by the name because “black people in general are the most down-trodden and oppressed people in this country.” But it insisted that the Black Caucus was open to workers of all races, and whereas the central committee had ended earlier leaflets with the racially charged slogan “All Power to the Black Bus Drivers,” they concluded this particularly leaflet with the more class-oriented “Muni Workers Unite, Power to the Workers, All Power to the People.”¹⁰⁸ Around the same time, the Caucus aggressively pursued a grievance on behalf of Tim Snider, a white cable car conductor whose foot had been badly injured in an accident. Snider was still in pain and walking with a cane when the Muni leave department ordered him back to work. The Caucus took his case to Local 250A leaders, who eventually claimed that their “hands were tied.” The Black Caucus issued its angry response in another leaflet that circulated throughout the car barns.¹⁰⁹ The Caucus offered the case as further evidence that the union leadership was not looking out for the interests of the rank-and-file, and it hoped that by championing Snider’s case it could dispel the notion that the Black Caucus was racially exclusive. “We needed something like that to break down the thought of racism, because of the name of the organization,” Wilson later explained.¹¹⁰

Throughout the latter half of 1969 and 1970, Caucus leaders sought to attract more support by softening their tone, emphasizing the reform elements of their program, and continuing to reach out to non-black Muni workers. In doing so, they kept in sync with changes taking place within the BPP itself. During the summer and fall of 1969, the BPP had worked on recasting its image in order to broaden its appeal. “Seldom now do members show up wearing their black leather jackets and black berets,” Earl Caldwell observed in July 1969. “And the guns that were once so visible are almost never seen now. ... The four-letter words that had been so much a part of the rhetoric just a few months ago were gone.”¹¹¹ The Panthers also placed greater stress on the interracial class struggle against capitalism, and hosted a three-day Conference for a United Front Against Fascism in Oakland in July that attracted several thousand participants – most of who were white radicals (the conference included a session titled, “Labor Against Fascism”, at which Ducho Dennis spoke of raising the political awareness of working people and forging “progressive movements within our locals, our unions.”).¹¹² While continuing to identify themselves as revolutionaries, the Black Caucus followed suit by focusing more on workplace grievances, and its leaflets and monthly newsletter, *Muni Worker*, sometimes included the stories of workers who claimed to have suffered an injustice at the hands hostile management and union indifference.

While the Caucus still considered itself a revolutionary vanguard, its members became more mindful of the need to reconsider how they came across to other trade unionists. In a November 1969 interview, Ducho Dennis maintained that the Caucus was not intent on dividing and disrupting the union. Contradicting all of its earlier pronouncements, in the same interview Wilbert Powe admitted that Local 250A had handled grievances with “honor.” Caucus leaders were still critical of the union, but it took the position that the bigger problem was Muni’s

“dictatorial” management, which took its orders from “pig Alioto.”¹¹³ In the December 1969 issue of *Muni Worker*, Joseph Wilson acknowledged that his group needed “to improve its working relationship with the drivers through the criticism and suggestions from the drivers and self criticism.” Admitting that “our behavior has had an air of self importance, disregard for the opinions of other drivers, and discourtesy in our dealings with drivers at union meetings and in personal conversations with drivers,” Wilson assured Local 150-A members that the caucus had “learned that we must listen as well as speak, to accept criticism and suggestions.” That same issue included some criticism from workers who, if they were not Caucus members themselves, were clearly sympathetic. Robert Coats, a cable car conductor and Caucus member, said that he thought that the Caucus’s “language” was “too technical.” Sandy Martin, a bus driver at the Kirkland Division, criticized the “arrogance on the part of the caucus.” Wilson pledged that the Caucus would modify its behavior, especially its conduct at union meetings. “In the past, our behavior has had an air of self importance, disregard for the opinions of other drivers, and discourtesy in our dealings with drivers at union meetings and in personal conversations with drivers,” he conceded. “We have learned that we must listen as well as speak, to accept criticism and suggestions.”¹¹⁴

Meanwhile, the Muni Black Caucus attempted to gain power through established political channels. Since the Black Panther Caucuses were committed to working within existing union structures, winning union offices was essential. “The people must organize caucuses inside their union, and take over its leadership by winning its elections,” Kenny Horston urged in his first column for *The Black Panther* in March 1969.¹¹⁵ Yet Muni Black Caucus leaders had initially equivocated on the questions of union politics. “We say that our main purpose is to raise the consciousness of the workers, and then they’ll vote for men among themselves who are not

opportunists, and who understand the necessity for strong unions,” Wilbert Powe explained in November 1969. “If the membership wanted us to represent them, and a particular situation arose where we felt this would serve their needs then we would.”¹¹⁶ In the summer of 1969, Caucus leaders decided not to run candidates when Local 250-A selected its representatives for the TWU International Convention. Instead, it held a “mass rally” at the BSU headquarters in the Western Addition so that members could “hear the platforms and intentions of each eligible candidate before selecting the best qualified.” The rally was a failure. Only one candidate appeared, and few rank-and-file union members showed up to hear speakers from other Bay Area unions speak “on the importance of selecting qualified delegates.”¹¹⁷ After Local 250-A members elected a slate of union leaders as delegates, the Caucus circulated a leaflet deriding “those of us who turn our backs and close our eyes to ‘truth’ and important issues that concern our jobs (to include working conditions) are turning our backs and closing our eyes on our families and communities as well!” Even though it offered no slate of its own, the Caucus added that the “membership of Local 250A has only itself to blame for the inadequate leadership which we have had and still have today.”¹¹⁸

Black Caucus leaders sought to avoid a similar outcome when Local 250-A held its biannual election of officers in May 1970. The Caucus sponsored a “unified slate” that included George Brady for President, Dave Nelson for Second Vice-President, Robert Coats for Third Vice-President, and Johnnie Gilbert for the Executive Board. Joseph Wilson, one of the Caucus founders, also ran for a seat on the Executive Board, however he appears to have left the group by the time of the election and was not part of the official slate.¹¹⁹ Although the Caucus may have supported non-Caucus candidates in some of the races, the fact that it did not put up a candidate for each office reflected the group’s chronically small following. This was confirmed

by the election results.¹²⁰ In the race for President, George Brady finished last in a field of four candidates with a just 62 votes, while John Squire was reelected with 873 votes. Dave Nelson also finished last of the three candidates for Second Vice-President with 145 votes, while LeRoy Perkins won reelection with 874 votes. Incumbent Clarence Fleming easily defeated Robert Coats for Third Vice-President by a margin of 1,014 to 148. John Gilbert and Joseph Wilson finished near the bottom of the field for the local's four Executive Board seats, while the only two incumbents in the race, Hilliard Terry and Nashelle Taylor, were by far the top two vote-getters. For the first time, in fact, Local 250-A's entire leadership – aside from the TWU International Representative – would be African American. The election was yet another setback for the Black Caucus. In general, Caucus candidates ran strongest at Kirkland and Washington-Mason (Muni's lone cable car division, which was located near Kirkland in North Beach), the only two divisions where they had managed to make significant inroads. "The results of the election show that the membership chose at this time not to deal with the issues," the May 1970 issue of *Muni Worker* averred. "Once again the membership felt it easier to vote on the basis of familiar incumbents and noncommittal candidates."¹²¹

The elections results were not the only setback for the Black Caucus. A few weeks before the vote, Caucus leaders had requested that a special meeting be held in which the membership could hear all candidates for office present their platforms and programs. Local 250-A's By Laws stated that "special meetings" could be called on petition of twenty percent of the membership, and the Caucus presented a petition that appeared to contain enough signatures. Yet the Executive Board denied the request, arguing that because Muni operated around the clock, such a meeting would unfairly discriminate against members who would not be able to attend (Leonard Airriess also called into the question the validity of the signatures). George Brady

further protested that the union had allowed two of his opponents for president, John Squire and Floyd Pitts, to use the local's mailing list to distribute campaign literature while denying him that same privilege. The Caucus's charges appeared to have merit. The Local's Election Committee, which did not include any Caucus members, also claimed that Squire had used "heavy-handed tactics in aiding other candidates" and had showed "total disregard for the integrity of the Election Committee."¹²² Yet the union's local and international leadership dismissed the allegations. The Caucus continued to protest, and after several volatile confrontations with union leaders at Local 250-A headquarters, Black Caucus leaders filed a complaint with the San Francisco City and County Superior Court.¹²³ They lost the lawsuit, and the union retaliated by charging the five Caucus members with violating the TWU International Constitution on the grounds that they "did maliciously institute a legal action against the Local Union and its officers without first exhausting all remedies through the forms of appeal of the International Union," that they "maliciously published and circulated false reports and misrepresentations among the members of the Local Union," and that George Brady "used abusive language and disturbed the peace and harmony of a meeting of the Local Executive Board and the Local's Election Committee at the offices of the Local Union."¹²⁴ In June, after a union trial committee reviewed the charges, the TWU suspended the memberships of Dave Nelson, Robert Coats, John Gilbert, and Ted Walker for four years and permanently expelled George Brady.¹²⁵

The Black Caucus's unsuccessful attempt to win election to union offices and its subsequent legal battle marked another turning point for the organization. The caucus maintained that "Rumors now going around about the 'death' of the Caucus are greatly exaggerated," though it further acknowledged the need to re-brand their group in an attempt to broaden its appeal.¹²⁶ "The Caucus has learned that there is a need for it to eliminate any impression that it is an

exclusivist group,” *Muni Worker* announced in its first post-election issue. “It is quite clear that there is a need for participation by all members in this union who feel that they would like to direct their officials toward being more responsive to the membership.”¹²⁷ In the hope of attracting white, Latino, and Asian-American workers to its cause, the group officially changed its name to the “Muni Drivers Caucus.” The Caucus also suggested that it would more actively link the struggle of Muni drivers to those of all working-class and black San Franciscans. “We’ll tell why transfer privileges are not the same for Fillmore and Hunters Point as they are for Marina,” *Muni Worker* announced in a column opposing a proposed fare increase.¹²⁸ The Caucus proved willing to participate in coalitions with community groups, as it did in the spring and early summer of 1970 when it actively participated in the Coalition to Oppose Muni Fare Increase to successfully thwart an attempt by the PUC to raise Muni fares from twenty to twenty-five cents.¹²⁹ Later that fall Caucus members also joined residents of Bernal Heights in a protest that succeeded in gaining bus service for the working-class neighborhood located on the outskirts of the city.¹³⁰

Yet the Caucus and Local 250-A leaders continued to spar over the summer. Although the new officers were installed, the Caucus shifted its attention to the election of Division Representatives, which the local’s By-Laws required to take place within a month of the general officer election. In June, the Caucus again petitioned for a special membership meeting to discuss the candidates, and again union officials denied the request.¹³¹ Throughout the summer, Caucus members squared off with union officials at membership meetings. According to Alex Ricca, a member of the Election Committee who had been critical of union leaders’ handling of the officer elections, the July meeting was “the wildest Local 250A has ever had.”¹³² Three of the suspended Caucus leaders showed up claiming that payment of their dues guaranteed them the

right to attend union meetings. The presence of the three suspended Caucus leaders resulted in a shouting match, and union leaders eventually called in the San Francisco Police Department's Tactical Squad to put an end to the meeting. Each side accused the other of sabotage and of subverting union democracy, however the actions of both brought about a decline in union participation among the rank and file.

"A Confusing Cable Car Strike"

By the fall of 1970 the BPP's involvement with the Muni Black Caucus had waned considerably, and it appeared to have given up on any hopes it had of establishing a black worker-community alliance. While the Muni Drivers Caucus's BPP leaders either had been suspended or expelled from Local 250-A, the UAW Black Panther Caucus across the Bay in Fremont fared little better. General Motors had fired Kenny Horsten, though the Caucus still claimed to represent 50-100 workers out of approximately 5,000 employed at the plant. In September 1970 Caucus members clashed with union leaders and loyal members during a strike but was eclipsed by another rank-and-file group that called itself the United Action Caucus of the United Auto Workers Union Local 1364.¹³³ *The Black Panther* did not cover these events and contained no coverage of Panther labor activities.¹³⁴ Panther leaders' commitment to organizing among the working class – and black trade unionists in particular – had never been as resolute as its members who worked at GM and Muni. Even as Hilliard praised Horsten's work with trade unionists at GM, he stressed that "Panthers themselves are workers" and that "we consider ourselves the most advanced detachment of the working class."¹³⁵ In a September 1970 interview, Huey Newton expressed doubt that trade unionists were fit for the role of revolutionary vanguard. "We are concentrating on the factory worker," he stated. "But not on that old unionism thing, you see, because unionism alone is never cause for revolution."¹³⁶

A few weeks after Newton made these comments the Muni Drivers Caucus exhibited its greatest show of force when it led a shut-down of the city's iconic cable car system with a two-day wildcat strike. Earlier in the year the Caucus had made the Washington-Mason cable car division the focal point of its operations. The division was located in close proximity to the Kirkland bus division, which was the original Caucus stronghold, and Caucus leaders had publicized several grievances filed by black cable car gripmen and conductors in its flyers and newsletter. The city's cable cars also held strategic advantages that streetcars and buses lacked. Unlike their counterparts in other divisions, cable car operators continued to work in pairs during this period – with each car carrying one gripman and one conductor. With about 150 workers, Washington-Mason was also the smallest of Muni's divisions. As a result of these factors, cable car workers developed a greater sense of camaraderie and solidarity than their counterparts in the bus and streetcar divisions.¹³⁷ Furthermore, the cable car system also served as one of San Francisco's prime tourist attractions, and visitors came from all around the world to ride the cable cars up and down the steep slopes of Nob and Russian Hills to tourist destinations in North Beach and the Marina district. In 1964, the cable car system was declared a special "moving" National Historical Landmark, and the Washington-Mason carbarn and powerhouse was subsequently updated to accommodate visitors. In 1970, several caucus members transferred to the Washington-Mason division at that year's general sign-up.

Local 250A's internal struggle with the Black Caucus became public on the night of Thursday, November 5, 1970. At approximately seven o'clock, the cable car that Robert Coats was operating collided with a truck at Columbus Avenue and Taylor Street in San Francisco's North Beach neighborhood. Coats was one of the caucus members who had been suspended by the union earlier in the year. What happened next was intensely disputed in the days that

followed. According to the driver of the truck, after the collision Coats threatened him with a small caliber revolver. Police officer Art Orrante, who witnessed the accident while walking his beat, corroborated this story. He immediately called for backup and then attempted to arrest Coats, who had since returned to his cable car. But Coats resisted, and before long two other cable car gripmen who also belonged to the Muni Drivers Caucus, LeRoy Hagler and Philip Alberto, had joined in the struggle. As the battle spread to the streets, twenty-six cable car workers – their cars halted by the accident – and more than thirty police officers converged on the scene before the three could be subdued.

Later, Coats, Hagler, and Alberto stated that “the police were the ones who started the whole fracas, from beginning to end, spiced heavily with police brutality.” Coats denied having a gun (no gun was recovered) and claimed that it was the driver of the truck, who was white, who had been verbally abusive. Coats said that he had called for a San Francisco Municipal Railway inspector and returned to his cable car when Officer Orrante, also white, struck him on the back of his head and jaw with a flashlight. At that point, Hagler and Alberto intervened and police drew their guns on the two before handcuffing them. According to William Love, another cable car gripman who witnessed the incident, “the police were beating the hell out of Coats while he was on the ground, with one cop with his foot on his back, and the third handcuffing him.” All three were charged with battery and resisting arrest and taken to city prison. While being interviewed a few hours later, the *San Francisco Chronicle* reported that Coats “displayed swollen hands and a cut lip ... a deep gash in the back of his head that required five stitches and his clothing was heavily bloodstained.”¹³⁸

News of the incident spread quickly among the 150 workers at the Washington-Mason cable car division. Police harassment had been a longstanding grievance among black Muni

operators and was a constant source of anger among urban blacks more generally. When the accident cleared, cable car operators decided to bring their cars back to the carbarn rather than resume service. After an emergency meeting, about 100 rank-and-file cable car workers informed Local 250-A officials that they would not return to work until Coats, Hagler, and Alberto were released, the charges against them dropped, and brutality charges brought against the police.¹³⁹ Meanwhile, the rest of Muni's workforce intensely debated whether or not to join the cable car workers. "It came to a point where men were about to fight their brothers and doing many other things which they, under normal circumstances would not consider," the union's official newsletter reported. "Some were enraged; some were trying to keep it cool till they could get the real story; most were confused and wondering what in h--- was going down."¹⁴⁰ The following morning, cable car workers kept the Powell-Mason line at a stand-still and attempted to shut down the entire Muni system by enlisting support from other bus and streetcar operators as well as passengers. Most Muni bus and streetcar operators obeyed their union leaders' instructions and returned to work. But workers sympathetic to the striking cable car workers interrupted Muni service with scattered acts of protest, and during the Friday morning and evening commutes picketing workers caused minor delays. Accompanying photos showing the idle cable cars, the stilled winding wheels of the Washington-Mason powerhouse, and Friday morning commuters waiting for a Powell-Mason cable car that would never arrive, the *Chronicle* reported that striking workers temporarily delayed bus and streetcar service by blocking the streetcar tracks at Geneva and San Jose Avenues as well as the West Portal entrance to the Twin Peaks tunnel, and by pulling down the overhead trolley poles that conduct electricity from streetcars and electric buses to the overhead wires. It was the first time that the general public became aware of the existence of a rank-and-file Caucus within Local 250-A, and the press

reported with intrigue on the “Black Caucus” that ‘demanded’ the TWU become “more militant on social issues.”¹⁴¹ One *Chronicle* headline called it a “Confusing Cable Car Strike.”¹⁴²

Local 250-A officials were quick to condemn the wildcat action. According to L.B. Delaney, who had taken over as the Local’s president in September, “a lot of fellows causing this trouble” were “not even union members and don’t even come from the cable car division.” He told the *Chronicle* that union officials had “told the men that we want to give the city fathers a chance to work this problem out.”¹⁴³ Delaney was acting upon the advice of Leonard Airriess, who instructed him to “publicly renounce the idea of a strike, tell the cable car people that the official union line is for this matter to be handled by the upcoming formal investigation through the Police Commission, and the men should return to work.”¹⁴⁴ Airriess felt that there was “no question the police did use more force than was necessary,” although he no sympathy with the workers who were assaulted. “I must admit they sure did pick the right people,” he confided to Joe Hanaberry.¹⁴⁵ The night of the incident, Delaney also sent a telegram – which Airriess had written – to Mayor Alioto and Police Chief Al Nelder demanding “an immediate and thorough investigation of the charges of police brutality arising from an incident in which several of our members were brutally beaten by San Francisco police even after they were handcuffed or otherwise restrained.”¹⁴⁶ By condemning the strike as well as the police, Local 250-A was trying to secure a precarious middle ground between its opposing flanks. The union was an important ally of Alioto – who viewed the incident as another episode in his ongoing battle against the Black Panthers and refused to dismiss the charges against the three cable car operators – and they needed his support in an ongoing dispute with the city over employee benefits.¹⁴⁷ On the other flank, Airriess viewed the situation as “a fight by the caucus for control of the cable car division.” In the short term, he was willing to allow caucus control at Washington-Mason if it

meant consolidating support for the union among bus drivers and streetcar operators. “I believe that if we let the cable car people stay out while keeping the other divisions working they will soon realize just which side of the bread the butter is on,” he advised. “I believe we can wait them out.”¹⁴⁸ It was a safe bet. Outside of the Washington-Mason and Kirkland divisions, the only other division to show support was the Ocean division, where twenty-five bus drivers elected to return home rather drive their scheduled routes through the southwest section of the city.

On the morning of November 6, union representatives met for two and a half hours with Mayor Alioto, Deputy of Social Services and black labor leader Revels Cayton, the Police Chief and Commissioners, and four rank-and-file cable car workers. Meanwhile, a few dozen Muni workers, most of whom were black and presumably sympathetic to the caucus, waited outside of the mayor’s office. Local 250-A officials emerged from the meeting confident that justice would be served. “The Local Officers are convinced,” Delaney informed Division Representatives and Executive Board members, “from the evidence presented that the charge of police brutality is well founded and are satisfied the investigation will prove it so.”¹⁴⁹ Yet when Alioto tried to address reporters following the meeting he was shouted down by the Muni workers who had been waiting outside. “You better drive those commuters around in your limousine tonight because there ain’t going to be any buses or streetcars running,” a white worker yelled. After moving the press conference inside his office, Alioto dismissed the work stoppage as a “wildcat walkout” that was part of an internal union problem involving the Black Caucus. Upholding his dual commitments to organized labor and ‘law and order,’ he reiterated his refusal to drop the charges against Coats, Hagler, and Alberto. “I don’t care what happens,” he stated. “We will not

compromise on that. If we have to take a strike by people who can't be controlled by their union, that's OK by me.”¹⁵⁰

Outraged cable car workers and their allies considered Local 250-A's complicity in Alioto's handling of the incident as further evidence of the failings of liberal leadership. The Caucus derided the TWU's stance as “weak kneed” and compared it to other cases in which the union failed to support black Muni drivers who had been arrested while on the job. When union leaders presented their side to a raucous two-hour meeting at the Washington-Mason car barn on Friday afternoon, the cable car workers defiantly elected to remain on strike.¹⁵¹ The striking cable car workers received support from the PLP, which taking advantage of the BPP's waning interest in the Caucus, sponsored a rally on their behalf at Powell and Market Streets.¹⁵² But without the support of the city, their union leadership, and most of the rank-and-file, the cable car workers stood little chance of success. On Saturday morning, members of Washington-Mason voted overwhelmingly to return to work pending completion of the Police Commission's investigation. A few weeks later the police officers involved in the incident were cleared, and Coats, Hagler, and Alberto received thirty-day suspensions from Muni for apparent trumped up charges that included refusing to obey orders, vicious conduct, repeated mishandling of fares, dishonesty, and immoral conduct.¹⁵³ Local 250-A leaders praised the majority of its members for “their cooperation and steadfastness,” and expressed regret that cable car workers lost two-day's pay.¹⁵⁴ Unable to expand their strike or succeed in getting the charges against Coats, Hagler, and Alberto dropped, the cable car workers and their supporters could only claim a symbolic victory. “The true example of brotherhood that was shown by the members at Washington and Mason Division, when they went out on a work stoppage in support our fellow union brothers is the type of brotherhood that we must have in order for us to exist as a strong union,” the Caucus

asserted.¹⁵⁵ But in reality it showed that most Local 250-A members still supported their union leaders.

The Concerned Muni Drivers

The wildcat strike lived on in the collective memory of the Washington-Mason Division, though it proved to be the last gasp for the Muni Black/Drivers Caucus. Jim Olsen heard about the strike when he began working as a cable car operator in the mid-1970s. According to Olsen, some of the black cable car workers were militant, but “not revolutionary.” Olsen, who was white (rare for a new operator in this period), recalled sitting across from three black cable car operators as he awaited his training. The black workers were each wearing sunglasses and hats emblazoned with the iconic black clenched fist on the front. After looking him up and down, one facetiously asked, “Are you a cop?”¹⁵⁶ It did not take long for Olsen’s black co-workers to warm up to him. He became interested in workplace issues and union affairs (in 1976 he wrote a Master’s thesis on the impact of stress on the lives of Muni operators), and successfully challenged a black incumbent to become a shop steward at Washington-Mason. While Olsen’s victory was “kind of a surprise” because of his race, the incumbent was closely aligned with the local’s president whereas Olsen was the “rank-and-file” candidate. Yet by that time the Muni Drivers Caucus no longer existed. In the cable car strike’s immediate aftermath, the Caucus quietly faded from Local 250-A, although it briefly resurfaced in 1971 as the Muni Drivers Association (MDA), which only consisted of about a dozen current and former Muni workers.¹⁵⁷

The Black Panther Muni caucus had left Local 250-A in worse shape than it had found it. Clashes between caucus members and union officials alienated most of the union’s members who had been caught in the cross-fire. Dissatisfaction with the state of the union gave rise to a new rank-and-file group in 1971 that called itself the Concerned Muni Drivers (CMD). A CMD

motorman with ten years' experience summed up the state of the Local 250-A in the following way in early 1973:

The union is besieged with critical problems. Attendance at union meetings no longer even constitutes a quorum. Job morale has plummeted to rock bottom. ...Men constantly speak of the failure of the local leadership surrounding grievance procedures, whereby, upon confrontation with management, they are suspended from work only to be told by union representatives that nothing can be done for them. ...Union members mention frequently the fact that local officers rarely visit the divisions around the city with them concerning any kind of union business or to speak with them just to show their interest. The men express their feelings that their union dues are being channeled elsewhere without any concern for them whatsoever.¹⁵⁸

Throughout the 1970s, the CMD became the type of vehicle for rank-and-file activism that the Black Caucus had sought yet failed to mobilize. It primarily sought to reinvigorate Local 250-A by facilitating greater rank-and-file participation in union affairs. "We the membership must realize that the policies and practices of the Local are our responsibility," the CMD explained. "We can influence these policies and practices only by participating in Union functions, especially and most basically Union meetings. In these times, no leadership, no matter how dedicated, can do the job that has to be done. No handful can win and secure victories. It will take a membership united in common understanding and engaged in a common struggle."¹⁵⁹

The CMD's call for rank-and-file action within the union contrasted with the centralized leadership of the BPP's Black Caucus. The CMD eschewed the caucus's black nationalism and revolutionary rhetoric, and as a result it had a larger base of support. The CMD's main forum was its monthly newspaper, *Draggin' the Line*, whose interracial editorial board consisted of four blacks and one white.¹⁶⁰ The CMD leaders who edited the paper urged members to contribute articles, letters, poetry, photographs, and jokes. Contributors only needed to adhere to a few guidelines, the most important of which was that they avoid personal attacks. "This is an instrument for the membership to open communications with each and every brother," the editors

stated in their mission statement. The response was impressive. In addition to regular columns written by CMD members, the paper was able to fill its pages with items submitted by rank-and-file drivers and sometimes Muni passengers as well. Issues of *Draggin' The Line* typically ran twelve pages and included items on the activities of union leaders, grievance issues, equipment problems, public relations, safety concerns, BART and the threat of regional transit to municipal jobs, and police harassment. The CMD also maintained a keen interest in racial issues within the union and Muni system and publicized incidents in which it believed black drivers had been victims of racism. A 1973 evaluation of Muni by the San Francisco Planning and Urban Renewal Association (SPUR) referred to *Draggin' the Line* as an “iconoclastic tabloid” but acknowledged that “it nevertheless contains articles promoting the better operation of Muni.”¹⁶¹

The CMD quickly captured the attention of union leaders as well as Muni management. Since *Draggin' the Line* dwarfed Local 250-A's newsletter in size, scope, and popularity, John Squire and recording secretary Sam Walker proposed that the CMD collaborate with Local 250-A's Executive Board on publishing an official union paper.¹⁶² The idea never came to fruition because Squire and Walker insisted that the Local Executive Board have final editorial control over the paper's content, but Squire tried to remain in the good graces of the CMD (L. B. Delaney had allegedly taken a similar tact with the Black Caucus). TWU officials also took notice. International representative Leonard Airriess and International Vice President Joseph Hanaberry, who had not forgotten the Black Caucus challenge, believed that “this rump group was not just a local San Francisco group but part of a larger movement ready to fill any vacuum created by the inactivity of the Local Union.”¹⁶³ Airriess, who must have considered the CMD as the Black Caucus reincarnated, also accused Squire of protecting “radical dissents who are trying to mislead the membership by publishing a newspaper.”¹⁶⁴ Muni management similarly viewed

the CMD as a dangerous continuation of the revolutionary rank-and-file tradition that the Black Caucus and PLP had been a part of. “Three different Muni officials expressed their concern – with all seriousness – about a national Communist-inspired conspiracy to ‘take over’ the communications and transportation industries,” SPUR’s 1973 report stated. “The ‘radicals’ – the Concerned Muni Drivers and other outspoken Muni employees are suspected of being part of this alleged conspiracy.”¹⁶⁵ The responses of union leaders and Muni management to the emergence of the CMD attest to the perceived influence and militancy that the group had generated in a relatively short amount of time.

The role that the CMD sought to play in rejuvenating Local 250-A was evident in its origins during February and March of 1972, when it helped lead a city-wide campaign against cuts to night and weekend Muni service. On January 29, 1972, the PUC, which managed Muni’s budget, revealed that it would be reducing nighttime and weekend service by thirteen percent in order to shore up a \$1.3 million budget deficit. The subsequent campaign against the service cuts brought Muni’s bus and streetcar drivers into common cause with the general public, particularly among workers and racial minorities. In addition to threatening Muni drivers’ jobs, the proposed service cuts posed the greatest hardship for the working poor and minorities who lived in areas that were isolated from San Francisco’s city center, such as the Mission district and Bayview-Hunters Point. Black San Franciscans, for example, decried the city’s neglect of Muni while suburban commuters enjoyed greater access to the city. “If San Francisco can afford to decrease taxes on its commute traffic, it certainly is inexcusable to curtail bus service for its own people,” the *Sun-Reporter* editorialized after the Board of Supervisors voted to reduce the off-street parking tax from twenty-five to ten percent. “While the Muni is reducing services for the poor in the city, the Golden Gate Bridge District is steadily dipping in Uncle Sam’s pocket for bread to

subsidize commuters from one of the most affluent counties in the country – Marin,” added Emory Cutis, the *Sun-Reporter*’s political columnist. “As systems like BART and the Golden Gate Bridge commuter system brings the suburbs closer in travel time to the jobs and shops downtown, more and more whites, and when they can, blacks with a little bread will move away from the city and its problems.”¹⁶⁶

Working with former Caucus leader Ted Walker and his small contingent, the CMD raised public awareness about the service cuts and circulated petitions opposing the cutbacks.¹⁶⁷ Only after the CMD and MDA had helped arouse public sentiment against the cuts and the PUC rebuffed Local 250-A’s attempts to negotiate did the TWU adopt a hard-lined stance. “We will not stand still and allow you to destroy our city,” Delaney and Paul Raymore informed PUC Manager John Crowley.¹⁶⁸ Having committed the union to open defiance of the PUC’s plan, Delaney instructed Local 250-A members not to sign up for the new reduced-service schedules and eventually convinced Alioto – who also changed his position on the cuts in the face of growing public opposition – to postpone the sign-up.¹⁶⁹ The TWU also organized a mass protest rally at the Civic Auditorium, sending 3,000 invitations to individuals, labor unions, community groups, and local and state politicians. About a week later, a Superior Court judge issued an injunction that required the PUC to obtain the Board of Supervisors’ approval for the service cuts, which it ultimately was unable to procure.¹⁷⁰

The victory validated the CMD’s efforts to work for reform within the union rather than from the outside. In the few years that followed, the CMD was able to build upon this momentum and win election to union offices, although it continued to clash with union officials and Muni management. The campaign also helped the fledgling group improve the relationship between Muni drivers and the general public. For the next several years the CMD sought to curry

favor with San Franciscans by protesting budget cuts and distributing their own schedules (Muni did not produce bus schedules during this period). “We know now that the key players are the riding public,” a CMD member wrote in a *Draggin’ the Line* column. “When they side with us, we win. When we alienate them, we have a tough time standing up to City Hall.”¹⁷¹ This was an important lesson, and one that drivers would be mindful of as they fought to protect their jobs and wages throughout the 1970s.

By organizing the Muni black caucus, the Black Panthers recognized the importance of the labor movement to black San Franciscans while at the same time challenging the notion that black trade unionists and their unions were serving the interests of the black working class. The San Francisco Muni was not an isolated case of such interactions between Black Power and labor. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, labor unions provided spaces in which Black Power activists and black liberals came into direct contact on a daily basis. In places such as Detroit auto plants, such interactions served to radicalize black workers. The attempt by Black Panther members to organize among San Francisco’s transit workers suggests that black trade unionists were reluctant to challenge their union’s liberal leadership. In this sense the story of the Caucus relates to that of the Panthers more generally in San Francisco, where the degree of black participation in municipal government made the BPP less successful at gaining recruits than it was across the bay in Oakland. In 1975, Larry Martin, who replaced John Squire as Local 250-A’s president the previous year, incredulously remarked that “While Local 250A and its members still do not have all of the benefits to which they are entitled, Muni drivers are far from the underpaid, downtrodden workers continuously portrayed by [the CMD].”¹⁷² Martin was correct. Muni operators were some of the highest paid transit workers in the country, and their union had influence at City Hall. Moreover, African American workers held most of the union’s

leadership positions, and the racial barriers to supervisory and management positions were gradually eroding. To be sure, workers had complaints about working conditions, management, and their union leaders. However, in the case of the Black Panther caucus, they were unwilling to allow an outside organization disrupt their union. This can explain the comparative success of the CMD, which, while still to the left of union leadership, was less divisive in its objectives and tactics. Even Martin, who had emphatically rejected the Black Caucus's invitation to join years earlier, seemed to embrace the need for change – even if it was in part to co-opt the CMD's influence and reclaim the confidence of the rank-and-file in union leadership.¹⁷³ In this sense radicals were able to influence the union's liberal leadership. Martin would still face challenges from radicals within the union, but on the whole Muni's workers proved to be loyal to their union and their jobs.

¹ “23rd Psalm, Present Day Version,” Box 91, Folder 3, Transport Workers Union of America. Records of Locals. Wagner 234, Tamiment Library/Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, New York University, New York.

² On the steel industry, see Ruth Needleman, *Black Freedom Fighters in Steel: The Struggle for Democratic Unionism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003); on the auto industry, see Heather Ann Thompson, *Whose Detroit? Politics, Labor, and Race in a Modern American City* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001); David M. Lewis-Coleman, *Race Against Liberalism: Black Workers and the UAW in Detroit* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2008); Peter B. Levy, *The New Left and Labor in the 1960s* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1994), Chapter Four; James A. Geschwender and Judson L. Jeffries, “The League of Revolutionary Black Workers,” in Judson L. Jeffries, ed. *Black Power in the Belly of the Beast* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2006), 135-162.

³ Recently, historians have sought to rehabilitate the Panthers by portraying a more nuanced picture of the group, by drawing attention to its efforts at coalition-building and community service programs. See, for example, Jama Lazerow and Yohuru Williams, editors. *In Search of the Black Panther Party: New Perspectives on a Revolutionary Movement*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2006; Kathleen Cleaver and George Katsiaficas, eds, *Liberation, Imagination, and the Black Panther Party: A New Look at the Panthers and their Legacy* (New York: Routledge, 2001); Paul Alkebulan, *Survival Pending Revolution: The History of the Black Panther Party* (Tuscaloosa, AL: The University of Alabama Press, 2007).

⁴ In doing so, I seek to build upon the insights of historians of Black Power and the liberal civil rights movement paralleled one another and sometimes converged. See Devin Fergus, *Liberalism, Black Power, and the Making of American Politics, 1965-1980* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2009); Peniel E. Joseph. *Waiting ‘Til the Midnight Hour: A Narrative History of Black Power in America* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2006.) Robert O. Self, *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland* (Princeton: Princeton University

Press, 2003), see esp. Chapter 6; Robert O. Self, "The Black Panther Party and the Long Civil Rights Era," in Jama Lazerow and Yohuru Williams, editors. *In Search of the Black Panther Party: New Perspectives on a Revolutionary Movement* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006).

⁵ According to some, during the 1950s Muni placed ads in newspapers in cities with large black populations. The result, according to the *Sun-Reporter*, was a "black exodus to San Francisco" as migrants from Detroit and other Midwestern cities filled Muni's ranks *Sun Reporter*, September 21, 1995. According to a former cable car operator, a large contingent of Muni workers migrated from Detroit as a result of these recruiting efforts. Telephone interview with Jim Olsen by Author, May 7, 2009. I've been unable to locate any corroborating evidence of this – such as job advertisements in Midwestern newspapers.

⁶ Gilly rooms were located within division headquarters and served as spaces where drivers could congregate before and after their shifts as well as during breaks. Drivers also picked up their assignments from dispatch in the gilly rooms.

⁷ Examples of commendation for black operators and conductors, as well as blacks who were finalist or winners of the Muni Man of the Month award, see *Trolley Topics*, October 1948, December 1950, January, 1951 – July 1952.

⁸ Irving Babow and Edward Howden, *A Civil Rights Inventory of San Francisco, Part I, Employment* (San Francisco, 1958), Homeland Ministries Archives, Reel 9, Box 20, Folder 6.

⁹ *Trolley Topics*, August 1950.

¹⁰ "A Veteran Driver Speaks," *Muni SF Defender*, Vol. 1, No. 1, Feb. 11, 1976, Box 92, Folder 9, TWU Records.

¹¹ *Trolley Topics*, November 1947; January, February, March, April, June, December 1948; July 1949; April and November 1950.

¹² TWU Local 250 List of Officers as of November 28, 1950 election, TWU Records, Box 90, Folder 4; *Trolley Topics*, February 1951.

¹³ Jack Sherry to Mike Quill, April 4, 1959, Box 90, Folder 15, L. B. Delaney to Mike Quill, September 26, 1960, Box 90, Folder 16, TWU Records.

¹⁴ See TWU Monthly Financial Reports for Local 250, January 1959 through September 1960, Box 90, Folders 15 and 16, TWU Records. These reports do not account for race, but a committee of Division 1380 members (several of who had once belonged to Local 250), recounted the story of whites who entered their union during Delaney's tenure because he was black. "Local 250's Crisis in Black and White," Box 90, Folder 18, TWU Records.

¹⁵ L. B. Delaney to Mike Quill, September 26, 1960, Box 90, Folder 16, TWU Records; Mike Quill to Jack Sherry, January 13, 1961, Box 90, Folder 17, TWU Records.

¹⁶ Jack Sherry to Matthew Guinan, May 22, 1963, Box 90, Folder 17, TWU Records.

¹⁷ "Transport Workers Union San Francisco Municipal Railway Trust Fund Report," November 1969, Box 91, Folder 3, TWU records.

¹⁸ "Muni Railway A.C.O.U. Bulletin," February 4, 1965, Box 90, Folder 18, TWU Records.

¹⁹ "Local 250's Crisis in Black and White," Box 90, Folder 18, TWU Records.

²⁰ Ed Coleman to Mike Quill, February 5, 1965, Box 90, Folder 18, TWU Records.

²¹ “Rank and File Committee Endorses T.W.U. Local 250,” circa March 1966, Box 90, Folder 19, TWU Records.

²² Joshua B. Freeman, *In Transit: The Transport Workers Union in New York City, 1933-1966* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001), 335.

²³ Ed Coleman to Thomas McGrath, February 23, 1966, Box 90, Folder 18, TWU Records.

²⁴ This figure includes \$9,667.57 in “lost time.” Ed Coleman to Douglas MacMahon, April 2, 1966, Box 90, Folder 19, TWU Records.

²⁵ Ray J. Antonio, “A History of the Transport Workers Union of America Local 250-A,” Box 2, Folder 4, Larry Martin Papers, 6-7; “Overflow Mass Meeting held by T.W.U. Local 250,” and “Local 250 TWU AFL-CIO Invites All Muni Carmen to Mass Meeting,” in Box 90, Folder 19, TWU Records. For general background information on Watts, see, David Head, “The African Presence in Transportation,” The Brooklyn Historical Railway Association, <http://www.brooklynrail.net/TheAfricanPresenceInTransportation.html>.

²⁶ Jay A. Darwin to Douglas MacMahon, April 5, 1966, Box 90, Folder 19, TWU Records.

²⁷ Matthew Guinan and Douglas MacMahon to the Membership of Local 250, April 5, 1966, Box 90, Folder 19, TWU Records.

²⁸ Leonard Airriess to Douglas MacMahon, March 5, 1968, Box 91, Folder 2, TWU Records.

²⁹ *Sun-Reporter*, March 23, 1968.

³⁰ William Johnson to Douglas MacMahon, July 21, 1966, Box 90, Folder 19, TWU Records.

³¹ *Sun Reporter*, March 23, 1968.

³² Official Election Results, TWU Local 250-A, May 10, 1968, Box 91, Folder 2, TWU Records.

³³ Paul C. Trimble, *The Platform Men* (San Francisco, 1984), 508.

³⁴ *Sun-Reporter*, December 9, 1967.

³⁵ *San Francisco Chronicle*, April 11, 1968.

³⁶ *San Francisco Chronicle*, April 11, 1968.

³⁷ Joseph Alioto, Press Release, April 11, 1968, Box 17, Folder 40, Alioto Papers.

³⁸ City and County of San Francisco Public Utilities Commission, “Proposal for a Transportation Assistance Program in the San Francisco Municipal Railway,” 1968, 1; Memorandum, Gil Boreman to John DeLuca, September 13, 1968; George Grubb to John Dukes, October 3, 1968; James Finn to George Grubb, October 3, 1968; Public Utilities Commission Resolution No. 68-0770, Box 6, Folder 1, Alioto Papers.

³⁹ Leonard H. Airriess to Joseph Hanaberry, Nov 4, 1969, box 91, Folder 3, TWU Records.

⁴⁰ “Muni Trainees Graduate,” *Sun-Reporter*, February 14, 1970.

⁴¹ “Transport Workers Union San Francisco Municipal Railway Trust Fund Report,” November 1969, Box 91, Folder 3, TWU Records.

⁴² San Francisco Planning and Urban Renewal Association, "Building a New Muni: An In-Depth SPUR Report on the San Francisco Municipal Railway," March 1973, 27; Joseph L. Howerton to Terry Francois, March 29, 1968, NAACP Region I Records, Carton 94, Folder 6.

⁴³ Bill Epton, Fred Jerome, and Walter Riley, "FBI-CP-SWP Tries Baiting Panther Trap," *Progressive Labor*, Vol. 7, No. 2 (August 1969): 19.

⁴⁴ For a biographical sketch of Walter Riley, see "Testimonial Dinner Honoring Walter Riley," National Lawyers Guild, San Francisco Chapter, <http://www.nlgsf.org/news/testimonial-dinner-honoring-walter-riley-april-27>.

⁴⁵ Harvey Klehr, *Far Left of Center: The American Radical Left Today* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, Rutgers, 1988), 87-88.

⁴⁶ Vartan Gregorian, *The Road to Home: My Life and Times* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2003), 171-172.

⁴⁷ "PLP Trade Union Program, U.S. Workers: Key to Revolution," *Progressive Labor*, Vol. 7, No. 2, August 1969, 57-80, quote appears on p. 74.

⁴⁸ By contrast, the Potrero and Woods divisions, which serviced the Mission and Bayview-Hunters Point districts, respectively, were considered the least desirable assignments, primarily for safety reasons. Jim Olsen Interview.

⁴⁹ Klehr, *Far Left of Center*, 88.

⁵⁰ Joseph Hanaberry to Matthew Guinan, May 8, 1969, Box 91, Folder 3, TWU Records.

⁵¹ Joseph, *Waiting 'til the Midnight Hour*, 215; Alkebulan, *Survival Pending Revolution*, 20.

⁵² Martha Biondi, *The Black Revolution on Campus* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2012), 67.

⁵³ The Fremont GM plant had about 5,000 workers, 30-35 percent of whom were black and Mexican-American. The Black Panther Caucus formed late in 1968. See, Thomas R. Brooks, "DRUMbeats in Detroit," *Dissent*, Jan-Feb 1970, n7, 23.

⁵⁴ "Revolutionary 'Black Caucus' Moves on Muni Railway Politics," *The Black Panther*, April 6, 1969.

⁵⁵ "Muni Black Caucus: Right on Time," *Movement*, November 1969.

⁵⁶ Earl Caldwell, "Angry Panthers Talk of War and Unwrap Weapons," *New York Times*, September 30, 1968.

⁵⁷ Earl Caldwell, "Panthers, Treading Softly, Are Winning Over Negroes on Coast," *New York Times*, September 15, 1968, 70.

⁵⁸ Eldridge Cleaver claimed that the Panthers had been "set up." Wiley Maloney, "'Frisco Police, Panthers Clash: 3 Cops Wounded," *Chicago Daily Defender*, November 20, 1968; Earl Caldwell, "Black Panthers Growing, but Their Troubles Rise," *New York Times*, December 7, 1968, 65.

⁵⁹ Marion Fay, "Mayor Alioto Demands Grand Jury Investigation of Black Panthers," *Sun-Reporter*, November 23, 1968; "Plan Investigation of Black Panthers," *Chicago Daily Defender*, November 21, 1968.

⁶⁰ Form Letter to Residents from Joseph L. Alioto, November 26, 1968, Alioto Papers, Box 17, Folder 23.

⁶¹ Earl Caldwell, "Black Panthers Growing, but Their Troubles Rise," *New York Times*, December 7, 1968, 65. Caldwell quotes the Reverend F. D. Haynes of San Francisco as being "delighted" with the way that Panther members had conducted themselves at his Third Baptist Church and admitted that they were "somewhat different than what had built up in my mind." Earl Caldwell, "Panthers, Treading Softly, Are Winning Over Negroes on Coast," *New York Times*, September 15, 1968.

⁶² Earl Caldwell, "Black Panthers Growing, but Their Troubles Rise," *New York Times*, December 7, 1968, 65.

⁶³ Joseph, *Waiting 'Til the Midnight Hour*, 241-244. According to some Panther scholars, the community survival programs represented the true character of the Black Panther rank-and-file, who were primarily concerned with improving the communities in which they lived. See Judson L. Jeffries, ed., *Comrades: A Local History of the Black Panther Party* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2007); According to former Panther and historian Paul Alkebulan, these programs were evidence that, official BPP rhetoric notwithstanding, rank-and-file members were more interested in reform than revolution Alkebulan, *Survival Pending Revolution*, 27-31.

⁶⁴ *The Black Panther*, April 20, 1969.

⁶⁵ "What Workers Must Do," *The Black Panther*, November 16, 1968.

⁶⁶ *The Black Panther*, April 24, 1969.

⁶⁷ Alkebulan, *Survival Pending Revolution*, 14.

⁶⁸ *The Black Panther*, May 4, 1969, reproduced in Foner, *The Black Panthers Speak*, 249-252; Historian Peter Levy has observed that the Panthers "presented the least critical view of the labor movement of all of Black Power groups." Levy, *The New Left and Labor*, 70.

⁶⁹ Horston quoted in *the Black Panther*, February 2, May 11 and 25, 1969; *Workers' Action*, January 1969.

⁷⁰ "An Interview with UAW's Black Panther Caucus Leader Kenny Horston," *The Black Panther*, May 11, 1969.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² *The Black Panther*, March 31, April 6, and May 11, 1969.

⁷³ "Revolution And Labor," *The Black Panther*, May 19, 1969.

⁷⁴ Alessandro Baccari and Associates, "Muni Report," February 1971, 5-6.

⁷⁵ "'It's a Good Job,' Says Bus Driver," *San Francisco Examiner*, October 18, 1971.

⁷⁶ "Muni Black Caucus: Right on Time," *Movement*, November 1969.

⁷⁷ "Muni Black Caucus: Right on Time," *Movement*, November 1969.

⁷⁸ *The Movement*, November 1969.

⁷⁹ "Here is Your Prop. G Victory!" Box 91, Folder 2, TWU Records.

⁸⁰ Joseph Hanaberry to Douglas MacMahon, October 6, 1967, Box 91, Folder 1, TWU Records. "Proposition G Charter Amendment," Box 91, Folder 1, TWU Records.

⁸¹ Joseph Hanaberry to Douglas MacMahon, October 14, 1967, Box 91, Folder 1, TWU Records.

⁸² John Squire to Executive Board Members and Division Representatives, February 27, 1969, Box 91, Folder 3, TWU Records.

⁸³ "Revolutionary 'Black Caucus' Moves on Muni Railway Politics," *The Black Panther*, April 6, 1969.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Joseph Hanaberry to Matthew Guinan, May 8, 1969, Box 91, Folder 3, TWU Records.

⁸⁶ Joseph Hanaberry to Matthew Guinan, May 8, 1969, Box 91, Folder 3, TWU Records.

⁸⁷ "First Negro Inspector at Muni Railway," *Sun-Reporter*, April 22, 1961.

⁸⁸ "Muni Man Moves Up," *Sun-Reporter*, July 28, 1973.

⁸⁹ Background information on Green is from the following sources: Department of Commerce, Bureau of Census, Fifteenth Census of the United States, Franklin, LA, Sheet 3B; *Sun-Reporter*, October 28, 1967; Trimble, *The Platform Men*, 466.

⁹⁰ "Were You There?" Box 91, Folder 3, TWU Records.

⁹¹ "FBI-CP-SWP Combo Tries Baiting Panther Trap," *Progressive Labor*, August 1969, 18-19.

⁹² *The Movement*, November 1969.

⁹³ Joseph Hanaberry to Matthew Guinan, May 8, 1969, Box 91, Folder 3, TWU Records.

⁹⁴ Thompson, *Whose Detroit*, Chapters 5 and 7.

⁹⁵ The Caucus did not appear to keep records of participants. The 150 number is based on the votes that Caucus leaders received in union elections. Local 250-A official election results, Box 91, Folder 7, TWU Records.

⁹⁶ My Interview with Larry Martin, June 26, 2009, San Francisco, CA.

⁹⁷ TWU Local 250-A Newsletter, July 17 and 29, 1970, Box 91, Folder 6, TWU Records.

⁹⁸ TWU Local 250-A Newsletter, December 1970, Box 91, Folder 6, TWU Records.

⁹⁹ Leonard Airriess to Matthew Guinan, May 4, 1970, Box 91, Folder 7, TWU Records.

¹⁰⁰ "Muni Black Caucus: Right on Time," *Movement*, November 1969.

¹⁰¹ "Special Report," Box 91, Folder 3, TWU Records; Alex Ricca, "One Union, One Purpose," circa October 1972, Box 92, Folder 3, TWU Records.

¹⁰² See letters from Delaney Armstead to Dave Nelson, Robert Coats, John Gilbert, Ted Walker, George Brady, June 12, 1970, Box 91, Folder 7, TWU Records; Local 250A to Delaney Armstead, May 14, 1970; Francis J. McTernan to International Secretary-Treasurer, TWU, August 19, 1970, Box 91, Folder 7, TWU Records.

¹⁰³ Thompson, *Whose Detroit*, 168-171.

¹⁰⁴ Transport Workers Union Local 250-A Newsletter, July 29, 1970, Box 91, folder 6, TWU Records.

¹⁰⁵ “Declaration of John T. Squire,” May 7, 1970, George Brady, et al., vs. Transport Workers Union of America, Local 250-A, AFL-CIO, et al., Superior Court of San Francisco City and County Case No. 616735, Box 91, Folder 8, TWU Records.

¹⁰⁶ Epton, Jerome, and Riley, “Baiting Panther Trap,” 20.

¹⁰⁷ “Black Caucus Policy,” Box 91, Folder 3, TWU Records.

¹⁰⁸ “Black Caucus Policy,” Box 91, Folder 3, TWU Records.

¹⁰⁹ Black Caucus, “Who Pays the Price?” Box 91, Folder 3, TWU Records.

¹¹⁰ “Muni Black Caucus: Right on Time,” *Movement*, November 1969.

¹¹¹ Earl Caldwell, “Panthers: They Are Not the Same Organization,” *New York Times*, July 27, 1969, E6.

¹¹² Rufus Byars, “Panthers Form United Front Against Fascism,” *Sun-Reporter*, July 26, 1969; Earl Caldwell, “‘Fascism’ Decreed at Black Panther Conference,” *New York Times*, July 21, 1969, 48; Earl Caldwell, “Panthers’ Meeting Shifts Aims From Racial Confrontation to Class Struggle,” *New York Times*, July 22, 1969, 21; “Duchow, Transit Worker At U.F.A.F.,” *Black Panther*.

¹¹³ *The Movement*, November 1969.

¹¹⁴ *Muni Worker*, Vol. II, No. 1, December 1969, Box 91, Folder 3, TWU Records.

¹¹⁵ Kenny Horston, “Toward A New Unionism,” *The Black Panther*, March 9, 1969.

¹¹⁶ *The Movement*, November 1969.

¹¹⁷ Untitled Flyer, Box 91, Folder 3; “Rampant Political Ignorance In Local 250-A,” July 1969, Box 91, Folder 3, TWU Records.

¹¹⁸ “Rampant Political Ignorance in Local 250A!” Box 91, Folder 3, TWU Records.

¹¹⁹ Local 250-A leaders listed him as a “former Black Caucus member” on the May Ballot.

¹²⁰ The following results are from Local 250-A’s official election results, Box 91, Folder 7, TWU Records.

¹²¹ *Muni Worker*, Vol. II, No. 3, May 1970, Box 91, Folder 7, TWU Records.

¹²² Alex Ricca, “One Union, One Purpose,” circa October 1972, Box 92, Folder 3, TWU Records.

¹²³ See pleadings filed in George Brady, et al., vs. Transport Workers Union of America, Local 250A, AFL-CIO, Superior Court for the City and County of San Francisco Case No. 616-735, Leonard Airriess to Matthew Guinan, May 4, 1970, Delaney Armstead to George Brady, April 11, 1970, Matthew Guinan to John Squire, April 13, 1970, Joseph Hanaberry to Matthew Guinan, April 13, 1970, George Brady to Delaney Armstead, April 16, 1970, Box 91, Folder 7, TWU Records.

¹²⁴ Local 250A to Delaney Armstead, May 14, 1970; Francis J. McTernan to International Secretary-Treasurer, TWU, August 19, 1970, Box 91, Folder 7, TWU Records.

¹²⁵ See letters from Delaney Armstead to Dave Nelson, Robert Coats, John Gilbert, Ted Walker, George Brady, June 12, 1970, Box 91, Folder 7, TWU Records.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

¹²⁷ *Muni Worker*, Vol. II, No. 3, May 1970, Box 91, Folder 7, TWU Records.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

¹²⁹ "Citizens Defeat Muni Rate Hike," *Sun-Reporter*, June 13, 1970; "Group Protest Muni Fare Hike," *Sun-Reporter*, April 11, 1970.

¹³⁰ Shashi Dalal, "Bernal Heights Gets the Bus," *Sun-Reporter*, October 17, 1970; "Righteous Protest," *Sun-Reporter*, October 10, 1970.

¹³¹ Muni Drivers Caucus, "Bulletin," July 1, 1970, Box 91, Folder 7; Muni Drivers Caucus "Bulletin," June 30, 1970, Box 91, Folder 7, TWU Records.

¹³² Alex Ricca, "One Union, One Purpose."

¹³³ "Fremont Strike Fracas Fizzles," *Oakland Tribune*, September 19, 1970. GM stated that Horsten was fired for "loitering on the job" and leaving an hour early. Horsten maintained that he was dismissed because of his organizing activities and Panther membership. "Fired Panther Fights GM, Union," *Sun-Reporter*, July 4, 1970.

¹³⁴ This also coincided with the decline of the UAW Black Caucus movement in Detroit. Lewis-Coleman, *Race Against Liberalism*, 113.

¹³⁵ *The Black Panther*, April 20, 1969.

¹³⁶ Newton Quoted in "New Left Seeks Role in GM Strike," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, September 23, 1970.

¹³⁷ Jim Olsen, interview by author.

¹³⁸ *San Francisco Chronicle*, November 6 and 7, 1970; "Police Beat Up Cable Car Operators," *Sun-Reporter*, November 14, 1970.

¹³⁹ "From the Members From Washington & Mason Division to the Rest of the Members of Local 250-A," Box 91, Folder 6, TWU Records; *San Francisco Chronicle*, November 6, 1970.

¹⁴⁰ Newsletter, Transport Workers Union Local 250-A, November 18, 1970, Box 91, Folder 6, TWU Records.

¹⁴¹ *San Francisco Chronicle*, November 7, 1970.

¹⁴² *San Francisco Chronicle*, November 9, 1970.

¹⁴³ *San Francisco Chronicle*, November 9, 1970.

¹⁴⁴ Leonard Airriess to Joseph Hanaberry, November 6, 1970, Box 91, Folder 6, TWU Records.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁶ "Special To All Division Officers And Executive Board Members," November 6, 1970, Box 91, Folder 6.

¹⁴⁷ Leonard Airriess to Joe Hanaberry, November 6, 1970, Box 91, Folder 6, TWU Records.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁹ "Special To All Division Officers And Executive Board Members," November 6, 1970, Box 91, Folder 6, TWU Records.

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- ¹⁵⁰ *San Francisco Chronicle*, November 7, 1970.
- ¹⁵¹ *San Francisco Chronicle*, November 7, 1970.
- ¹⁵² Progressive Labor Party, "Why Muni Men Are Striking," Box 91, Folder 6, TWU Records.
- ¹⁵³ "Muni Men Suspended; Police Cleared," *Sun-Reporter*, November 28, 1970.
- ¹⁵⁴ Newsletter, Transport Workers Union Local 250-A, November 18, 1970 and December 1970, Box 91, Folder 6, TWU Records.
- ¹⁵⁵ "From the Members From Washington & Mason Division to the Rest of the Members of Local 250-A," Box 91, Folder 6, TWU Records.
- ¹⁵⁶ Jim Olsen Interview.
- ¹⁵⁷ *San Francisco Chronicle*, February 1, 1972.
- ¹⁵⁸ John D. Nevin to Matthew Guinan, March 6, 1973, Box 92, Folder 6, TWU Records.
- ¹⁵⁹ Editorial, *Draggin' the Line*, November 1972, Box 2, Folder 12, Larry Martin Papers.
- ¹⁶⁰ In the transit industry, "draggin the line" refers to a work slowdown in which operators purposely run behind schedule.
- ¹⁶¹ SPUR, "Building a New Muni: An In-Depth SPUR Report on the San Francisco Municipal Railway," March 1973, 31.
- ¹⁶² *Draggin' The Line*, November 1972, Box 2, Folder 12, Larry Martin Papers.
- ¹⁶³ Leonard Airriess to Joseph Hanaberry, January 5, 1973, Box 92, Folder 6, TWU Records.
- ¹⁶⁴ "TWU Local 250-A, Summary of Union Activities and Progress," nd, Box 92, Folder 6, TWU Records.
- ¹⁶⁵ SPUR, "Building a New Muni: An In-Depth SPUR Report on the San Francisco Municipal Railway," March 1973, 26.
- ¹⁶⁶ Emory Curtis, "The Political Game," *Sun-Reporter*, March 18, 1972.
- ¹⁶⁷ "Bus Service to be Sharply Curtailed," *Sun-Reporter*, February 26, 1972; "Public Ignored as Buses are Cut Back," *Sun-Reporter*, March 18, 1972.
- ¹⁶⁸ L.B. Delaney and Paul Raymore to John Crowley, March 15, 1972, Box 93, Folder 2, TWU Records.
- ¹⁶⁹ L.B. Delaney and Paul Raymore, "By Agreement With the Mayor's Office..." Box 93, Folder 2, TWU Records.
- ¹⁷⁰ TWU Local 250-A Press Release, nd, Box 92, Folder 3, TWU Records.
- ¹⁷¹ Martin P. Choate, "Protecting Our Jobs," *Draggin' The Line*, Dec-Jan 1973.
- ¹⁷² "Affidavit of Lawrence B. Martin in Opposition to Preliminary Injunction," Billy Ellis v. TWU Local 250A, et al, San Francisco County Superior Court Case No. C 75 2145 WHO, Box 92, Folder 8.
- ¹⁷³ My Interview With Larry Martin.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE PHILADELPHIA PLAN COMES TO SAN FRANCISCO: BLACK LABOR, BLACK CAPITALISM, AND AFFIRMATIVE ACTION IN THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY

As the Black Panthers attempted to radicalize Muni bus, streetcar, and cable car operators in 1969 and 1970, another drama involving Black Power and labor was unfolding in the local construction industry. By 1969, black activists across the country were demanding immediate results after several years of trying to increase the number of minority workers in the skilled construction jobs. “Trouble is brewing in the San Francisco Bay Area construction industry,” a *Sun-Reporter* editorial announced in early October as it warned of “the possibilities of massive white and black confrontation on the battleground of equal job opportunities in the construction industry.”¹ The troubles in San Francisco were also brewing in cities across the country as the federal government, responding to years of civil rights protests, took new measures to increase the number of minority workers on publicly-funded construction projects. The catalyst for a new wave of protests and demonstrations came on June 27, 1969, when Assistant Secretary of Labor Arthur Fletcher had unveiled the Nixon administration’s Philadelphia Plan, which required building contractors bidding on federal projects to submit numerical “target ranges” and “goals” for minority employment in designated trades on each contract (carefully avoiding the word “quotas”).² Although the federal plan initially only covered Philadelphia, the Department of Labor (DOL) warned cities that if they could not quickly develop acceptable voluntary “hometown plans” of their own then they could also expect a similar federally “imposed” affirmative action plan.

Although administration officials viewed the Philadelphia Plan in part as a way to help alleviate racial problems stemming from black unemployment, Fletcher’s announcement touched off a wave of protests and counter-protests across the nation.³ White building trades unionists

bitterly complained that the Philadelphia Plan unfairly discriminated against them. In Chicago, Arthur Fletcher had to be ferried away after he was confronted by thousands of angry white workers when the DOL convened hearings there in the fall.⁴ On the other side of the spectrum, civil rights leaders, black power militants, and community activists staged protests and construction site shut-downs in cities across the nation. The largest demonstrations took place in Chicago and Pittsburgh in July and August before spreading to other cities, including Philadelphia, New York, and Seattle.⁵ In Chicago, protesters shut down twenty-three projects totaling \$85 million on the city's South Side during July demonstrations, and in August clashes injured fifty black protesters and twelve policemen in Pittsburgh.⁶ Such confrontations dramatically illustrated the ways in which the urban problems of housing, unemployment, and violence converged in the construction industry.

San Francisco Mayor Joseph Alioto was determined to prevent similar conflicts from taking place in his city. He also did not want Nixon administration officials to meddle in the affairs of the city's building trades unions, who, together with the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union (ILWU), had been among his strongest political backers during his 1967 campaign. As previous chapters discussed, Alioto looked to black trade unionists to advise him on racial matters, and they might have seemed well-suited to resolve a problem arising within the house of labor. Yet as chapter three discussed, while black trade unionists had considered themselves leading advocates for the city's black working class in the decades following the wartime migration, they had few answers when it came to racial discrimination in the building trades. Even the Laborers Local 261, the lone building trades union with a large black membership and a key part of Alioto's black-labor alliance, was mostly silent when it came to racial discrimination and exclusion within the industry. When Alioto's liberal coalition

proved unable to broker an agreement between civil rights groups and the building trades unions, black construction contractors belonging to the General and Specialty Contractors Association (GSCA) made a final effort to convince community activists and federal officials that they held the key to creating job opportunities for black construction workers. Arguing that black workers would not obtain steady and reliable access to training and jobs in the skilled building trades unless black contractors were awarded a larger share of government contracts, GSCA leaders advanced a form of black capitalism that ultimately diverged from the Nixon administration's approach to black economic development on the one hand and community activists' demand that neighborhood residents be employed on publicly-funded construction projects on the other.

Alioto's Liberal Coalition and the Building Trades

By that time Alioto entered the mayor's office in 1968, black workers were still largely excluded from the skilled trades. With 97 locals and 79,100 members, the construction industry was the most unionized sector in the Bay Area.⁷ Although African Americans comprised roughly thirteen percent of the city's population, they accounted for 39 percent of construction laborers, 5.8 percent of all carpenters, 7.1 percent of sheet metal workers, 3.7 percent of electricians, and 2.9 percent of all plumbers and pipefitters.⁸ And whereas members of San Francisco's mostly nonwhite Laborers Local 261 on average worked a mere 80 days and earned \$2,512 in 1966, union workers in the city's other skilled trades listed above worked between 118 and 204 days and earned between \$5,577 and \$9,308 for the year.⁹ Black trade unionists and civil rights groups were able to convince Alioto to apply pressure on the building trades unions, a delicate matter given their political clout and support for the mayor in his first election. Next to the ILWU, Alioto's strongest labor support had come from Joseph Mazzola, who headed plumbers

Local 38, which had more than 3,000 members. Alioto rewarded Mazzola, also the son of Italian immigrants, by appointing him director of the Golden Gate Bridge District and later to the airport commission. He also stacked the Board of Permit Appeals, City Planning Commission, and Redevelopment Agency – each of which wielded power in building construction – with labor representatives.¹⁰ But he also expected some level of cooperation from Mazzola and other union leaders when it came to increasing minority representation in the construction trades. Stating that the “unions backed me and I don’t think they want to embarrass me,” a month before taking office Alioto called upon the “lily white” construction trade unions to accept black workers within their ranks.¹¹ As early as the spring of 1968, five months into his first term, Alioto’s aides told reporters that when it came to new publicly-funded construction projects, Alioto would instruct the unions to set aside half of those jobs for black workers.¹²

The San Francisco Building Trades Council (SFBTC) responded to pressure from Alioto, the Human Rights Commission (HRC), and civil rights groups by partnering with the Bay Area Urban League, the Greater Chinatown Community Service Association, and Horizons Unlimited to establish the Apprenticeship Opportunities Foundation (AOF) in 1968. Funded by a grant from the DOL, the AOF grew out of negotiations between the SFBTC and the HRC, which had monitored similar outreach programs in the electrical, carpenter, and sheet metal trades throughout 1968.¹³ The AOF’s key feature was an “Affirmative Action Program” designed to help minority applicants apply for apprenticeship training, obtaining their first jobs as an apprentice, and eventually becoming a journeyman and union member.¹⁴ The SFBTC offered its participation in the program as a demonstration of its good faith, though some observers were skeptical that the AOF’s chairman was Joe Mazzola, whose plumbers’ union had one of the poorest track records when it came to racial discrimination. In its first year the AOF placed 102

minority youths in building trades apprenticeships, including the first ever in the plastering, sprinkler fitting, bricklaying, elevator constructing, ironwork, and operator engineering trades.¹⁵ These apprentices included thirty-one plumbers, though Mazzola cautioned that “maintaining full employment” would be necessary for those apprenticeships to translate into actual jobs.¹⁶ Despite Mazzola’s admonition, city officials were optimistic. “This makes clear not only the progress in this field,” HRC Chairman William Becker boasted, “but that these apprenticeship opportunities – the best route to the best jobs – are available to youth of all ethnic groups.”¹⁷ Even the ever-critical *Sun-Reporter*, which regularly publicized the AOF and apprenticeship opportunities in its pages, offered guarded approval for “this belated move by organized labor in San Francisco.”¹⁸ Weeks before Arthur Fletcher unveiled the Philadelphia Plan in the summer of 1969, Bill Chester of the ILWU insisted that as “a result of community pressure, as a result of showing that it can be done and it can work ... we’ve been able to crack through with some of these building trades locals, and now we’re beginning, again, we are beginning, to make progress.”¹⁹

Asserting that they were making a good-faith effort to increase minority employment in the skilled crafts, the building trades unions reacted with predictable outrage after the DOL announced the Philadelphia Plan in June 1969. Critics of Nixon at the time and since have pointed out the political benefits he hoped to reap by implementing affirmative action in the building trades, since it pitted two of the Democratic Party’s key constituencies – civil rights and labor – against one another. Yet historian Dean Kotlowski argues that Nixon was placing “economics and civil rights ahead of political expediency.” Nixon hoped to court white blue-collar voters, and antagonizing construction unions ran the risk of alienating that particular voting bloc. At the same time, he also had a real interest in lowering construction costs, and

increasing the construction labor supply was one way to go about this.²⁰ Regardless of what those true intentions were, the Philadelphia Plan risked political repercussions for both Democrats and Republicans. The SFBTC joined their counterparts in other parts of the country in arguing that the Plan's goals and timetable requirements violated the 1964 Civil Rights Act and ignored the economics of the construction industry. It also protested that the Plan undercut apprenticeship programs and was "inconsistent with the Apprenticeship Outreach Program of the building and construction industry."²¹ In doing so union leaders raised their most potent challenge to affirmative action in their industry, for it took years to master a skilled construction trade. "The jobs should go to those who most want and are qualified," explained Daniel Del Carlo, secretary of the SFBTC and a close ally of mayor Alioto. It's fair to the workers and fair to the employer who wants and deserves whatever he can get for his investment money."²² At the same time, the SFBTC refused to acknowledge the historic role that some of its member unions had played in preventing minority workers from entering the industry. "The truth is that Negroes, historically, have shown little interest in skilled trades," the editor of *Organized Labor*, official organ of the SFBTC, wrote. "Perhaps it is because they never showed interest in serving apprenticeships, more often preferring a work that is more interesting from the beginning, like professional sports, or the dramatic arts." For years National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), Negro American Labor Council (NALC), and GSCA leaders had acknowledged the lack of interest among young black workers in the construction industry, however as they pointed out the racial practices of the skilled building trades unions was a major contributing factor. But for labor leaders that was beside the point, as they felt unfairly singled out by the Nixon administration in an attempt to pit labor and minorities against one another. "No one would think of establishing a quota system for whites in major league baseball where a

team may be dominated by Negro players,” opined Felix Rodriguez, *Organized Labor’s* editor.²³ Rodriguez, whose parents were born in Spain, also criticized what he saw as the arbitrariness of the Philadelphia Plan’s racial quotas. “Do we need a master race that uses forms for students and job hunters with blanks to fill in Race, Nationality, Color, Religion and other data that does not say anything about the informant?” he asked rhetorically.²⁴ In the years following the introduction of the Philadelphia plan, building trades unionists in San Francisco and across the country would champion the colorblind equality inherent in the Civil Rights Act of 1964 when protesting affirmative action in their industry.

On the other end of the spectrum, black activists reacted to the Philadelphia Plan by demanding more immediate access to jobs, especially in the neighborhoods where they lived. Residents of the Western Addition and Hunters Point had a front-row seat to the publicly-funded redevelopment projects that were breaking ground, and they had little patience for apprenticeship outreach programs to prove their worth. For the increase in minority apprentices, who could take five years to reach journeyman status in some trades, was not reflected in the racial composition of the construction crews working in those predominantly black neighborhoods. In September 1969 a group of black community leaders based in in the Western Addition met with labor leaders in an effort to convince them to admit more minorities into their unions and suggested that the two sides work together on developing a “San Francisco Plan” pursuant to the Department of Labor’s June directive. By the end of October, however, labor leaders had taken no additional steps toward working with community leaders or city officials.²⁵ As the SFBTC stalled, black activists became more militant. On October 13th the NAACP and GSCA jointly sponsored a “Black Monday” rally in San Francisco to protest racial discrimination in the building trades. Between 100 and 200 protesters gathered outside of the San Francisco Federal

building on a cold and windy Monday evening and listened as speakers demanded a greater share of the jobs in the Western Addition and Hunters Point. Underscoring the shift in emphasis from apprenticeship to employment, western regional director Leonard Carter echoed community activists' demands that the racial composition of the workforce should reflect the racial composition of the area in which the work was taking place. Other speakers warned of the consequences if this demand was not met. "If we don't do the work of redeveloping our own neighborhoods, then nobody is going to do it," warned Thomas Neal, president of the Hunters Point branch of the NAACP. Demanding that black contractors also obtain contracts in black neighborhoods, demolition and trucking contractor and GSCA member Charlie Walker defiantly promised the crowd that "We ain't going to leave and we ain't going to disappear."²⁶

Anyone who dismissed Walker's message as grandstanding would have been unfamiliar with his past record. Earlier in the year he had chained his truck to a Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) construction site because white truckers, many of whom were based outside of the Bay Area, obtained most BART dirt hauling subcontracts.²⁷ Walker and eight other black truckers then picketed various BART construction sites until management agreed to an affirmative action policy for its dirt hauling contracts.²⁸ Thanks to his "dramatic one-man demonstration," Walker proudly wrote decades later, "white contractors were forced by BART to hire me and every other black trucker with a rig that wanted in."²⁹ A few months after the Black Monday rally Walker was at it again. In December 1969, the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency (SFRA) awarded a demolition contract in the city's Western Addition district to the Flora Crane Service, a white-owned and operated firm that had a poor track record when it came to employing minority workers. Over a year earlier, the SFRA had threatened to cancel a subcontract with the company because it did not employ any minority operating engineers, and by the time it set to begin work

in December of 1969 Flora Crane Service still had “no semblance of an affirmative action program.”³⁰ At this point Charlie Walker took matters into his own hands. According to Quentin Kopp, an attorney who represented Flora Crane Service, the white workers were “physically threatened and driven from their job site” by Walker and his crew. Walker refuted Kopp’s claim, although “he did mention that such threats were unnecessary when the white Flora Crane crew was surrounded by unemployed black men.”³¹ His partner, Gabe Sellers, further warned that the “primarily black truckers from A-2 [the SFRA designation for the project area] would not sit idly by and watch the Flora Crane crews working.”³²

Walker’s protest publicly challenged the assertions of city and labor officials that they were making progress when it came to alleviating the racial disparity in the skilled construction trades. He was also aware that physical confrontations could produce results as it had with his BART protest. The powerful Building Trades Council was already concerned with the threat of government intervention after the DOL introduced the Philadelphia Plan in June, and it also sought to avoid “a recurrence of problems such as those which occurred in Chicago and Seattle between the Building Trades and the Minorities.”³³ Walker thought he could exploit these concerns. Hoping to bring the conflict to a quick and quiet resolution, redevelopment officials persuaded Flora Crane representatives not to call the police and attempted to mediate between the rival parties.³⁴ At the meeting that followed, Walker, who actually lived across town in the city’s Hunters Point district, “spoke at length about the community’s right to work and urged that every effort be put forth to insure use of black workers in the contracts.” He claimed that the few black truckers in the city were not able to make a living while white truckers were too busy.³⁵ Walker received strong support during the meeting from the Western Addition Project Area Committee (WAPAC), a coalition representing forty-five community and civil rights

organizations that formed earlier in the year to provide residents with a strong unified voice on all issues relating to redevelopment.³⁶ WAPAC represented a cross-section of black community activists, but at the time it was dominated by the Western Addition Community Organization (WACO), a militant group originally formed in 1967 to closely monitor displacement and construction on redevelopment projects (see chapter five). By the time of Walker's protest, WAPAC had already called upon the SFRA to award contracts to Western Addition-based contractors and insisted that "these projects be done by the people in the community." Norman Smith, a black general contractor and GSCA member based in the Western Addition, advised his WAPAC colleagues to request that the SFRA rescind the award to Flora Crane, and at the meeting its representatives forthrightly expressed concern "that minority contractors were being circumvented in getting a fair share of the A-2 contracts."³⁷ Attorney Kopp, who would emerge in the 1970s as a leading voice of fiscal conservatism in San Francisco, considered the initial protest a "criminal activity," and several years later he still seethed that "some of the very people who had been threatening and intimidating my client's employees" attended the meeting.³⁸

With the SFRA already under fire from civil rights groups and residents of the Western Addition and Bayview-Hunters Point, it quickly sided with Walker and community protesters. SFRA official Arthur Evans pulled Quentin Kopp aside after the meeting and told him that Flora Crane would have to "give in to the people."³⁹ Kopp tried to persuade the District Attorney to prosecute Walker for the work stoppage, but was unsuccessful. The SFRA instructed Flora Crane to hire two black truckers "as an interim measure," and in March 1970 it agreed to add a provision to its demolition contracts in the Western Addition Redevelopment Project requiring that fifty percent of the work force be residents of the Western Addition Area. To further placate Walker, the agreement also included a provision for the use minority-owned businesses.⁴⁰

Arthur Evans would later explain that the SFRA was in a difficult position of having to develop and implement an affirmative action program amid growing pressure from community activists and the federal government to provide work for residents and minorities.⁴¹

As Walker confronted Flora Crane crews, community activists also picketed construction sites across town in Hunters Point, where for years they had voiced opposition to the San Francisco Housing Authority's "practice of catering to Jim Crow Unions" and demanded that "minority group people be hired on a priority basis for all jobs."⁴² Hoping to avoid a confrontation, SFBTC officials met with "representatives of the black community" at Mayor Alioto's office. Following those meetings, the mayor agreed to oversee a task force comprised of representatives from both groups "in an attempt to prevent any disturbance in construction in San Francisco."⁴³ Nine months after Walker's protest, the SFBTC, community activists, and Alioto's office reached an agreement for Bayview-Hunters Point. Similar to the Western Addition agreement, it required each group to "use their best efforts" to ensure that at least fifty percent of the construction workforce in the Bayview-Hunters Point Model Cities Project would be recruited from the area. By the end of 1970 the Redevelopment Agency boasted that 50 percent of its workforce in the Western Addition and Hunters Point was comprised of minority residents and that eleven minority subcontractors were working on four different housing developments in the Western Addition.⁴⁴ When asked by the Department of Labor how the Western Addition and Hunters Point agreements were enforced, SFRA director M. Justin Herman credited the efficacy of work stoppages and the looming specter of violent confrontations: "You don't get anything built if you don't comply."⁴⁵ One national observer of the building trades issue was so impressed that he argued in a 1972 article that "voluntary plans...such as the Bayview-Hunters Point Plan

in San Francisco, have the greatest potential for meaningful integration of the construction trades.”⁴⁶

In many respects these resident-participation agreements were significant achievements. Similar protests took place in cities across the northern and western United States in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and historians David Goldberg and Trevor Griffey have explained demands for resident participation in urban redevelopment as a turn away from liberal solutions to employment discrimination and toward “Black Power labor politics and community control organizing to gain access to jobs as well as control of the economic and physical development of inner cities.”⁴⁷ Yet this was a form of Black Power activism that liberal city officials and even trade unionists could support to their own ends. San Francisco Mayor Joseph Alioto, who was no more willing to allow the Nixon administration to interfere in his city’s racial and labor affairs than he was to let Ronald Reagan become involved in the San Francisco State strike the previous year, offered those agreements as further evidence that his liberal urban coalition was up to the task of confronting the urban crisis in construction. “This tremendous milestone reached today is a remarkable testimonial to the fact that we in San Francisco can work out our own solutions to the problems we face,” he announced upon completion of the Bayview-Hunters Point agreement. “The Bayview-Hunters Point Model Cities leadership, the construction trades unions, and the contractor groups have demonstrated that determined effort and good will can overcome what have been insurmountable obstacles in other cities.”⁴⁸ The HRC likewise trumpeted the agreement as “a historic step in the entrance of ghetto neighborhood residents into the ranks of the building trades unions and related job opportunities in San Francisco.”⁴⁹ Even the building trades unionists were willing to make concessions in ghetto neighborhoods if they felt that their safety was at risk. Resident-participation agreements may have satisfied the demands of

“community control” and Black Power labor activists, but, in the case of San Francisco, they did so in a way that organized labor and city officials also found acceptable.

The Limits of Community Control

While the San Francisco resident-participation plans produced short-term employment gains, they left some big questions unanswered. William Becker, director of the San Francisco Human Rights Commission, identified one problem as follows:

Redevelopment area construction jobs, with their emphasis on resident employment are not permanent opportunities. The bulk of future jobs will probably be in the downtown area, which means that Model Cities and Redevelopment Area residents will need a city-wide plan calling for the employment of minority people rather than neighborhood residents in order to continue to increase their participation in this part of the labor market.⁵⁰

Community activists likely believed that that resident-participation plans were a step towards permanent jobs, but Becker’s assessment shows the potential conflict between movements for community control and liberal reformers attempts for long-term solutions to the lack of skilled job opportunities for black and other minority workers. Moreover, since community-based plans were based on resident employment and did not address what types of jobs these workers would perform, they did not guarantee that minority workers would be hired for redevelopment jobs or that they would gain access to the skilled jobs that civil rights activists and DOL officials were focusing. In fact, one of the only construction unions not to sign the agreement was Laborers Local 261, whose black members feared that they would lose jobs to area residents under the agreement.⁵¹ These workers reasonably assumed that most resident utilization would occur in unskilled laborer positions and not in the white-dominated skilled trades.

Black contractors, who had been trying to position themselves at the front of the fight to integrate the skilled construction trades for several years, shared some of these concerns.⁵² In

addition to intervention by the federal government, black contractors looked to community-based movements as a possible way to get around their exclusion from urban liberal coalitions. The National Association of Minority Contractors (NAMC) had already sought to position minority contractors within community-based movements. Its official mission statement included rebuilding “the rotting, inner core of the cities,” providing “adequate, safe and sanitary housing,” constructing “sufficient health and educational facilities suitable to the needs of the inhabitants,” and fostering “greater minority participation in the planning of redevelopment area structures, and the management of new and rehabilitated facilities.”⁵³ In 1969 Joseph Debro also formed a lobbying group whose very name highlighted minority contractors’ rhetorical attempts to align themselves with growing movements for community control. Called CONTROL (Contractors Organized to Lobby), it sought to secure “economic control” of the construction process in America’s inner cities through federal legislation. “We have formed this organization because we are deeply troubled by the way in which public money has been consistently used to create private fortunes for white Americans,” Debro told a congressional committee on housing and urban development. “We are troubled and angered by the way the Federal Government has seen fit to rebuild the inner city ghetto: with white architects, white lawyers, white bankers, white planning consultants, white contractors, white suppliers, white craftsmen – in short, with white control over a process designed to provide housing and community facilities for minority people.”⁵⁴ He argued that opening up construction jobs to inner-city residents was not enough as long as white contractors continued to reap the financial benefits of public construction projects. “The minority contractor is one of the most important agents in rebuilding the inner city ghetto,” he argued. “Not only does he provide jobs for community residents, but he also gives a measure

of control over the rebuilding of the community to its residents. ...Jobs performed by minority contractors help to increase the dignity and self-reliance of the community.”⁵⁵

Yet aside from Charlie Walker’s successful protest in the Western Addition, GSCA members also realized that resident-participation employment plans contained no guarantees for minority contractors. In fact, they undercut GSCA claims that minority contractors were needed to bring black workers into the skilled labor construction labor force. Another problem, as William Becker pointed out, was that the “emphasis on neighborhood residents rather than race is resented by contractors who, in some cases have built up an integrated work force, who naturally do not all live in the particular neighborhood where the work is taking place.”⁵⁶ This applied to some white contractors, but especially to black contractors. This issue points to the plain truth that while black contractors thought that they could help black workers, their primary objective was to gain work for themselves. As Joseph Debro would put it while fighting for contracts several decades later, “I’m selfish and am looking for work, but work for me also means work for the community I come from.”⁵⁷ Yet in several instances across the country in the late 1960s and early 1970s, black contractors with integrated crews found themselves opposed by “community control” activists when working outside of their own neighborhoods.⁵⁸ The problems that community control movements could create for black contractors convinced Robert Easley, who headed the NAACP’s National Afro-American Builders Corporation, to advise black contractors to refrain from participating in the various community construction coalitions that had been formed in Chicago, Pittsburgh, Detroit, Boston, and other cities. If black contractors aligned blindly with such movements, Easley feared, they might “get stuck with all the culls from these groups who will demand that black contractors hire all black at going wages, qualified or not.”⁵⁹

Black Contractors and Black Capitalism

With limited chances at breaking through at the local level, the GSCA and the NAMC placed most of its hopes with the federal government. Any chances of the federal government incorporating black contractors into an affirmative action program for the construction trades were delivered a serious setback by the Philadelphia Plan, which did not include provisions to assist minority contractors. Yet in the summer and fall of 1969 federal officials still considered black contractors as potential allies in their efforts to bring more black workers into the skilled construction trades. In recognition of minority contractors' activism and because of the attention and controversy that immediately engulfed the Philadelphia Plan, the Nixon administration's most prominent African American officials addressed the NAMC founding conference in July 1969. Arthur Fletcher himself attended the San Francisco conference, informing the contractors that while the Philadelphia Plan held no explicit provisions for the use of minority contractors they could anticipate subcontracts from general contractors in search of a minority workforce. He also praised the contractors "for functioning within the system rather than trying to destroy it."⁶⁰ Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) assistant secretaries Samuel Jackson and Samuel Simmons also took the rostrum, assuring the contractors that their department was also committed to helping them obtain more government contracts and pledged to step up enforcement of the 1968 Housing Act's requirement that "contracts for work to be performed on certain housing programs of HUD, where appropriate, be awarded to business concerns ...located in, or owned in substantial part by persons residing in the area of such housing."⁶¹ A few months later, Labor Secretary George Shultz revealed that his department had considered the increased utilization of minority contractors as a possible alternative approach to the controversial Philadelphia Plan.⁶²

But once the DOL committed to the Philadelphia Plan model, there was little chance of it changing course. A year after introducing the plan, several Nixon administration officials declined invitations to appear before the NAMC's national convention in Washington, D.C. NAMC leaders promptly condemned the administration for being "insensitive to the needs of the nation's minority contractors."⁶³ Rather than pursue policies that included black businesses and workers in tandem, the Nixon administration would take a more limited approach that proposed to help black businesses through various "black capitalism" initiatives. During his 1968 run for the White House, Richard Nixon famously embraced the concept of "black capitalism" and promised that his administration would promote black business ownership – particularly in urban ghettos. The notion of black capitalism was not strictly a Nixonian creation. Since the late nineteenth century, Booker T. Washington and advocates of racial uplift had extolled the virtues of black business. Black nationalists, such as Marcus Garvey, had also found in black business a source of race pride and power. Inside the beltway, the Department of Commerce, through its division of Negro Affairs, made overtures toward fostering black business growth. The administration of Lyndon Johnson also took measures to assist black entrepreneurs, and Hubert Humphrey, the Democrat nominee for president in 1968, echoed Nixon in his pledges to foster black business development while on the campaign trail. As the victor in 1968, however, Nixon had the task of translating campaign promises into actual policy. During his first administration, he appeared committed to launching new programs under the black capitalism rubric, which through a rhetorical shift became known as "minority capitalism."⁶⁴ On March 5, 1969, Nixon issued Executive Order 11458, which established the Office of Minority Business Enterprise (OMBE).

Richard Nixon's promotion of minority capitalism was and remains a controversial approach to eradicating racial inequality. During the first Nixon administration, blacks and whites from all points on the political spectrum debated its meaning as well as its merits.⁶⁵ Some Black Power activists, most notably Roy Innis and Floyd McKissick, responded favorably to the idea because it dovetailed with community-based demands for self-determination, and they believed it would result in greater economic power in black ghettos. This was no accident, according to historian Dean Kotlowksi, who notes that Nixon purposefully co-opted the concept of Black Power from militants. Black capitalism was, in Kotlowksi's words, "Black Power, Nixon Style."⁶⁶ Many black and white liberals, such as Whitney Young, Andrew Brimmer, and Frederick D. Sturdivant, on the other hand, warned that black capitalism in a strict sense would not create economic equality and, even worse, might further harden racial segregation in the United States. Brimmer, for example, concluded that "the only real promising path to equal opportunity in business ... lies in full participation in an integrated, national economy" and not "in a backwater of separatism and segregation."⁶⁷ On their left stood black Marxists such as James Boggs, Robert Allen, and Angela Davis, who rejected the idea because, in Boggs' words, "Black capitalism would have to exploit a Black labor force which is already at the bottom of the ladder."⁶⁸ Black contractors, who were among the supposed beneficiaries of black capitalism, were weary. "I'm not sure what Nixon means by black capitalism," Joseph Debro remarked in the spring of 1969. "He's said a lot of things."⁶⁹

Minority contractors' early experiences with government-imposed minority capitalism were enough to give them pause as to how much assistance the Nixon administration would offer. The National Construction Task Force marked the first comprehensive attempt by the federal government to tackle the wide range of problems that beset minority contractors. The

Task Force was part of Project OWN, the Small Business Administration's (SBA) bold initiative to create twenty thousand new minority-owned businesses a year.⁷⁰ The program was the brainchild of Howard Samuels, a wealthy businessman and civil rights liberal who took over as SBA administrator in August 1968. Project Own was a subtle departure from the previous Equal Opportunity Loan's emphasis on poverty in that it sought to facilitate minority business ownership by guaranteeing private bank loans to entrepreneurs. Thus is represented a move away from Johnson's War on Poverty and towards Nixon's black capitalism.⁷¹ Samuels believed that the construction industry was a fertile field for minority business expansion because of its projected growth (from \$105 billion to \$180 billion annually through the 1970s), the expected increase in the number of construction firms, and the emerging government efforts to maximize the use of local businesses on urban redevelopment projects.⁷² The creation of the National Construction Task Force suggested that the SBA was aware of the specific problems that prevented most black and minority contractors from bidding on government contracts and, more importantly, that it had resolved to do something about it.

Whereas the *modus operandi* of Project OWN was to finance \$500 million in loans each year to minority-owned businesses, the National Construction Task Force put forth a more thorough agenda that focused on the key areas that minority contractor associations were trying to address. Noting that "minority entrepreneurs are almost nonexistent in all phases of construction," the Task Force sought to "coordinate the previous fragmented efforts of the private sector, the government and other interested groups" to provide "capital assistance, management and technical training and market information to minority construction contractors at the municipal level; to develop a national strategy and organization for implementing a practical action program to assist in the growth and productive capability of minority

entrepreneurs in the various fields of construction in the United States.” The work of the Task Force was to be carried out by local Action Construction Teams (ACT) headed by SBA regional directors and consisting of “participating industries, agencies and organizations” in eighteen cities, including San Francisco, Oakland and Los Angeles.⁷³ Samuels predicted that the program would create 70,000 black-owned construction contracting businesses within a decade.⁷⁴

Despite Samuels’ enthusiasm and faith in the program, Project OWN turned out to be a major disappointment. Even before the program launched, area coordinators with the Office of Federal Contract Compliance had reported difficulties working with the SBA and getting it to assist in providing aid to minority contractors.⁷⁵ ACTs did sprout up in target cities during the first few months of 1969, and by the spring several contractors had obtained loans.⁷⁶ But ultimately, the SBA National Construction Task Force did little to help minority contractors. This was in part because of the early demise of Project OWN, which, while never able to achieve Samuel’s lofty expectations, was discarded by his successor, Hillary Sandoval, who Nixon appointed in 1969.⁷⁷ Yet the Task Force also suffered from a communication gap that alienated its administrators from its clients. Minority contractors faulted the program for failing to include them in its decision-making and implementation. Samuels had recommended that the ACTs be comprised of representatives of lending institutions (including surety company executives), the Associated General Contractors (AGC), building trade councils, municipal government, and the National Urban Coalition, but not minority contractors themselves.⁷⁸ “These people will perpetuate the same practices that have been in effect for the last 90 years,” Robert Easley thundered after meeting with SBA officials in November 1968 (the same month that Samuels unfurled the program). “This Task Force program does not ask the Negro contractor how he wishes to be helped.” Easley, who was busy organizing contractors into the NAACP’s National

Afro-American Builders Corporation (NAABC) at the time, rejected the program “as dangerous and unworkable.”⁷⁹ According to Ray Dones, the SBA “came under severe and caustic criticism” at the NAMC founding conference in July 1969.⁸⁰ A year later the Task Force was little more than a dead letter. “The National Construction Task Force was composed of many interest groups who had nothing to gain by the kind of change which the Task Force advocated,” Joseph Debro intoned. “Not a single minority contractor was a member of this Task Force.”⁸¹ For black business activists like Debro, who had clashed with SBA officials while with the OSBDC, the National Construction Task Force’s brief and ineffectual existence was another example of the government’s reluctance to include minority contractors in affirmative action programs in the construction industry.

Hoping to influence both black capitalism and employment-based affirmative action in the building trades, throughout the last months of 1969 and into 1970, CONTROL sought to convince federal legislators that minority contractors held the key to integrating the construction industry and keeping the urban peace. Debro enlisted the support of William Moorhead, A Democrat Representative from Pennsylvania, and Birch Bayh, a Democrat Senator from Indiana, who sponsored legislation aimed at coordinating and funding federal programs to assist minority construction contractors and workers. Joseph Debro explained the reforms in testimony before the Senate Committee on Small on Business in June of 1970. To remedy the lack of technical management skills, they sought legislation that would require HUD and the Small Business Administration to fund technical assistance programs. To help compensate for minority contractors’ lack of capital, they proposed that HUD and the SBA set up revolving funds that would be managed by local minority contractor organizations and that would provide working capital for minority contractors who could not obtain financing from private institutions. The

revolving funds would also help minority contractors obtain bonds on large projects. They also proposed a host of other measures to help minority contractors overcome the bonding problem, including government-guaranteed bonds on all HUD projects, an SBA-issued “certificate of competency” in lieu of a bond on federally assisted projects, the division of large government construction projects into smaller units, the stricter regulation of surety companies by the Treasury Department, and legislation that would raise the ceiling on federally assisted projects not requiring bonds from \$2,000 to \$50,000.⁸² CONTROL believed that these reforms would give minority contractors control over the reconstruction of the inner cities as well as make it possible for them to obtain private contracts on jobs outside the urban ghettos. The legislative program, Bayh stated in 1969, represented “an important step toward bringing some sense of credibility to the rhetoric of minority economic development.”⁸³

Meanwhile, in California Ray Dones was working in support of state-level legislation that would help alleviate minority contractors’ bonding problems. In October 1969 Dones and John Brown, president of a minority contractor association in Los Angeles, testified before the California Assembly Urban Affairs and Housing Committee hearing on minority participation in free enterprise. This particular hearing was held to discuss a resolution introduced by Assemblywoman Yvonne Brathwaite concerning “conditions surrounding the bonding of minority and small contractors.” A graduate of the University of California at Los Angeles and the University of Southern California School of Law, in 1966 Brathwaite became the first African American woman elected to the California State Assembly – where she represented a district that was roughly one-third African American and lay just to the west of South Central Los Angeles.⁸⁴ Throughout her career in Sacramento and later as a member of the United States Congress, Brathwaite was a key legislative ally for minority contractors.

By 1969 she had become convinced that California's bonding laws "literally exclude minority contractors from participation" in publicly financed construction.⁸⁵ Drawing in part on her experience as an attorney for the McCone Commission, which investigated the causes of the 1965 Watts riot, she told her Assembly colleagues that, "When public buildings are constructed in the Watts area, the residents of the area cannot qualify even if they are financially responsible because of bonding obstacles."⁸⁶ Moreover, her resolution pointed out, "The only efforts to alleviate the situation have been initiated by a private foundation while all levels of government have been unresponsive to appeals from the victims of these circumstances."⁸⁷ Early in 1969 Braithwaite introduced a bill that, had it passed, would have permitted government agencies to waive performance bonds on construction projects valued under \$200,000.⁸⁸ "At the time I became very interested in minority business, and I was concerned that minority contractors could not get the bonds often to qualify for government contracts and for large contracts," Braithwaite recalled in a 1982 interview. "So I was trying to establish a system where government could assist in providing them with bonding capability."⁸⁹

In their testimony, Brown and Dones told of the struggles of minority contractors in Los Angeles and the Bay Area, and they offered proposals for ways that the California state government could provide bonding assistance. In doing so the pair made sure to connect their proposals with ongoing efforts to address unemployment in urban ghettos. The point was well-received by the more liberal members of the committee. "You're saying in effect then that if we're going to lower the astronomical unemployment we have in our community, which is higher than anywhere else in the county, and perhaps higher than anywhere else in the state, the way we're going to attack it realistically is to enable you men who are contractors to secure bonds so you can secure contracts and thereby employ people from the community," asked

Assemblyman Leon Ralph, an African American whose district included Watts. “That is what I’m saying,” Brown responded, taking his cue from Ralph. “You have, we’re very conscious of the fact that in the Watts area or in the ghetto area, that there are tremendous amounts of building going on and we are very much concerned and confused, to some degree, and in some case even frustrated because we’re not able to participate in the rebuilding of our own community. We are as much concerned about what is going on in Watts and more so that we would be interested in what’s going on outside. I think if we are in a position to participate in this the rebuilding of our own community, I think we would solve many problems.”⁹⁰

The contractors’ lobbying efforts mostly came up empty at both the state and federal levels. In California, Brathwaite was able to shepherd a bonding bill through the state legislature two years later. However, Assembly Bill 2175, which sailed through committees unopposed, merely amended the California State Insurance Code to explicitly prohibit racial discrimination in the issuing of contractor’s license bonds and did not address the larger problems connected to bid, performance, and labor and material bonds.⁹¹ “This first step merely makes it unlawful to discriminate,” she stated after Governor Reagan signed the bill into law in November 1971. “We still have to provide minority contractors with a better piece of the action.”⁹² CONTROL’s federal legislative agenda also went mostly unfulfilled. It did win passage of the SBA surety bond guarantee program, which was passed in 1970 and went into effect on September 2, 1971. The surety bonding guarantee program, enacted as Public Law 91-609, authorized the SBA to guarantee 90 percent of a surety company’s losses on an SBA guaranteed contract with a maximum face value of \$500,000.⁹³ The new law was a significant achievement, but Debro later stated that CONTROL was “not happy with the outcome of the legislative process.”⁹⁴ For federal policymakers, the problems that black contractors’ claimed perpetuated their exclusion

from the construction industry was proving to be more complex and elusive than those that discriminated against black and minority workers.

Back in San Francisco, black contractors in the Bay Area received support from community activists, but the resident-participation agreements placed limitations on that support. This was evident in San Francisco in September 1969, Trans-Bay Engineers and Builders, a general contracting firm started by Dones, Debro, and several other GSCA members, submitted a bid on the first site-improvement contract for the Hunters Point redevelopment project – which promised to bring low-to-moderately priced housing, schools, businesses, parks and a community center to the district.⁹⁵ Although Trans-Bay's bid was the lowest, the SFRA awarded the contract to the De Narde Construction Company, a white-owned firm, after Trans-Bay was unable to raise enough cash to obtain the requisite bonds. DeNarde would emerge as a leading critic of local affirmative action laws and would lose several city contracts for failing to use minority workers and subcontractors.⁹⁶ The bonding company claimed that Trans-Bay was “biting off more than it could chew” and lacked experience in the type of large scale earth moving and retaining wall construction entailed in the Hunters Point site-improvement job.⁹⁷ But Dones claimed that the bonding company had requested an unreasonable amount of cash up front, and he demanded that the SFRA reconsider the contract award and to support a “long term oral commitment” to obtain better bonding practices for black firms.⁹⁸

Meanwhile, Hunters Point community and civil rights groups rushed to Trans-Bay's defense. Neighborhood activists demanded that the SFRA reconsider the award of the contract to DeNarde Construction, warning “Black workers and Black Contractors or no building.”⁹⁹ Percy Steele of the Bay Area Urban League struck a similar chord, demanding that “More minority contractors need to be involved and it is the responsibility of the Redevelopment Agency to

IMMEDIATELY address itself to this explosive problem today; that is NOW.”¹⁰⁰ The Urban League further reminded city officials of the “unpleasant effects of institutional racial discrimination which Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, Seattle and other cities are currently experiencing because of traditions of denial to free access in the building trades.”¹⁰¹ The NAACP also intervened, telling M. Justin Herman that “that the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency should have held up the awarding of the bid and offered the services of its office to halt the practices of racial discrimination by the bonding company.”¹⁰²

The bonding issue had indeed created something of a dilemma for the SFRA, which typically placed expediency over civil rights concerns. Herman, who was later described as “the last of the Robert Moses autocrats,” built his reputation on an ability to cut through red tape and find legal loopholes when laws stood in his way.¹⁰³ But when it came to the problem of bonding for minority contractors, he needed a sharper pair of scissors. He appeared to side with Dones and Trans-Bay, even agreeing that there was a “racial double standard” in the bonding industry. However, he explained that the Agency was hamstrung by the California Community Redevelopment Law, which required bonds on all projects valued at least \$1,500 and had “long hampered the desire of the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency to involve minority contractors in its activities.”¹⁰⁴ He insisted that the SFRA was “entirely sympathetic” with the plight of Trans-Bay Engineers and Builders and that although it had thus far been unable to address the bonding problem of minority contractors it was working on the problem.¹⁰⁵ But holding up construction to help Trans-Bay ultimately clashed with Herman’s faith in expediency, and he felt that he had no choice but to award the contract to De Narde in order to move the project forward.¹⁰⁶ As head of the Home and Housing Finance Administration’s San Francisco regional office from 1951 to 1959, Herman had been a leading critic of delays in the city’s urban

renewal programs.¹⁰⁷ To postpone the job any longer, Herman felt, would compromise the SFRA's overall mission, which was to provide affordable housing. "Although we are committed to minority participation," he informed Percy Steele, "we are also committed to the construction of housing, particularly for families of low-to-moderate income, such families having a substantial minority component."¹⁰⁸

Although it was unable to help Trans-Bay on the first site improvement contract, the SFRA still showed an interest in using minority contractors on other projects and made good-faith efforts to achieve that end. Prior to advertising for the second Hunters Point site improvement contract, it contacted the GSCA and urged its members "to participate as general contractors and as minority first and second tier specialty subcontractors and suppliers." The SFRA also attempted to foster joint ventures between Trans-Bay and white-owned firms interested in bidding on the contract in order to improve their chances of obtaining bonds – something that the GSCA and OFCC officials advocated from the start. "While this Agency cannot provide bonding and financing," the SFRA Affirmative Action Officer informed the GSCA, "we hope to be able to assist your members in solving problems in these and other areas."¹⁰⁹ It eventually awarded the contract to the CEME Development Company, a large black-owned firm based in Los Angeles.¹¹⁰ The following year Ernie Lowe, a GSCA board member, joint-ventured with another firm to win the contract for construction of the first 101 housing units – "for and by the people of Hunters Point" – built in the district since World War II.¹¹¹

For Trans-Bay's owners, the lost contract soured them to the resident-participation agreement that had just been agreed to by the SFBTC. As long as 50 percent of the workforce lived in the redevelopment area, most community residents, as well as the SFRA, exhibited less concern as to the race of the contractor. Thus while Herman "would have preferred to have

minority entrepreneurial participation as well” on the city’s redevelopment projects, he was able to take satisfaction that contracts contained a 50 percent clause for resident employment.¹¹²

Moreover, Trans-Bay, which was headquartered in the East Bay, was not a Bayview-Hunters Point business, which likely weakened the community’s resolve in joining its fight for the contract. According to a 1977 study, only 45 percent of minority contractors in the Bay Area resided in poor communities, and only a small handful were based in Hunters Point.¹¹³ Just as De Narde would do, Trans-Bay would have also theoretically taken money out of the community. Furthermore, had Trans-Bay been able to obtain the bonds and thus a contract in Hunters Point, it would have had to ensure that it was using 50 percent of the community’s residents, regardless of the racial composition of its workforce.

The Search for a Hometown Plan

The marginalization of black contractors from the process of integrating San Francisco’s skilled construction workforce was further evident in 1970, when the city attempted to develop a city-wide “hometown” plan. The limitations of resident-participation agreements also portended ill for black contractors’ fight for inclusion in local “hometown plans.” Proponents and critics alike noted that the neighborhood-based plans did not guarantee long-term employment and economic development. Furthermore, the SFBTC and the Alioto administration still hoped to forestall the Department of Labor from implementing a federal affirmative action plan in San Francisco. In February 1970 a group comprised of leaders from the city’s African-American, Hispanic, and Chinese-American communities met with a representative from the OFCC to discuss plans to develop a city-wide plan and negotiate with the SFBTC.¹¹⁴ By May the group was meeting regularly as the San Francisco Minority Affirmative Action Coalition (SFMAAC). During its negotiations with the SFBTC and city officials on a hometown plan during 1970, the

SFMAAC elected not to include provisions pertaining to minority contractors. The Coalition's only minority contractor, Henry Tom, was based in Chinatown and not a GSCA member. Its founding chairman, Hunters Point labor activist Harold Brooks, explained that he personally viewed an affirmative action plan for construction employment "as also the first step for minority contractors in securing a portion of federal contracts" but indicated that the committee would not seek the inclusion of minority-owned construction firms in any agreement.¹¹⁵ Thus SFMAAC would forego the problem of minority businesses and focus instead solely on the employment problem.

In the view of black contractors, who claimed to be the best qualified to bring minority workers into the skilled construction trades, their exclusion from the process in San Francisco and other cities was a fatal flaw. GSCA leaders were outraged that they were not invited to participate in the hometown plan negotiation. "The various job plans were created by a group consisting of one-third white contractors, one-third union representatives and one-third minority people, who don't know what they are doing in this industry and who are interested in civil rights, but who lack the knowledge of both the industry and bargaining methods," Joseph Debro protested.¹¹⁶ At the national level, the NAACP agreed. "Giving a preferential status to black contractors is the only realistic way of guaranteeing that a substantial number of black craftsmen will be employed on Model Cities and other publicly funded construction," Herbert Hill declared at a hearing held in Boston just days before Fletcher introduced the Philadelphia Plan.¹¹⁷ "More than the contractors' interest is at stake: the pay-off in jobs for black artisans is even more vital in the long run," Roy Wilkins said of the NAABC a month later. "A strong Negro-owned construction industry will mean breaking through many of the job barriers. It will swell the payrolls and create genuine economic strength."¹¹⁸ In August 1970, Hill objected to a final draft

of “The New Orleans Plan” in part because “Negro-owned building contractors have no representation on the Administrative Committee and indeed, are excluded entirely from the scope of the plan.” He added that “It is absolutely essential, that Negro and other non-white contractors have an opportunity to bid for both prime and sub-contracts on all public construction projects...The total omission of this point in the plan is most significant.”¹¹⁹ The NAACP’s own “Proposed Model Plan for Construction Industry Agreements” included a provision requiring that minority subcontractors receive a certain percentage of all government contracts.¹²⁰

As Debro suggested, SFMAAC could have benefited from the GSCA’s industry knowledge and of the apprenticeship and employment issues that black workers faced, as well as the minority contractor organization’s experience mediating among different ethnic groups. SFMAAC would turn out to be a highly dysfunctional organization that revealed the difficulties that arose when neighborhood activists tried to unite on a city-wide basis. Representatives from different neighborhoods frequently clashed at meetings, and Latin-American and Chinese-American members resented the assertiveness of their black colleagues who had already participated in formation of the Western Addition and Hunters Point agreements. This was evident when the Coalition tried to select a negotiating committee. While members quickly agreed that the committee should consist of ten members, when it came to its racial composition the Coalition became bogged down in an affirmative action debate of its own. Black members from Bayview-Hunters Point and the Western Addition argued that selection to the committee should be based solely on merit. “I don’t think we should get hung up on the ethnic bag,” Western Addition representative Vernon Thornton suggested. “You can’t hope to go out and find someone who hasn’t worked on this thing (agreement) and expect him to be able to negotiate,” added Revel Brady, who worked on the Bayview-Hunters Point agreement. “It should be

composed of the people who are knowledgeable and who have worked on the agreement.” This angered some non-African American representatives who had more recently joined the campaign and feared that the committee would be stacked with black members. At one volatile meeting, Henry Tom angrily asked, “What makes you think each group won’t send it’s most qualified representatives?” And When Brady suggested that the committee be composed of people from each “target area,” John Ramirez of the Mexican American Political Association objected that “by having 2 delegates from each target area you could end up with an all Black team.”¹²¹ The Coalition also struggled to reach a consensus concerning what constituted a ‘fair share’ of the construction work. Revel Brady argued that the coalition should stick with the 50 percent resident clause that he helped negotiate for Bayview-Hunters Point. The Urban League’s McKinley Farmer, on the other hand, thought the plan should specify a numerical goal for each craft. This proposal also met resistance from members who could not agree upon how those numbers would be set and who worried that a set number could also backfire in the future. The Coalition eventually reached a compromise, settling on a 50 percent resident requirement in redevelopment “target” areas while stating that in all other areas the workforce should reflect the minority percentage of San Francisco’s population.¹²²

SFMAAC’s internal divisions made negotiating with the recalcitrant SFBTC all the more difficult. The SFBTC seemed aware of the disagreements between Coalition members over percentages, and took advantage to create delays and even question whether or not the Coalition’s members were in fact the proper representative of the city’s minority communities. And although SFBTC representatives did meet regularly with the SFMAAC, they did not approach these meetings with the same sense of urgency as they had when negotiating with the residents of Bayview-Hunters Point earlier in the year. Once that agreement was in place, the

threat of construction site shutdowns abated. In addition, the SFBTC continued to tout the Apprenticeship Opportunities Foundation, which the DOL had renewed late in 1969 and had placed another 45 minorities in apprenticeships during the first half of 1970.¹²³ In the fall of 1970 the Coalition considered a one-day site shutdown in the hope that it might compel the unions to be more cooperative.¹²⁴ But instead it called upon the city's minority organizations to write to the Department of Labor to request immediate hearings in San Francisco "in order to impose an Affirmative Action Plan on San Francisco."¹²⁵

When the Department of Labor held hearings in San Francisco in December 1970, Ray Dones and Charlie Walker tried once again to convince government officials that the most expedient way to get more black workers in the building trades was to ensure that black contractors got more contracts and to fund more programs like Project Upgrade.¹²⁶ SFMAAC representatives and civil rights leaders demanded an imposed affirmative action plan, while union officials and representatives from Mayor Alioto's office asked for more time to negotiate. The DOL ultimately determined that San Francisco's "construction industry has been underutilizing and failing to adequately train minority workers," and gave notice that it would impose a San Francisco Plan if the city could not immediately agree upon a hometown solution.¹²⁷ With Alioto leading negotiations, the parties returned to the negotiating table, and this time the immediate threat of a federal order gave the SFBTC an incentive to negotiate with more expediency.¹²⁸ According to SFMAAC Chairman Vern Thornton, negotiations were going "pretty well," until April 8, 1971, but the two sides reached an impasse when it came to whether a city-wide plan would override the Western Addition and Hunters Point resident-participation plans (this was particularly important to the SFBTC, which was pushing for a 30 percent racial quota compared to SFMAAC's 50 percent).¹²⁹ Meanwhile, the SFMAAC's Western Addition-

based members were coming under fire from “a score of hostile young Blacks ... who see many minority workmen being employed, but workmen who do not live in the Western Addition.” The young blacks had formed their own organization, which they called the Affirmative Coalition, and had threatened to impose “their own plan.”¹³⁰ On May 27, 1971, with talks at a standstill, the DOL made San Francisco third recipient of a federally-imposed affirmative action plan on publicly-funded construction projects. Joseph Alioto was furious at the notion that his liberal administration was not up to the task of handling the explosive issue, and he dismissed the order as a political ploy of the Republican presidential administration. “We have proven we can foster reasonable relationships between the unions and the black community,” the mayor protested. “When Federal officials tell us to cut down on construction and then impose minority quotas, they’re playing political games.”¹³¹

The San Francisco Plan and the Limits of Reform

Historian Kevin Yuill has written that “neither the Philadelphia Plan nor the ‘hometown solutions’ ... can be regarded as successes.” Not only was enforcement lax in most cases, but the plans coincided with a downturn in construction in the 1970s. “Progress, when it existed, was painfully slow,” Yuill writes. “Progress for blacks employed in the construction industry took place in tens rather than in thousands of jobs.”¹³² This was evident in the San Francisco Plan, which had a minimal effect on the number of skilled job opportunities for minority workers. As with the other two federally-imposed affirmative action plans at the time – in Philadelphia and Washington D.C. – the San Francisco Plan targeted unions representing the skilled trades that the Department of Labor determined to be underutilizing minority workers in the area. In this case, the Plan covered five trades: the Electricians (8.3% minority membership), Plumbers, Pipefitters and Steamfitters (5.2%), Structural Metal Workers (7.2%), Sheet Metal Workers (10.5%), and

Asbestos Workers (7.4%).¹³³ The Plan required contractors bidding on federally-funded construction projects exceeding \$500,000 in San Francisco to submit “specific goals of minority manpower utilization” for the designated trades that fell within “ranges” established by the Department of Labor.¹³⁴ The San Francisco Plan did not include a provision requiring the use of minority contractors. Instead, it stated that a “number of minority contractors are operating effectively within the San Francisco area” and predicted that “utilization of these subcontractors could significantly expand the participation of minority craftsmen on projects of Federal construction contractors.”¹³⁵ An OFCC compliance check in November 1973 found 615 minority workers employed out of a total workforce of 1,465 on 29 federally-funded projects. For the five “critical crafts,” 100 minorities were employed out of a total of 371. According to the compliance officer, most of the San Francisco Plan’s impact was on HUD redevelopment projects in “minority ghetto areas” while “little impact has been made in critical crafts outside of HUD (redevelopment construction) projects.” The officer concluded that unless the Plan’s ranges were increased there would be “little likelihood that Plan will substantially increase number of minority craftsmen in critical crafts covered by the Plan.”¹³⁶ That likelihood lessened even further later that year when as Nixon, having courted building trades unionists, withdrew his support of the Philadelphia Plan. In addition, the president, determined to “get the Federal Government out of the public housing business” and slow the pace of residential integration, issued a moratorium on the construction of new subsidized housing.¹³⁷ SFMAAC Chairwoman Rachel Arce opined that “The federally imposed plan, as expected, seems to be virtually worthless.”¹³⁸

Locally devised and administered affirmative action programs, including the Western Addition and Bayview-Hunters Point agreements, fared better in the short term. In a 1972

interview two officials with the Bayview-Hunters Point Affirmative Action Program indicated that union cooperation “had been excellent and that prospects for continued cooperation were good.”¹³⁹ According to the HRC, between July 1, 1971 and December 31, 1972 the Bayview-Hunters Point Affirmative Action Program placed or trained 131 residents on community projects – 13 journeymen, 93 apprentices, and 25 laborers.¹⁴⁰ In the twelve construction projects that the HRC monitored in 1973, 53 percent of the total workforce was comprised of local residents, and 64 percent were minorities. Based on these results, it concluded that “minority groups as a whole had gained a strong foothold in most of the City-financed construction jobs.”¹⁴¹ By 1974, however, the volume of government-funded construction projects was already on the decline, and so too were the number of job opportunities for minority workers. On the eight projects that the HRC monitored that year, the percentage of resident-workers dropped to 39 and the percentage of minorities fell to 47.¹⁴² By 1975, when the Agreement was up for renewal for the first time, just 34 percent of residents were employed on public jobs.¹⁴³

As the HRC monitored city construction projects in the early 1970s it awakened to the exclusion of minority contractors. “An ongoing problem in Hunters Point construction continued to be the 69% of out-of-town subcontractors, who posed problems to some unions with respect to hiring residents,” the HRC 1973 report stated. “There was no minority contractor affirmative action requirement, and the bidding system tended to mitigate against minority contractors.” In response, the HRC consulted with the Department of Public Works on how to involve more minority contractors. By that time, however, the number of contracts in the Bayview-Hunters Point district had decreased and the number of minority workers on city construction projects would steadily decline over the next several years as construction slowed.¹⁴⁴ Appearing before the House Subcommittee on Labor-Management Relations in 1975, Joseph Debro told of two

black plumbing contractors in San Francisco who felt compelled to remain open-shop because Local 38 of the plumbers union continued to discriminate against racial minorities. “They cannot sign those agreements or they will not sign those agreements because they have work crews who have been a part of their organization for the last 10 to 15 years,” he stated. “They won’t sign these agreements unless these men are going to be given permanent status in the local plumbers’ union. That is not going to happen.” Being an open-shop contractor in a strong labor city like San Francisco was a tough existence. Even if these black contractors won contracts, Debro explained, the building trades unions would likely shut down the job until unionized plumbers were employed. Having first become part of Trans-Bay Engineers and Builders, the general contracting firm that GSCA members formed in 1966, Debro was now president of his own general contracting company. The committee members asked how his company fared in the City by the Bay. “I don’t work in San Francisco,” Debro replied. “I have never been able to work in San Francisco.”¹⁴⁵

As the federal government became further committed to the Philadelphia Plan model, it also lost interest in minority contractor-administered apprenticeship programs. In 1973 HUD, operating in conjunction with the Department of Labor and the Bureau of Apprenticeship Training (BAT), withdrew its support for Project Upgrade, the GSCA training program launched in 1968 (see chapter three) on the grounds that it violated the Davis-Bacon Act, which requires contractors working on federally-funded projects to pay prevailing wage rates. Since union-dominated BAT and the Joint Apprenticeship Council (JAC) denied certification to Project Upgrade, HUD maintained that contractors were required to pay trainees full journeymen wage-scales. Union leaders charged that Upgrade exploited workers and failed to adequately prepare them for the skilled crafts. Black contractors in the NAMC and GSCA, on the other hand,

countered that the real issue was whether or not unions would maintain control of entry into the construction labor force. They protested that union-sponsored apprenticeship outreach programs were “designed to keep you out of the workforce” and were based on the erroneous assumption that formal apprenticeships were the only path to journeyman status.¹⁴⁶ Many black contractors were themselves evidence of this, as they had learned their trades from other black contractors or while working in Right-to-Work states. But HUD’s insistence that Upgrade would need to earn the recognition of the union-dominated agencies such as the JAC, California Division of Apprenticeship Standards, and BAT, severely curtailed the possibility that the state would help integrate the construction industry by empowering minority contractors’ training programs. Rather than try and buoy programs such as Upgrade, government agencies felt more comfortable working through union-sponsored outreach apprenticeship outreach programs, which black contractors and other civil rights activists criticized for overstating the role of formal apprenticeship training while proving less effective at recruiting young blacks. Meanwhile, the Ford Foundation, whose financial grants were instrumental in launching Project Upgrade and other minority contractor assistance programs in the Bay Area, also stopped providing funds as it moved away from funding programs designed to spur urban black economic development.¹⁴⁷ With federal and state support waning and the construction market contracting, by 1977 Project Upgrade’s funding dried up and it had closed up shop.¹⁴⁸

By that time blacks represented 2.18 percent of the nation’s construction firms and accounted for 1.03 percent of total receipts.¹⁴⁹ Much of this could be attributed to the persistence of financing problems, but the problem of social capital also remained. “There’s definitely an old boy system,” Tom Lewis, a black contractor who started his San Francisco-based business in 1973 explained. “There are very few black contractors in the building trades that are doing well.

The problem is, people don't know who these people are. They don't have the chance to meet them, to give them the exposure where they are confident to use their services. Getting in the door, and just getting one or two jobs, makes a big difference. They have to really work hard to get the first job.”¹⁵⁰ In the estimation of another San Francisco black contractor, the chance of linking the causes of black contractors and workers also amounted to a missed opportunity. “We had a lot of training programs back in the 1970s and 1980s but these young Blacks did not take advantage of them,” Darryl Bishop explained. “Now, they want the work but the training programs are not here any more. When I have room I will try to bring some on. They need on-the-job training...Back then you had agencies that were standing up for your rights.”¹⁵¹

In places like the San Francisco Bay Area, where the national minority contractor movement began, the persistence of these problems has caused black contractors, workers, and community activists to form coalitions reminiscent of the 1960s. In 1996 for example, activists demanding more jobs for black contractors and workers in both Oakland and San Francisco picketed construction jobs. In April, the Black Bay Area Contractors Association and its supporters picketed four construction projects in Oakland. Joe Debro led the pickets at one of the projects – a Christian Education Center of the Bethel Missionary Baptist Church. “What bugged me was Bethel hired a general contractor from Pittsburgh, who is white, and he, in turn, hired a sub-contractor from Sacramento whose crew is 100% white,” he explained.¹⁵² Meanwhile, across the bay in San Francisco, a group called the Western Addition Residents (WAR) was protesting the exclusion of black subcontractors on the renovation of City Hall. Sylvia Britt, WAR's vice president, justified the work stoppage because “people working City Hall are from Corte Madera, Fresno, Los Angeles, and every other county but San Francisco....These outside employees are basically taking the food off the table from people who are unemployed in San

Francisco, who need to feed their families.”¹⁵³

For activists like Debro, who could not remember picketing any construction sites himself in the 1960s, work stoppages such as these signaled a new militancy. “White construction workers must understand that coming to Hunter’s Point taking work that should be done by our young people can be hazardous to their health,” he wrote in 2006. “They must be made to understand that an integrated work force is a good insurance policy.”¹⁵⁴ Forty years earlier Debro would have worked behind the scenes while leaving such tough talk to more militant supporters. But after spending half of his life fighting for change he had become that militant voice. Much like when Debro helped launch the minority contractor movement in the 1960s, his current battle has placed a renewed emphasis on the interlocking fates of black construction workers and contractors – in fact, the Bay Area Black Builders, which he established in 2009 to fight for “community control” of federal economic stimulus spending, is an organization of both workers and contractors. Much like the GSCA had in the 1960s, Debro’s new organization made the pursuit of “jobs for the Black community,” on-the-job training programs, and the establishment of a bonding program its top priorities.¹⁵⁵ “The problems are the same now as they were 40 years ago,” Joe Debro lamented in 2011.¹⁵⁶

The failure of federally-imposed and hometown affirmative action plans in the construction industry resulted from several factors. At the local and federal levels, government leaders were more concerned with managing the problem of black unemployment so that it did not threaten the peace. When the fear of violence abated in the early 1970s, so too did the urgency with which municipal and federal government leaders approached the problem of employment discrimination. The reluctance of local or federal government officials to withdraw support from union-administered apprenticeship programs also hindered success. While many

union officials claimed to support efforts to bring more minority workers into the skilled building trades, they also remained outspoken against the concept of affirmative action. As long as they controlled the process, chances of significant increases in employment opportunities for minority workers in the skilled trades remained limited. In fact, the increase in minority construction workers in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries would come largely in the non-union residential sector. Regardless of opposition from union officials, the downturn in construction, and in publicly-funded construction in particular, also worked to seal the fate of affirmative action programs. Plumbing union boss Joe Mazzola had said all along that “full employment” was necessary in order for minority apprentices to become minority workers. And when jobs became less plentiful in the mid and late 1970s, union leaders such as Mazzola were not about to admit minority members to compete for jobs with long-standing union members. Given the economics of the construction industry in the late 1960s and early 1970s, it is questionable whether black contractors could have made much of a difference. Nevertheless, they did represent an alternative approach to both employment and business based affirmative action programs that ultimately represented a path not taken.

¹ Editorial, “Trouble in the Building Construction Trade,” *Sun-Reporter*, October 4, 1969.

² See Hugh Davis Graham, *The Civil Rights Era: Origins and Development of National Policy, 1960-1972* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), chapters 6 and 8.

³ On Nixon’s use of affirmative action to “manage” racial crisis, see Kevin Yuill. *Richard Nixon and the Rise of Affirmative Action: The Pursuit of Racial Equality in an Era of Limits*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, INC. 2006.

⁴ Erik S. Gellman, “‘The Stone Wall Behind’: The Chicago Coalition for United Community Action and Labor’s Overseers, 1968-1973,” in David Goldberg and Trevor Griffey, *Black Power at Work: Community Control, Affirmative Action, and the Construction Industry* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2010), 125-126.

⁵ David Goldberg and Trevor Griffey, “Constructing Black Power,” in David Goldberg and Trevor Griffey, eds., *Black Power at Work: Community Control, Affirmative Action, and the Construction Industry* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010), 10.

⁶ Graham, *The Civil Rights Era*, 334-335.

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CONCLUSION

Most postwar histories of labor and civil rights have paid little attention to the activists who sought to work within the parameters of mainstream liberalism, concentrating instead on those who remained firmly on its left. Historians have focused more on the lost or missed opportunities of the “popular front” coalitions of the 1930s and 1940s on the one hand, and the Black Power activists who challenged liberalism in the late 1960s and 1970s on the other.¹ Yet this dissertation demonstrates the importance of considering those who sought to fight for racial equality and influence urban policies from within liberal coalitions in order to fully understand what was and what was not achieved. During the three decades following World War II, black trade unionists and their unions – and the ILWU in particular – became important bases of institutional strength for the tens of thousands of African Americans who migrated to San Francisco during and after the war. Their unions also became venues in which black liberals and leftists came into direct contact. The ILWU, along with a few other unions such as the TWU, drew upon black workers to increase their overall strength. In return, these unions helped lead the fight for equality in employment and housing while also challenging racial inequality in policing and providing black San Franciscans with political organization and representation. For the black and white leaders of these unions, these activities also brought them into a political coalition with the moderately liberal mayoral administration of Joseph Alioto. The participation of black and erstwhile left-wing trade unionists in the city’s liberal coalition was central to black migrants’ fight for equality in postwar San Francisco as well as the city’s ability to confront the urban crisis of the 1960s and 1970s.

The changing composition of the city’s black working class and trade union movement in the last quarter of the twentieth century also diminished the influence of male-dominated blue-

collar unions such as the ILWU and TWU. By the late 1970s, the ILWU, which had opened its doors to black migrants during the immediate postwar era and had positioned itself as a leader in the fight for racial equality, comprised a small labor elite that some progressive-minded San Franciscans claimed had lost its fighting spirit. Black trade unionists in the last third of the twentieth century were increasingly female and far more likely to work in the public sector. Their politics were shaped more by the political, social, and cultural battles of the 1960s than by those of the 1930s. And while the ILWU and TWU owed much of their growth and influence to the migration of African Americans to San Francisco, these workers entered the labor movement at time when African Americans were beginning to leave the city. This shift has been evident in the early leadership of the local chapter of the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists (CBTU), which formed in 1977. To take one example, Leo Robinson represented the older influence of the ILWU among the black working class. Robinson's family had migrated to the Bay Area during World War II, and Leo followed in the footsteps of his father by joining ILWU Local 10 in the 1960s, during which time he embarked on a life as a political and social activist – which included co-leading the Northern California chapter of the CBTU.² Robinson's chief partner at the CBTU was Geraldine Johnson, who represented the growing presence of women and white-collar public-sector workers in the city's black labor movement. An educator by trade, Johnson was a hard-nosed political and community activist based in the Western Addition. She founded the CBTU chapter to provide “an independent voice for black labor,” and under her direction the chapter focused a broad range of issues that included equality education, discrimination in housing and employment, and apartheid in South Africa. She also fought for black political power, and made the Northern California CBTU among the “most politically active CBTU chapter in the country.”³ Perhaps more than anyone else, Johnson was at the forefront of efforts

to reconstruct and strengthen ties between black trade unionists and the black community in San Francisco.

The shift in the ranks of the city's black trade union leadership also coincided with the waning influence of the black-labor-liberal alliance in San Francisco. The transformation of liberal politics took place over time but was already evident by the spring of 1976, when seventeen craft union locals representing nearly 2,000 San Francisco city employees went out on strike to protest wage cuts. The picketing craft workers brought all city maintenance to a halt, including street cleaning, park maintenance, plumbing, electrical work, and public vehicle repairs. Without these workers, the San Francisco Zoo and Opera House were forced to close. The San Francisco International Airport remained open, but had to manage without its 100-member maintenance crew. Along with the city's public schools, the airport also had to get by without heat and hot water because non-striking stationary engineers honored the picket lines.⁴ Although the suspension of these services created hardship for some San Franciscans, the strike would have been a brief and minor affair had it not been for the Transport Workers Union (TWU) Local 250-A, which also elected to honor the craft unions' picket lines. San Franciscans were forced to drive, taxi, bike, and walk to their destinations, while disappointed tourists left the city without the chance to ride on one of its famed cable cars. Thus while the city's wage dispute involved its predominantly white craft workers, the success of the strike hinged on the mostly black Muni operators and conductors. "Let's face it," one striking craft worker admitted, "they are a main force of bargaining."⁵ The strike would end up lasting thirty-eight tumultuous days.

During those five-and-a-half weeks the various rifts in the city's liberal coalition played out on picket lines and the front page of the city's major daily newspapers. Throughout his two terms as mayor, Joseph Alioto had helped resolve dozens of labor disputes – both in the private

and public sectors – through mediation that usually favored workers and their unions. Upon taking office in 1968, Alioto, who later summed up his political philosophy by stating “I came out of the New Deal,”⁶ had promised to run an administration “that will first of all be sympathetic to organized labor.”⁷ His successor, Democrat George Moscone, had been elected in 1975 with support from organized labor as well. However, Moscone also owed his election to emerging forces within the local Democratic Party, particularly homosexuals and urban environmentalists, that sometimes opposed the pro-growth politics championed by Alioto’s liberal coalition. Instead of intervening as Alioto had done in the past, Moscone and his staff waited out the strike in City Hall – sleeping on couches and cots, living on a diet of take-out food, and suffering through cold showers – to show their solidarity with the people of San Francisco.⁸ Workers in non-striking unions also wavered in their support for the craft workers, who were among the highest-paid blue-collar workers in the city. The building trades unions had sought to strengthen their bargaining position by raising the specter of a general strike, but this threat lost its teeth early on when the Teamsters voiced its opposition and ILWU leader Harry Bridges – who rose to fame during the 1934 waterfront strike – expressed doubt that such a plan would work.⁹ And while the SEIU, which claimed to represent most of the city’s lower-paid “miscellaneous” workers (and whose ranks included a growing number of racial minorities and women), had promised to honor the picket lines, it quickly became apparent that most of its members were going to their jobs.¹⁰ As the strike dragged on, black TWU members also reconsidered their support for the craft workers’ cause. As one frustrated driver put it, “Why should we work for the electricians or plumbers when they make \$30,000.”¹¹ African Americans more generally questioned an alliance that had them disrupting their lives on behalf of unions that historically had excluded them from the skilled construction trades. The *Sun-Reporter*,

which was the only non-labor newspaper to support the strike, openly pondered the strike's implications on the city's black-labor alliance. While it supported the transit workers and the relatively small number of black street-sweepers who were involved, it criticized the "elitist" skilled craft unions' long history of racial exclusion and discrimination and called upon those unions to recognize the sacrifice made on their behalf by the predominantly black transit workers and the city's black population more generally. "Black laborers, Muni railway workers, and the Black miscellaneous workers who honored the picket line will not forget the sacrifices they made to themselves and their families in the maintaining of what is called labor solidarity," the paper declared at the strike's end. "All of the Black citizens who make their homes in the City and County of San Francisco hope that the elitist craft unions will never forget just how much Blacks remained out in support of a theory of working man solidarity which has never meant the same to Black workers as it has meant to white workers."¹²

The strike's resolution signaled that liberalism in San Francisco was in transition. After five weeks the strike-weary transit workers were no longer willing to sacrifice their wages for the higher-paid craft workers. Once the transit employees returned to work, the craft unions lost their main bargaining chip and had no choice but to negotiate an end to the labor dispute. According to one study, the settlement that followed represented the first ever clear victory for San Francisco's "Supervisors and citizens" in a public employee strike and was "one of the very few cases in recent American history where a public employee strike was ended without the public employer having to put up any extra money at all."¹³ Quentin Kopp, who along with other city supervisors – namely the fiscally conservative Republican John Barbagelata and moderate Democrat Dianne Feinstein – had spent much of the decade trying to roll back the influence of public sector unions, proclaimed that the "strike shows that San Francisco is not a special-

interest town and that the real test of political strength is coming from the neighborhoods.”¹⁴

Mayor George Moscone, who had aligned himself with neighborhood activists opposed to downtown development during his campaign, might have agreed on that point as he emerged from his self-imposed confinement in City Hall. The *Washington Post* found great significance that while San Francisco may have been the “most liberal city in America,” there was “probably no city in the country where labor unions are now less popular or liberal politicians less willing to defend them.”¹⁵ As Kopp surmised, San Francisco was still a “liberal city, but liberal and labor are not synonymous anymore.”¹⁶

Yet even as the “New Right” ascended new heights in national politics in the last decades of the twentieth century, liberalism, as Kopp recognized, remained a dominant political force in San Francisco and in some other major cities as well. The forces of urban crisis, Black Power, and white backlash failed to dislodge liberalism in San Francisco, and in the 1980s and 1990s the city still earned such monikers as the “capital of progressivism” and the “temporary capital of the liberal wing of the Democratic party in the United States.”¹⁷ But black trade unionists have wielded less influence in the urban liberal coalitions since the 1970s. Newer and well-organized liberal interest groups, whose ranks have mostly been white and middle-class “progressives,” gained influence in part at the expense of organized labor. “San Francisco’s progressivism is concerned with consumption more than production, residence more than workplace, meaning more than materialism, community empowerment more than class struggle,” Richard DeLeon succinctly argued in his 1992 book *Left Coast City*.¹⁸ The city’s move from district to at-large elections, first between 1977 and 1980 and then again since 2000, has further strengthened neighborhood-based political groups while also making it possible for African American candidates to get elected to the Board of Supervisors from their districts – thus lessening the need

for the role of political brokers that black trade unionists effectively played in the 1960s and early 1970s. Black trade unionists and their unions have remained active in city politics, and they played a conspicuous role in Willie Brown's successful bid to become the city's first African American mayor in 1995. Yet they now operate in a more crowded field of liberal and race-based political organizations.

The diminished and evolving civic role of black trade unionists since the 1970s should not detract from what they accomplished, as well as what they sought but did not accomplish, in the three decades following World War II. They challenged employers and public agencies that discriminated against black labor migrants, sought to make mitigate the most harmful effects of redevelopment, and provided the first significant representation for black San Franciscans in municipal government. Yet influence came with a price, and they often had to compromise on some issues of importance to black San Franciscans. On issues such as school busing and police brutality, black trade unionists refrained from taking strong public positions in order to preserve their influence within the Alioto administration. Their fight for jobs for black workers was also compromised by their ties to organized labor and the local liberal political coalition. This was evident in the fight to increase job opportunities in the skilled construction trades. Black trade unionists and their unions were reluctant to directly challenge those skilled unions that had historically discriminated against black and other nonwhite workers. Black workers who remained outside of organized labor and went into business for themselves were far more forceful in pushing for meaningful opportunities for young black workers in the construction industry, but they found themselves without access to the local political power structure. As a result, they became more dependent on private foundations and the federal government, both of which eventually chose not to follow their lead.

In the three decades following the Second World War black trade unionists sought to position themselves as the guardians for the city's growing black working class. In 2014 they no longer invoke that idea. Moreover, since the 1970s the city's black population that they had once claimed to represent has been quietly disappearing. Whereas 96,078 African Americans comprised 13.4 percent of the city's population in 1970, by 2010 only 50,768 blacks lived in the city (6.3 percent of the total population). San Francisco's "black flight" has been part of a nationwide trend. In San Francisco's case, the majority of out-migrants appear to be working-class and middle-class families, who, unable to afford the city's high rents and concerned with crime, have moved to smaller working-class cities in the East Bay and elsewhere.¹⁹ While the city's finance and high-tech sectors have produced sustained economic growth, a special city task force on African-American out-migration that formed in 2007 cited economic inequality as a primary cause. It reported that the median income for black residents was \$35,200 compared to \$70,800 for their white counterparts, while the 10.4 percent unemployment rate among African Americans was more than twice that of whites and far exceeded that of any other "racial or ethnic group."²⁰ The black out-migration has in turn impacted black politics. Although the city has elected more black officials since the 1970s, African-Americans arguably have not wielded the same degree of influence that they did in the 1960s and 1970s. Districts that had once been black political strongholds and began sending black representatives to the Board of Supervisors after the switch to district-based elections in 2000 are now in transition.²¹ It is telling that Mayor Gavin Newsome's committee on African-American out migration did not include any representatives from labor. Thus the future of black San Francisco, and its place within the city's liberal political culture, seems just as uncertain as it was in the years following the wartime migration. As one observer has been left to wonder, "What is happening in San Francisco, this

bastion of progressivism?”²²

¹ For two examples on the 1940s and 1950s, see Martha Biondi, *To Stand and Fight The Struggle for Civil Rights in Postwar New York* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003) and Robert Rogers Korstad, *Civil Rights Unionism: Tobacco Workers and the Struggle for Democracy in the Mid-Twentieth-Century South* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2003). For examples of the 1960s and 1970s, see Robert O. Self, *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003); Matthew Countryman, *Up South: Civil Rights and Black Power in Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005).

Works on Detroit and the United Autoworkers Union have traced black trade unionists' activities through the postwar period, however the leading works in this field also emphasize their challenges to liberalism. See Heather Ann Thompson, *Whose Detroit: Politics, Labor, and Race in a Modern American City* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2001); and David M. Lewis-Coleman, *Race Against Liberalism: Black Workers and the UAW in Detroit* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2008).

Studies of the American Federal, State, County and Municipal Employees union have provided the type of attention to liberal black trade unionists that this dissertation studies. See, for example, Joseph A. McCartin, "Managing Discontent: The Life and Career of Leamon Hood, Black Public Employee Union Activist." In *The Black Worker: A Reader*, Edited by Eric Arnesen (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2007); Michael K. Honey, *Going Down Jericho Road: The Memphis Strike, Martin Luther King's Last Campaign* (New York and London: W.W. Norton and Company, 2007).

² David Bacon, "Leo Robinson: Soul of the Longshore," *SF Bayview*, January 29, 2013, <http://sfbayview.com/2013/leo-robinson-soul-of-the-longshore/>; Peter Cole, "Leo Robinson: ILWU Activist Led Anti-Apartheid Struggle," ILWU, January 30, 2013, <http://www.ilwu.org/?p=4395>.

³ "Activist Geraldine Johnson Remembered," *Sun-Reporter*, November 20, 1997; "Civil Rights, Labor Activist Geraldine Johnson," *SFGATE*, November 14, 1997, <http://www.sfgate.com/bayarea/article/S-F-civil-rights-labor-activist-Geraldine-3089566.php>; "Report of the Executive Council, 1983 CBTU 12th Annual Convention, May 26-30, Chicago, IL.," p. 13, Coalition of Black Trade Unionists Collection, Schomburg Library, Box 1, Folder 8.

In general, the CBTU stressed the role of women in the labor movement. Robert Zieger, *For Jobs and Freedom: Race and Labor in America Since 1865* (Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 2007), 229.

⁴ Randolph H. Boehm and Dan C. Heldman, *Public Employees, Unions, and the Erosion of Civic Trust: A Study of San Francisco in the 1970s* (Frederick, MD: Aletheia Books, University Publications of America, Inc., 1982), 177.

⁵ Jackson Rannells and Mel Ziegler, "Muni Drivers' Big Vote today," *San Francisco Chronicle*, April 16, 1976.

⁶ Quote appears in William Issel, *Church and State in the City: Catholics and Politics in Twentieth-Century San Francisco* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2013), 222.

⁷ Dick Meister, "Labor Power," *San Francisco Bay Guardian*, December 23, 1970.

⁸ Robert Hollis and Harry Johanesen, "City Strike Talks Resume Amid Threats of Escalation," *San Francisco Sunday Chronicle and Examiner*, April 3, 1976; Abe Mellinkoff, "Moscone's Dilemma," *San Francisco Chronicle*, April 16 1976.

⁹ Boehm and Heldman, *Public Employees, Unions, and the Erosion of the Civic Trust*, 182-184.

¹⁰ Boehm and Heldman, *Public Employees, Unions, and the Erosion of the Civic Trust*, 177-178.

¹¹ George Snyder, "A Rump Meeting of Muni Drivers," *San Francisco Chronicle*, April 6, 1976.

¹² Editorial, "They Shall Not Forget," *Sun-Reporter*, May 8, 1976; Editorial, "Compromise Still Needed in S.F.'s City Strike," *Sun-Reporter*, April 24, 1976;

¹³ Boehm and Heldman, *Public Employees, Unions, and the Erosion of the Civic Trust*, 202.

¹⁴ Russ Cone, "A Hard Look: Strike's End Could be Start of Real Battle at City Hall," *San Francisco Chronicle*, May 9, 1976.

¹⁵ Robert G. Kasier, "Trouble for Unions," *Washington Post*, June 13, 1976, 1.

¹⁶ Robert G. Kasier, "Trouble for Unions," *Washington Post*, June 13, 1976, 1.

¹⁷ Nancy Pelosi and Kenneth Starr quoted in Richard Edward DeLeon, *Left Coast City: Progressive Politics in San Francisco, 1975-1991* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1992), 2.

¹⁸ DeLeon, *Left Coast City*, 2.

¹⁹ John Diaz, "The Quiet Exodus of African Americans from San Francisco," *San Francisco Chronicle*, December 4, 2011; Judy Keen, "Blacks' Exodus Reshapes Cities," *USA Today*, May 19, 2011.

²⁰ *Report on the San Francisco Mayor's Task Force on African-American Out-Migration* (City of San Francisco, 2009).

²¹ Rachel Gordon, "S.F. Blacks' Political Clout Imperiled," *San Francisco Chronicle*, July 25, 2011.

²² John Diaz, "The Quiet Exodus of African Americans from San Francisco," *San Francisco Chronicle*, December 4, 2011.

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PUBLICATIONS:

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“Flat-footed Soldiers: Black Transit Workers’ Fight for Urban Citizenship in San Francisco, 1940-1950.” *Race, Labor, and the City: Crises Old and New*, Labor and Working-Class History Association and the Fund for Culture and History Conference, May 28-31, 2009, Roosevelt University, Chicago.

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