Atlanta's reaction to the first black mayor, Maynard H. Jackson, as seen through its major newspaper, The Atlanta Constitution

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ATLANTA'S REACTION TO THE FIRST BLACK MAYOR, MAYNARD H. JACKSON, AS SEEN THROUGH ITS MAJOR NEWSPAPER, THE ATLANTA CONSTITUTION

A THESIS
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THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS

BY
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DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

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ABSTRACT

HISTORY

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Atlanta's Reaction to the First Black Mayor, Maynard H. Jackson, as Seen through Its Major Newspaper The Atlanta Constitution

Advisor: Dr. Margaret N. Rowley
Thesis dated: May, 1990

This thesis investigates the reaction to Maynard H. Jackson's election as the first black mayor of a major southern city, Atlanta, through selected articles of its major newspaper, The Atlanta Constitution, covering the period of Jackson's announcement of his candidacy through the end of his first two years in office. This particular paper was chosen because it was the dominant day-time newspaper and because of its moderate viewpoints and its emphasis on political news.

While The Atlanta Constitution was aware of race as a factor, it was able to be objective in its treatment of Jackson. For example, the articles did not elaborate on Jackson's race, but rather his qualifications and platform which made him eligible to be mayor of Atlanta.
One would expect more criticism, and more emphasis on the race issue, but there was very little of such in the newspaper's reporting of events during the Jackson era.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Throughout the sixties and seventies, Atlanta projected an image of economic growth, progressive leadership, and social and racial harmony. The image of a city "too busy to hate"¹ characterized Atlanta's reputation for racial harmony which existed in spite of the fact that blacks had constituted a considerable portion of Atlanta's population since the Civil War.

Although blacks have been discriminated against, they have in no way been "economically backward, nor have they been politically static"² as was shown by the election in 1973 of Maynard H. Jackson, the first black as mayor of Atlanta. This paper is a study of the reaction toward Atlanta's first black mayor as seen through an examination of selected articles in a major Atlanta daily newspaper.

It is significant that the first black mayor of a southern city since Reconstruction period was elected in

¹Virginia Hein, "The Image of 'A City Too Busy to Hate,' Atlanta in the 1960s," Phylon, 33, no. 3 (Fall 1972): 205-221.

Atlanta, the city symbolic of the New South. Atlanta, first as Marthasville and then Terminus, grew around a railroad terminal point and became a major transportation center of the southeast, thus making it a regional service center.\(^3\) In 1847, the state capital was moved from Milledgeville to Atlanta which soon became a major city.\(^4\)

Atlanta has experienced two periods of significant growth during the twentieth century. One was associated with the first "Forward Atlanta" Program of the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce in the 1920s. The second major growth period occurred after 1950 due to annexation of adjacent suburbia. By 1970, the City's population had reached a peak of just under one half million. The most significant black population change, however, was during the sixties when it exceeded 30 percent of the total population.\(^5\)

In spite of the fact that Atlanta had become a regional center before the sixties, it can best be described at that time as a small town with narrow streets and high buildings such as office buildings, single family houses, a small museum, and a few good restaurants. Today,


\(^4\)Ibid., p. 54.

\(^5\)Ibid., p. 61.
-3-

Atlanta has had a tremendous physical growth and has taken on the ambience of a sophisticated metropolis.

The growth of Atlanta was due to several unique factors. One was the excellent opportunity for education. Hutcheson listed fifteen accredited universities, colleges and junior colleges, and ten vocational and technical schools as a favorable element in contributing to Atlanta as a dynamic and growing city. Because of its location, Atlanta early became an educational center for blacks as well as whites. It has schools such as Emory, Oglethorpe and Georgia State Universities, Georgia Institute of Technology, and the six predominantly black colleges that together form the Atlanta University Center. These six draw some 6,793 students to the 156 acre campus, making it the major such center in the world. Since many of these students come from nearby and many stay after graduation, Atlanta's blacks made up 52 percent of the inner city population of 500,000 which resulted in an increase in black voters in Atlanta.6

Another factor contributing to Atlanta's growth was economics. For example, during the early 1960s, the number of new jobs doubled, construction gained 20 percent, and

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retail sales showed an increase of 7 percent. By the late 1960s, Atlanta also had the nation's lowest employment rate of 1 percent, and almost 169,000 new jobs were created for a 45 percent increase in employment.7

A third factor contributing to Atlanta's growth was politics. Although black Atlantans did not share the same power as white Atlantans in the political arena during the sixties and seventies, they did exert some influence over the white power structure. By 1973, black Atlantans shared almost the same voting power as white Atlantans, and cooperated on political matters. This was done by forming community groups. One group called the Atlanta Consortium dealt with issues such as education, employment, and the like. Another community group called the Atlanta Action Forum was made up of twelve blacks and twelve whites. Some black elected officials of the sixties and those elected in later years were a part of these groups who had played a major role in Atlanta's school desegregation and in arranging the desegregation of public accommodations before it was required by law. These accomplishments were based on a long history of

cooperation between black and white business and civic leaders in Atlanta. As the 1973 elections came, Atlanta's blacks, although still in the minority of registered voters with 49 percent of the total, were strong enough along with their white allies to elect a black mayor, Maynard Jackson.

Since Maynard Jackson was elected the first black mayor of a major southern city, this thesis will look at the reaction to Jackson's election through one of its major newspapers, The Atlanta Constitution. The Atlanta Constitution, born on June 10, 1868, had several editors during its early years before Henry Woodfin Grady, the most influential of these, was hired in 1876. By 1880, Grady had risen to the position of managing editor. In addition to his journalistic duties, Grady took on another task. He became spokesman for a New South and for better relations with the North.

Henry W. Grady was born in 1850. He grew up in Athens, Georgia, where he went to the local high school. After graduation, Grady went to the University of Georgia and then to the University of Virginia to study law.8 While at the University of Virginia, Grady wrote some

articles for The Atlanta Constitution. But after he got his degree from the University of Virginia, he became editor of The Courier, a Rome, Georgia newspaper. Grady's career at The Courier was brief, due to his reporting of corruption in city politics. Since Grady was from an affluent family, he bought Rome's other two newspapers and consolidated them.\(^9\) This did not last long. Grady, along with two partners, founded a newspaper in Atlanta, The Herald. The Herald existed for only several months.

After the short life of The Herald, Grady again wrote articles for The Atlanta Constitution and The Augusta Chronicle. Later Grady was made the New York correspondent for The Atlanta Constitution.\(^10\) Since he had always wanted to own a newspaper, Grady borrowed $20,000 from Cyrus W. Field to buy a quarter interest in The Atlanta Constitution in 1879. This gave Grady the opportunity to write the way he wanted. He did so by writing that Southerners needed to diversify their crops and break the habits of the past; the South must attract and build industries to survive. He wrote also that the Negro stood in a new relationship to Southerners, whether they liked it or not and that somehow black and white must learn to

\(^9\)Ibid., p. 145.

\(^{10}\)Ibid., p. 146.
live together.\textsuperscript{11} Grady knew what and how to write, therefore, his skills and abilities helped to make The Atlanta Constitution what it is today.\textsuperscript{12}

After Grady's death from pneumonia in 1889, various editors and writers came to The Atlanta Constitution; but in 1929, a man who was to be a prominent figure at the newspaper for nearly four decades joined the staff as a sports writer. Ralph Emerson McGill, a Tennessee native, rose rapidly, becoming sports editor in 1938, editor in 1942 and publisher in 1960. For many years, he wrote a front page editorial column, and it was this column that gained him the reputation as a moderate on racial matters. McGill actually underwent a gradual change in his racial views from a segregationist to an integrationist stance, and an important phase of this change occurred during the sit-ins of the 1960s.\textsuperscript{13} McGill's liberalism was a major factor in the development of The Constitution's response to racial issues.

Maynard Holbrook Jackson, Jr. was born in Dallas, Texas, but grew up in Atlanta, Georgia. He came from a

\textsuperscript{11}Ibid.


prominent black family of preachers, college professors, 
and politicians. His maternal grandfather, John Wesley 
Dobbs, was a community and labor leader, and his father, 
Maynard Holbook Jackson, Sr., was pastor of historic 
Friendship Baptist Church. Jackson attended Oglethorpe 
Elementary and David T. Howard High Schools respectively, 
and at the age of fourteen, entered Morehouse College 
where he graduated at the age of eighteen. He then went 
on to law school at North Carolina Central University 
where he was an outstanding debator.

Jackson began his law practice when he became an 
attorney in Atlanta’s Region 10 for the National Labor 
Relations Board in 1964. After three years with the 
National Labor Relations Board, he became managing attorney 
for the Emory Community Legal Services, a position he held 
until 1968 when he decided to challenge Senator Herman 
Talmadge for his congressional seat. At the same time, 
he was also Senior Partner of Jackson, Patterson, Parks 
and Franklin Law Firm.14

Although Jackson was defeated in the senatorial race, 
he had built up enough political recognition to run for 
vice mayor in 1969. He then decided to campaign against 

14"Trail to Mayor’s Chair Started with Senate Race," 
a seventeen-year aldermanic board veteran, Milton Farris, for vice mayor of Atlanta whom he successfully defeated. It was during Jackson's tenure as vice mayor during the mayoralty of Sam Massell that this position evolved from a ceremonial role to one of significance. Four years later, in 1973, Jackson campaigned against the incumbent mayor of Atlanta, Sam Massell. He defeated Massell with 59 percent of the total vote.

At the time of Jackson's election, Atlanta was characterized by economic growth, progressive leadership, and social and racial harmony. The 1964 Civil Rights Act made discrimination in housing, jobs and public accommodation against the law; and in 1965, the Voting Rights Act, which meant blacks could not be discriminated against for voting, was passed. But Atlanta's location and history were also reasons for its development along fairly liberal racial lines. At the end of the sixties, the voters of Atlanta elected Sam Massell, its first mayor from the Jewish minority group. By 1973, the voters were apparently ready for a black mayor.
On March 28, 1973, Maynard H. Jackson announced his candidacy for mayor of Atlanta, which had been expected for a long time. It was expected that Maynard Jackson would run for mayor since he and Sam Massell, the mayor then in office of the City of Atlanta, had been at odds on a number of issues since Jackson's first term as vice mayor.

According to an article that appeared in The Atlanta Constitution on March 28, 1973, titled "Maynard Jackson Expected to Declare for Mayor Today," the city garbage strike was the cause of the earliest split between Jackson and Massell in April of 1970. The article reviewed other issues of conflict between Jackson and Massell, such as Massell's shuffling members of the Aldermanic Committee around so that four of the committees were all white; his not upgrading the vice mayor's job as Massell had promised in his 1969 campaign for mayor of Atlanta; his designating retiring Police Chief Herbert Jenkins as Police Commissioner; his advising blacks to think white; his indifference to poor blacks; and also his nominating John Inman
for Police Chief without notifying the Board of Aldermen in advance.\textsuperscript{1} Following Jackson's announcement, an article entitled "Jackson Enters Mayor's Race" by Tom Linthicum on March 29, 1973, described the issues about which Jackson expressed concern. These were: "discrimination, police brutality, and especially crime," which Jackson labelled "the awesome threat."\textsuperscript{2}

After Jackson announced his candidacy in March 1973, several articles naming Jackson as the man to beat appeared in the paper. The May 2, 1973 article by Tom Linthicum discussed a poll commissioned by Jackson to determine his standing in the field of potential mayoral candidates. It showed that he would win over any candidate named to run against him. Tom Linthicum's article of June 25, 1973 indicated that the polls still favored Jackson as the man to beat.\textsuperscript{3}

During the final weeks of the campaign, a cartoon appeared on September 25 showing Jackson's reaction to a more recent poll. Also, just one day before the appearance

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of the cartoon, it was reported by Tom Linthicum and Tom Henderson, that Jesse Hill had been selected as Chairman of the Jackson Campaign to be in charge of the final weeks of the campaign. Hill, a black insurance executive who had helped to get Andrew Young elected Georgia's first black Congressman since Reconstruction, outlined plans to "help the Jackson campaign organization by getting more volunteers and contributions, as well as creating a better image for Jackson with the business sector."\(^4\)

The election for mayor of Atlanta took place on October 2, 1973. There were eleven candidates, including Jackson. Of the eleven, two were black: Maynard Jackson and Senator Leroy Johnson who was Georgia's first black legislator since Reconstruction. Johnson, like Jackson, was a prominent Atlanta attorney. Among the other candidates who were white, the four major ones were Charles Weltner, Rodney Cook, Harold Dye, and Sam Massell who was the incumbent.

As the votes were counted in the election of October 2, Jackson received 47,041 votes for 47 percent of the total votes, and Massell received 19,760 votes for 19.7 percent and Weltner ended up with 18,946 votes for

18.9 percent. The breakdown of the other major candidates was as follows: Harold Dye came in fourth with 3,974 votes for 8.8 percent and Leroy Johnson finished fifth with 3,832 votes for 3.8 percent, while the other six candidates got no more than 1 percent of the votes.\textsuperscript{5}

The next significant news article concerning Jackson's bid for the mayor of Atlanta appeared on October 15, 1973, under the by-line of Sharon Bailey. This article was primarily concerned with Jackson's qualifications and political experience. Jackson's entrance into politics started with the 1968 senate race against Herman Talmadge. Although he lost, Jackson got more votes in Atlanta than Talmadge, and the following year he ran for Vice Mayor of Atlanta against Milton Farris, who was better known, and Jackson won by getting 59 percent of the vote.\textsuperscript{6}

According to the Bailey article, Jackson, as vice mayor, was highly visible. One aspect of his high visibility was in sponsoring more legislation than any vice mayor before him, including Sam Massell. The article also stated that Jackson was hard on crime saying, Atlanta's crime rate is the number one issue, and vowing to be "death  

\textsuperscript{5}"Vice Mayor Takes 47 Percent of Vote," \textit{The Atlanta Constitution}, 3 October 1973.

On October 17 the Constitution carried two articles on Jackson. The first by Sam Hopkins echoed some of the same sentiments that appeared in the Bailey article. However, Hopkins stressed Jackson's educational and family background. The second, entitled "Jackson Wins Over Massell," gave a breakdown of the votes in the runoff election. For example, the final votes were 74,404 for Jackson giving him 59.2 percent, and 51,237 for Massell, giving him 40.7 percent. The article also gave breakdowns for voting precincts which indicated how both whites and blacks voted.8

After the runoff, an interview with Jackson was reported on October 22, 1973. Jackson indicated that he wanted to meet with Massell to discuss the transfer of power. He also stated that he was especially concerned about the months of November and December in terms of the transition.

In response to questions, Jackson stated that he would like to reorganize city government under the new city charter in less than six months. He stated that he would seek the opinion of other elected officials before finalizing his method to cut cost in city government. He

7Ibid.

reiterated his campaign promise to place special emphasis on drugs, police training, housing, day-care centers, on attracting more industries to Atlanta, and on improving relations among county, city and state governments.  

The next important event which the newspaper covered was that of Jackson's inauguration which was to be the largest inauguration in the history of Atlanta. According to a January 7, 1974, article by Jim Meriner, the inauguration was to be held at the Civic Center with an expected 6,000 people attending. Special events taking place during the inauguration included a performance by the city-wide college chorus, and by Mattiwilda Dobbs, the famous international opera star, who is also Jackson's aunt. To handle this event an Inaugural Committee was established. The article, as further indication of support for Jackson, noted that much of the inauguration expenses came through donations such as money ($2,000 plus), the Program, time by stage and electrical workers, flowers, the Symphony Orchestra and Chorus, and the Civic Center itself.


11Ibid.
But the most important factor of the whole election and the inauguration was that a major southern city had elected its first black mayor. With this election, a new city charter was also to become effective. This new charter stated that the mayor had all the executive power, and the city council had all the legislative power, whereas the old charter mixed administrative and lawmaking duties together. Put another way, "this inauguration [would] mean not just a different mayor with a different style of doing things, but it [would] mean a whole new foundation of government."12

When Jackson announced his candidacy for mayor of Atlanta, the fact that he was black was not an important factor in the mayoral campaign. But it was not entirely ignored in the newspaper reports. For example, in The Atlanta Constitution on March 29, 1973, an article by Tom Linthicum pointed out that "Jackson and State Senator Leroy Johnson are the two major announced candidates. Both are black."13 On June 19, the same writer reported that a comment made by Jackson was called racist by Massell. According to Massell, Jackson was telling blacks to vote

12 Ibid.

black. Massell criticized Jackson by stating that: "If a white man said something like that then the strongest editorials possible would be written calling him a racist, and in fact, he would be a racist."14

Again, in an article on October 17, 1973, by Sam Hopkins, Jackson's race was referred to in statements like the following:

As a black man he did what few whites would have even considered—-he ran against the biggest vote getter in Georgia, Senator Herman Talmadge for the Democratic nomination to the U. S. Senate.15

Another article by Tom Linthicum on October 18, 1973, noted that "the 35-year-old Jackson, an attorney, was elected the city's first black mayor."16

Race was also noted when the voting was reported. For example, Tom Linthicum's article on October 3, 1973, played up the fact that both Jackson and his opponent, State Senator Leroy Johnson, were black. Further reference regarding Jackson's race was made in the following comment: "Massell, 46, who is white will face Jackson, the


35-year-old black lawyer, in an October 16 runoff."17 After this runoff election, Linthicum noted that "Vice Mayor Maynard Jackson Tuesday combined a crushing black majority with a surprisingly strong showing among white voters to win election as Atlanta's first black mayor."18

Further reference to Jackson's race carried over into reports of the inauguration. For example, an article by Tish Young on January 4, 1974, referred to Jackson as the "People's candidate '73," a comment seemingly designed to play up the elaborateness of the coronation plans as compared with the simple seating-in ceremony at City Hall for former mayors. The article implied that this was a celebration of Jackson's being elected as the first black mayor of a major southern city. It emphasized the fact that the members of the Conference of Southern Black Mayors meeting in Atlanta over the weekend were expected to stay for the ceremony.

The writer feels that a few of the newspaper references to the inauguration gave off racial overtones. In an article titled "Atlanta Coronation? People, There'll Be People. . .But Jackson Will Star," it was stated "that

17"Vice Mayor Takes 47 Percent of Vote," The Atlanta Constitution, 3 October 1973, 1(A).

the number of people expected to attend the inauguration (6,000) would be the largest to attend such a function in Atlanta. The inauguration would be held at the Civic Center (also a first time) with performances by the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, and the City-Wide College Chorus.

In "For 'Ode to Joy'," the comment was made that Maynard Holbrook Jackson, Jr. will be inaugurated as Atlanta's first black mayor, Monday, at a ceremony unprecedented in its size and pageantry. The title of the article is a reference to the last movement of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. The last article, "Jackson's Inauguration Tonight," referred to the inauguration as show time. It stated that "show time for the inaugural is 7:30 p.m. Monday and the festivities are open on a first-come, first-served basis."

One of the most significant of these articles was entitled "Jackson Sworn In, Urges Harmony," which appreciated the importance of the bi-racial aspect of the new government. It stated that with a mixture of solemnity and pageantry, Maynard Jackson was inaugurated as the

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19"For Jackson, 'Ode to Joy'," The Atlanta Constitution, 6 January 1974.

first black mayor of Atlanta Monday night and promised to build a city of love. Continuing, it said "the 90-minute inaugural ceremonies launched a new era of bi-racial government, under a new city charter. To underscore his theme of brotherly love, Jackson had the Atlanta Symphony and a choral group perform the finale of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, the 'Ode to Joy'."21 The article ended with the following statement:

Both the fact that Jackson is the first deep south big-city mayor and the spectacular nature of his inauguration have been widely publicized. However, the ceremonies did not equal those of Coleman A. Young, the first black mayor of Detroit, elected November 6.22

21 "Jackson Sworn In, Urges Harmony," The Atlanta Constitution, 8 January 1974.
22 Ibid.
CHAPTER III

SELECTED NEWSPAPER ARTICLES CONCERNING SIGNIFICANT ISSUES OF MAYOR JACKSON'S FIRST TWO YEARS IN OFFICE

Immediately after Jackson's inauguration several editorials appeared in The Atlanta Constitution supporting the new administration. Although Jackson had the support of the newspaper, there were several articles which indicated awareness of Jackson's uniqueness as a first black mayor. First, on January 8, 1974, an editorial entitled "New End" appeared in The Atlanta Constitution. The editorial stated that,

Mayor Maynard Jackson's inauguration was history in the making. He is the first black ever elected mayor of a major Southern city, and that puts him in the history books no matter what the accomplishments of his administration.¹

"The New Mayor," another editorial appearing the next day made the following observation:

Mayor Maynard Jackson made a good beginning with his inaugural address. He'll face tough decisions enough on specific programs and policies. But his stated commitment to an Atlanta that can serve as a model for a

¹"New Era" (Editorial, The Atlanta Constitution, 8 January 1974.)
high quality of life in an urban environment is certainly one that all Atlanta citizens can support.²

In further support of Jackson, an editorial entitled "City Government" which appeared on February 5, 1974 stated:

Mayor Jackson's proposed reorganization is not something that has been done on a crash basis. There has been much study of city reorganization, study by an impartial commission whose members have no axes to grind. It has been a deliberate and careful process, and it must be given wholehearted support.³

To continue, a May 23, 1974 editorial entitled "After a Setback, Jackson Goes On," attempted to allay fears that Jackson had lost his power and was no longer in charge. This editorial stated:

Jackson's programs are not jeopardized. The only potential danger is that the city's charter will be invalidated and that further elections will have to be held. Even that would not destroy him. What would come closest to destroying him would be an assumption by his own supporters that he has been licked finally.⁴

It also stated that "Jackson's most difficult decisions for the moment are what to do to reassure his own

²"The New Mayor" (Editorial), The Atlanta Constitution, 9 January 1974.

³"City Government" (Editorial), The Atlanta Constitution, 5 February 1974.

⁴"After a Setback, Jackson Goes On" (Editorial), The Atlanta Constitution, 23 May 1974.
constituency that he remains the mayor in fact."⁵

"The Mayor Speaks," an editorial which appeared on June 13, 1974, in The Atlanta Constitution continued support for Jackson. According to the editorial, Jackson had made two speeches during the previous week (the week before this editorial was published). It stated that,

Some wealthy white businessmen are willing to utilize the Inman controversy in order to undercut the administration of Mayor Maynard Jackson, including putting into effect the new governmental structure of the new city charter.⁶

However, in his second speech, "Jackson avoided any mention of the police controversy, yet he emphasized his commitment to strong law enforcement."⁷

Not only the editors but also the readers were aware of the impending changes. One such reader's comment entitled "Hopes of Mayor Jackson" was noted in The Atlanta Constitution on January 9, 1974 which stated:

The new mayor has, indeed, been presented one of the greatest challenges ever offered a member of the great American minority. He has proven himself adept with words and phrases, but now is the time for action. This is an entirely new ball game, and he

⁵Ibid.

⁶"The Mayor Speaks" (Editorial), The Atlanta Constitution, 13 June 1974.

⁷Ibid.
is the quarterback, with no coach calling the signals.\(^8\)

The issue of race was especially of concern to the white business leadership. In his article "Black Mayor and Its Business Image: Can He Please the Poor and Big Business Too?," Ernest Holsendolph stated that the white business leaders were afraid that the election of a black mayor would hurt the good working relationship between city government and business leaders which was started when William B. Hartsfield was mayor.\(^9\)

The major concern of the white business leaders was Jackson's priorities. They felt that his priorities seemed to be social issues such as unemployment and crime. On the other hand, the white leadership was interested in issues such as expansion, rapid transit, trade and annexation. Mr. Augustus H. Stern, the Chairman of the Trust Company of Georgia and financier, expressed the concern of the businessmen: "He (Jackson), will have to be careful about pushing too hard to satisfy black demands."\(^10\) Mr. Stern hoped that Jackson would avoid


\(^9\)"Atlanta's Black Mayor and Its Business Image: Can He Please the Poor and Big Business Too?" The Atlanta Constitution, 4 November 1973.

\(^10\)Ibid.
even the appearance of a "black" mayor, and strive instead for an image of even handedness, and a statesman like attitude.

In another article, the city's first black administration was described as chaotic. The police department was listed as one particular aspect of how badly it was perceived that the city was being run. The Constitution's editor, Reg Murphy, in the article, "Jackson's Big Risk Is Non-Administration," stated that a number of officers were being busted back to a lower rank weekly. Particular attention was noted that Jackson traveled a lot. Reference was that city administration could not function well when the mayor was always away from the city.11

Probably the most serious criticism coming from the business community appeared in an article entitled "Racism Killing City, Ivan Allen Tells Forum." It was reported that ex-mayor Ivan Allen said, "Black and white racism threatens to 'kill off' Atlanta unless there is more cooperation among local business and government."12

Also mentioned in the same article was a fifteen-page letter Jackson received from the Central Atlanta


Progress (CAP), a group of business leaders charging him with being anti-white and not doing enough to stem the exodus of whites and businesses from the city. It was then reported that Jackson in response to the CAP's letter called for a twelve-point program for "curbing crime," and bringing young middle- and upper-income families back to live in the city.\textsuperscript{13}

In an article discussing Jackson's response to the CAP's criticism entitled "Jackson to Help Recruit Business in Chicago," Jackson had agreed to go to Chicago with Bradley Curry, Jr., who was president of the Chamber of Commerce. This was seen as an attempt on Jackson's part to try to put aside the supposed differences between him and white business leaders. Reported in this article also was the account of a letter written by Jackson and Harold Brockey, Chairman of the Board of Rich's, Inc. department stores which appeared in The New York Times, Business Week Magazine, and other national media. This letter was seen as an effort to "mend fences between Jackson and the business leaders, and to repair the damage to the city's reputation,"\textsuperscript{14} especially since Brockey

\begin{flushright}
13\textsuperscript{Ibid.}
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was responsible for the fifteen page letter Jackson received from the CAP mentioned earlier which expressed its concerns about the city's image, as well as the image of Jackson.

Later Jackson, speaking at a luncheon sponsored by the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce for a group of business executives, attempted to heal the supposed rift between local government and business. But, both Jackson and Chamber President Curry denied a rift between business, and local government. Jackson said that "published reports of a feud between him and Atlanta businesses created a gross misrepresentation of what is really happening in Atlanta."15 Within this same context, Curry said, "the mayor and I are warm enough friends to disagree and still remain friends. We do have the capacity to disagree. . .because we don't sweep things under the rug."16 With this show of unity which is further discussed in another article entitled "Mayor, Execs Put on Show of Unity," it was reported that Jackson agreed to lead a group of businessmen and Chamber of Commerce officers to Chicago, New York and other major cities.

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16 Ibid.
cities to recruit new business and repair Atlanta's tarnished image. He also started a Mayor's Breakfast Program which was an invitation to business leaders to have breakfast with the mayor over two or three weeks.17

Another very important issue which was the focus of many newspaper articles was that of public housing. This issue centered around the poor conditions in public housing and around Jackson's desire to bring the Atlanta Housing Authority under the control of the mayor's office. An example illustrating this issue was disorder at The Bankhead Courts Complex.

The Bankhead Courts Complex was publicized as an example to point out the problems of public housing. Bankhead was chosen because of a series of rock-throwing incidents which grew out of frustrations and because of a high crime rate in the area. The incident started when an attempted arrest for gambling occurred at the complex. An October 18, 1974 article reported by Gary Hendricks stated that residents voiced charges of police brutality to Public Safety Commissioner Reginald Eaves and City Councilmen.18 The 500-unit Bankhead Courts Complex was

17 Ibid.

18 "Bankhead Courts Gets $1 Million Aid, Mayor Says," The Atlanta Constitution, 18 October 1974.
built in 1970 for $10 million. Several Atlanta Constitution reporters in an October 21, 1974, article stated, "because it was federally funded, the predominantly black complex was exempt from city housing codes." Added to poor construction, further deterioration to The Bankhead Courts Complex was due to poor maintenance and city services. For example, there were piles of garbage, open sewage, and large rats. Similar conditions of the complex were described in an article by Jim Stewart and Jim Merriner on October 16, 1974. To bring attention to problems at the Bankhead Courts Complex, Jackson decided to spend the weekend there. The article also stated that by spending the weekend at the Complex, Jackson wanted to prove "it is a safe place to live."  

Although the public was aware of the Bankhead situation and of Jackson's impending weekend visit, it was made more dramatic by a cartoon that appeared in The Atlanta Constitution on October 19, 1974, which shows Jackson arriving at The Bankhead Courts wearing a helmet.

On October 17, 1974, an editorial praised Jackson for taking such an initiative as a public figure.


Although the writer felt that Jackson did a good and decent thing by spending the weekend at the Complex to show his concern, the newspaper commented that "such live-in conditions are not always desirable. Public officials, like other administrators, don't have to go to every neighborhood to prove they care. The administrative decisions which they make are generally more important than the symbolism of their visits." Nonetheless, the editorial applauded Jackson "for roughing it in one of the roughest neighborhoods." 2

In the meanwhile, Jackson had used another means of proving he cared by securing funds for the Atlanta Public Housing and Bankhead Courts in particular from the U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Gary Hendricks describes this in an article which appeared in the October 18, 1974 issue of The Atlanta Constitution. The headline was: "The Bankhead Courts Project received $1 million of a $1.3 million grant." According to the article, one million of the grant was to be used for immediate assistance such as landscaping, major drainage improvements, providing for renovation and opening of The Bankhead Courts Community Center.

21 "Jackson Weekend" (Editorial), The Atlanta Constitution, 17 October 1974.
After all the publicity, Jackson, as mentioned earlier, moved into The Bankhead Courts for a weekend. His weekend visit is described by Jim Stewart on October 19, 1974. According to the article, Jackson would "sleep on a cot during his stay and share meals with the host family." The article also stated that Jackson would tour the whole Complex during his weekend visit. Another article written, by several reporters, appeared on October 21, 1974, described the conditions Jackson found at Bankhead Courts. The complex was rat infested; there were water and mosquito-infested sewage backed up into drainage ditches surrounding the buildings, and several of the lower-lying apartments were vacant and boarded up because of poor drainage. The article stated that Jackson interviewed some of the tenants, and it reported what he was told. For example, one woman tenant told him she had killed hundred of rats in the three years she had lived at Bankhead. Another said she had been burglarized seven times in the past month, and another pointed to a hole in her ceiling through which excrement


flowed each time the upstairs toilet was flushed.24

Commenting on Jackson's weekend visit October 21, 1974, an editorial appeared on October 23, 1974 which stated:

Mayor Jackson was offended by the unsanitary conditions including heaps of garbage, open sewage, and large rats at Bankhead Courts, as well as the lack of security and what he attacked as "poor construction" of the $10-million complex which was completed four years ago.25

The editorial felt the stance Jackson took regarding The Bankhead Courts was a good show by a public official.

In a very supportive but challenging article on October 23, 1974, Editor Reg Murphy praised Jackson's visit to Bankhead for focusing attention on the problems of public housing. Writing that, "the toughest job for any administrator is to mobilize support and get the problem corrected after it has been analyzed," Murphy felt that the visit had accomplished the first and that Jackson was capable of infusing "the city with enough enthusiasm and optimism to believe that permanent improvements could be made."26 The editor approved Jackson's proposed immediate

24Ibid.

25"Bankhead Problems" (Editorial), The Atlanta Constitution, 23 October 1974.

relief measures such as on-site police squads in housing projects and a "flying squad" of maintenance men to work on the worst housing problems. He felt that Jackson's outrage at conditions was real and challenged him to develop "constructive, positive, optimistic actions" to get the problem corrected. To help aid in improving The Bankhead Courts, on October 23, 1974, a federal grant for another several million dollars was announced in The Atlanta Constitution in an article by Jim Merriner and Mark Berman. Although $1.3 million had previously been set aside for Bankhead Courts, one million of which was for renovating the complex, the new grant was not a part of the remainder from the $1.3 million. According to this article, "Jackson could not yet disclose the specifics of the grant,"27 but it was speculated that the money would be used to modernize and upgrade Atlanta's public housing. One of the major improvements would start with fighting crime in the area. Ways suggested for this were providing better security, providing better lighting, and providing more social programs.28

27 "Bankhead May Get Another Grant of Millions - Mayor," The Atlanta Constitution, 23 October 1974.
28 Ibid.
According to an article by Frederick Allen on November 1, 1974, eleven days after his initial stay, Jackson revisited Bankhead Courts and found some improvements had already been made such as "better maintenance and sanitation, new security measures, the opening earlier this week of a recreation unit and strong efforts at rodent extermination." Improvements at Bankhead Courts were made because of the HUD grants and because Jackson had given housing official two weeks to come up with a report on short- and long-range improvements of public housing.

With the success of Bankhead Courts, Jackson made a visit to Eastlake Meadows. What he heard there was a replica of Bankhead Courts. This was reported in The Atlanta Constitution on November 2, 1974, by Jim Stewart. The article reported the complaints were the same such as "crime, poor police protection, open drug sales, and poor landscaping." However, Jackson found the Eastlake Projects cleaner than Bankhead, and the manager of the Eastlake Projects a bit more up beat about the area. The


30"Mayor Hears Same Housing Story," The Atlanta Constitution, 2 November 1974.
manager stated at Eastlake some people were "gung-ho about cleaning their places up."31

While the newspaper reported on Jackson's visit to Eastlake, it did not play it up as it had The Bankhead Courts possibly because the paper felt it was an extension of Jackson's reaction to public housing problems.

In the struggle between Jackson and the Atlanta Housing Authority (AHA), the newspapers attempted to stay neutral. However, in the time period of this thesis (first two years of his first administration), the problem still had not been solved. The issues involved with the AHA in addition to that of public housing were:

1) Authority of AHA over urban renewal programs with demise of model cities project which expired on December 31, 1974. Jackson's proposed to shift Urban Renewal Programs from control of AHA to City Hall; and

2) Relocation of businesses and families necessitated by the building of MARTA, a rapid transit system.

As early as May 1974, Jackson was faced with helping the AHA face the challenge posed by the Metropolitan Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA) for solving the problem of dislocated business and individual families caused by the building of the rail system. Federal relocation law required MARTA to relocate tenants into standard housing

31Ibid.
or offices comparable to their existing housing or offices. "Federal laws also required that MARTA give a displaced family a 'relocation payment' over and above the fair market purchase price of their property." According to an article by Sharon Bailey on May 17, 1974, Jackson suggested that a "replacement housing advisory committee should be set up to help MARTA relocate persons displaced by the rail system." The housing committee was to be made up of local government representatives, state and local agencies representatives, local planning groups, and MARTA representatives. No time table for appointing this committee was given, but as mayor of the city, Jackson thought the community should be protected. He argued for "safeguards to insure proper consideration of community residents who face relocation as a result of construction programs as extensive as those planned by mass transit systems." By November 1974, Jackson had come up with a proposed ordinance which was acceptable to City Council members.

32 "Mayor Urges Housing Unit," The Atlanta Constitution, 17 May 1974.
33 Ibid.
34 Ibid.
35 Ibid.
Jim Merriner's article on November 14, 1974 stated:

The ordinance would shift multi-dollar urban renewal programs from the independent AHA to City Hall. It would also grant Jackson the power to buy and sell land for urban renewal purposes without City Council approval.36

Agreements between the mayor and council, such as "how the City will operate under two decrees from Washington--the death of model cities and the creation of direct grants to city halls for redevelopment"37--were reached after months of struggles. One factor that came out of the proposal was model cities and AHA employees with a salary under $20,000 would get first choice for city jobs.

As late as 1976, according to an article written by Emma Edmonds, on November 23, 1976, Jackson was still trying to solve problems associated with the AHA.38 For example, he appeared before the House Special Study Committee on the Condition of Landlords, Tenants and Rental Premises where he outlined his proposal suggesting a State Housing Court which should have powers equal to those of


37Ibid.

38"Jackson Urges State Housing Court," The Atlanta Constitution, 23 November 1976.
the State Supreme Court. It should have authority to issue warrants for inspection, injunctions, and requiring landlords to appear in courts. Other proposals made by Jackson included demolition of property rated by the city as 50 percent deteriorated, a state constitutional amendment allowing the City or a non-profit agency to assume control of abandoned buildings suitable for rehabilitation and habilitation, statewide loans and grants to help residents rehabilitate their homes, and state emergency funding for cities employing inspectors for housing units.39

A much more divisive issue which Jackson had to face was that of enlarging the metro area by the annexation of parts of Fulton County not included in the City of Atlanta at the time. The Fulton County-Atlanta Consolidation Program was supported by the Mayor, the City Council members, business leaders, and several black community and political leaders. Opposition came from the residents of these suburban areas and some of their lawmakers and from the masses of blacks who felt that such a move would dilute their voting power. In general, the newspaper neither openly supported nor opposed Jackson's stance in the annexation matter; but it was well aware of the

39Ibid.
complexity of the problem. According to David Nordon's article on June 1, 1975, if Jackson could pull off the annexation process, he "could go down in history as the Charlemagne of Atlanta." To pull off the annexation process, Jackson would have to "broker, cajole, ramrod or sell a meaningful annexation or Fulton County Atlanta Consolidation Program to the muddled masses and the moneyed big wigs at the same time." The reason for comparing Jackson to Charlemagne is that just as Charlemagne was "the first Emperor to preside over the Holy Roman Empire in 742, Jackson could be the first super mayor to preside over the Unholy Conglomeration of Greater Fulton County in 1976." The writer expressed the opinion that Mayor Jackson was "faced with a rare opportunity to become a statesman."

By October 1975, annexation was still not a reality. Jim Merriner and Frederick Allen's article of October 2, 1975, stated that legislation for annexation was expected to be passed in the 1976 General Assembly. However, in

41 Ibid.
42 Ibid.
43 Ibid.
a speech to the Hungry Club Forum, Jackson declared that all the annexation plans put forth so far lack merit. He proposed that a citizens study commission and a state committee explore the issues and present a plan for voters' approval by 1980. Jackson felt that a three-year waiting period was needed to study the problem of annexation based on the criteria which he put forth.

Included in Jackson's criteria were:

> The effects on costs of all facets of government, promote tax equity and uniform tax assessments, guarantee more citizen participation, attract economic growth and development, improvement of governmental services, and preserve existing corporate charters, meet federal voting sights standards and retain the Atlanta-in-Dekalb portion of the City within Atlanta."\(^{44}\)

To oversee the proposal, Jackson suggested that a Commission on Fiscal Affairs and Annexation be established. The Commission was to have twenty-five members from the Atlanta University Center, Georgia State University and local elected officials. Also, a state committee to analyze fiscal relationships would be established.

After a month, according to an article by Jim Gray on January 7, 1976, Jackson had changed his mind about a

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\(^{44}\)"Mayor Asks 3-Year Wait on Annexing," \textit{The Atlanta Constitution}, 2 October 1975.
three-year wait for annexation. By November Jackson felt that annexation should be settled because it would enhance industry's move to Atlanta.

In reconsidering his October stand, Jackson placed more importance on the criteria for annexation than on a study commission itself. He emphasized that the plan should consider the impact on revenue, water supply, schools, and so forth; the effect of equalizing tax burdens; improvement in citizen participation and economic development; improvement in delivering services; lessening of overlapping services; reduction of service costs, and no removal of land from Atlanta's city limits. According to the article, this plan put forth by Jackson would take the three to five-year wait off the shelf and move toward annexation more quickly. The problem of annexation was still pending at the end of Jackson's first two years in office.

In general, the Constitution articles appeared neutral and offered no opinion regarding Jackson except for one or two that mentioned race. The newspaper simply reported events as they unfolded.

CONCLUSION

At the time of Jackson's election, Atlanta had already built an image of a progressive city. The image was one of economic growth, progressive leadership, and social and racial harmony which existed throughout the 1960s and into the 1970s. For example, the number of new jobs doubled, bank deposits and housing starts increased more than 50 percent. Other factors such as education also enhanced Atlanta's image. Because of its progressiveness as a city, Atlanta has been called "a city too busy too hate." Therefore, the election of Maynard Jackson was in line with that image.

A city may be judged or understood, in part, by the way it responds to significant events such as triumph tragedy, and change.\(^1\) Change is the measurement by which Atlanta would be judged. Part of this change came in the form of the 1973 mayoral election which was won by Maynard Jackson, the first black to be elected mayor of a major southern city. As stated in Chapter II,

\(^1\)Virginia Hein, "The Image of 'a City too Busy to Hate' Atlanta in the 1960," Phylon, 33, No. 3 (Fall, 1972):205-201.
Jackson's election was made possible by the increase in the number of registered black voters, as well as by white voters who supported him.

Since Maynard Jackson was elected the first black mayor of a major southern city, this thesis looked at the reaction to Jackson's election and his first two years in office as seen through a major Atlanta newspaper, The Atlanta Constitution. The Atlanta Constitution was chosen because it tended to be more moderate, as well as to give more space to political affairs, and also both The Atlanta Constitution and The Atlanta Journal, the other major paper, were owned by the same company (Cox Enterprises). The Atlanta Daily World, owned by a prominent black Atlanta family (The Scotts) was circulated to a predominately black population. Therefore, it is The Atlanta Constitution that can offer the most objective viewpoint on the first two years of Jackson's first administration. For example, the positive aspects of his election, such as overcoming the racial barrier, and the negative aspects, such as the concerns of the white business leaders, were both treated objectively.

By way of beating the racial odds, Jackson made a strong showing politically in 1968 when he challenged Senator Herman Talmadge in the Democratic Primary for the United States Senate seat. Although he was defeated, he
gained a quarter of the statewide vote, the majority from
within the city of Atlanta. With the build up he received
from that 1968 campaign, he had gathered enough political
recognition to run for vice mayor of Atlanta in 1969.
This race he won.

On the other hand, there were some apprehensions
regarding the election of a black as mayor of a major
southern city. The white business leaders were concerned
with Jackson's priorities which they felt were social
issues, while they were interested in such problems as
expansion/annexation, rapid transit and trade.

While the paper was aware of race as a factor,
because of its moderate viewpoint, The Atlanta Constitu-
tion was able to be objective in its treatment of Jackson.
For example, an early article which anticipated his can-
didacy did not elaborate on Jackson's race, but rather on
his qualifications and platform which made him eligible
to be mayor of Atlanta.2 In other articles, Jackson's
concern for the welfare of the city of Atlanta with
respect to crime, discrimination, and police brutality
was the focus of attention.3

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The moderate viewpoint continued as seen through other articles and editorials. Immediately after Jackson's inauguration, several articles supporting the Jackson administration appeared in *The Atlanta Constitution*. These editorials made statements such as "Mayor Maynard Jackson made a good beginning with his inaugural address,"⁴ and "Mayor Jackson's proposed reorganization is not something that has been done on a crash basis."⁵ In general, the articles made no reference to Jackson's race. However, one editorial on the inauguration hinted at ethnic differences when it stated: "They are calling it a people's inauguration, and there had never been a mayoral inauguration like this in the history of the city."⁶

As evidence of its moderate reporting views, *The Atlanta Constitution* supported Jackson's stance on public housing as illustrated in both his handling of the Bankhead Courts situation and the Atlanta Housing Authority (AHA). Even in such complicated matters as annexation


the newspaper was sympathetic to Jackson's problem of having to satisfy both black supporters, most of whom did not favor annexation, and other elements in the city who were all for it.

In spite of the newspaper's support, there were some critics. Two articles illustrated this. One, "Risk Is Non-Administration" criticized Jackson for his lack of administration, but not on racial grounds. The other, "Racism Killing City" by former mayor Ivan Allen, charged that "black and white racism threatens to 'kill off' Atlanta unless there was more cooperation among local business and government leaders."9 

It is not often that any single person or event can make such a mark in history, but Maynard Jackson's election as the first black mayor of a major southern city was history making. In fact, his administration proved to be good for Atlanta according to newspaper accounts. For example, cooperation between Jackson and business started a "breakfast with the mayor program" which was an invitation to business leaders to have breakfast with the

7 The Atlanta Constitution, 18 September 1974.
8 The Atlanta Constitution, 26 September 1974.
mayor during a period of two or three weeks. Reports of his handling the Bankhead Courts crisis were amicable, as well as reports of his work with the Atlanta Housing Authority and of his position on the annexation process.
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