A study of the community organization techniques employed by selected urban leagues in the area securing housing for Negroes during the period of 1943-1945

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A STUDY OF THE COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION TECHNIQUES EMPLOYED BY SELECTED URBAN LEAGUES IN THE AREA SECURING HOUSING FOR NEGROES DURING THE PERIOD OF 1943—1945

A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE ATLANTA UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK

BY
PERCY HOWARD STEELE, JR.

ATLANTA, GEORGIA
JUNE 1946
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The objective of this study is to draw a functional picture of the work done by selected Urban Leagues in easing the housing problems and to show how the local Leagues are influenced by the National Urban League. The National Urban League, in building up its own program in the fields of: Investigation and Research, Community Organization and Planning, Employment, Housing, Health, Education, and Recreation, is organized to meet the special and emergency needs of its local affiliates, thereby, being able to be of service to as well as an influence upon the local Leagues. It is the aim of the writer to analyze the performances, and to present briefly such information as will show how the work and influence of the selected Urban League are related to community structure.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to make available to the Urban Leagues and other community organization agencies, both on a national and local level, throughout the country, the Community Organization Techniques employed by selected Urban Leagues in the area securing housing for Negroes. Urban Leagues today, more than ever, are realizing the acuteness of the housing problem and are including this phase of work in their community organization programs. In many cases where a Negro has moved into a new neighborhood, strong tensions have been created which, if unresolved, increase racial animosity and conflict on nearly all levels of social action. Some Urban Leagues have been working with this type of problem for a considerable amount of time and have amassed numerous experiences. This study will attempt to organize and illustrate these experiences.
The writer presents this study as a possible guide, not only to new Urban Leagues and other Community Organization Agencies, but also to already existing Leagues and to staff and Board members who have a responsibility for supporting and cooperating with the Community Organization Program in the Housing Area.

Method and Scope

The Urban League Movement was chosen because it has been one of the movements interested in and working to improve the housing conditions of Negroes and in the attempted accomplishments of this end, numerous techniques have been used in the endeavor. This study, therefore, starts with the beginning of the League Movement, the National Urban League, its work and influence upon its local affiliates. Washington, D. C. is a typical city, but a city without suffrage. It is, therefore, interesting to note the techniques employed by the Washington Urban League in its effort to remedy the housing problems in the District of Columbia, the only city of its kind. The writer includes also the Urban League of Greater New York because New York City always has had a problem of housing due to its size and the masses of people living in such an area. The local Leagues of Cincinnati and Columbus, Ohio have been included in this study upon the recommendation of Mr. Franklin Thorne, Race Relations Adviser to the Federal Housing Authority, Washington, D. C. Mr. Thorne recommended these two Leagues because the community organization techniques, upon his own evaluation seemed to be outstanding and significant. This study was made during the first semester of the 1945-1946 school year while the writer was doing field work at the Washington Urban League. Conferences with outstanding men and women in the League Movement and in the field of housing, who are familiar with the subject, were held. Annual Reports, Bulletins, and other file materials of the selected Leagues were made available and personal
contacts with the professional staffs of the National Urban League and the Urban League of Greater New York were made to develop this study.

Limitations

No attempt is made to trace the origin and growth of the local Urban League affiliates, or to evaluate the housing program of any agency. The writer encountered difficulties, despite numerous requests, in securing pertinent material from the Cincinnati Urban League which would illustrate further the effective use made of techniques in securing housing for Negroes. Therefore, the chapter dealing with the Cincinnati situation is brief in comparison with other chapters, but the reader can get a picture of the results of techniques used.
CHAPTER II

THE NATIONAL URBAN LEAGUE--A PROGRAM OF SOCIAL ACTION

The story of the Urban League is a story of people. It is a story of people who, though of different races, of varying creeds and sects, and resident in widely separated communities, have found a common meeting ground in the belief that "America's most baffling problem"¹ can be solved only by intelligent and united action. It is also the story of a band of men and women who, through training, experience and consecration to service, have brought alive an ideal in a very difficult field, a field of race relations.

The history of the Urban League begins with a meeting called in the fall of 1910 by the late Mrs. Ruth Standish Baldwin, but the foundation work upon which the new movement was built had taken shape several years before this date. The National Urban League's organization is the result of the intense patriotism of a group of unusual men and women of both races, who in New York City in 1906 met at the call of William H. Baldwin, then President of the Long Island Railroad and President of the General Education Board. These persons were primarily interested in the industrial welfare of Negroes in New York and realized then as we do now that there can be no sure solution of the problems of race relations as long as our industrial problems are intensified by the racial aspects. Negroes then as now, but with difficulty, were able to find work for which they were fitted or had a vent. Labor unions discriminated against them, employers consulted the attitudes of their white employees before taking on Negro workers, and sometimes justified their personal disinclination based on prejudice to give Negroes work by ascribing imaginary unwillingness on the part of their

white employees to work with Negro fellow-workers. This group of valiant believers in the rights of men and in the responsibilities which rested on those of more vision and more intelligence immediately began to study the industrial needs of Negroes, and to seek new openings for those most fit.

Almost simultaneously, in the same year with the meeting of this group, Miss Frances Keller, a worker with immigrant white women, called together a group of men and women of both races to whom she told the story of the difficulties which she experienced in trying to get work for girls who were coming into New York and Philadelphia mainly by coastwise steamers from the South. The only difference between the problems of these girls and the problems of the colored girls was that there was at least a sympathetic community waiting to give the white girls a chance in the new country while with the colored girls, neither the white community nor the community was sympathetic in a definite way with their hopes and aspirations.

Withal, it was a very discouraging and disgusting situation. A committee was formed called, The League for the Protection of Colored Women, a name which was criticized by many colored leaders. These two organizations, The Committee for Improving the Industrial Conditions of Negroes in New York and the National League for the Protection of Colored Women, worked along parallel lines and in cooperation with each other for four years.²

In 1910, Mrs. William H. Baldwin, Jr. called together a conference of the various organizations working in the interests of Negroes in the city of New York, to develop cooperation between these agencies. Their conference resolved itself into The Committee on Urban Conditions Among Negroes, organized: to develop cooperation and coordination among these

²Ibid., pp. 1 ff.
agencies; to secure training for Negro social workers; and to establish new agencies for social service among Negroes when the investigation disclosed there was a need. Later the three organizations decided for purposes of economy and efficiency to merge into one organization, The National League on Urban Conditions Among Negroes, organized for the combined purposes of all of the organizations forming the coalition. Mrs. Baldwin became the first president of the group and the basic policy of the organization is reflected in this early statement of Mrs. Baldwin: "Let us work not as colored people, nor as white people for the narrow benefit of any one group alone, but together as American Citizens for the common good of our common city, our common country."  

Later the name was shortened to the National Urban League. Since its inception in New York City and in Nashville, Tennessee, in 1910 as the National League on Urban Conditions Among Negroes, the Urban League Movement has grown into a national organization supplemented by and cooperating with affiliated local Leagues in fifty-three cities and industrial centers throughout the nation spending approximately $700,000 a year for this work. To implement its approach, the Urban Leagues are formed as Executive Boards with equal representation of responsible white and colored citizens to determine policies and programs. The National Urban League is financed through grants from foundations, contributions and memberships from corporations, organizations and individuals, and appropriations from affiliated locals.

Actual performance necessarily depends on certain basic concepts, which are:

1. The very essence of interracial relations in the contact
between individuals; hence, healthy relations between the races cannot be imposed from outside but must be encouraged to develop through mutual respect.

2. The job, the home, the school, the public bus, and the leisure time for both children and adults are all productive of contacts; thus the basis for any realistic program must be for the improvement of working, living, and other conditions, and the replacing of resentment and prejudice with understanding and good will. This in turn means intelligent and effective social service activities.

3. The level of social service varies sharply among American cities and even the best organized communities neglect many needs of their colored citizens. Therefore, special emphasis must be placed on building up the services to the Negro if the general community welfare is to be advanced.

4. Because of this variation in local conditions, local Urban Leagues require full autonomy which is subject only to the stipulations that, (a) their Executive Boards be at all times equally representative of the two races, (b) their Executive Staffs be led by trained social service workers, and (c) their organizations accept the general philosophy and objectives of the whole League movement.

5. Although the test of an effective interracial program is at the local level, certain trends in our national life make essential a complementary national organization.

The greatest single element of strength in the Urban League Movement is the flexibility of its organization. The locals are autonomous groups determining for themselves the sizes and personnel of their respective Boards and Staffs, and developing their own programs and financial support. The National Urban League is similarly free to develop its own organization and program in relationship to the national pattern of governmental, industrial, labor and private agencies. Under this flexible arrangement the National can make available to any local the information, contacts and influence it has on the national level, and can provide staff aid for specific projects and in special emergencies; and at the same time the National can draw upon the locals for their fund of information and experience which, in the aggregate, provides the data for effective League approach to the interracial situation at the national level.

In planning its own program in terms of local needs and of available

\[\text{Ibid., pp. 7 ff.}\]
resources in money and personnel the Urban League includes Housing as one of its major fields of service. Sound family life depends largely upon provision of decent housing. An Urban League works for slum clearance and low-cost housing, for improvement of privately owned homes and for more enlightened policies by real estate owners and operators in increasing the opportunities for Negroes to buy and rent decent family dwellings. Closely associated with this matter of dwellings is the broad question of the public services, sanitation, police protection, street lighting, schools and park and playground facilities which provide the background and tone for decent living. In furtherance of this overall program the Urban League cooperates with the various public agencies, with enlightened real estate interests and with tenant organizations and civic groups interested in better housing.

The basis of the National Urban League philosophy lies in the following:

There is a frightening amount of public ignorance regarding both the past and the possible future of race relations in America. It is disheartening to see many Northern communities developing for the first time a pattern of race relationships which the best Southern leadership has long since repudiated and is seeking now to eradicate. It is ironical that white and Negro families have for a long time lived together more amicably and under more stable conditions in Southern communities than is now true of great Northern industrial centers into which Negroes are now moving in large numbers. If present trends continue, the Negro slum will be a characteristic of Northern rather than Southern cities. Living space, within which the Negro community can make use of what economic resources for housing are at its disposal, is thereby accorded that population. Northern communities are prone to close their eyes stubbornly to the fact that the Negro population is steadily growing. Thus the Negro slum in a Northern community is apt to be highly congested, tightly restricted and deprived of social benefits which are essential to living in the modern community.5

The job of providing good homes for all American families is far more than a matter of special problems. It is tied up with our whole

5 Extracts from Report of Lester B. Granger, Executive Secretary of the National Urban League, to the National Urban League Conference in Columbus, Ohio, September 28, 1944.
economy. Basically, the lack of decent homes for millions is due to the fact that those millions cannot pay for them from the wages they receive. Neighborhoods are blighted and generally become slums because we have not found an effective formula to preserve them. Too often, unnecessary and poorly planned new developments spring up on the outskirts of cities, and the central areas within these cities decline. This wasteful process has gone on for years and the sufferers embrace all classes of citizens, all those whose savings go into homes of their own or are used to finance others.

John B. Blanford, Jr., made this statement at an Urban League Conference:

> We are all affected as citizens by the whole array of housing problems. But because you have interested yourselves in the plight of minority groups, you know of barriers which exist even for the Negro citizen who can pay for a home, and if permitted, could raise a family in decent surroundings. I think we should deal frankly with these barriers, the problems of site selection and racial restrictive covenants, and not in a spirit of defeatism. I think we are gaining ground, though no one in my position could under-estimate the job ahead.

> In that job, the National Urban League can play a vitally important part. For a long time, I have tried to emphasize the fact that the communities of this country must take the leadership in solving their own housing problems. The Federal Government can help, but our cities must map out their own future. That's where you come in. You are an organization of local groups, with your roots deep in many communities. Only if you, and other civic-minded people like you, get effective machinery working, will our housing problems ever be solved.6

The National Urban League recognizes the fact that housing conditions throughout the nation became even more critical during the war and that Negroes have been chronically subjected to substandard housing in urban and rural areas. Vital interest has been manifested in the improvement of the housing of all income groups without regard to race, and therefore recommends:

(a) That the National Housing Agency be made a permanent Federal body to assist private and public construction of standard housing for all people of middle and low income levels.

6 Statement by John B. Blanford, Jr., Administrator of the National Housing Agency, before the Annual Conference of the National Urban League, Columbus, Ohio, October 2, 1944.
(b) That adequate Federal funds be made available, under the United States Housing Act, as amended, to continue the Low-Rent Housing Program.

(c) That Federal and State Urban Redevelopment Laws be adopted:

1. to provide the right of eminent domain where necessary to assemble land for redevelopment or development, private individuals or concerns, however excepted;
2. to remove all racial restrictions from land acquired under eminent domain or redevelopment laws;
3. to provide adequate housing for people displaced by slum clearance;

The American community has arrived at its point of decision; will it maintain its sprawling, filthy, life-destroying slums, or will it move to provide a decent home for every citizen? Poor housing in the Negro neighborhood adds up to poor race relations in the community. Community isolationism is willful self-destruction. The structure of our economy demands fluidity of movement and free intermingling of all people, regardless of where or how they live.

Thus, attempting to get adequate housing is not so much a matter of crusading for the poorly-housed as it is of protecting the entire community from the hazards that originate in slums. The National Urban League maintains that unless city planners and builders, municipal officials and civic leaders and the local Urban League affiliates accept this truth and attack their housing problems with courage and imagination, America will have no internal peace.

It has been due largely to the influence of the National Urban League that the local Urban Leagues have fostered their housing programs. For the purposes of this study the writer has isolated four local Urban League affiliates and has attempted to illustrate the community organization techniques employed by each one in attacking the housing problems in their respective localities.


CHAPTER III

THE WASHINGTON URBAN LEAGUE AND THE HOUSING PROBLEM IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

The Washington Urban League, one of fifty-three local affiliates of the National Urban League throughout the country, confirms the philosophy of the National Urban League and adapts its program to conditions as they exist in the District of Columbia.9

Its interracial Board of Directors determines the policy and programs of the agency and the staffs administer the programs. Specifically, the Washington Urban League gathers facts regarding race relations and the social and economic problems of the Negro in the District of Columbia; gives this information to the various public and private organizations interested in or responsible for community needs; and assists these organizations in providing adequate services for the entire community including Negro citizens. Since the fall of 1939 the Washington Urban League has concentrated on the problems of employment, race relations, and housing.10

Employment

The depression of the thirties exerted severe and unproportionate economic pressure on the Negro. Denied technical and mechanical training, forced out of the trades they had traditionally followed, and refused for unskilled work because of race, the depression found the Negro on relief and public works programs in numbers totally out of proportion to their percentage of the population. These inequities continued the "recovery" and well into the national defense and war employment programs. Labor


10 Ibid.
shortages and public sentiment forced the Executive Order prohibiting discrimination in employment in war industries but by no means abolished the economic handicaps under which Negroes earn a living.

The Washington Urban League, as is common with other Urban Leagues, believes that the economic status of the Negro is responsible for many of the handicaps encountered by him. In accordance with the policy of the national body a department of industrial relations was established in April 1944 with the following functions:

1. Maintain accurate and up-to-date statistics regarding the employment of Negroes.
2. Assist in the recruiting, training and placing of Negro workers in war and essential jobs.
3. Advise the Employment Service and other public officials on the effective referral and placement of Negro workers and with education authorities on the recruiting and training of young Negro workers.
4. Work with employers and government agencies on the establishment of sound personnel policies where Negro workers are employed.
5. Disseminate among the Negro community pertinent information regarding employment and training opportunities and the necessity of maintaining high standards of conduct, attitudes and efficiency.
6. Cooperate with responsible labor leadership in developing better understanding and more harmonious relationships between white and Negro workers in plants where both races are employed.
7. Ease the shock of post-war contraction of employment rolls by working to insure the retention of Negroes on payrolls in accordance with their seniority and demonstrated ability; and work to insure the inclusion of Negroes in any programs designed to take up the slack in employment.

In addition to activities flowing out of the above functions, the Washington Urban League has carried on many others, too numerous to mention in this study.

Race Relations

Interracial in composition and dedicated to the improvement of race relations, the Washington Urban League has sought to establish itself as a fact finding agency issuing factual information regarding the economic and social status of the Negro community and interpreting the facts it has uncovered to both whites and Negroes. The source of many of
the existing tensions is in the conditions under which Negroes live and the League has been persistent in its belief that the Negro community needed to know the nature, causes and remedies for its problems and that the white community needed much of the same information in order to understand the resentments of the Negro community and to recognize that many of the results of social and economic pressures are not racial origin. The specific activities of the Washington Urban League in improving race relations include its total programs, but a few of the direct services rendered by the League are:

1. Maintenance of an information center regarding the Negro in the District.
2. Conducting of investigations and the gathering of facts regarding conflicting situations and the underlying causes.
3. Initiation of the Citizens' Committee on Race Relations.
4. Maintenance of a Speakers Bureau on Race Relations and the Negro community.
5. Presentation of appropriate facts to public and private agencies, and investigating committees dealing with problems affecting the Negro community or race relations.
6. Promotion of a program of public education regarding race relations.

Housing

For decades the citizens and national legislators of the District have discussed the deplorable housing situation symbolized by expanding slums, hidden alleys and the resultant outgrowths of crime, disease, juvenile delinquency and personal indignity. Few people realize the actual monetary cost of Washington's slums. In 1938, it was revealed that one of the twelve police precincts which is characterized by bad housing, cost the District citizens about twenty-eight per cent of the total appropriations for such service as crime and juvenile delinquency prevention, health facilities, welfare and courts. It has been conclusively shown that the housing of the Negro population is the core of the District's housing problem.
The distinctive housing problem of Negroes stems from a complex of low income and racial restrictions resulting in an artificially restricted housing supply, less housing value per dollar spent, and intensification of overcrowding, blight and deterioration. Washington has made adequate provision for housing its Negro population. Covenants and restrictive agreements in the District and outlying areas crowd the majority of Negro families into too few dwellings, many of which lack essential sanitary facilities. Some 1500 publicly financed dwelling units are vacant and reserved for white occupancy despite the fact that hundreds of Negro families vainly search for shelter. Many of these vacancies are located in unquestionable Negro neighborhoods. Meanwhile slum landlords grow rich, and taxpayers foot the health and crime bills produced by slum conditions.

Public agencies have condemned Negro homes for the building of roads and public buildings. Private builders have constructed dwelling units for whites on land formerly occupied by Negroes. The Negro community must have more homes, and vacant sites for building them must be found. The middle and upper income levels constitute a long neglected market of Negro families whose earnings guarantee the legitimate profits so necessary to private builders. The current policy of building homes for Negroes only in established Negro neighborhoods has led to much of our present difficulty. This policy has restricted the Negro community to already overcrowded areas. If slums are to be eliminated, a portion of the slum inhabitants must be siphoned off into other sections of the metropolitan area.

In meeting this number one problem of the Negro population in the District of Columbia, the Washington Urban League has:

1. Worked closely with the National Capital Housing Authority, the National Capital Park and Planning Commission, the Federal Public Housing Agency, the National Housing Agency, Dormitories for War
Workers, War Housing Center, National Association of Real Estate Boards, and other private builders and community agencies.

2. Participated in the organization of and serviced the Emergency Committee on Housing in Metropolitan Washington and the Citizen's Counsel on Community Planning.

3. Sponsored and assisted in holding a city-wide Housing Conference.

4. Conducted a program of public education on housing needs, urban redevelopment and city planning.

5. Presented the results of the Washington Urban League research to national and local officials and congressional investigation committees.

The organization of the Emergency Committee on Housing was spearheaded by Mrs. Pauline Redmon Coggs, former Executive Secretary of the Washington Urban League, who served also as chairman of the committee. The Emergency Committee on Housing was organized in the spring of 1943 for the purpose of studying the housing conditions of Negroes, coordinating the activities of the various Negro organizations working in this field and conducting programs of activities to secure improved housing conditions.

During the past few years the Committee has carried out these purposes through research, conferences with public housing representatives and neighborhood groups, and appearances before municipal and congressional bodies and a program of community education. This Committee has as its purpose to secure a decent home for every family in the Metropolitan area of Washington. The program set up by the Emergency Committee on Housing aims to:

1. Study the problem of housing with special reference to the housing problem of Negro citizens.

2. Unify the activities of groups working in the interest of better housing.

3. Create public interest and disseminate pertinent information regarding housing and related problems.

4. Inform public and private housing interests regarding housing conditions and needs; work for minority representation on policy determining bodies; secure continuous information regarding plans and developments related to housing; and interpret committee attitudes and reactions to appropriate officials.

5. Define positions on issues affecting housing in the Metropolitan area of Washington and secure understanding and support for such positions.

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Report of the Subcommittee to Study the Organization of the Emergency Committee on Housing in Metropolitan Washington, D.C., April, 1943.
In a statement of the Emergency Committee on Housing before the Special Sub-Committee of the Senate Committee on the District of Columbia concerning the program of the National Capital Housing Authority, Mrs. Virginia R. McGuire presented the principles and issues upon which all of the representatives were in agreement. The following is taken from Mrs. McGuire's testimony before the Senate Committee:

The Emergency Committee on Housing in Metropolitan Washington has utilized the resources of the organizations whose representatives comprise the Committee, to study with considerable care the housing problems faced by Negroes in this area. We have sought to pool our interest and our efforts in order to devise a coordination and unified approach.

Based on the findings of our Research Committees, certain phases of this problem have been presented by this committee to various of the appropriate local, regional and national housing officials. We have conferred with community and neighborhood groups in efforts to interpret the various elements of this problem. We have testified in hearings before the Zoning Commission and cooperated with various other civic and local organizations in carrying out our purpose of achieving the goal of decent homes for all the people. We are testifying in this hearing in an effort to share our interests and our findings with this Senate Subcommittee for the District in the hope that we may be of some concrete assistance in sharing the responsibility of working out a constructive and feasible program for improving conditions in the District of Columbia.12

Mrs. Pauline R. Coggs, then Chairman of the Research Committee of the Emergency Committee on Housing in Metropolitan Washington and as stated previously the Executive Secretary of the Washington Urban League, also testified in the hearing before the Special Subcommittee. While the Washington Urban League subscribed to the report of the Emergency Committee on Housing in Metropolitan Washington as presented by its chairman, Mrs. Coggs testified on behalf of the Washington Urban League. In her testimony, Mrs. Coggs brought out the fact that the Board of Directors of the Washington

12Mrs. Virginia R. McGuire's Testimony," (Statement of the Emergency Committee on Housing in Metropolitan Washington before the Special Sub-Committee of the Senate Committee on the District of Columbia Concerning the Program of the National Capital Housing Authority, 1944). (Mimeographed.)
Urban League, after a careful and thorough study of the housing situation in the District, adopted the following statement of position on "Public Housing" at its regular monthly meeting, January 4, 1944:

The Board of Directors of the Washington Urban League voices its support of public housing and the National Capital Housing Authority. The present critical need of housing in the District of Columbia, brought about by an unmet pre-war need and intensified by war migration and building restrictions, can be met only by the fullest cooperation on the part of both public and private builders. The extent of current overcrowding and insanitation within the Capital demands a greatly expanded building program on the part of private enterprise. However, private enterprise, requiring legitimate profit, has never been able to meet the housing needs of low income families. It seems logical, therefore, that private builders should supply housing for middle and upper income groups, and public housing continue to meet the needs of low income families.

The National Capital Housing Authority, although limited in funds, has done much to alleviate bad housing among low income groups in the District of Columbia. It is our belief that with some modification in policies and procedures, the National Capital Housing Authority can utilize its past experience in developing a more effective program for the future...Public Housing for low income groups is important not only in providing for the immediate critical housing need, but also as the nucleus for an intelligent post-war public works program. For these reasons, therefore, we urge the continuation of the public housing program and the National Capital Housing Authority.13

In order to improve the housing situation, the Washington Urban League in defining the problem proposed to do three things:

1. To delineate the peculiar characteristics of this problem which make the housing of low income Negro families distinctive from the housing of any other group of people.
2. To evaluate current housing programs and proposals.
3. To present a plan based on this analysis.14

The above proposals were very effectively carried out by Mrs. Pauline R. Coggs during the hearing.

The Washington Urban League, a fact-finding agency, was instrumental in aiding another of the citizens' organizations in the District of

13"Mrs. Pauline R. Coggs' Testimony," (Statement of the Washington Urban League before the Special Sub-Committee of the Senate Committee on the District of Columbia Concerning the Program of the National Capital Housing Authority, 1944). (Mimeographed.)

14Ibid., p. 3.
Columbia, the Citizens' Council for Community Planning. This Council includes about fifty civic organizations in Washington preparing to work together for the improvement of housing and neighborhood conditions and for assistance toward the redevelopment of the community. The Citizens' Council was incorporated on August 11, 1944, in the District of Columbia. Current vehement debates in the District on low-rent housing and housing principles were broadcasting much confused thinking and actual misrepresentation, which was taking on national import. There appeared to be a pressing need of an open forum for public discussion of these subjects.15

Accordingly, a city-wide Housing Conference was called for May 13, 1944, at the Chamber of Commerce, with the support of thirty-eight representative organizations and thirteen individuals, with the Washington Urban League sponsoring it. The statement at the end of the conference by the Conclusions and Coordinating Committees was so warmly received that a second meeting was called for May 29 of this same year. At this meeting an interim committee was authorized to draw up by-laws for an organization which was seen as a clearing house for a combined exchange of housing facts, for discussion of housing programs, for critical study of proposed legislation, and for a common meeting ground where member organizations and individual delegates might have an opportunity to present problems of vital interest to them. It became at once clear to the committee that housing and neighborhood conditions could not be considered a part from an overall view of the development of Washington. For this reason the proposed organization was given the name of the Citizens' Council for Community Planning, community planning in this connection referring especially to the physical aspects of the community as they are related to human welfare.

The purpose of the Citizens' Council is for furtherance of community planning in accordance with the following statement of policy:

Subject to coordination by a public planning agency, both public and private housing are essential to redevelopment of the Washington area. Slum reclamation and public and private housing should conform with a flexible general plan devised to meet the requirements of the general welfare. This plan should establish standards of site developments, dwelling planning, construction and management. Primary responsibility for such planning should be assumed by a public planning agency, the memberships of which should include genuine and adequate representation of the citizens of the District of Columbia. Slum reclamation and the provision of housing for low income groups will require subsidies and should be administered by a local public agency, the memberships of which should include adequate and genuine representation of the citizens of the District of Columbia.¹⁶

For the accomplishment of its stated purpose the Council: Investigates and studies problems of housing, neighborhood development and community planning; formulates and disseminates information, findings and proposals; recommends action by affiliated organizations upon legislative and administrative problems within their fields of interest; advises with responsible public and private agencies and officials; edits and publishes an official organ; and raises funds for the maintenance and work of the Council.

The Washington Urban League has maintained representation on various citizens' committees interested in the housing problem. The League has stressed this technique more so than other Leagues because the District of Columbia is a community where its people have no vote, thus making necessary the extensive use of large representative committees. The League to a great extent has used the valuable services of volunteers who are professionally trained technicians in the field. These persons have aided the League staff in gathering facts and information for the use of citizens' groups in planning for the acquisition of adequate housing for Negroes. Social Action, Community Support, Research, Fact-Finding Public

¹⁶Ibid., p. 2.
Relations and Administration are the outstanding community organization techniques employed by the Washington Urban League in the area securing housing for Negroes in the District of Columbia.

The Washington Urban League’s efforts are concentrated on the problems of employment, race relations and housing. Because Washington has not made adequate provision for housing its Negro population, the Washington Urban League sponsored the formation of the Emergency Committee on Housing, the Citizens Council on Community Planning, and a city-wide Housing Conference. The League has also worked closely with various District and Federal Agencies in order to create public interest in the deplorable housing conditions in Washington. As a result of the techniques employed by the League, both directly and indirectly, more housing has been made available to Negroes and present plans indicate that as soon as materials are available the construction of more housing units will begin.
The Negro In New York

New York's Negro population is upwards of 500,000. That is a community larger than Louisville, larger than Minneapolis, larger than Cincinnati, and larger than New Orleans. Harlem alone contains more people than the entire population of six different states. There has been a forty per cent increase in New York's Negro population over the past two years, as compared with an eight per cent all-over increase. The Negro community is growing fast. How it is growing is still more significant.\(^\text{18}\)

New York was not designated a "critical area" in housing until September 1944. But for Negroes it was on the critical list long before the war began. As a whole, the problem is not much one of structural deficiency as it is one of congestion. Hemmed in on all sides by restrictive covenants and practices, Negroes are packed together beyond the limits of health and safety. There is a single block in Harlem in which 3,871 persons live. A similar density of the entire United States would result in the whole of America's population living in one-half of New York City. The demand for housing units is so great that rents have risen far above those asked for similar units occupied by white citizens. Negroes not only pay greater absolute amounts, but in most cases they pay a much higher proportion of their income for rent than do white citizens.

\(^{17}\)Harlem is a section in New York City, located north of Central Park, between 8th Avenue and the East and Harlem Rivers, inhabited almost entirely by Negroes.

\(^{18}\)"Its Background and Its Future," (The Urban League of Greater New York, Inc., 1944). (Mimeographed.)
The low-cost housing program has made no appreciable adjustment of the situation as yet. With more than 300,000 residents, Harlem has but one such unit accommodating 574 families at rentals still above the pocketbooks of most. Negro ownership of property is negligible. Home Owners Loan Corporation and Federal Housing Authority restrictions, operating within the framework of local patterns, bar Negroes as a group from effective use of these government aids in property owners. Most Negro tenanted buildings are operated under absentee ownership and management. Negroes service and maintain few buildings. Most contractors and mechanics are brought in from outside and have shown little interest in maintaining adequate levels of service. The results are bad and tend to become worse. There is an inevitable and rising tide of bad faith between white owners and Negro tenants. There is an unavoidable loss to owners through accelerated deterioration of property from hard use, neglect, and improper maintenance. There is an inevitable accrual to the community of slums, health problems, and related ills.

Health resources are insufficient in these neighborhoods. Voluntary agencies originally established to meet the needs of earlier populations exclude Negroes in some cases, and admit them on a limited basis only in others. Clinical facilities for many special health needs are nonexistent; existing facilities (public and private) are totally inadequate to serve a community which exhibits the low health level characteristics of any underprivileged group. Infant mortality is half again as high among Negroes as among whites. The Negro maternal death rate is three times that of white mothers. Tuberculosis incidence is more than five times that found among Negroes as among whites. There are ten times as many syphilis cases among Negroes as among whites. A recent Hospital Discharge Study made by Welfare Council of Harlem indicates that Negroes use municipal
hospitals twice as often as do white citizens. Yet the municipal hospital in Harlem contains only 654 beds plus 109 bassinets. Of the five voluntary hospitals in the Harlem area (not including the recently established interracial Sydenham Hospital) not one admits Negro doctors to regular affiliation; not one admits Negro patients to anything but wards, regardless of ability to pay.

Negro children exhibit the inevitable deficiencies of their background. Poorly fed, inadequately housed, lacking in vitality and over susceptible to disease, and their high rate of retardation in school is understandable. As among all people who find subsistence difficult, delinquency and crime are problems in Negro neighborhoods. Anti-social attitudes are familiar accompaniments to bad health, inferior housing, bad economic adjustment. They are not racial in origin. The disparity between income levels for white and Negro workers is the greatest single obstacle in the way of Negro advancement. Cut off from full employment opportunity, suffering from job exclusion in some fields and low wage levels in others, the Negro community is essentially a poverty stricken one. The State Department of Commerce reports that the poorer half of the Negroes in New York City live on incomes approximately forty-six per cent of that received by the poorer half of the white people.

It is understandable that employment of Negroes has reached a new high under pressures received during war-time. There are 700,000 Negro men and women in uniforms, half of them overseas. There are 1,500,000 Negro workers in war industries. But there has been very little change in the basic attitudes of hiring and working with Negroes.20

19 Ibid., p. 4.
20 Ibid., pp. 4 ff.
The Urban League Movement and Housing in New York

When one surveys the overall housing conditions in New York City there can be no doubt that the Brooklyn and Manhattan Urban Leagues have served a valuable community purpose through the last decade, a fact attested not only by their record but by the dependence which New Yorkers have placed on them for information, service and guidance in matters relating to Negro welfare. Nor can there be any doubt as to the future needs for augmented work along these lines. By 1943 it had become clear that a change in League organization was necessary, because of the following:

Manhattan with 312,000 Negroes, has more facilities than other boroughs including some special programs in various public and private agencies. None of the needs is adequately served, not even by the Urban League whose entire program is aimed at Negro advancement.

The rapid growth of Brooklyn's Negro population now numbering more than 110,000 has created a problem in community welfare which the borough's already inadequate social services could not begin to meet.

Bronx has over 25,000 Negroes and no services of the type given by the Urban League.

This is also true in Queens with a Negro population of 27,000, and in Richmond with its 4,000 Negroes.

Lack of programs in the outlying boroughs meant heavier calls for service on Brooklyn and Manhattan. Unaccompanied by any corresponding increase in income, it became impossible for either agency to keep pace with growing demands. The tendency was either to spread service too thinly, or to withdraw from some fields altogether. Sporadic efforts of local leaders to organize local programs flared briefly and died for lack of support. It was against this background of developments that the Urban League of Greater New York was incorporated on July 31, 1944.

For thirty-six years the Urban League has been the movement in New York with the primary objective of service and forecast of service to a

21 Ibid., p. 13.
rapidly growing Negro group. No real solution to the housing dilemma of the Negro in New York can be reached until the congestion is relieved. In addition to their work towards this goal the League has steadily sought the improvement of conditions within the existing framework and has kept careful records of housing conditions, cooperating with the State Division of Housing in gathering data. The Housing Program of the Urban League of Greater New York aims to improve the living conditions for Negroes in all boroughs through research, planning and community cooperation. The League has sought to stimulate interest in public redevelopment and private enterprise housing. It has gathered facts affecting Negro housing welfare and acted for their adjustment where warranted. The League has encouraged Negro participation in ownership, management and service of real estate.23

The Urban Housing Management Association

In Harlem, which has always had housing problems, a new idea was born in December 1943 as a result of a fundamental technique employed by the Urban League of Greater New York. The idea was that tenants, landlords, and the community, would gain if the Negro people of Harlem were given a chance to manage buildings usually held by absentee white owners and managed by absentee white agents. To test this theory, a non-profit corporation, the Urban Housing Management Association was formed under the sponsorship of the Urban League of Greater New York. Prominent Negroes and whites were chosen for the board. An all-Negro staff was employed to manage Harlem tenements for absentee owners. An office was opened in the Urban League building at 204 West 136th Street, in the center of Harlem. In an attempt to broaden Negro participation in housing management, this Association has the following four aims:

23Ibid., p. 17.
1. To demonstrate that management aimed at improving the living conditions of tenants is good business.
2. To help neutralize the disadvantages of absentee ownership by using local agents who have tenant confidence.
3. To encourage the establishment of Negro management agencies.
4. To encourage the formation of Negro contractor and service groups.

It has now taken over some ninety housing units and favorable reports from white owners have come in as well as interested inquiries from all over the country.

The main objective of the Urban Housing Management Association is to show that competent local management by Negroes can help both tenants and owners. Proof is found in the fact that tenants are much more satisfied with the Urban Housing Management Association's management and that average vacancies of about fifty per cent in buildings taken over by the Association have been reduced three per cent. A second objective is to give Harlem real estate men and mechanics an opportunity to make a living from work that is normally handled by outsiders. So consistently have local residents been excluded from responsible jobs in the housing business that the Association found it hard at first to get enough trained men. This problem is being solved by a training program instituted by the Urban League of Greater New York.

Through the Urban Housing Management Association the Urban League of Greater New York has gathered information on such subjects as:

- Do Negroes cost more to house than other people? If so, why?
- Do Negroes depreciate property? If so, why?
- How can substandard tenants in substandard housing be helped?

The above techniques have proven to be very valuable in making way for better housing for Negroes.

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25 Ibid., p. 3.
The Citizens' Housing Council of New York

In order to make Post-War New York a more livable and prosperous city the Citizens' Housing Council of New York was organized with the able assistance of the Urban League of Greater New York. The Citizens' Housing Council of New York, representing civic, construction, educational, financial, governmental, labor, managerial, real estate, technical, tenant, and welfare interests, was formed in the spring of 1937 for the purpose of formulating an over-all housing program for New York City. Recognizing the fact that it is as much the concern of financial and business interests as it is of social, civic, and tenant organizations to strive for a more efficient and livable city, Citizens' Housing Council brought together men and women with special and expert knowledge in these widely diversified fields of organized activity to study the problem and recommend methods of procedure.26

That a combination of public and private action is necessary to bring about the improvement of New York's housing and neighborhood conditions, especially for families of low-income, was considered basic in the deliberations which followed. The first step in this technique was the formation of committees to explore different facts of the larger problem. Each committee was headed by an expert in the special field and had in its membership representatives of the various interests. In 1938 six such committees submitted preliminary reports, committees on old housing, new housing, laws and administration, city planning and zoning, housing management, and rehousing of tenants. These tentative reports were then presented to the public at a series of six public meetings to which audiences, again representing all types of experiences and opinions, were invited and asked

to participate in the discussion. Valuable ideas brought out at these meetings were incorporated later in revised reports which subsequently were published and distributed among public officials, housing and planning groups, as well as other interested citizens. This was followed by the publication of a summary of the entire six reports entitled, "Housing the Metropolis," which was given wide distribution throughout the city.27

The studies, research, and analysis, made by the committees in preparing their reports, highlighted the fact that a solution of the problem of housing for low income families could not be achieved unilaterally by any one group or by action for any one section of the population. Further, it became apparent that a rational and permanent housing program must be part of a comprehensive city plan involving considerations of the needs of the entire community. To achieve effective neighborhood planning and a desirable community life, it appeared, moreover, that a specific land-use policy must be adopted. And finally there was the recognition that there must be cooperation among private enterprise and the public agencies involved in providing housing for the various income groups. Based on these assumptions, the reports now only presented a comprehensive analysis of New York's housing and planning problems and proposed steps for immediate action, but also established a long-range program for continuing study of interrelated social, economic and physical factors.

In September, 1937, Congress passed the Wagner-Steagall Act, which enabled the Federal Government to embark on a program of slum clearance and housing through the operation of the new United States Housing Authority. New York City was in a position to take immediate advantage of the available Federal loans and subsidies through its local housing authority, which had been set up in 1934. Citizens' Housing Council immediately, as

27Ibid., p. 2.
a result of its preliminary studies, offered concrete suggestions and ex-
tended cooperation to the Housing Authority, to the City Planning Commission
and to the other agencies involved in the public housing program.

A second opportunity for specific action occurred when in May, 1938,
the Constitutional Convention of New York considered proposals for permis-
sive legislation enabling the state to make loans and subsidies to munici-
palities for the construction and operation of low-rent housing. Citizens' 
Housing Council took a leading part in helping to formulate the housing 
section later incorporated in the amended constitution. During the course 
of the Convention's deliberation, the Legislative Committee of Citizens' 
Housing Council analyzed the proposed provision in non-legal language, pub-
licized the proposals and arranged for public discussion meetings. To dra-
matize the issues involved, a tour of the city's slums and the two then 
existing federally aided low rent housing projects was conducted for a 
group of visiting legislators. With the enabling amendment passed, Citi-
zens' Housing Council took the initiative in calling into being an indepen-
dent statewide legislation necessary to implement the amendment. Subse-
quently CHC published a comprehensive report, "Public Housing Laws," which 
included outline analysis of the United States Housing Act, the housing 
provision of the New York State Constitution, and the Public Housing Law 
of New York State. This report served to familiarize interested groups 
and individuals with the legislation then on the books.

With a number of public low-rent projects actually built or under 
construction, CHC continued to study various phases of the public housing 
program, particularly as it affected New York City. For example, as a 
result of study by a sub-committee, "Civil Service in Relation to Housing

28 Hereinafter, unless otherwise noted, the Citizens' Housing Council will be referred to as CHC.
"Management Personnel" was published, proposing the type of examination required to reveal a candidate's personal qualifications, technical competence and social attitudes. CHC recommended special institutes for management training, while it put out other reports dealing with methods of tenant selection and tenant and community relations. The pros and cons of adjusted or graded rents were treated in a study entitled, "Family Incomes in Relation to Rentals in Public Housing."\(^\text{29}\)

While recognizing that direct federal, state and municipal aids for housing offer one important remedy, CHC has always firmly held that private enterprise has, and must continue to have, the major role in efforts to provide its citizens with proper housing and in the endeavor to improve neighborhood conditions. To this end, CHC has sought to widen the field for sound private investments in housing, and will continue so doing, always stressing the fact investors must be assured long-range protection from the blighting influence of planlessness, speculation in land and buildings, and inadequate public controls.

A comprehensive analysis of housing conditions, incomes, rents and overcrowding in Harlem was made by CHC's Interracial Committee and published under the title of, "Harlem Housing," in August 1939. The Urban League of Greater New York, employing one of its techniques, was represented on this committee. This study revealed the existence of a market for private investment in apartments to rent for twelve to fifteen dollars per room per month, and called for an integrated program of public and private housing development. Such a program has since been exemplified in the decision to locate the Housing Authority's proposed Abraham Lincoln Houses and Metropolitan Life Insurance Company's Riverton side by side.

The comparatively small, though significant results from the efforts of private and public groups, individually and cooperating to improve housing conditions and aid in the redevelopment of slums locally, have accentuated the magnitude of the problem. Some experts have felt that no solution is possible without some sort of federal aid to local private initiative, at least in the matter of aiding in the reduction of land costs. CHC does not claim to have the solution. However, at the request of Senator Robert A. Taft, Chairman of the Sub-Committee on Housing and Urban Redevelopment of the Senate Committee on Post-War Economic Policy and Planning, a special committee of CHC has recently completed a report for that committee dealing with various phases of housing and urban redevelopment. This report offers suggestions for consideration by Congress as to a permanent Federal agency for more effective cooperation with financial institutions, private builders, and municipalities in meeting post-war housing needs.

Throughout its activities CHC has emphasized the need for a Master Plan to serve as a guide for New York's gradual redevelopment and growth, the importance of the "neighborhood community" concept for assuring safety of investment for home owners and financial institutions, and the necessity for a comprehensive revision of the Zoning Resolution. The report of the City Planning and Zoning Committee, issued in 1938, revealed the unhealthy conditions resulting from the unorganized growth of the city and made extensive recommendations for methods of improvement, including controls to prevent future recurrence of similar conditions. In May 1944, a comprehensive study of population densities with recommendations for their control was embodied in another publication of this committee, entitled, "Densities in New York City."

Currently with its research activities, CHC has carried on an
extensive educational program through public meetings, courses, institutes, popular publications and magazine articles, as the occasion demands. GHC keeps the public informed on pending and enacted housing legislation. Other educational activities have included a Speakers' Bureau, equipped to secure housing speakers when requested by clubs and other organizations. **GHC Housing News**, (published ten times a year), gives information on current housing and planning activities, legislation, and housing literature. A well stocked housing and planning library is available to teachers, students and the general public.

In the late spring of 1944, **GHC organized New York City's "Housing Week,"** the first such project in the country. By this means public attention was focused on the city's housing problem and the importance of planning now for New York's post-war physical redevelopment. The cooperation of more than sixty groups representing business, professional, technical, commercial, church and tenant interests was secured. The Urban League of Greater New York was outstanding in this endeavor. The Housing Week idea has attracted nationwide attention and seems likely to spread to other cities.30

The role of the Urban League in the work of the **GHC**, the City-Wide Citizens' Committee on Harlem, the Urban Housing Management Association and other organizations is mainly in terms of cooperation on projects. Staff members of the League are represented on the Boards and there is free exchange of information. One particular instance of the type of cooperation in which the League participated occurred during the early fall of 1945. The **GHC sponsored the campaign for the passage of the Housing Referendum in the election held in New York City, November 6, 1945.** A State-Wide

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30 Ibid., pp. 4. ff.
Committee was formed and nearly a million pieces of literature was distributed throughout the State of New York. Speakers were scheduled for various types of public meetings, while newspapers, radio publicity, and spot announcements were all a part of the effort to acquaint the public with the implications in passage of this referendum, known as, "Proposition Number One." It assures five additional projects for New York City. The League participated in all of the above activities and assumed responsibility for the work in Harlem and Brooklyn areas.\(^{31}\)

That slums are a menace to the health and safety of the entire city and a disgrace to the nation's metropolis is generally agreed. That slums unduly burden the taxpayer, do depress property values, and are a brake on business, industry and good citizenship cannot be contradicted. That life in slums causes untold misery to human beings is a truism. The Urban League of Greater New York, because of its realization of these unmet needs, has in recent years broadened its program so that it may reach out into the community and assist other agencies and apply all of its efforts to see that the housing needs are met.

The Urban League of Greater New York has met with a great deal of success in employing certain specialized community organization techniques by means of which the League helps groups and other organizations to achieve unit of purpose and action. Prominent among these are: Fact-Finding; Research; Publicity; Public Relations; Administration; Community Support; and Social Action.

While no real solution to the housing dilemma of the Negro in New York can be reached until the congestion is relieved, the Urban League of

\(^{31}\)Mrs. Dorothy B. Hamilton, Health and Housing Secretary, (Letter from Urban League of Greater New York City, November 26, 1945).
Greater New York has sought the improvement of conditions within the existing framework and has aimed to improve living conditions for Negroes in all boroughs. The Urban League of Greater New York sponsored the organization of the Urban Housing Management Association and assisted in the organization of the Citizens' Housing Council of New York.

Aside from the already built low-rent housing projects, five additional projects are now under construction and Negroes are getting a "fair" share of the units.
CHAPTER V

THE ROLE OF THE CINCINNATI URBAN LEAGUE AND TECHNIQUES EMPLOYED IN ITS HOUSING INVESTIGATION

The Division of Negro Welfare is not an Urban League as many of us know Leagues. In Cincinnati, Ohio, the War Chest and the Community Chest and the Council of Social Agencies staffs are as one. The administrative functions of this organization are handled by seven divisions with an equal number of executives. The arrangement is democratic and no differences are made within staff or physical facilities. The office of the Director of the War Community Chest, C. M. Bookman, is fifty feet from the Division of Negro Welfare's office and the Director of the Council of Social Agencies, Donald Van Vales, has the adjoining office.

The Division of Negro Welfare serves as a clearing house through which the Negro work of the Community as a whole is discussed, planned, and then promoted by the Council of Social Agencies. Likewise, the Division has the additional responsibility of aiding existing civic and welfare agencies in their interpretation and treatment of Negroes. The Division is available for advice, research and information on problems in the above-mentioned fields and recommends, initiates, and promotes services deemed essential to the welfare of the community.

In Cincinnati there are twenty-six agencies working directly with Negroes, of which eleven have complete Negro personnel. The Division membership, which is equivalent to a League Board, has seventy-six persons. Fifty-two of these come from the twenty-six agencies (a professional and


33 Ibid.

34 Ibid., p. 5.

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a lay representative from each); twenty-three and the chairman come from the community at large. Division members serve on one of five functional committees (Racial Amity, Health, Housing, Educational and Industrial). Such an arrangement permits an interchange of experiences and program for the entire community as well as a general program of community organization on any particular program.

The interest and activity of the Division in Housing since January 1942, has progressed along several lines:

1. Active cooperation with established housing agencies in extending their services to Negro citizens.
2. Interpreting housing needs of Negro citizens, and developing lay leadership to interpret these needs.35

Recommendations to the Housing Authority and management of Lincoln Court, a new Housing Project, on personnel adjustments have been favorably acted upon. The Division was also consulted on personnel changes in the Valley Homes Housing Project. The Division was active along with several agencies in helping secure priorities for material to insure the completion of some four hundred dwelling units in the 1,015 apartment project, Lincoln Court. Later, the Division had a city-wide protest against a proposal to use this project for Negro soldiers.36

Norris Homes, stand as a monument to the social vision of Mrs. Mortimer Matthews and a group of citizens interested in low cost housing for Negroes. The initial step for this project originated in the Housing Committee of the local Urban League affiliates. This committee has worked continuously for increased priorities, for low cost housing, and for low income groups, regardless of race, creed or color. Efforts have been made

35(Sixth Annual Report, Division of Negro Welfare Department, Council of Social Agencies, Community Chest, Cincinnati, Ohio, 1942-43, p. 8.) (Mimeographed.)

36Ibid.
locally, regionally, and nationally, to secure such priorities. Likewise, the Housing Committee was one of the many organizations interested in and playing an active part in urging the appointment of a qualified Negro citizen to the Cincinnati Metropolitan Housing Authority. The appointment of Dr. Ray E. Clarke during 1945 culminates many years of activity on the part of the Division of Negro Welfare which constantly urged such an appointment. This committee has remained vigilant urging the removal of slums and compliance of real estate board members with City Building Laws. Following the Race Relations Institute, sponsored by the Mayor's Friendly Relations Committee, a meeting was held with representatives from the real estate board to discuss these matters as well as loan and selling price differentials exercised against Negroes.

These representatives were exhorted to encourage more private building for the Negro consumer. At the time this meeting was held, many priorities were going unused as the private builders had stated publicly in the press that they were willing to build for Negroes but had not followed up by using the over one hundred priorities which were available. The Housing Committee has been working rather closely with the Better Housing League, and the Advisory Committee of the Laurel Homes-Lincoln Court Projects, and legislative groups to assure the success of public housing and to encourage better housing for low income groups.

As an additional specific project of the Division of Negro Welfare, the Urban League affiliate of Cincinnati, Ohio, in the field of housing, I quote a portion of a letter written by the Executive Secretary:

... we are responsible for the detailed construction of a private housing project during the war period for low income houses. This

37(Annual Report of the Division of Negro Welfare Department), Council of Social Agencies, Cincinnati, Ohio, June 1945, p. 4. (Mimeographed.)
was done more as a demonstration as to what might be done with capital and social vision. The securing of the properties, contractor, investor, and the actual signing of the papers of incorporation totalling over two hundred thousand dollars were negotiated from this office.

I forgot to mention that we likewise screened and helped select the buyers. Once the persons were in the homes this office followed up by organizing these persons into a Neighborhood Group for their mutual protection.

Most of our efforts other than for pressuring in the areas of discrimination are devoted to supporting the Better Housing League which is one of our agencies. Through our support of this agency we have actually helped to lobby for better housing locally and on the state and national levels...38

Mayor's Friendly Relations Committee

This Committee was appointed by Mayor James Garfield Stewart in January 1944, pursuant to a resolution adopted by the City Council on November 17, 1943, to study the problems connected with the promotion of harmony and tolerance, work out community problems, and act as an advisory committee for their solution. An Executive Board of eighteen members represents all religious, racial, industrial, labor, and civic elements in the city. So far the city has appropriated only one hundred dollars for the support of the committee, but a budget is being drafted for presentation to the City Council (fall 1944). The entire committee has a membership of one hundred and nine, representing a cross-section of the community.

The Committee has done some effective work toward improving the housing situation for minority groups in Cincinnati. Arnold B. Walker, Executive Secretary of the Division of Negro Welfare, is a member of the Mayor's Friendly Relations Committee and is on the Executive Board.39

The Community Organization Techniques employed by the Division of

38Arnold B. Walker, Executive Secretary, (Letter Division of Negro Welfare Department, Council of Social Agencies, Cincinnati and Hamilton County, Cincinnati, Ohio, November 15, 1945).

Negro Welfare Department in its housing investigations are much the same as those used by other communities interested in the problem. The Department has stressed the problem of housing the under-housed to its groups believing that more recruits will be secured if it was a total community approach. In other words, it was a part of the city-wide educational campaign to arouse public opinion. The Department also promoted a film which was shown in all Negro communities demonstrating the ill affects of bad housing and arousing their racial as well as civic interest for correction.

Needless to say, the Department has continued to fight all of the opponents of better housing regardless as to where they are found. In its fight the Department has used all of the pressure techniques short of legal coercion. This, of course, was predicated on research in the field, and use was made of all organized groups and community planning to facilitate the above. The promotion of legislation to the extent of lobbying for it on the local and state levels was done. The Division of Negro Welfare Department has as its basic technique that of serving as a clearing house for all groups interested in the problem of housing.40

40Arnold B. Walker, Executive Secretary, (Letter Division of Negro Welfare Department, Council of Social Agencies, Cincinnati and Hamilton County, Cincinnati, Ohio, December 7, 1945).
CHAPTER VI

PROCEDURES USED BY THE COLUMBUS URBAN LEAGUE
IN AMELIORATING THE HOUSING PROBLEM IN COLUMBUS, OHIO

Columbus, for over one hundred years, has had a large proportion of Negroes in comparison with other cities in the North. The rate of increase in population, with few exceptions, has been a gradual, normal increase. This was the record until 1917 when there was a shortage of laborers in the plants of the North and Negroes were induced to come into the industrial centers to produce munitions and other necessities for carrying on the First World War. There was a 74.1 per cent increase in the Negro population from 1917-1927. Previous migration came from cities of the South. In 1917, most of the migrants were from Southern rural districts. Many among them were untutored and knew practically nothing of living in highly specialized industrial centers.

The agencies such as the churches, ministerial alliances, schools, YMCA, YWCA, NAACP, and others, recognized the problem created by such a large influx of people. These people had come without preparation, advance notice or any definite place to go. In response to a call issued at the request of the late Dr. William J. Woodlin, representatives from these agencies met at the Spring Street Branch YMCA and organized The Federated Social Welfare Movement for the Negro, in March, 1917. In April, a permanent organization was perfected with Dr. William J. Woodlin as president, and Mr. Nimrod B. Allen, general secretary of the executive staff, and also a member of the executive board.

After a period of about a year, this organization which was informally called The Negro Welfare League, became a branch of the National

\[\text{Mrs. Edwina T. Glascor, Director of Department of Public Relations, (Letter from Columbus Urban League, Columbus, Ohio, December 4, 1945).}\]
Urban League. The advantage of working with a national organization on the migrant problem, which was more national than local became very evident. From this beginning the local League grew to a federation of agencies which attempted to comprehend the major social needs of the Negro and better race relations. In the federation were: that Colored Big Brothers; the Colored Big Sisters; the Northwest Community Committee, (formally known as the Northwest Community Center); the Monroe Avenue Social Center; and the Friendly Service Bureau. The other departments which were operating in the federation with the executive boards were: Research, Inter-Race Relations, Intra-Race Relations, Industry, Neighborhood, Recreation and Education, and Health and Housing. In all cases with regard to the afore-mentioned agencies, the Columbus Urban League either organized, coordinated, or developed them. It has been the opportunity of the League to assist other Negro agencies in their developments. In cooperation with others, contribution was made to the establishment of the Beatty Park Playground and Community Center, the Alpha Hospital Association which conducted a hospital for Negroes for a number of years, and the Ohio State Conference on Social Work Among Negroes. Through an investigation by the Urban League, the Phyllis Wheatley Home, a maternal home for unmarried girls, was re-opened in 1930, and a new Board of Directors and Officers established. One of the most recent and effective agencies organized is the Frontiers Service Club, unlike most clubs because of its nature.

The story of the development of the Columbus Urban League thus mirrors the struggle, aspiration, and progress, of a people to gain for themselves economic, social, and civic freedom. The Negro is aware that his greatest obstacles are poverty, ignorance, and discrimination. He is also realizing that his best weapon of offense is organization. He has responded well with his means and understanding, not only to the Urban
League, but to other agencies interested in his welfare. It is through this anxiety on the part of Negroes and white people of goodwill that the Urban League has been able to serve Columbus and Franklin County. In 1944, the structure of the Urban League was changed and the reorganization was called, THE NEW EPOCH.42

The Columbus Urban League is an Inter-Racial Organization for social service among Negroes and cooperation and understanding between races. Cooperation and goodwill must lead in the post-war world. Cooperation means that we conduct ourselves so that others can work with us. The Urban League has consistently carried that theory. It has shown during the past years in the more perfect organization of the departments so that these could work harmoniously with others. Cooperation with all groups and individuals; unity of purpose; and an educational approach to problems brings the goodwill that makes the Urban League an outstanding community organization. The main or primary objective of the Columbus Urban League is to achieve a normal participation for the Negro minority in our democratic way of life.

The achievements and progress of the local Urban League are worthy of note, some of which are:

1. It has been a common ground for Interracial Action between Management, Organized Labor, the Worker and the Community for Upgrading and New Job Opportunities.
2. Continued its endeavor for Adequate Housing for the Negro Minority. Slums are a Health, Vice and Delinquency Menace to the entire City of Columbus.
3. It has given Instruction and Guidance to 1,872 neglected and frustrated Youth, after the difference between a Normal and Delinquent Life.
4. It cooperated with eighty-six Agencies and Organizations in adjusting Social and Minority Group Problems and in Planning Community Action.
5. It conducted a wide Public Education Program which included

42 Ibid.
a weekly radio program, "THE TENTH MAN" and many other Radio Programs, News Articles and Speaking Engagements.43

The Columbus Urban League has been interested in Housing since its inception, and has attacked this problem through a Committee on Health and Housing. In the housing areas, this committee collects statistics and promotes public education on housing needs of Negro families. It initiates and stimulates programs to increase the amount of space and the number of dwellings available for Negroes, and to secure needed repairs. This committee also cooperates with other groups in the community who are interested in housing. In regard to some of the things the committee has done, some of the Annual Reports of the Columbus Urban League show interesting examples. In the 1936 report is found:

In cooperation with the Health and Housing Department, the Columbus Metropolitan Housing Authority included in their plans to the United States Government, a housing project that would have cared for five hundred Negro families...(the blighted area located in the east end)...But though the project fully met the Government requirements, it was rejected. We hope that the citizens will become so aroused over the frightful housing situation in Columbus, that they will protest vigorously enough to bring about the remedying of it.44

In the report of work in 1937, it is reported: "The most significant development during the past year was the passage of the Federal Housing Act. Of the projects submitted for Columbus, the Champion Avenue Project seems most likely of approval."45

Appearing in the same report:

The problem of financing real estate properties in Negro neighborhoods has been attacked by a committee from the Frontiers Club. This group is seeking a solution for the problem of financing the purchase

43"Goodwill Is Post-War Planning Too," the Urban League of Columbus and Franklin County, Columbus, Ohio. 1945.

44(Annual Report of the Columbus Urban League, Columbus, Ohio, 1936). (mimeographed.)

45Ibid.
and repair, and of refinancing homes in these communities, and to make available federal assistance to home owners.\textsuperscript{46}

The following year, the annual report states:

Most significant in this connection has been the steady progress in developing the Champion Avenue low-rent project. Specifications for the buildings are settled, and at present, a worker has been employed and is engaged in the preliminary task of relocating the dispossessed families. Actual work of demolition of existing structures and erection of new buildings is expected to commence this spring.\textsuperscript{47}

In 1940, the report pointed out that:

Poindexter Village, which provided new decent housing for four hundred and twenty-six families, was occupied and completed. The Department was of material assistance in the development of this project. In addition to aiding representatives of the Metropolitan Housing Authority in relocating dispossessed families, cooperation was rendered in the work of interpreting the objectives of the public housing program. In this connection, the Director and some other members of the Department served on the Board of Housing Consultants. The Director also served as a member of the Housing Committee of the Council of Social Agencies. This latter group examined applications of families for apartments in Poindexter Village and recommended qualified applicants to the Authority which made final selections.\textsuperscript{48}

The 1941 annual report said, in part:

A committee representing the Frontiers Club and real estate dealers devoted considerable time in securing financial aid from private institutions and the FHA insurance of such loans for assisting such prospective Negro home owners. The Department in cooperation with the Frontiers Club and representatives of other civic organizations, in an effort to secure a Negro member of the Columbus Metropolitan Housing Authority, has not been successful to date, but the committee is hopeful.\textsuperscript{49}

In 1943, the annual report stated:

The efforts to secure FHA assistance for Negroes were culminated when Mr. Talmadge Allen, Real Estate Dealer, and the Chairman of this Department, located available sites which the FHA approved, and a concern which was willing to make the loans. The project has developed rapidly and construction is expected to being on a group of small, low-cost dwellings. It is anticipated that this development will

\textsuperscript{46} Ibid., 1937.
\textsuperscript{47} Ibid., 1938.
\textsuperscript{48} Ibid., 1940.
\textsuperscript{49} Ibid., 1941.
ultimately provide several hundred new dwellings for Negroes. During the early part of 1944, Negroes who had been displaced from slum areas in another section of the city for a public housing project, Riverside Gardens, ("on the near westside of town, known as 'the bottom"), were urged to fill applications for occupancy in the project. The tenant occupancy policy for slum elimination projects, established by the United States Housing Authority, was used as a basis for this move. This attempt was not successful and to date this particular project is all white. During that same year, however, through the efforts of the Frontiers Club, the Columbus Urban League, and other organizations, a Negro was appointed to the Metropolitan Housing Authority.

As a member of the War Housing Committee in Franklin County, the Columbus Urban League was instrumental in getting the problem of Negro housing in the forefront. As a result, the following recommendations were passed:

1. Since Negro housing is our most pressing, immediate problem, we recommend that the National Housing Administration be requested to program for Columbus:
   (a) One hundred and fifty additional privately constructed units for Negroes to be in addition to the fifty priorities recently issued for Negro occupancy.
   (b) Twenty-five private conversions for Negroes.
   (c) One hundred private conversions for whites...

The properties were granted but the development of new homes was almost stopped as a result of objections on the part of white citizens to sites selected. Even when an all Negro community, which had been all Negro for forty years, was decided upon, there were objections from adjacent whites. The Urban League helped to get financial backing for this project, although

50 Ibid., 1943.
51 (Statement by David M. French, Resident, 289 Highland Avenue, Columbus, Ohio, personal interview, December 11, 1945).
52 War Housing In Franklin County, War Service Board Leaflet, A.E.P., Inc., January, 1945, p. 12.
it was later returned when a company in Connecticut agreed to finance the whole project. 53

The public will feel soon the effects of the Ohio Urban League Executive Secretaries Council's Regional Housing Clinic, held in Columbus on September 29 and 30, 1945. More than one hundred housing experts and delegates, actively engaged in and interested in the field, came from the North, South, East and West to attend this Clinic. According to N. B. Allen, Chairman of the Council, the Executive Secretary of the Columbus Urban League, the Clinic was called to consider underlying causes of inadequate housing, the effect, the remedy, and techniques to secure decent homes for the American citizens, and particularly the TENTH MAN, the Negro, our largest minority. It was agreed that a clearing house be set up on a regional level to tackle housing problems and to disseminate information to groups in various local communities. Study and action groups on a neighborhood basis has been encouraged so that there may be an articulate demand for adequate services and for public and private housing projects in neighborhoods where they are lacking. The Clinic endorsed the principle of the Wagner-Ellender Bill and urged its early passage with modifications and safeguards against discrimination and inadequate sums made available to local communities for aid in building programs. 54

Thus the techniques employed by the Columbus Urban League in the areas securing housing for Negroes were varied. The director of the Department puts it this way: "We use almost any method at hand." 55

53Mrs. Edwina T. Glasco, Director of Department of Public Relations, (Letter from Columbus Urban League, Columbus, Ohio, December 4, 1945).

54"The New Epoch," (the Columbus Urban League, Columbus, Ohio, October, 1945). (Mimeographed.)

55op. cit., pp. 3.
techniques used have included: Conferences with realtors and public housing officials; representatives on policy making boards; relating the story through the press, the radio, and speakers; cooperative work with the outer groups seeking to pass legislations; and it has sent information to members of policy making boards pertaining to the Negro; and appearing to tell the story themselves, whenever and wherever possible.

As a result of the above mentioned techniques, the Columbus Urban League was of material assistance in the development of a new low-cost housing project, Poindexter Village. The League was instrumental in getting the problem of Negro housing in the forefront and as a result additional privately constructed units have been granted and there is a much better general attitude toward the problem of housing the Negro. The Columbus Urban League can boast a very effective Public Education Program which is the basis of the improved conditions.
CHAPTER VII

SUMMARY

A study of the Community Organization Techniques employed by selected Urban Leagues in the area securing Housing for Negroes will naturally show differences and similarities in programs among the various agencies. It is the aim of the writer to point out these differences and similarities without any mention as to whether the techniques employed were good ones or otherwise.

Washington, D. C. is a typical city, but without suffrage, thus making an unusual situation and calling for much Social Action and Community Support. The Washington Urban League, realizing the above and that in order to seek improvement in race relations and un-met housing needs, sought to establish representation on policy-making boards and on as many Citizens' Committees as possible. As in Washington, this technique was employed by the Urban League of Greater New York, the Cincinnati Urban League and the Columbus Urban League.

The Washington Urban League, unlike the other Leagues studied, has no Housing Committee within the framework of the agency itself. However, the Washington Urban League was instrumental in organizing what is known as the Emergency Committee on Housing, which is made up of representatives from all agencies and organizations in the District of Columbia. This Committee, like the Housing Committees of each of the other Urban Leagues, promotes housing legislation on local, state, and national levels, does research in the housing field, and acts as a fact-finding committee.

The Urban League of Greater New York employed a technique not found in any other of the selected Leagues. It conceived the idea that tenants, landlords, and the community would gain if the Negro people of Harlem were given a chance to manage buildings usually held by absentee white owners and managed by white agents. To test this theory, the Urban Housing
Management Association was formed under the sponsorship of the Urban League of Greater New York.

The Washington Urban League and the Columbus Urban League maintain a Speakers Bureau with key men in the field of Housing prepared to discuss or relate the housing needs to various citizens' groups and organizations. While each of the selected Leagues employ the use of the Press as a technique, the Columbus Urban League only, appears on a regularly scheduled radio program of its own called, The Tenth Man. This endeavor is a means toward a good Public Education Program. The Housing Clinic sponsored by the Columbus Urban League in the fall of 1945 was called, among other reasons, to consider the techniques to secure decent homes for Negroes.

Each of the four local Urban League affiliates stressed Social Action and Public Relations as techniques and were used quite freely.

The varied techniques mentioned above which were employed by the Urban Leagues were not employed in vain, in that, in each of the four cities more housing has been made available for the occupancy of low-income Negro families. There is still vast room for improvement and the Urban Leagues throughout the country are making an all-out effort to alleviate the problem of Housing.

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Annual Report of the Columbus Urban League, Columbus, Ohio. 1937. (Mimeographed.)

Annual Report of the Columbus Urban League, Columbus, Ohio. 1938. (Mimeographed.)

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Letter from Arnold B. Walker, Executive Secretary, Division of Negro Welfare Department, Council of Social Agencies, Cincinnati and Hamilton County, Cincinnati, Ohio, December 7, 1945.

Letter from Dorothy B. Hamilton, Health and Housing Secretary, Urban League of Greater New York, New York, November 26, 1945.

Letter from Edwina T. Glasser, Director, Department of Public Relations, Columbus, Ohio, December 4, 1945.

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