

# “Have Faith in Your Neighborhood”

## Jews and Urban Renewal in 1950s Hyde Park, Chicago

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In April 1954, Rabbi Jacob J. Weinstein wrote a letter to Illinois Congressman Sidney Yates, explaining his achievements as a rabbi of Chicago's Hyde Park Kehilath Anshe Ma'ariv (K.A.M.) Temple for fifteen years: “Perhaps as a member of a minority, I have been especially sensitive to the fact that the American dream has its nightmares in the areas of racial relations... Yet, vast as these implications are, the betterment of race relations begins right on the lowly street where one lives. Only as it is created within neighborhoods can it become national policy and an international way of life.”<sup>1</sup> Weinstein was referring to his work advocating for an interracial neighborhood as a member of the Hyde Park–Kenwood Community Conference (HPKCC); he appeared to view this work as a fundamental component of antiracism and as a testament to his own broad and sincere commitment to civil rights. Julian Levi, chairman of the South East Chicago Commission (SECC) and architect of urban renewal policies that shaped the future of the neighborhood, challenged the view of liberal Hyde Parkers like Weinstein in a 1980 interview: “You have in Hyde Park a definite segment of people who pride

1. Jacob J. Weinstein to Sidney Yates, April 12, 1954, box 3, folder 2, Rabbi Jacob J. Weinstein Papers, Chicago History Museum (hereafter, JJW Papers).



themselves on their great conviction about liberal theories of one sort or another, but when the chips go down will behave like anyone else.”<sup>2</sup>

The conflict between Levi’s and Weinstein’s views demonstrate the complex politics of Chicago’s urban renewal projects at midcentury, as those in power enacted plans that reshaped but ultimately maintained the segregation and ghettoization of Chicago’s black population. An uneasy and tenuous alliance of city leaders, business interests, and liberal integrationist groups supporting urban renewal contrasted with white ethnics who resorted to violence to try to prevent black people from moving in to their neighborhoods, while Chicago’s black population was often left with little to no influence on the situation. As a result, Hyde Park, the home of the University of Chicago, remains one of the few integrated neighborhoods in Chicago and one of the few South Side neighborhoods with a continuing Jewish presence, but this has in many ways come at a cost to the South Side communities surrounding the university.

Against this background, a group of liberal Jews in Hyde Park, led by Weinstein, occupied an unusual position: it advocated fiercely for integration of the community and against white flight to the suburbs, but supported policies that would ultimately lead to further segregation and displacement for many black and poor-white residents of Hyde Park. In *Making the Second Ghetto*, Arnold Hirsch resolves this contradiction by arguing that the community’s liberal attitudes are precisely what allowed urban renewal to proceed in Hyde Park, by allowing the neighborhood to “bend rather than break” when black people began migrating into the neighborhood. Furthermore, Hirsch viewed the civil rights ideals of HPKCC members as idealistic goals that the community professed verbally while actually allowing the University of Chicago to act in the affluent white population’s interest. Yet these Hyde Park Jews did not see themselves as using integrationist rhetoric as a front for self-interested actions; Weinstein and K.A.M. Temple endorsed a broader

2. Arnold R. Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto: Race and Housing in Chicago, 1940–1960* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 262.

mission of social justice and were active in multiple causes beyond the neighborhood level.

This thesis investigates how the liberal Jews of K.A.M. navigated their role in Hyde Park’s urban renewal, examining how this role converged and conflicted with the community’s commitment to racial equality and civil rights, and how Jewish identity influenced participation in neighborhood politics. While Hyde Park had a large Jewish population at the dawn of the 1950s, this thesis focuses mostly on Weinstein and his congregation, given that Weinstein was one of the most prominent activist Reform rabbis of his time, and when it came to community involvement and activism, K.A.M. was a pioneer and role model among local Jewish congregations. K.A.M. and Weinstein provide a useful case study for how Jews with strong commitments to civil rights navigated housing issues in their own backyards. However, it should be noted that Weinstein and his devotees did not speak for all of the neighborhood’s Jews, who held a variety of positions on urban renewal. Other prominent voices included SECC Director Levi, the university’s urban renewal advocate, and Leon Despres, alderman of the 5th Ward (which includes south Hyde Park and Woodlawn), who attended K.A.M. but sometimes was to the left of Weinstein on neighborhood issues.

Ultimately, Weinstein and his congregants advocated for urban renewal because they believed it was a social good: it would allow Hyde Park to become an interracial neighborhood and the ends therefore justified the means. K.A.M.’s faith in urban renewal was motivated first of all by beliefs that emphasized the importance of interpersonal relations and underestimated the structural basis of racism. Secondly, support for urban renewal allowed Hyde Park liberal Jews to construct a white identity in which they could receive the material benefits of whiteness without associating themselves with the white racists they opposed.

## Whiteness in the City: Jews and the Chicago Housing Crisis

In the years after World War II, the city of Chicago faced a severe housing shortage due to the great wave of migration of African Americans from the South and a lack of housing construction since the Great Depression, which was further compounded by the return of veterans to the city.<sup>3</sup> The black community was hit the hardest and longest by the housing shortage: in the late 1940s, roughly 375,000 blacks lived in the Black Belt on the South Side, which ought to have accommodated only 110,000.<sup>4</sup> The severe shortage led many black Chicagoans to pay more rent than white families and to live in “kitchenette” apartments, which were apartments cut up into smaller units by real-estate speculators and landlords, often with inferior facilities that led to sanitation and health problems.<sup>5</sup> In the postwar period, the existing situation of segregation became untenable, especially as construction of housing in the suburbs accelerated and whites began to move there, leaving vacancies behind in the city.<sup>6</sup> With suburban developments closed to blacks,<sup>7</sup> the Black Belt began to expand into previously white areas, with black renters forced to pay significantly higher rent and buyers forced to buy at higher prices. As racially restrictive covenants—arrangements among property owners that forbid the sale or lease of land to African Americans—

3. Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto*, 17.

4. *Ibid.*, 23.

5. *Ibid.*, 18.

6. *Ibid.*, 29. According to Hirsch, 77 percent of new units constructed between 1949 and 1955 were located in the suburbs.

7. *Ibid.*, 28.

became increasingly indefensible in the courts,<sup>8</sup> Chicago’s racial boundaries were poised for destabilization.

Yet just as a variety of forces combined to challenge Chicago’s existing segregation, other forces emerged to re-entrench it. With banks and life insurance companies often unwilling to extend mortgages to black buyers, partially because the Federal Housing Administration would not insure mortgages in neighborhoods with a significant black population,<sup>9</sup> real-estate speculators stepped in.<sup>10</sup> Speculators facilitated the changing of property from white to black hands and charged black buyers significantly higher prices. They also played off white fears of changing racial demographics by pushing whites to sell as soon as a neighborhood seemed on the brink of change.<sup>11</sup> Many speculators sold property to blacks through an exploitative method known as the land contract, in which they charged a small down payment but high monthly payments and retained the deed to the property until the contract was paid off, making it easy to evict buyers who did not complete their contract. In order to meet contract payments, black buyers were often forced to overcrowd or convert their properties into smaller units illegally or to let maintenance fall by the wayside.<sup>12</sup> In areas where black people moved into apartment buildings, real-estate operators could make significant profits converting buildings into smaller units and renting to black people who were willing to pay higher rents than whites.<sup>13</sup> Some even

8. The United States Supreme Court ruled restrictive covenants unenforceable in *Shelley v. Kraemer* (1948).

9. Beryl Satter, *Family Properties: How the Struggle Over Race and Real Estate Transformed Chicago and Urban America* (London: Picador, 2010), 4.

10. Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto*, 31.

11. *Ibid.*, 34.

12. *Ibid.*, 32–33.

13. *Ibid.*, 33.

evicted white families so that they could rent to higher-paying black families.<sup>14</sup> The conditions created by these exploitative practices convinced already wary white Chicagoans that when black people moved in their neighborhoods it would mean their own dispossession or the creation of slums.<sup>15</sup>

Whites in Chicago responded to black families moving into their neighborhoods in one of three ways: forming violent mobs, moving to the suburbs, or engaging in urban planning or urban renewal to attempt to control the future of the neighborhood. The South and West Sides' large Jewish communities participated in both white flight and urban renewal, and Jews also made up a significant proportion of exploitative real-estate sellers.<sup>16</sup> The term urban renewal was well-defined by Herbert J. Gans in a critical article in 1965:

Since 1949, this program has provided local renewal agencies with federal funds and the power of eminent domain to condemn slum neighborhoods, tear down the buildings, and resell the cleared land to private developers at a reduced price. In addition to relocating the slum dwellers in “decent, safe, and sanitary” housing, the program was intended to stimulate large-scale private rebuilding, add new tax revenues to the dwindling coffers of the cities, revitalize their downtown areas, and halt the exodus of middle-class whites to the suburbs.<sup>17</sup>

However, urban renewal programs in cities across the nation allowed powerful interests significant leeway to remake neighborhoods and led to mass displacement of residents, often without offering replacement housing. According to George Lipsitz, “ninety percent of the low-income

14. Hirsch, 35.

15. Ibid.

16. See Satter, *Family Properties*, for more details of Jewish real-estate sellers.

17. Herbert J. Gans, “The Failure of Urban Renewal,” *Commentary Magazine*, April 1, 1965, <https://www.commentarymagazine.com/articles/the-failure-of-urban-renewal/>.

units removed for urban renewal were never replaced,” as cleared land was rededicated for “commercial, industrial, and municipal projects” rather than replacement housing.<sup>18</sup> And urban renewal was not color-blind: it ultimately destroyed 10 percent of units occupied by whites and 20 percent of those occupied by blacks. In Hyde Park, the urban renewal plans led to widespread displacement and garnered significant opposition in Chicago’s black community.

Scholars have not fully analyzed the role of Chicago Jews in urban renewal. Existing scholarship on urban renewal in Chicago has often centered around conflicts between white ethnics and blacks, but without examining the role of Jews specifically.<sup>19</sup> Scholarship on the role of Jews in changing neighborhoods has often focused on the question of whether or not Jews participated in white flight and on the role of the suburbs in assimilating Jews into white middle-class identity, rather than on the actions of those who stayed in the city.<sup>20</sup> The choice of Hyde Park’s Jews to stay in the city was relatively unusual, making it a particularly compelling case to investigate.

18. George Lipsitz, “The Possessive Investment in Whiteness: Racialized Social Democracy and the ‘White’ Problem in American Studies,” *American Quarterly* 47, no. 3 (September 1995): 374.

19. In *Making the Second Ghetto*, Hirsch focuses more on the role of working-class Catholics than on Jews; in *Family Properties*, Satter considers the place of the Jews in postwar Chicago, Jewish participation in real-estate exploitation, and the Jewish community of Lawndale.

20. See Karen Brodtkin, *How the Jews Became White Folks*, for how Jews, aided by FHA mortgages unavailable to black people, were able to leave the city for the suburbs, which was an important part of assimilation into whiteness; Lipsitz, “The Possessive Investment in Whiteness,” for suburbs as the site where various white ethnic identities fused into a homogenous white identity; Cheryl Greenberg, “Liberal NIMBY: American Jews and Civil Rights,” for Jews’ decisions about whether or not to stay in the city as an indication of whether they lived up to their liberal racial beliefs in their private lives; and Lila Corwin Berman, *Metropolitan Jews*, for how Detroit Jews maintained allegiances to the city even after moving to the suburbs.

In *Making the Second Ghetto*, Arnold Hirsch gives a detailed account of the forces that reshaped and maintained segregation in Chicago in the 1950s and '60s. He portrays the Hyde Park–Kenwood Community Conference (HPKCC) as an organization that espoused lofty liberal goals while knowing it would not be able to accomplish them. According to Hirsch's analysis, the members of the HPKCC used their liberal attitudes as a nonviolent front for their efforts to fight the racial succession of Hyde Park, while allowing the institutional interests of the University of Chicago to ultimately override their ideological commitments. Hirsch notes that Hyde Park was a heavily Jewish community,<sup>21</sup> but in general, his work retreats from a full analysis of the place of Jews in Chicago in the 1950s. He illustrates a scene in which white "ethnics"—mostly working-class Catholics—fought racial succession of their neighborhoods with violence, business and institutional leaders fought racial succession with political power, and liberal groups like the HPKCC fought racial succession with rhetoric about "an interracial community with high standards." Consequently, black people were caught in the middle with little political power. Hirsch divides the white actors into two general groups: the white ethnics of outlying neighborhoods and the more affluent actors of the Loop and Hyde Park. Jews are placed in the latter category. According to Hirsch, Hyde Park was "a relatively well-to-do, significantly Jewish area" that would have been "largely alien to the Irish in Englewood and the Slavs in South Deering."<sup>22</sup> The white working-class ethnics are portrayed as victimizers, as perpetrators of racial violence, but also as victims, stereotyped as "unenlightened" by Hyde Parkers and, in general, subject to the whims of those in power.<sup>23</sup> The violence of the white ethnics, in this account, stemmed partially from their pride in their ability to buy a home and their belief that the

21. Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto*, 173.

22. *Ibid.*

23. *Ibid.*

influx of black people into their neighborhoods would destabilize the communities they had worked to create, as well as a fear of losing their tenuous possession of white identity.<sup>24</sup> According to Hirsch, "the immigrants and their children displayed the poor judgment of becoming militantly white at the precise moment prerogatives of color were coming into question."<sup>25</sup>

Yet this dichotomy between white ethnics and powerful whites in the Loop and Hyde Park is complicated, given that Jews might also be considered white ethnics, or at least otherwise separate from the white American mainstream. If working-class Catholics were coming to grips with a new white identity in the 1940s and 1950s, so too were Jews, but Hirsch devotes less time to analyzing the impact of white identity formation on Chicago's Jews. In *Making the Second Ghetto*, Jews occupy multiple category-defying spaces, to the extent that Hirsch does not seem to quite know how to analyze them. On the one hand, Jews are lumped in with well-off Protestants and considered as part of both a general group of white liberals and powerful white interests. Jews were present as members of liberal groups like the HPKCC and also the face of institutional interests like the University of Chicago: Levi, a Jew, chaired the South East Chicago Commission that acted on the university's behalf.

Yet Jews also appear from time-to-time in the narrative as targets of racialized violence and anti-Communism tinged with anti-Semitism. A race riot that took place in Englewood started when neighbors saw black people in the house of a Communist Jew, Aaron Bindman, who lived at 56th and Peoria and was hosting a labor meeting. This prompted rumors about a "Jewish-Communist plot to destroy the neighborhood" and then spurred a riot that at one point gathered ten thousand people. The racist mob did not just attack black people; unfamiliar whites were beaten and denounced as "Jews, Communists, and—apparently worst of all—

24. *Ibid.*, 194–96.

25. *Ibid.*, 198.

University of Chicago meddlers.”<sup>26</sup> Finally, in addition to the Jews of Hyde Park, Hirsch briefly mentions the West Side Jews of Lawndale, Chicago’s largest Jewish community, who met the prospect of flight to the suburbs willingly, unlike the working-class white ethnics. In general, Jews rarely participated in racist violence: only 0.2 percent of those arrested for their role in race riots were Jews, by far the smallest percentage of any white ethnic group. Overall, throughout the narrative, Jewish identity takes on multiple valences: at various points, Jews appear as institutional power brokers, meddling white liberals, indifferent suburban whites, and minority victims of violence.

The struggle to categorize and analyze American Jews in the social landscape is not Hirsch’s problem alone. In the *Price of Whiteness*, Eric Goldstein argues that, since American society is organized in a black-white dichotomy, European Jews have long struggled with how to conceive of and present a group identity, especially as their acceptance in the white mainstream has accelerated.<sup>27</sup> Goldstein’s work builds on a tradition of other historians working in American Jewish history and in studies of the social construction of “whiteness” and the ways in which immigrants progressively gained access to white identity. Much of the previous literature has framed Jews’ (and other European immigrants’) negotiations with white identity primarily in the past and has suggested that their self-identification as white American Jews resolved smoothly not too long after immigration.<sup>28</sup> Goldstein, however, argues that European Jews continued to struggle to negotiate identity long after they

26. *Ibid.*, 55.

27. Eric L. Goldstein, *The Price of Whiteness: Jews, Race, and American Identity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006).

28. See Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race*, and David R. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class*.

arrived in the United States and into the present.<sup>29</sup> Goldstein focuses on Jews’ attempts to continue to assert a minority group identity even as they became more deeply folded into the white mainstream. At midcentury, this often meant embracing racial liberalism while taking care not to jeopardize their own recent entry into whiteness.<sup>30</sup> Unlike much of the other scholarship on Jews and whiteness, which has focused mostly on how Jews benefited from “becoming white,” Goldstein’s narrative emphasizes not just whiteness’s “material and social benefits” but also its “emotional costs” for Jews as they struggled to define their minority identity and to act meaningfully in solidarity with other minority groups.<sup>31</sup> Hyde Park liberal Jews’ actions during urban renewal were partially the result of aiming to maximize the benefits of whiteness while minimizing costs.

Given the controversies surrounding urban renewal in Hyde Park, my secondary and contemporaneous literature is divided in its assessment of neighborhood politics in the 1950s. Hirsch, whose book is often considered the seminal historical monograph on Chicago urban renewal, is generally critical, calling out neighborhood players’ hypocrisies and detailing how community groups, university interests, and individuals made way for the deepening of ghettoization of black Chicagoans on the South Side. Other portraits of Hyde Park renewal in recent years have cited Hirsch but offered alternate perspectives. John W. Boyer, in *The University of Chicago: A History*, summarizes the renewal process from a university perspective, acknowledging its flaws but painting it ultimately as a victory for the university’s survival. In *Culture of Opportunity*, a

29. Goldstein, *The Price of Whiteness*, 4.

30. American Jews including people of various races and places of origin (Mizrahi Jews from the Middle East, Sephardic Jews from Spain, and Ashkenazi Jews from Eastern and Central Europe). This thesis concerns white Ashkenazi Jews, who comprised the Jews of Hyde Park and the prominent American Jewish organizations and activists in the 1950s.

31. Goldstein, *The Price of Whiteness*, 6.

popular history of Hyde Park geared towards providing context for Barack Obama's rise as a politician, Rebecca Janowitz acknowledges narratives of Hyde Park urban renewal as shining victory or racist ploy, but refrains from adopting either of them, instead acknowledging both flaws and successes in the project. In this thesis, I engage in dialogue primarily with Hirsch, given his prominence in the literature and the scope of his study, but acknowledge perspectives from Boyer and Janowitz. In narrating the events of urban renewal, I also draw heavily on two works published at the conclusion of the 1960s that provide a chronological retelling of events with very different intentions and styles. *A Neighborhood Finds Itself* is HPKCC director Julia Abrahamson's 1959 memoir of urban renewal from the perspective of an on-the-ground community organization. *The Politics of Urban Renewal* by Peter Rossi and Robert Dentler is a 1961 sociological study examining citizen participation in Hyde Park's urban renewal, which was designed partially as a lesson for other communities attempting urban renewal projects. Muriel Beadle, wife of University of Chicago president George Beadle, provides additional firsthand perspective in *The Hyde Park–Kenwood Urban Renewal Years* and *Where Has All the Ivy Gone?*

## American Dreams and Nightmares: The Jews of Hyde Park and Racial Liberalism

Hyde Park, the home to the University of Chicago, is a neighborhood located adjacent to the lake on Chicago's mid-South Side. Directly north of Hyde Park is the neighborhood known as Kenwood; the term "Hyde Park–Kenwood" usually refers to Hyde Park and the southern part of Kenwood. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Hyde Park–Kenwood was known for housing the wealthy in luxurious mansions and single-family homes. By the 1920s, the wealthy were replaced by upper-middle-class families and students, and apartments began to

dominate.<sup>32</sup> By 1925, most vacant land in Hyde Park had been built upon.<sup>33</sup> Until the 1950s, Hyde Park was a predominantly white neighborhood; by 1950, it was about 6 percent nonwhite.<sup>34</sup>

Much of the Hyde Park white population was Jewish. By the end of the Second World War, there were nine synagogues in the Hyde Park area,<sup>35</sup> which made up part of a larger South Side Jewish community that encompassed the lakeside neighborhoods of Kenwood, Hyde Park, and South Shore.<sup>36</sup> The South Side Jewish community, especially in Hyde Park–Kenwood, had the highest income of Chicago's main Jewish communities at the time. The bulk of the Jewish population was German Jews with a smaller portion of Eastern European Jews; refugees from Nazi Germany arrived later.<sup>37</sup> The Hyde Park area also absorbed Jews that moved in from the adjacent neighborhoods of Grand Boulevard and Washington Park after those communities became 90 percent black by 1930. By 1950, Hyde Park–Kenwood had about 15,000 Jews, which made Jews the neighborhood's largest ethnic group.<sup>38</sup>

32. *Hyde Park–Kenwood Community Directory*, 1959–1960, box 10, folder 7, Hyde Park–Kenwood Community Conference Records, Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

33. Peter H. Rossi and Robert A. Dentler, *The Politics of Urban Renewal: The Chicago Findings* (New York: Free Press of Glencoe, 1961), 13.

34. *Ibid.*, 26.

35. Irving Cutler, *The Jews of Chicago: From Shtetl to Suburb* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996), 203.

36. *Ibid.*, 197–98.

37. *Ibid.*, 199.

38. Muriel Beadle, *The Hyde Park–Kenwood Urban Renewal Years: A History to Date* (Chicago: printed by the author, 1967), 4.

There were three large Reform temples that attracted most of the German Jews: Temple Sinai, Isaiah Israel, and K.A.M.;<sup>39</sup> the latter, established in 1847, was the oldest Reform congregation in Chicago. K.A.M.'s rabbi from 1939 to 1968, Jacob J. Weinstein, was a well-known and an active participant in social causes on the local, state, and national level. K.A.M. was seen as a local leader in incorporating social justice work into congregational activities.<sup>40</sup> Much of K.A.M.'s social justice work was led by the Sisterhood's Community Action Committee, which was guided by Weinstein.

Throughout the 1950s, Weinstein himself was involved with a broad variety of organizations within and beyond the Jewish community and at the local to the national level. He also corresponded with various influential politicians and leaders. His affiliations included, among many others, the American Jewish Congress, the Housing Conference of Chicago, the Religion and Labor Foundation, and the Council Against Racial and Religious Discrimination. He was appointed by the governor as one of twenty members of the State of Illinois Commission on Human Relations.<sup>41</sup> In a letter to Congressman Yates in 1954, outlining his main achievements so that Yates could craft a speech for his fifteenth-anniversary celebration as rabbi of K.A.M., Weinstein mainly highlighted his efforts working for labor rights and in race relations. On race relations, Weinstein wrote to Yates, "I have thought that the denial of equal rights to the negro was not only basically irreligious but a real threat to democracy and the one crimson failing that places these United States at a terrible disadvantage in its world leadership."<sup>42</sup> He took an

39. Cutler, *The Jews of Chicago*, 202; Tobias Brinkmann, *Sundays at Sinai: A Jewish Congregation in Chicago* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012).

40. Jacob J. Weinstein, "Pioneer Chicago Jewish Congregation Faces Up to Social Problems in a Changing World," *Chicago Sentinel*, April 2, 1953.

41. JJW Papers, Chicago History Museum.

42. Weinstein to Yates, April 12, 1954, box 3, folder 2, JJW Papers.

interest in local and national civil rights issues and sent a donation to Martin Luther King Jr. in 1956.<sup>43</sup>

In September 1955, Weinstein penned a letter to the *Chicago Sun Times* after a Mississippi juror acquitted the murderers of Emmett Till. Weinstein acknowledged complicity in such racist violence: identifying himself firmly in the camp of American white people: "The guilt lies on us, the white people, for having been so lax in implementing the victory over the South in the Civil War. We have permitted political consideration, victory at the polls in November, and the pernicious abuse of the States' Rights doctrine to keep us establishing anything like a real civil equality for the Negro." He asked when integration would finally be achieved and when black victims would receive justice. Yet even while criticizing the lack of action from fellow white Northerners, he still located the most vicious racism in the domain of Southern Christians, calling the violent Southern whites "that venal community that prays to God and calls itself Christian and righteous."<sup>44</sup> The letter displayed a delicate dance in which Weinstein both acknowledged his place in American whiteness yet implied a level of distance from the violence as a Northern Jew.

Before arriving at K.A.M. in 1939, Weinstein attempted to bring his social-justice-oriented rabbinical style to two congregations, in Austin and San Francisco, but clashed with more conservative members.<sup>45</sup> In Austin, he was overwhelmed by the severity of racial discrimination; in San Francisco, he supported political activities like a department store

43. Martin Luther King Jr. to Jacob J. Weinstein, March 22, 1956, box 3, folder 5, JJW Papers.

44. Jacob J. Weinstein to the editor of the *Chicago Sun-Times*, September 24, 1955, box 3, folder 4, JJW Papers.

45. Janice J. Feldstein, *Rabbi Jacob J. Weinstein: Advocate of the People* (New York: KTAV, 1980), 44–71.



strike, even when many of his congregants were store owners.<sup>46</sup> Weinstein was frustrated that his congregants wanted him to speak of social justice academically but not push them to engage practically in activism. He found a better fit with the liberal Hyde Park Jews of K.A.M. According to a 1951 history of K.A.M, Weinstein discovered at his new pulpit that the women were usually the most interested in participating in social justice work, because they had more time to participate in campaigns and had the experience of being a “minority” in a male-dominated world. In 1930, Weinstein convened the first Community Affairs Committee (CAC) of women from K.A.M.’s sisterhood. By 1942, the CAC was an official part of the sisterhood and was working with other organizations, lobbying in favor of liberal legislation and registering voters.<sup>47</sup> By 1953, the CAC had Legislative, Human Relations, Housing, Schools, Political Action, and Publicity Committees. Guided by the rabbi in its various activities, the CAC held study meetings on topics like “What You Don’t Know about the Cicero Riots,” “Chicago Schools and Their Enemies,” and “The Japanese Peace Treaty and Its Implications.”<sup>48</sup> The CAC’s early goals for legislative action included curbing inflation, nondiscriminatory public housing, an anti-lynch bill, abolition of the poll tax, increased social security benefits, control of monopolies and trusts, universal disarmament on the national scene, and much more. Realizing how ambitious this program was, the CAC decided to focus mostly on municipal and state matters by 1948.<sup>49</sup>

46. Richard Lerner, “Rabbi Touches Many Fields in Discussing His Philosophy,” *National Jewish Post*, May 7, 1954.

47. “A History of Kehilath Anshe Mayriv,” June 1951, box 23, folder 3, JJW Papers.

48. Mrs. Sidney Rosenthal, “How a Sisterhood Applies Judaism to Community Affairs,” January 1953, scrapbook 2, JJW Papers.

49. Weinstein, “Pioneer Chicago Jewish Congregation,” *Chicago Sentinel*, April 2, 1953.

While the views of the rabbi and the CAC did not represent the views of the whole congregation, many members of K.A.M. did lean liberal. On a first name basis with Illinois governor and Democratic presidential candidate, Adlai Stevenson, Weinstein wrote to Stevenson in 1954 that he was disappointed Stevenson wouldn’t be able to come to speak to the congregation, saying “there are 1,500 rabid Stevensonites at K.A.M.” and that Stevenson might have found it “relaxing” to “be among devotees.”<sup>50</sup> The executive chairman of the CAC wrote in 1953 that while the entire congregation didn’t approve of the CAC’s approach because “we tread too often upon their special interests or innate prejudices,” the CAC had the “respect of a large segment of the temple and Sisterhood.”<sup>51</sup> It regularly conducted K.A.M. services and discussions and counseled other congregations on creating social action committees.<sup>52</sup> Weinstein wrote in 1953: “It is not enough to preach Justice...it is not enough to preach love. The synagogue must exert itself to remove the barriers which the frozen inequalities of the past have erected between men of different faiths, nationalities, and race.”<sup>53</sup> He clearly saw social action as an integral part of the congregation’s mission.

Weinstein’s open advocacy for racial equality sometimes made him vulnerable to attacks on the basis of his Jewish identity, especially before the war. After speaking on a radio program in 1940 about civil rights, he received a letter of complaint from a listener in Mississippi, who wrote, “your race can make themselves very unpopular by your talks of race,” referring to Jews as a separate race and threatening Jewish safety in

50. Jacob J. Weinstein to Adlai E. Stevenson, March 12, 1954, box 3, folder 2, JJW Papers.

51. Rosenthal, “How a Sisterhood Applies Judaism to Community Affairs,” January 1953, scrapbook 2, JJW Papers.

52. Weinstein, “Pioneer Chicago Jewish Congregation,” *Chicago Sentinel*, April 2, 1953.

53. *Ibid.*

America if they continued agitating for racial equality.<sup>54</sup> Weinstein, however, usually referred to himself as a white person, and Judaism was his religious identity.<sup>55</sup>

The politics of Weinstein and K.A.M. were consistent with a general trend of Jewish racial liberalism at midcentury, especially within Judaism's Reform movement, where rabbis consistently spoke out about civil rights. Throughout the 1940s, various forces—including a new focus on tolerance defined in opposition to Nazism, the inclusive politics practiced by Franklin D. Roosevelt, and the full integration of white ethnics into the military—helped give Catholic immigrants and Jews a safer place in the mainstream, to a greater degree than for African Americans and other racial minorities.<sup>56</sup> As Depression-era anti-Semitism began to recede and Jews became more secure, they felt free to speak out against racism without fearing as much backlash. Furthermore, according to Goldstein, the development of a new wartime liberalism that opposed racial hatred meant that Jews could feel confident about both adopting white identity and advocating against racism. They could oppose racism on the basis of “American ideals,” rather than claiming any kind of solidarity between minorities that would emphasize their outsider status.<sup>57</sup>

Racial liberalism was also a way to come to terms with Jews' new power and place in the mainstream: “many Jews supported the abstract notion of black integration because it made their own entrance into the ranks of white society morally tenable,” writes Goldstein.<sup>58</sup> National

54. L. M. McDonald to Jacob J. Weinstein, February 12, 1940, box 19, folder 7, JJW Papers.

55. Jacob J. Weinstein, “What Can Religion Do for Chicago?” October 24, 1952, box 2, folder 5, JJW Papers. In this sermon, as in many others, Weinstein talks about Judaism as part of a larger category of “religion.”

56. Goldstein, *The Price of Whiteness*, 192.

57. *Ibid.*, 195.

58. *Ibid.*, 213.

Jewish groups like the American Jewish Committee and the American Jewish Congress began to broaden their message to oppose anti-black racism;<sup>59</sup> this was certainly the situation in Chicago, where Jewish organizations were regularly involved in racial issues. And in an analysis of 1950s sermons by thirteen Reform rabbis around the country, scholar Marc Lee Raphael finds that the most commonly discussed theme was civil rights.<sup>60</sup> Once Jews themselves were no longer defined in racial terms, they gained a place in American society as a “religion,” a label which they freely adopted but which did not always sufficiently describe their sense of community and tribal identity.<sup>61</sup> In general, Jews pursued the approach of advocating for civil rights within existing structures and with an attitude of optimism about American democracy.<sup>62</sup>

Accordingly, Weinstein usually addressed racism from the perspective of a patriotic American, concerned with the blemish that racism placed on American democracy and pointing out its incongruence with American values. His approach to activism was undergirded by an optimism in the potential of America if it could only take care of its racial discrimination.<sup>63</sup> However, he did not hesitate to emphasize his own minority status in order to underscore his commitment to rights for other minority groups. In fact, he believed that racism against Jews was intertwined with racism against blacks, and that the latter could easily lead to the

59. *Ibid.*, 197.

60. Marc Lee Raphael, *The Synagogue in America: A Short History* (New York: New York University Press, 2011), 67.

61. Goldstein, *The Price of Whiteness*, 206.

62. Cheryl Greenberg, *Troubling the Waters: Black-Jewish Relations in the American Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006), 114.

63. Jacob J. Weinstein, “To Bigotry No Sanction,” February 22, 1959, box 4, folder 2, JJW Papers.

former.<sup>64</sup> In a 1942 letter, he wrote that he believed Jews of Hyde Park had a special obligation to oppose racism because of the history of the Jewish people as slaves in Egypt, because of their close proximity to Chicago's Black Belt neighborhoods, and because it would be hypocritical for Jews to treat blacks unfairly if Jews were at the same time advocating for fair treatment from Christians in America.<sup>65</sup>

Weinstein's 1950s activism took place in the context of the anti-Communism of the McCarthy era, which worked to block many organizations and individuals from moving further left. Jews often found themselves under increased scrutiny as potential "Communists" and "subversives." Weinstein was a vocal critic of McCarthyism. He traveled to Springfield to testify against the "Broyles Bills," anti-Communist bills in the Illinois Senate that aimed to create a commission to investigate anti-government suspects and to require public officials and housing authority employees and tenants to swear loyalty oaths.<sup>66</sup> He clashed with Edward Clamage, chairman of the Anti-Subversive Committee of the American Legion, who accused him of allowing K.A.M. to hold a meeting of the Chicago Committee for Academic and Professional Freedom with Communists present.<sup>67</sup> In 1955, the Army hired Alan Strauss, one of Weinstein's congregants, as a physics instructor in a nuclear weapons course; Strauss found his security clearance delayed because of publications he subscribed to that he didn't know were classified as "subversive." A Counter Intelligence Corps agent interrogated him about his connection with Weinstein and Weinstein's political

64. Jacob J. Weinstein, "Prejudice Is Indivisible," October 24, 1958, box 26, folder 4, JJW Papers.

65. Jacob J. Weinstein to Ulysses S. Schwartz, February 12, 1942, box 19, folder 7, JJW Papers.

66. Helen Levin to Jacob J. Weinstein, March 18, 1953, box 3, folder 1, JJW Papers.

67. Edward Clamage to Jacob J. Weinstein, June 29, 1954, box 3, folder 3, JJW Papers.

activities.<sup>68</sup> To help Strauss obtain his clearance, Weinstein had to write a letter defending himself against the accusations, underscoring the fact that he and fellow labor activists in the A.F.L. and C.I.O. were all anti-Communists and that he "could not as a rabbi accept the materialistic, anti-religious philosophy of the conscious Communist." Weinstein wrote to Strauss that he was not concerned with his own reputation being "damaged by these innuendoes,"<sup>69</sup> but the affair showed that he was clearly versed in the consequences for him and his associates if he was suspected of any Communist activity.<sup>70</sup> Weinstein and his congregants' commitment to social activism, as well as their place in a world of McCarthyism and Jewish liberalism, provides context for their actions as their neighborhood's demographics began to change.

## "If White People Would Just Stay Put": The Ethics of White Flight

Hyde Park and Kenwood, situated directly southeast of the city's Black Belt, became logical places for black people to move as racial boundaries began to shift in the late 1940s. Cottage Grove Avenue, the former border between Hyde Park-Kenwood and the Black Belt, fell by the turn of the 1950s.<sup>71</sup> The prominence of apartment housing in Hyde Park meant that blacks could find rentals without navigating the real-estate market as

68. Alan Strauss to Samuel Golden, December 16, 1955, box 3, folder 4, JJW Papers.

69. Jacob J. Weinstein to Alan Strauss, December 16, 1955, box 3, folder 4, JJW Papers.

70. See Greenberg, *Troubling the Waters*, for how black and Jewish organizations "had to establish their distance from communism...to legitimize their civil rights positions" (170) during the Cold War.

71. Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto*, 136.

buyers.<sup>72</sup> Just as in the rest of the city, the movement of black people into Hyde Park prompted fear in the white population, aggravated by the actions of real-estate speculators. And just as in the rest of the city, white people in Hyde Park often conflated the effects of housing discrimination and exploitation with overcrowding and blight, and the existing decay of old buildings with the inherent effects of having black residents.

By end of the 1940s, some white residents of Hyde Park were already beginning to sell their homes, and others wanted to stay but were fearful, describing the situation in dramatic and apocalyptic terms. “Hyde Park–Kenwood in 1949 was gravely threatened,” wrote Julia Abrahamson, the first executive director of the Hyde Park–Kenwood Community Conference (HPKCC) in a 1959 account:

It was surrounded by blighted and near-blighted sections, and the blight was spreading. There was no comfort in history. Neighborhood after neighborhood throughout the industrial North had gone through the same process: decline, overcrowding, loss of high-income families, flight of white residents as Negroes moved in, and finally slums leveled by bulldozers and then rebuilt at a tremendous expense to the taxpayer.<sup>73</sup>

The HPKCC was created as an attempt to keep Hyde Park from meeting the same fate.

Sources were divided on to what extent fears of increased “blight” were justified. Multiple authors mention that many of Hyde Park’s buildings were already aged by the dawn of the 1950s. According to Rossi and Dentler, increased neighborhood density in the early 1950s made parking difficult and burdened the city’s municipal services, leading to

72. Julia Abrahamson, *A Neighborhood Finds Itself* (New York: Harper, 1959), 9.

73. *Ibid.*, 9.

a decline in cleanliness.<sup>74</sup> Abrahamson described concerns about more and more taverns in the neighborhood. Residents were especially alarmed by a perception of rising crime. Rossi and Dentler found it difficult to estimate an exact crime rate for the neighborhood, given problems in the city’s reporting methodology, until the South East Chicago Commission began documenting crime rates in 1953. But, they wrote, “it is fairly clear that at the height of the influx of newcomers into the community its crime rates were very high.”<sup>75</sup> Boyer cites multiple university officials alarmed by the state of affairs. “I... was completely thrown out of balance by this encounter with poverty, crime, and desolation,” wrote one medical school professor. “Our neighborhood in Chicago was in a state of panic... People could not safely walk the streets in the evening, except in groups,” remembered anthropologist Sol Tax of the time.<sup>76</sup>

However, Rossi and Dentler found that changes in Hyde Park’s housing composition, such as building age and number of occupants, between 1950 and 1956 were not “much greater than a community of this sort might normally experience.”<sup>77</sup> In 1950, 16 percent of dwelling units in the neighborhood were classified as “dilapidated,” lower than the rate of 20 percent in the entire city,<sup>78</sup> and if the crime rate was high, Rossi and Dentler note, this wasn’t entirely new: the neighborhood had been vulnerable to crime in the past.<sup>79</sup> They also found no meaningful change in the rate of University of Chicago faculty leaving the university, though the university worried about the effect of neighborhood change on

74. Rossi and Dentler, *The Politics of Urban Renewal*, 22.

75. *Ibid.*, 31.

76. John W. Boyer, *The University of Chicago: A History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), 346–47.

77. Rossi and Dentler, *The Politics of Urban Renewal*, 28.

78. *Ibid.* 25.

79. *Ibid.*, 31.

faculty retention. Rossi and Dentler concluded that by the early 1950s, changes in neighborhood demographics and economics had not actually been “extreme upheavals,” but that residents did react to “relative community deterioration” as Hyde Park became more similar to other areas of the city and less upscale.<sup>80</sup> In any case, whether or not changes in material conditions in the neighborhood were statistically significant, residents certainly perceived change and feared for the future based on patterns of change in other neighborhoods.

The Jews of Hyde Park were among the white people concerned about the neighborhood’s future. K.A.M. Temple had been attuned to the potential for changing racial boundaries for some time. In fact, it was the K.A.M. sisterhood’s interest in housing conditions in the Black Belt neighborhood of Bronzeville that actually inspired the creation of the Community Affairs Committee (CAC). In fall 1939, for its first ever task, the CAC worked with the University of Chicago’s sociology department to prepare a survey of housing conditions in Bronzeville and presented them in a Hyde Park–Kenwood Council of Churches and Synagogues Institute on “Negro Problems of the Community to the West,” chaired by Temple Isaiah Israel rabbi, Morton Berman.<sup>81</sup> The CAC’s Housing Committee concluded that the severe overcrowding of the Black Belt—its report found that 8.1 percent of black families in Chicago were overcrowded, compare to 3.5 percent of white families—should be addressed with construction of more low-cost housing, including public housing, and rehabilitation of sound buildings.<sup>82</sup> It also called for open occupancy legislation, which, according to urban renewal researchers Rossi and Dentler, was a “radical move” for the time.<sup>83</sup> The CAC appeared sincere about living up to its goals for open occupancy and equal rights.

80. *Ibid.*, 42–43.

81. Weinstein, “Pioneer Jewish Congregation,” *Chicago Sentinel*, April 2, 1953.

82. “Suggestions and Recommendations,” n.d., box 19, folder 7, JJW Papers.

83. Rossi and Dentler, *The Politics of Urban Renewal*, 41.

According to Janice Feldstein, Weinstein’s biographer, when a K.A.M. member apparently noted in response to the report that the temple property itself contained a restrictive covenant in the deed of sale, Weinstein and the CAC convinced the board of directors to remove it.<sup>84</sup>

At the same time, however, when new black residents took advantage of opportunities to move openly and began migrating to the area around K.A.M.,<sup>85</sup> the temple was concerned for its own future. White families began to leave their large single-family homes, many of which were divided into kitchenette apartments for a large number of black families. Many of the fleeing white families were Jewish.<sup>86</sup> Parents became concerned about sending their children or going themselves to evening activities at K.A.M.<sup>87</sup> In response to the growing white flight, members of K.A.M.’s sisterhood met with Thomas Wright, head of the Chicago Commission on Human Relations. According to Abrahamson, the K.A.M. sisterhood and Weinstein were “committed to the principle of integration” and worked with Wright on possibilities for “conserving housing for all races by setting up voluntary agreements based on occupancy standards rather than on racial restrictions.”<sup>88</sup> K.A.M. appeared to share many of the concerns about the consequences of racial succession, but also a desire to respond in a way that would live up to their professed ethical commitment to civil rights and interracial living.

84. Feldstein, *Rabbi Jacob J. Weinstein*, 110.

85. Editor’s note: K.A.M. is located at 1100 East Hyde Park Boulevard on the border between Hyde Park and Kenwood.

86. Rossi and Dentler, *The Politics of Urban Renewal*, 22–23. Heavily Jewish areas were among those that experienced the most out-migration of whites and in-migration of blacks.

87. Feldstein, *Rabbi Jacob J. Weinstein*, 111.

88. Abrahamson, *A Neighborhood Finds Itself*, 12.

Therefore, when, on November 8, 1949, over forty people convened in Hyde Park's First Unitarian Church for a meeting on the future of the neighborhood, organized by the Social Order Committee of the 57th Street Meeting of Friends, two members of the K.A.M. sisterhood were there. Rabbi Berman of Temple Isaiah Israel was also present, as was one of the temple's directors.<sup>89</sup> The rest of the room contained representatives of Hyde Park churches, the university, groups like the Chicago Commission on Human Relations and the Chicago Council Against Racial and Religious Discrimination, and other Hyde Park residents, including black residents who had recently moved into the neighborhood.<sup>90</sup> The meeting was the beginning of a community organizing process that would soon result in the creation of the HPKCC. At the outset of the gathering, Thomas Wright summarized the general concerns of the attendees: "Hyde Park and Kenwood are faced with four problems... how to keep from extending the pattern of segregation; how to maintain community standards; how to integrate new residents; and how to deal with the general housing need which is a city-wide problem."<sup>91</sup> The group engaged a "long discussion" that "ranged over the pros and cons of organization, the problems of overcrowding, deterioration, interracial living, flight to the suburbs, schools, crime, maintenance of services, possible next steps."<sup>92</sup> They decided to form a temporary steering committee to consider how residents could continue to organize.

One of the more powerful moments in Abrahamson's account of the meeting was when Oscar Brown, a black attorney, took Hyde Park's white residents to task for evading discussion of their own agency and responsibility. According to Abrahamson, a white woman asked "how

89. *Ibid.*, 14.

90. *Ibid.*

91. *Ibid.*, 15.

92. *Ibid.*, 19.

do we know the Negroes *want* to be integrated?" Brown responded that both whites and blacks would have to work together to create an interracial community and noted that white residents had to take responsibility for their role in the process:

Some of us are sensitive, perhaps too much so...to the constant references to "the Negro problem." We would like to see more recognition that the difficulties we face are a white problem as well, caused by attitudes that white people themselves have to do something about. If white people would just stay put when a Negro family moves into a block, there wouldn't be any panic, and Negroes couldn't take over all the buildings. No one forces white people to sell."<sup>93</sup>

Mrs. Molner of the K.A.M. sisterhood responded by expressing her appreciation for Brown's point and announcing that while some K.A.M. members would be moving away, the congregation was committed to remaining in Hyde Park and was still in the process of constructing a new community house in the area. "Quite apart from our stake in the community, however," she said, "we share Rabbi Weinstein's conviction that the extension of segregated communities is morally and ethically indefensible."<sup>94</sup> Rabbi Berman of Temple Isaiah Israel brought up his own congregation's decision to stay and that they had just finished their new building.<sup>95</sup>

Brown and Molner's rhetoric, which painted the decision to stay in the neighborhood as an ethical choice and white flight as a morally problematic alternative, was common during the urban renewal process.

93. *Ibid.*, 17.

94. *Ibid.*

95. *Ibid.*, 18.

Weinstein and other K.A.M. members continually described the decision to stay in Hyde Park as a heroic resistance against segregation.<sup>96</sup> After all, the choice to stay in a racially changing neighborhood was an uncommon choice for Jews, both in Hyde Park and elsewhere. Despite K.A.M.'s strong desire to stay in the neighborhood, it faced the departure of many of its members, which was a burden on the congregation. In January 1951, Weinstein wrote to Bradford W. Alcorn, the president of the Oakland-Kenwood Planning Association, who had asked him to chair a series of programs, and said, "with the added financial problems created by the change in the neighborhood, it becomes less and less possible for me to undertake outside assignments."<sup>97</sup> In Hyde Park as a whole, the Jewish population declined considerably: by 1960, there were only five congregations left in the neighborhood, compared to nine in 1950. Jews in North Lawndale on the West Side and nearby in South Shore left for the suburbs relatively quickly. Across the country, most urban Jews did the same. Historian Marc Lee Raphael describes K.A.M.'s decision to stay in the neighborhood and a similar decision by two Philadelphia congregations as "exceptions" to the general rule of white Jewish flight.<sup>98</sup>

White flight to the suburbs was facilitated by Federal Housing Administration (FHA) loan policies that made it easy to receive federally insured loans for white suburbs but difficult for nonwhite or racially mixed neighborhoods.<sup>99</sup> Lipsitz outlines the often invisible advantages that structural

96. Jacob J. Weinstein, "Urban Renewal and the Brotherhood of Man," October 23, 1958, box 2, folder 6; Jacob J. Weinstein, "Antidote to Current Mysticism," April 10, 1959, box 33, folder 2; Jacob J. Weinstein, "Autobiographical Notes of Jacob J. Weinstein—Class of 1923," April 1973, box 1, folder 1, JJW Papers.

97. Jacob J. Weinstein to Bradford Alcorn, January 15, 1951, box 2, folder 2, JJW Papers.

98. Raphael, *The Synagogue in America*, 62.

99. Satter, *Family Properties*, 41.

white supremacy has afforded to white Americans and describes how white flight led to a concentration of political power in the suburbs with devastating consequences for minority communities remaining in the city. In addition to FHA loans, the government supported migration to the suburbs by building highways that disrupted city neighborhoods and displaced residents.<sup>100</sup> Once white residents had left, inner-city neighborhoods were "susceptible to the placement of prisons, waste dumps, and other projects that further depopulated these areas."<sup>101</sup>

In addition to contributing to segregation, white flight helped consolidate a new white identity for European Americans. While many whites had lived in ethnic enclaves in the cities, the suburbs, according to Lipsitz, "helped turn European Americans into 'whites' who could live near each other and intermarry with little difficulty."<sup>102</sup> In general, this suburban white identity also became available to white Jews. While Jews had faced housing discrimination throughout the early twentieth century—Jewish areas were ranked as riskier than all-white areas by home appraisers<sup>103</sup>—by the postwar period they had access to GI Bill benefits and FHA loans.<sup>104</sup> As reported in the *Chicago Defender*, a Commission on Race and Housing report found in November 1958 that "Jews are excluded from residence areas 'on occasion'" but that "anti-semitic discrimination is NOT comparable in severity to the discrimination practiced against nonwhites."<sup>105</sup> Therefore, while instances of anti-Semitism persisted, Jews found themselves with increased access that African Americans, Latinos, and Asian

100. Lipsitz, "The Possessive Investment in Whiteness," 375.

101. Ibid.

102. Ibid., 374.

103. Satter, *Family Properties*, 41-42.

104. Karen Brodtkin, *How Jews Became White Folks and What that Says about Race in America* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1998), 25-52.

105. "Report Maps Plan to End Evils of Housing Bias," *Chicago Defender*, November 13, 1958.

Americans were not granted. Goldstein points out that Jews continued to struggle with their identity and did not assimilate smoothly into white culture, but that didn't stop them from receiving the material benefits of whiteness.

Despite the devastating consequence of white flight, painting it as the only immoral choice and extolling the virtue of white people who stayed is reductive. Certainly, Weinstein and the Jews who stayed in Hyde Park expressed a sincere commitment to living in an interracial neighborhood, and that interracial neighborhood ultimately became a reality. Yet the urban renewal policies that they supported did lead to displacement for many poor-black and poor-white people and the destruction of many local businesses. Furthermore, the Jews of Hyde Park were divided from the Jews of Lawndale by more than just a commitment, or lack thereof, to living in an interracial neighborhood. According to Satter, while racism did likely influence Lawndale residents' choices to vacate the neighborhood, many Jews were eager to escape the working-class neighborhood anyway. In addition to Lawndale's material deficiency as an overcrowded industrial enclave without parkland, it was "tarred by its very success as a way station for Jewish migrants." The migrant institutions that had helped welcome Jews to the United States were now "embarrassing reminders of an outsider status they hoped to outgrow."<sup>106</sup> The Jews of Hyde Park, on the other hand, lived in a wealthier neighborhood surrounded by parks, which benefited from the presence of the University of Chicago. Throughout the process of urban renewal the institutional power of the university, and not the goodwill of residents, would dictate Hyde Park's future. There were organizations in Lawndale, like the Jewish People's Institute (JPI), that supported integration. In 1950 the JPI formed the North Lawndale Citizens Council to "transform Lawndale into a 'pilot community' for interracial living," a similar goal to that of the HPKCC,<sup>107</sup>

106. Satter, *Family Properties*, 29.

107. *Ibid.*, 28.

but ultimately, weaker attachments to Lawndale and the lack of a powerful institution like the University of Chicago led Lawndale's path to diverge from Hyde Park's.

According to Satter, "conventional wisdom" on segregation and the deterioration of urban neighborhoods is oversimplified because it ignores the role of real-estate speculators: "in the 1950s and 1960s, mainstream thinking was divided between those who blamed blacks for their pathological behavior in destroying their own residences and those who blamed racist whites for hysterically fleeing long-established neighborhoods at the first site of a black face." Satter explains that the potential profits of contract selling were so great that exploitation of resources, rather than a lack of resources in black neighborhoods, helped spur neighborhood decline.<sup>108</sup> Her analysis minimizes the importance of individual white families' decisions on where to live and emphasizes the role of institutionalized discrimination and widespread exploitation in determining neighborhood demographics. The decision of Weinstein and his supporters to stay in Hyde Park when so many others left was unusual and did show that, as Oscar Brown pointed out at the meeting, whites were not forced to leave as soon as neighborhoods began to integrate. Overall, however, the notion of staying in Hyde Park as the ethical or progressive alternative to white flight was complicated by the actual circumstances and results of urban renewal.

### **"A Splendid Opportunity": Hyde Park Organizes**

Weinstein and other neighborhood activists were eager to contrast the response of Hyde Park with the actions of violent mobs in other neighborhoods trying to remain all white. Weinstein regularly expressed excitement about the prospect of living in an interracial neighborhood. In a 1950 letter to Bradford Alcorn of the Oakland-Kenwood Planning

108. *Ibid.*, 6.



Association, Weinstein proposed that the churches and synagogues of Hyde Park dedicate a weekend to the theme of “Why I Like My Neighborhood” and the neighborhood’s advantages: “one of the advantages being that because of the mixed population, jew and gentile, colored and white, we have a splendid opportunity to implement the American dream.”<sup>109</sup> In order to prevent white families from moving away, he urged his congregants to “have faith in your neighborhood.”<sup>110</sup> Given that real-estate speculators trafficked in rumors and fear when trying to get people to sell their homes, countering those fears was a crucial part of trying to prevent white flight. The HPKCC conducted meetings to try to calm fearful residents.<sup>111</sup> K.A.M. went ahead and broke ground on a new community house, which became a physical manifestation of their desire to remain in the neighborhood. At the community house’s dedication ceremony, one congregant apparently declared, “gentleman, I would feel as though I had betrayed my religion to acknowledge that the presence of Negroes in this neighborhood would keep me from worshipping here or sending my children to the Community House,”<sup>112</sup> emphasizing K.A.M. members’ belief that it was fulfilling a religious duty to stay in the neighborhood.

At the same time, however, Weinstein and the HPKCC were often nostalgic about the neighborhood as it used to be and wished to preserve it; they spoke often of their project to “save the neighborhood.” In an August 1948 temple bulletin, Weinstein wrote to congregants: “if we will keep the occupancy standards implied in our zoning laws and other

109. Jacob J. Weinstein to Bradford Alcorn, September 22, 1950, box 2, folder 2, JJW Papers.

110. Jacob J. Weinstein, “Have Faith in Your Neighborhood,” August, 17, 1948, scrapbook 13, JJW Papers.

111. Abrahamson, *A Neighborhood Finds Itself*, 127.

112. Albert Vorspan and Eugene J. Lipman, *Justice and Judaism: The Work of Social Action* (New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1956), 39.

maintenance standards which may be adopted by democratic consent of the home-owners and residents, we can keep this neighborhood clean, delightful, and desirable.” On the one hand, Weinstein and other neighborhood activists spoke hopefully about the prospect of living in an interracial neighborhood in the future; on the other, they spoke nostalgically about keeping the neighborhood’s middle-class comforts. In a 1958 sermon looking back on neighborhood changes, Weinstein said, “what had once been clean was dirty, what had once been beautiful became ugly.”<sup>113</sup> His standard for what made a neighborhood “delightful” and “desirable” was less about race than about class and respectability. Accordingly, even though he was against making distinctions based on race, Weinstein referred to some new Hyde Park residents in condescending or negative terms based on class; he compared K.A.M.’s new neighbors unfavorably to the people who had lived there before, noting that “the newcomers were not Temple-minded.”<sup>114</sup> The main goal, as Weinstein professed, was to welcome the new black residents and at the same time continue emphasizing upper-middle-class standards of living.

The Hyde Park–Kenwood Community Conference followed these goals by organizing block clubs, undertaking educational campaigns to dispel rumors about racial succession, and aggressively prosecuting zoning violations.<sup>115</sup> But Hirsch makes the argument that the HPKCC was “doomed to failure.”<sup>116</sup> First, its comparatively liberal stand on racial issues put it at odds with many of the area’s property owners, businessmen, and the university.<sup>117</sup> Second, while the conference was successful

113. Jacob J. Weinstein, “The Fear of Our Neighbors,” September 24, 1958, box 33, folder 2, JJW Papers.

114. *Ibid.*

115. Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto*, 140.

116. *Ibid.*, 137.

117. *Ibid.*, 140.

in attacking illegal construction and illegal conversions of property into smaller units, they could not fight legal conversions. Third, according to Hirsch, “judges were also reluctant to enforce the code on overcrowding as there was no provision for the relocation of those evicted under the law. They knew, given the housing shortage, that strict enforcement would only create hardship and shift the problem from one locality to another.”<sup>118</sup> The HPKCC understood that securing adequate housing and preventing slums was a citywide problem. They called for a “comprehensive planning program” for the entire city and open housing legislation on the city and state level.<sup>119</sup> But Hirsch calls this statement “politically naïve,” because the HPKCC had no political power to make such decisions.

Therefore, despite the HPKCC’s hope of creating an integrated community, black residents continued to move in and white residents continued to move out, leading to fears that, rather than integrating into the city, the segregated black ghetto was just expanding.<sup>120</sup> Meanwhile, K.A.M. continued to lose membership, and Weinstein became increasingly occupied with what was going on in the neighborhood. A 1953 *Chicago Tribune* article described a house on 49th Street and Ellis Avenue, near K.A.M.’s community house, that was being challenged as a zoning violation in the courts after it was converted into fifteen apartments in the summer of 1950. According to the article, some families had left because of the presence of the crowded apartments, and some parents whose kids attended Hebrew school at the community house “expressed fear of letting their children pass the northwest corner of 50th and Ellis after dark.” K.A.M. moved Hebrew school to Temple Isaiah Israel for the winter, moving back to K.A.M. for the spring term

118. *Ibid.*, 141.

119. *Ibid.*, 141–42.

120. *Ibid.*, 143.

when days got longer.<sup>121</sup> In 1958, Weinstein mentioned in a letter that K.A.M. was in the midst of a “drive to cover the deficit needs of the temple, a problem that becomes more and more severe in this neighborhood.”<sup>122</sup> Some families who left K.A.M. remained part of the membership; others did not.

Despite asking others to “have faith” in the neighborhood, Weinstein came close to losing that faith himself. According to a 1997 history of K.A.M. Isaiah Israel,<sup>123</sup> K.A.M. started holding “extension” events in Chicago’s North Shore suburbs in 1953, including religious school classes, adult education courses, and services, conducted alternately by Weinstein and his assistant rabbi. By fall 1956, K.A.M. North Shore members decided to form their own congregation instead of continue as an extension of K.A.M.<sup>124</sup> They asked Weinstein to be their rabbi, and he seriously considered the offer. According to notes from a February 1957 address to the temple board, Weinstein explained his reasoning for considering the move, including a congregation not committed to regular attendance. One item on the list of factors influencing his decision was “the change in the neighborhood.” He said it is “like a ghost city every time I walk around here,” which “makes all activities—especially youth activities—difficult.”<sup>125</sup> Yet he exhorted the board not to “attribute

121. Gladys Priddy, “Case History of Zoning Violation Told,” *Chicago Tribune*, February 8, 1953.

122. Jacob J. Weinstein to Samuel N. Rattner, December 9, 1958, box 3, folder 4, JJW Papers.

123. The two merged into one congregation in 1971.

124. Jerry Meites, “Chapter 12: They Lived What They Believed,” In *The Story of K.A.M. Isaiah Israel: Honoring Chicago’s Oldest Congregation during Its Sesquicentennial (1847–1997)* (Chicago: privately printed by K.A.M., 1997).

125. Jacob J. Weinstein, Board meeting notes, February 26, 1957, box 22, Folder 5, JJW Papers.

cheap motives” to his considerations such as “social climbing; svelte surroundings; escape from Negroes; more money.”<sup>126</sup>

Congregants flooded Weinstein with letters pleading him to stay on the South Side. Some of them urged him to consider the implications for integration activism in Hyde Park if he left. Rabbi Richard G. Hirsch, the director of the Chicago Federation and Great Lakes Council of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, acknowledged that the last four years had been “difficult” for Weinstein but lauded him for choosing to stay in the neighborhood so far and urged him to continue: “You are not an ordinary rabbi. You are Jacob Weinstein. A move to the North Shore now and under the present circumstances could not help but reflect deprecatorily on your entire ministry...and if Rabbi Weinstein does not maintain his principles, then what rabbi can?”<sup>127</sup> Such pressure ultimately proved persuasive. In March 1957, Weinstein responded to congregants who had written to him, announcing his decision to stay: “I have never doubted that the neighborhood will again become one of the most enviable communities in which to live.”<sup>128</sup> The episode showed that Weinstein’s advocacy against white flight and in favor of living in Hyde Park had become a significant part of his and K.A.M.’s reputation; he was now expected to serve as a leader in advocating for an interracial neighborhood in Hyde Park.

Around the same time, in 1956, realizing that the city was not close to achieving open occupancy, HPKCC proposed a Tenant Referral Office, which would “carefully screen all persons seeking housing in Hyde Park–Kenwood and...make a conscious and deliberate effort toward all Negro blocks by encouraging whites to rent apartments that

126. Ibid.

127. Richard G. Hirsch to Jacob J. Weinstein. February 12, 1957, box 4, folder 1, JJW Papers.

128. Jacob J. Weinstein to congregants, March 6, 1957, box 4, folder 5, JJW Papers.

became vacant in these areas.”<sup>129</sup> The HPKCC, therefore, had arrived at a contradiction: while they didn’t want the neighborhood to turn from all-white to all-black and continue the pattern of segregation, controlled mechanisms like a Tenant Referral Office violated their own endorsement of open occupancy and nondiscrimination.

Ultimately, the HPKCC’s efforts proved to be of little consequence compared to the influence of the neighborhood’s largest institution, the University of Chicago. The university had been involved in efforts to keep Hyde Park an all-white neighborhood since the 1930s; it subsidized local property owners’ associations in defending the legality of restrictive covenants. According to Hirsch, the University spent \$83,597.46 for such purposes between 1933 and 1947.<sup>130</sup> The university’s creation of the South East Chicago Commission (SECC) in 1952 was a continuation of its existing involvement in the neighborhood and desire to control its immediate environment. While the SECC was created in response to a call by the Council of Hyde Park Churches and Synagogues (of which K.A.M. was a prominent member) for the university to do something about the rising crime rate, according to Hirsch, SECC’s goal was always to defend the interests of the university, rather than respond to the needs or requests of the community. Janowitz notes that the SECC did, however, work on crime prevention strategies and making information about crime known to the public.<sup>131</sup> University of Chicago Chancellor Lawrence A. Kimpton chaired the Committee of Five, which recommended the creation of the SECC, and the university helped fund its first year.<sup>132</sup>

Unlike the HPKCC, the SECC was able to marshal significant connections and public influence to implement a broad plan of neighborhood

129. Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto*, 143.

130. Ibid., 145.

131. Rebecca Janowitz, *Culture of Opportunity: Obama’s Chicago, the People, Politics, and Ideas of Hyde Park* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2010), 118.

132. Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto*, 144.

“conservation” and never professed an idealistic commitment to making Hyde Park an interracial neighborhood. Behind the scenes, Chancellor Kimpton was clear that he wanted the neighborhood to be wealthy and white, and SECC Director Levi said that in urban renewal, the university’s priorities should take preference over any other goals.<sup>133</sup> Boyer argues that Hirsch’s assessment of Kimpton as racist is “unduly harsh and distorting of Kimpton’s personal values and strategic intentions” and that Kimpton wanted an integrated neighborhood and acted pragmatically to ensure that white members of the university community would remain living there.<sup>134</sup> Abrahamson wrote that the Committee of Five chose to create a new organization, rather than give grant money to the HPKCC, partially because the HPKCC was engaged in welcoming black families to Hyde Park–Kenwood; thus, a university grant “could never have been approved at that stage in community history.”<sup>135</sup>

While the liberal members of the HPKCC initially were optimistic about the creation of the SECC, it quickly found that the approaches of the two organizations would not always go hand-in-hand. For example, the SECC was not interested in helping the HPKCC with the Conference Committee to Maintain an Interracial Community.<sup>136</sup> The HPKCC was often forced to garner community support for the SECC’s renewal plans; when the SECC didn’t require community support, it simply went ahead on its own. The HPKCC favored making decisions in a community-based process, while the SECC wanted to forge ahead quickly.<sup>137</sup> However, Hirsch argues that the actions of the university, through the SECC, ultimately worked to the advantage of the HPKCC. If HPKCC members were worried that their tactics sometimes conflicted with their

133. *Ibid.*, 153–55.

134. Boyer, *The University of Chicago*, 351–53.

135. Abrahamson, *A Neighborhood Finds Itself*, 190–91.

136. Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto*, 156.

137. Abrahamson, *A Neighborhood Finds Itself*, 221–24.

liberal beliefs, the SECC removed that decision from their hands. According to Hirsch, for the HPKCC, “the good fight could be fought without the fear that it might be won.”<sup>138</sup> Beadle portrays the relationship between the two organizations as ultimately symbiotic: “In retrospect, most of the people who lived through the 1950’s in Hyde Park and Kenwood agree that the urban renewal project could not have succeeded without the double-barrelled approach that the accident of time and place provided: the human relations approach of the Conference, and the law-and-order approach of the Commission.”<sup>139</sup>

Weinstein, for his part, was associated with both the HPKCC and the SECC and appeared generally pleased, at least initially, with the actions of both groups. In 1953, he cheered the news that the Field Foundation of Illinois had granted the University of Chicago \$100,000 for a study of the neighborhood. While he continued to assert that the goal of Hyde Park’s redevelopment was to “prove that interracial living is possible,” he also wrote that “the extremely able and dedicated Executive Director of the South East Chicago Commission is confident that we can attract desirable residents and desirable businesses into the Hyde Park–Kenwood areas,” once again implying that only some residents would be “desirable.”<sup>140</sup> By 1954, Weinstein was serving on the SECC board.<sup>141</sup> Despite his professed commitment to interracial living, Weinstein was not always seen as a friend to black Chicagoans. A 1954 profile noted that Weinstein had been accused of being “anti-Negro,” because he opposed the conversion of apartment buildings into smaller units by

138. Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto*, 138.

139. Muriel Beadle, *Where Has All the Ivy Gone? A Memoir of University Life* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972), 43.

140. Jacob J. Weinstein, “Good News for Our Neighborhood,” *Chicago Southeast Economist*, December 13, 1953.

141. Julian H. Levi to Board of Directors, November 30, 1954, box 3, folder 3, JJW Papers.

“Negro exploiters” and because he opposed a “mass movement” of black people into Hyde Park, because, he said, that would jeopardize Hyde Park’s status as an interracial neighborhood.<sup>142</sup>

## “A Well-Conceived Scheme”: Hyde Park Urban Renewal and Its Critics

Hyde Park urban renewal began when the Metropolitan Housing and Planning Council—the body that had spearheaded Chicago’s previous urban renewal project, the Lake Meadows development in Bronzeville—published its 1953 *Conservation* report.<sup>143</sup> The report, funded and influenced by the university, recommended securing legal power for the city to exercise eminent domain for the purpose of slum prevention by using the Urban Community Conservation Act of 1953. The university also successfully lobbied for an amendment to the Neighborhood Redevelopment Corporation Act of 1941 to allow small groups of citizens to form private corporations and organize a redevelopment plan for an area and to exercise eminent domain with the consent of 60 percent of the property owners in the area.<sup>144</sup> With these legal tools, the university could proceed with its urban renewal projects, which were divided into three main components, each of which resulted in controversy and conflict within Hyde Park–Kenwood.

The first project was called Hyde Park A and B Urban Renewal. In 1953, the Chicago Land Clearance Commission approved public funds for the demolition of deteriorated buildings in two sections of Hyde Park between 54th and 57th Streets and between Kimbark and Lake Park Avenues. Hyde Park A was 42.7 acres, and Hyde Park B was 46 acres.<sup>145</sup>

142. Lerner, “Rabbi Touches Many Fields,” *National Jewish Post*, May 7, 1954.

143. Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto*, 149.

144. *Ibid.*, 150–51.

145. Abrahamson, *A Neighborhood Finds Itself*, 200.

In 1957, the city approved New York real-estate firm Webb and Knapp to redevelop the sites, using over half for residential use, a third for shopping and parking, and the rest for “public and institutional purposes,” according to Julia Abrahamson.<sup>146</sup> The plan would require 892 families and 498 individuals to relocate<sup>147</sup> and would construct 825 new dwelling units in high-rises and row houses.<sup>148</sup> In November 1954, Weinstein wrote to University of Chicago Chancellor Kimpton thanking him for his “splendid work” in promoting Hyde Park A and B. He noted that the remaining members of the congregation had been “heartened” by the SECC’s work and that “their confidence would be immeasurably increased by the approval of Renewal Projects A and B.”<sup>149</sup> Weinstein also wrote a letter of endorsement for the project to the City Council.<sup>150</sup> Yet, Hyde Park A and B caused significant problems and tension in the community. Abrahamson called small business owners the “chief victim” of Hyde Park A and B; many small businesses had to close or move because demolition and construction interfering with business, as the neighborhood moved towards a model of larger shopping centers.<sup>151</sup> According to Rossi and Dentler, a group of active liberal HPKCC members who owned property in the planned demolition zone testified against Hyde Park A and B at 1954 public hearings, arguing that the plan would demolish too much housing and that they would not be able

146. *Ibid.*, 201–2.

147. *Ibid.*, 230.

148. *Ibid.*, 201.

149. Jacob J. Weinstein to Lawrence A. Kimpton, November 18, 1954, box 3, folder 3, JJW Papers.

150. Julian H. Levi to Jacob J. Weinstein, December 2, 1954, box 3, folder 3, JJW Papers.

151. Abrahamson, *A Neighborhood Finds Itself*, 231–32.

to afford to live in the redeveloped neighborhood.<sup>152</sup> While unsuccessful in protesting Hyde Park A and B, this group would eventually form a more organized opposition force against the final urban renewal plan.

Meanwhile, in 1956, the university put the Neighborhood Redevelopment Corporation Act amendment to use and formed the South West Hyde Park Neighborhood Redevelopment Corporation, with the goal of acquiring and demolishing 14.5 acres of land adjacent to the campus in southwest Hyde Park and building married student housing in its place.<sup>153</sup> The population that would be displaced by the demolition was about 80 percent black,<sup>154</sup> and opposition quickly formed among residents of the acquisition site. Residents formed the South West Hyde Park Neighborhood Association, chaired by St. Clair Drake, a black University of Chicago sociologist who had just purchased a home near the acquisition site after he was repeatedly turned down when trying to buy or rent in other areas of Hyde Park.<sup>155</sup> At public hearings with the corporation, the association's attorney, Michael Hagiwara, argued that many of the buildings designated by the university as dilapidated needed only minor improvements<sup>156</sup> and that the university was attempting to "set up a buffer against the presence of Negro residents in large numbers."<sup>157</sup> Drake favored spot clearance and code enforcement, rather than clearance of the acquisition site.<sup>158</sup> Despite the opposition, the corporation approved the South West Hyde Park Redevelopment Commission in November 1956. The association attempted to fight the

152. Rossi and Dentler, *The Politics of Urban Renewal*, 222.

153. Abrahamson, *A Neighborhood Finds Itself*, 206.

154. Rossi and Dentler, *The Politics of Urban Renewal*, 159.

155. *Ibid.*, 165.

156. *Ibid.*, 173.

157. *Ibid.*, 177.

158. *Ibid.*, 169.

corporation in the courts, until it was finally defeated in 1958 when the U.S. Supreme Court would not accept jurisdiction of the case, but it did manage to delay clearance and construction for almost two years.<sup>159</sup> The controversy strained relations between the HPKCC and residents in or near the acquisition site, since the HPKCC had supported the corporation's plan. The conflict also exposed the tension in residents' competing visions for the neighborhood. According to Rossi and Dentler, upper-middle-class people and university interests viewed areas like the southwest side of Hyde Park as overcrowded and blighted, but the residents viewed their area as respectable living arrangements in comparison to the overcrowded Black Belt from which they had moved.<sup>160</sup>

In February 1958, the Chicago Community Conservation Board released a final urban renewal plan for an 855.8-acre portion of Hyde Park–Kenwood, which encompassed most of the neighborhood. The plan included demolishing 638 of the 3,077 structures, or 6,147 of the 29,467 dwelling units, and building 2,100 new dwelling units, over half of them in high-rises.<sup>161</sup> The plan called for additional parks and playgrounds and new shopping centers, as well as the removal of stores that, according to Abrahamson, were "characterized by marginal operation and non-convenience uses."<sup>162</sup> Overall, the plan would require the relocation of 4,371 families, 42 percent of whom were white and 58 percent of whom were nonwhite.<sup>163</sup> The plan included a prohibition on racial or religious discrimination in the sale or lease of the land.<sup>164</sup>

159. *Ibid.*, 180.

160. *Ibid.*, 177.

161. Abrahamson, *A Neighborhood Finds Itself*, 210.

162. *Ibid.*, 211.

163. Boyer, *The University of Chicago*, 351.

164. Abrahamson, *A Neighborhood Finds Itself*, 212.

In March 1958, the *Chicago Defender*, the city's premiere black newspaper, invited HPKCC executive director James Cunningham (who succeeded Abrahamson in 1956)<sup>165</sup> to write an article defending and explaining the implications of the plan for Hyde Park's black community. Cunningham stressed that "if plans are carried out the city's first integrated neighborhood can result; if the plans fail Hyde Park–Kenwood will likely become just another overcrowded segregated part of Chicago."<sup>166</sup> Many black Chicagoans harbored significant concerns, though. In June 1958, *Defender* columnist Louis Martin estimated that opinions on the plan were often divided along racial lines, generalizing that most white people in Hyde Park would be in favor of the plan and most black people against it.<sup>167</sup> Also in June, the NAACP Hyde Park unit announced that the urban renewal plan, in its current state, would "serve only the interests of the minority of citizens in Hyde Park Kenwood and the city as a whole." The NAACP called for changes to the plan that would prevent families from being relocated to segregated or overcrowded neighborhoods, build public housing on scattered sites throughout the neighborhood, arrange for middle-income housing in the neighborhood, and set aside land to sell to cooperatives for interracial housing.<sup>168</sup> In the same month, a report published by the Chicago Urban

165. Ibid., 226.

166. James V. Cunningham, "Will Negroes Get Fair Deal in Hyde Park?" *Chicago Defender*, March 8, 1958.

167. Louis Martin, "Dope and Data," *Chicago Defender*, June 14, 1958. According to Martin, blacks were suspicious of the University of Chicago's motivations: "the charge of hypocrisy grows, it seems, out of the role of the university in 'protecting' the lily-white areas east of the university from Negro residents while at the same time declaring that they wish to make a model 'integrated' community."

168. "N.A.A.C.P. Seeks Changes in Hyde Park Renewal Plans," *Chicago Defender*, June 19, 1958.

League concluded that "urban renewal, as conducted now, in Chicago, is working great and undue hardships on the Negro population."<sup>169</sup>

When the plan failed to incorporate changes recommended by the NAACP, the *Defender* published several editorials criticizing the plan and its supporters. In September, the *Defender* accused the urban renewal plan of being a "well-conceived scheme to clear Negroes out of the Hyde Park area so that the University of Chicago and a privileged class of rich patrons might have an exclusive community of their own." *The Defender* supported slum clearance and renewal, the editorial said, but not if relocation for displaced residents was not adequately addressed. The *Defender* was joined by the Hyde Park–Kenwood Tenants and Home Owners Association, which formed in March 1958 from the group that had opposed Hyde Park A and B and which was also concerned that the urban renewal plan was aiming to clear the community of lower- and middle-income white and black families.<sup>170</sup>

The most successful attack on the plan, however, came not from the black press, the Urban League, the NAACP, or the Tenants and Home Owners Association, but from the Catholic Church. With the backing of Cardinal Samuel Stritch, Monsignor John Egan, director of the Cardinal's Committee on Conservation and Urban Renewal,<sup>171</sup> expressed concern with how the plan would affect lower-income people, whether the needs of displaced people would be significantly addressed, and the plan's focus on Hyde Park rather than large-scale metropolitan planning. Beginning in April 1958, the *New World*, the Chicago archdiocese's newspaper, began publicizing a series of articles criticizing the plan,

169. "Urban Renewal and the Negro in Chicago," June 18, 1958, box 78, folder 15, Hyde Park Historical Society Collection, Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

170. Rossi and Dentler, *The Politics of Urban Renewal*, 223–24.

171. Ibid., 227.

which received wide attention and stirred controversy.<sup>172</sup> According to Rossi and Dentler, the committee's opinions had a powerful effect because of the position of Catholics in Chicago: Roman Catholics were the city's largest denomination and many city officials were Catholic. The criticisms resulted in a five-month delay of the City Council's approval of the plan.<sup>173</sup>

In June, Monsignor Egan issued a statement on behalf of the Cardinal's Committee calling for specific provisions to the plan, including that land clearances should happen progressively over several years and that the plan should include two hundred scattered units of public housing. According to Rossi and Dentler, the motivation for the church's attack was multilayered, based both in a general interest in community welfare and in self-interest. Monsignor Egan, part of a liberal group of Chicago Catholic clergy experienced in left-wing labor organizing, was "sensitive to the plight of Chicago's Negroes and other underprivileged groups." The church also had significant material and organizational interests in parishes in white Chicago neighborhoods and knew that displacement of black and low-income people from Hyde Park–Kenwood might result in them moving into those neighborhoods.<sup>174</sup>

Urban renewal supporters in Hyde Park often interpreted Egan's attack as complete opposition to the entire plan, despite Egan's support for the plan generally, but with changes.<sup>175</sup> Levi, director of the SECC, met with Protestant and Jewish clergy, including Weinstein, to discuss how to oppose the Cardinal's Committee's intervention.<sup>176</sup> In May, Weinstein published a letter to the editor in the *Hyde Park Herald* sharply criticizing the *New World's* stance and defending the urban renewal

172. *Ibid.*, 227–28.

173. *Ibid.*, 225.

174. *Ibid.*, 232.

175. *Ibid.*

176. *Ibid.*, 228.

plan. He accused the *New World* of trying to sabotage the urban renewal plan by waiting to announce its criticisms until the plan was about to be submitted to the City Council. Furthermore, he accused the *New World* of fomenting dissent among displaced and black residents against the neighborhood: "It is sheer arrogance for *The New World* to imply that the Negro has to be protected from the wiles of the upper class segregationists in our neighborhood. No neighborhood in the city has received the Negro in a more friendly way. No neighborhood in the city gives fairer promise of an integrated, interracial life for white and black."<sup>177</sup> Weinstein used the potential for creating an interracial neighborhood as a defense against charges that the plan was targeting black residents.

Many letters to the *Hyde Park Herald* in response to Weinstein defended the *New World's* criticisms and repeated concerns about a lack of provisions for low- and middle-income housing in the plan and the choice to spend so many city resources redeveloping Hyde Park alone.<sup>178</sup> The most pointed responses attacked Weinstein's letter from a Catholic perspective. James F. Stanton, a Hyde Park resident, accused Weinstein of having less concern for the poor because he was Jewish and not Catholic: "I think the Rabbi's difficulty is he does not see the same thing the Catholic sees when he looks at a slum. The Rabbi sees a dilapidated building. The Catholic sees a shelter for people where the rent is usually low," Stanton wrote.<sup>179</sup> Another writer, Lar Daly, went even further: "Negroes know well which of the two have their best interests at heart, the Catholic church or Jews. The Kenwood–Hyde Park redevelopment project has really only one true objective. It is to clear undesirable elements (mainly Negroes) out of the University of Chicago and the east of Lake Park ave area, where the big apartment buildings are occupied

177. Jacob J. Weinstein, letter to the editor, *Hyde Park Herald*, May 28, 1958.

178. Letters to the editor, *Hyde Park Herald*, June 4, 1958.

179. James F. Stanton, letter to the editor, *Hyde Park Herald*, June 18, 1958.



by about 90 percent wealthy Jews.”<sup>180</sup> To reframe the debate as a question of Jewish morality versus Catholic morality is an oversimplification. Monsignor Egan’s intervention didn’t make the Catholic Church the ultimate defender of black people in Chicago, who had often faced violent white mobs when trying to move into Catholic neighborhoods in the 1940s and ’50s.<sup>181</sup> Perhaps for this reason, black interest groups did not publicly join forces with the Catholic Church’s position.<sup>182</sup> The exchange showed the prominence of ethnic and religious tensions in 1950s Chicago and how the urban renewal plan could be viewed by onlookers as a benefit to Hyde Park’s wealthy Jews at the expense of others. Weinstein’s willingness to defend the plan in a strongly worded letter, furthermore, demonstrated his general commitment to defending the plan, on the grounds of wanting to build an interracial neighborhood, even while others were expressing criticism. The congregation as a whole appeared to support the plan; in June, at its 111th Congregational Annual Meeting, K.A.M. adopted a resolution asking the City Council to quickly approve the plan.<sup>183</sup>

Together with black groups, many lay Catholics and clergymen were not united behind church’s opposition, which, ultimately, did not stop or force significant modifications to the urban renewal.<sup>184</sup> The HPKCC and SECC, for their part, attacked the Cardinal’s Committee as only concerned with keeping black residents out of white Catholic communities.<sup>185</sup> According to Rossi and Dentler, the Cardinal’s Committee was

180. Martin, “Dope and Data,” *Chicago Defender*, June 14, 1958.

181. Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto*, 40–67.

182. Rossi and Dentler, *The Politics of Urban Renewal*, 233–34.

183. “Cardinal’s Conservation Committee Asks for Inclusion of Four Points in ‘Plan,’” *Hyde Park Herald*, June 18, 1958.

184. Rossi and Dentler, *The Politics of Urban Renewal*, 233–36.

185. Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto*, 166.

foiled above all by timing: it raised criticisms late in the public comment period, after the plan had already been debated many times over within Hyde Park–Kenwood: “the City Council was not empowered to do more than give blanket endorsement or rejection of the Plan, and the latter appeared to all as too drastic a step to be seriously considered.”<sup>186</sup> Furthermore, the plan had the support of Mayor Richard J. Daley. In November 1958, the City Council approved the plan, with forty-four alderman in favor and none opposing.<sup>187</sup>

Notably, the plan passed without any changes.<sup>188</sup> Many among both critics and supporters believed the plan ought to include public housing; the HPKCC had called for two hundred to two hundred fifty scattered public housing units.<sup>189</sup> The university and the SECC had been staunchly opposed to including any public housing in the plan; Levi said it would be “harmful to the neighborhood.”<sup>190</sup> But when the plan was approved, Mayor Daley, with the support of alderman, said that as part of the plan’s implementation 120 public housing units—sixty for families and sixty for elderly couples—would be built on cleared land.<sup>191</sup>

Alderman Despres, a K.A.M. congregant and an advocate for public housing, believed public housing was necessary to accommodate people relocated by urban renewal and considered this a victory. Weinstein view on public housing is unclear. Despres said that the Hyde Park–Kenwood Council of Churches of Synagogues and the Chicago Rabbinical

186. Rossi and Dentler, *The Politics of Urban Renewal*, 236.

187. “City Council OK’s Hyde Park Renewal Plan,” *Chicago Tribune*, November 8, 1958.

188. “Council Approves Plan 44 to 0,” *Hyde Park Herald*, November 12, 1958.

189. Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto*, 162.

190. *Ibid.*

191. “Council Approves Plan 44 to 0,” *Hyde Park Herald*, November 12, 1958.

Association, with which Weinstein was associated,<sup>192</sup> supported 120 public housing units.<sup>193</sup> However, Weinstein wrote a January 1959 letter to the *Sun-Times* in which he identified himself as “one who took the opposite side” of Despres on “the question of public housing.”<sup>194</sup> Whether Weinstein was against any public housing or advocating for a different number of units, he was not marching arm-in-arm with Despres as an outspoken public housing supporter.

Of the 120 planned public housing units in Hyde Park, only thirty-four were constructed by 1968, twenty-two of them for the elderly.<sup>195</sup> By the late 1960s, urban renewal’s supporters and its detractors had shaped two distinct narratives of Hyde Park urban renewal. In a 1963 article, Elinor Richey identified a difference between Hyde Park urban renewal’s “official publicized effect” on the black population versus its “actual effect.”<sup>196</sup> The former, which Richey called the “official Hyde Park success story,” emphasized Hyde Park’s integration, rebuilding, and citizen participation in urban renewal. In 1961, for example, a *Hyde Park Herald* article commented that “the most difficult goal—readiness to welcome interracial evolution—has largely been won.”<sup>197</sup> According to Richey, the “actual effect” was the eviction of twenty thousand people from Hyde Park, fourteen thousand of them black: “The Urban League charged that eight out of ten of those relocated were Negro, and that the pile up

192. “Rabbi Morton Berman Elected President of Chicago Rabbinical Association,” *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, July 3, 1949. Weinstein was a former president of the Chicago Rabbinical Association.

193. Leon Despres, “Low Income Housing and the Redevelopment Plan,” December 29, 1958, box 4, folder 2, JJW Papers.

194. Jacob J. Weinstein to editor of the *Chicago Sun-Times*, January 26, 1959, box 4, folder 2, JJW Papers.

195. Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto*, 163.

196. Elinor Richey, “Splitsville, USA,” *New York Reporter*, May 22, 1963, 36.

197. “Chicago Neighborhood: Caucus or Eat?” *Hyde Park Herald*, May 3, 1961.

was ‘breeding more slums and worse slums’ and causing ‘further concentration, enlargement, and institutionalization of segregation.’”<sup>198</sup> By 1960, Woodlawn, the neighborhood directly south of Hyde Park, held eighty-two thousand people in a neighborhood designed to accommodate twenty-five thousand.<sup>199</sup> Moving into Hyde Park’s newly constructed units was only an option for black (or white) people able to pay the high prices. Richey concluded that “the Federally assisted ‘non-discriminatory’ pilot project has served to roll back the ghetto border, generating pressures that deliver displaced residents into the hands of greedy landlords and ruthless spectators.”<sup>200</sup> This view of Hyde Park urban renewal was shared by black organizations like the *Defender* and the Urban League. A study found that residential segregation in Chicago actually increased between 1950 and 1960.<sup>201</sup>

## “Clean Hands and Serene Spirit”: Jewish Motives for Supporting Urban Renewal

The phenomenon of Jews who prided themselves on racial liberalism participating in activities opposed by the black community was not unique to Weinstein or to Hyde Park’s Jews. Cheryl Greenberg explores the politics of Jews in the 1950s and ’60s who politically supported civil rights and integration but still made racist decisions in their personal lives. Greenberg finds that while studies showed Jews expected themselves to be less racist than other whites—and black people expected the

198. Richey, “Splitsville, USA,” *New York Reporter*, May 22, 1963, 36.

199. Ibid.

200. Ibid., 38.

201. Ibid., 35.

same of a fellow minority—this wasn't always the case in practice.<sup>202</sup> Research was mixed as to whether white Jews actually exhibited less racist attitudes than other white people.<sup>203</sup> Greenberg's analysis focuses on Jews who participated in white flight. They often supported racial equality, but chose to leave for all-white suburbs, often in search of better public schools, safer streets, and better social services. According to Greenberg, for many white American Jews, "integration as political action" often came into conflict with "integration as lived experience."<sup>204</sup>

The case of K.A.M., however, is more complicated. Weinstein and the K.A.M. members who stayed in Hyde Park *did* choose "integration as lived experience," but also used choosing integration as a justification for full support of urban renewal. Weinstein believed that participation in urban renewal was a rejection of the kind of hypocrisy described by Greenberg. He was no stranger to the fact that racism came in many forms. In a review of Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun*, he lauded Hansberry for making the play's only white character (a man from a homeowners association, who offers the black Younger family money if they won't move into his all-white neighborhood) not a bigot but "a kindly person who hates violence and who represents modest people like himself, who have put everything into their homes and want to preserve their investment and their way of life."<sup>205</sup> He understood, therefore, that even a "kindly person who hates violence" could participate in racism. But Weinstein's writings indicate that he viewed K.A.M.'s work in the neighborhood as the opposite: an example of the congregation living up

202. Cheryl Greenberg, "Liberal NIMBY: American Jews and Civil Rights," *Journal of Urban History* 38, no. 3 (May 2012): 463.

203. *Ibid.*, 455.

204. *Ibid.*, 453.

205. Weinstein, "A Raisin in the Sun," March 13, 1959, box 24, folder 7, JJW Papers.

to their values in their own backyard, in the face of great adversity. He viewed his own role as one of his proudest accomplishments.

In autobiographical notes written in 1973, after his 1968 retirement from the pulpit, Weinstein wrote that of all his social action he was "most proud of the great part which my Congregation played in the 25-year battle to integrate the races in our neighborhood."<sup>206</sup> In a draft written for the *National Jewish Post* celebrating the passage of the urban renewal plan, Weinstein cheered the white K.A.M. members who he believed had lived up to their values: "When these white families denounce the savagery of Little Rock, they do it with clean hands and serene spirit. When these Jews read the passage from Amos: 'Are ye not as the children of Ethiopia unto me, O Children of Israel,' they read it with that understanding of the heart which only integrity can give."<sup>207</sup> According to Weinstein, this was all the more laudable because it had not been an easy task—the approximately sixty K.A.M. families who remained had to accept the "arduous discipline of living in an integrated neighborhood" because, as he said in a speech, "people who live differently, think differently and the races had a sizable store of misconceptions about one another."<sup>208</sup> Outside observers also viewed the congregation's neighborhood activities as a triumph for social justice. A 1956 book dedicated to describing how the principles of Judaism could be mobilized for social action praised K.A.M.'s decision to stay.<sup>209</sup> Weinstein retained a

206. Weinstein, "Autobiographical Notes of Jacob J. Weinstein—Class of 1923," April 1973, box 1, folder 1, JJW Papers.

207. Weinstein, "Urban Renewal and the Brotherhood of Man," October 23, 1958, box 2, folder 6, JJW Papers.

208. Weinstein, "Antidote to Current Mysticism," April 10, 1959, box 33, folder 2, JJW Papers.

209. Vorspan and Lipman, *Justice and Judaism*, 38.

reputation as a civil rights leader; in 1960 he earned an appointment to John F. Kennedy's Committee on Equal Employment Opportunity.<sup>210</sup>

Perhaps the clearest evidence for Weinstein's sincere belief in urban renewal as a social good is the fact that he was actually willing to leave in 1957. Hirsch argues that many Hyde Parkers used their advocacy for an interracial neighborhood via urban renewal as mostly an excuse, because they wanted to stay in their homes. Weinstein, however, in nearly choosing to leave K.A.M., showed that he was open to moving his pulpit to the North Shore and abandoning Hyde Park; "the resources for such a move will be found," he wrote.<sup>211</sup> Much of the pressure he received to stay mentioned that if he left it would have been viewed as abandoning the cause. Therefore, Weinstein himself, congregants, and outside observers clearly viewed K.A.M.'s commitment to Hyde Park urban renewal as a political action in support of interracial living and civil rights, not just a plan to help themselves stay in the neighborhood.

Why, then, did Weinstein believe the urban renewal plan was an instrument for justice, even as it gained opposition from local groups, the archdiocese, the NAACP, and the Urban League? Weinstein's pride in K.A.M.'s activities in Hyde Park stemmed partially from a belief in integration as an interpersonal effort, in which black and white people learning to get along with one another could have a profound impact on civil rights. In the review of *Raisin in the Sun*, for example, he commented on the symbolism of the plant carried off by Lena Younger at the end of the play and the lesson it held for other white people: "The plant is the hardy perennial we call brotherhood and whether it lives or dies at 406 Cleburne is going to depend not only on the loving care of the Youngers, but on the attitude of their neighbors. If the people in 404 and 408...open their hearts and treat the Youngers as fellow humans,

210. "JFK Names Rabbi Weinstein to Committee on Equal Employment," *Chicago Sentinel*, April 13, 1961.

211. Jacob J. Weinstein, "Memo on the Temple Program," n.d., box 25, folder 5, JJW Papers.

that plant will grow and become a great tree and give us all its fruit."<sup>212</sup> The ability of the Youngers' new white neighbors to act neighborly and not racist, according to Weinstein, was the primary determinant of the Youngers' ability to thrive in a racist city.

Weinstein was very proud when K.A.M. modeled such neighborly behavior. He celebrated the fact that K.A.M., working with the Girl Scouts, had participated in establishing an interracial Girl Scouts troop in Hyde Park. The troop was equally divided between white girls, most of them Jewish, and black girls, and came into existence four years before *Brown v. Board of Education* desegregated schools in 1954. Weinstein expressed pride that the girls got along well and that the parents were growing more comfortable with one another, though he acknowledged that this was "but one small community experience" and that it "must be repeated a million times in every corner of the land."<sup>213</sup> Putting together an interracial Girl Scouts troop was certainly no small feat in the 1950s, when public schools remained segregate and many whites would have refused to participate. On the other hand, creating interracial Girl Scouts troops across the country wouldn't remove the structural basis of racism. Black Chicago families like the fictional Youngers faced not only violent and racist neighbors, but also FHA loan discrimination, exploitative contract selling, and reduced political power.<sup>214</sup> The Girl Scouts experiment didn't address the role of class in race issues: Weinstein admitted that the Brownie troop worked because most of the black girls came from upper-middle-class homes. This was a common concession

212. Jacob J. Weinstein, "A Raisin in the Sun," March 13, 1959, box 24, folder 7, JJW Papers.

213. Jacob J. Weinstein, "Desegregation Working Well in Our Own Backyard," *The National Jewish Post*, May 25, 1955.

214. See Satter, *Family Properties*, 56, for the experience of one Chicago family, the Boltons who could not find a comfortable home due to the overcrowding of the Black Belt, an exploitative real-estate seller, Hyde Park urban renewal, restrictive city housing codes, and reduced organized black political power.

among Hyde Park neighborhood activists; HPKCC Executive Director Cunningham freely acknowledged that urban renewal was likely to make Hyde Park more expensive but that economic diversity would have to be sacrificed for the sake of racial diversity.<sup>215</sup> Separating race from class, however, ignored how racism, through mechanisms like job discrimination and discrimination in housing prices, affects black people's chances of achieving economic mobility. K.A.M.'s willingness to participate in interracial activities was laudable, but such activities didn't address all the problems that black Chicagoans faced.

In an era in which advocating for more leftist ideas could lead activists to be tarred as Communists, a focus on interpersonal goodwill, rather than structural racism and class divisions, isn't surprising. Weinstein had already had to defend himself against charges of Communism; advocating more radical ideas may have increased the scrutiny. Leftist groups and individuals in the 1950s often found themselves smeared as Communists even if they had no party affiliation. Elizabeth Wood, head of the Chicago Housing Authority from 1937 to 1954, pursued a policy of integrated public housing and was called a "pinkie." According to Hirsch, the local paper in South Deering, a South Side neighborhood where whites engaged in violent protest against integration of the CHA's Trumbull Park Homes in the neighborhood,<sup>216</sup> even called for the CHA to be investigated by Senator McCarthy.<sup>217</sup> The Chicago Committee to End Mob Violence, an organization founded by Urban League executive Sidney Williams to take an strong stand against racist violence and the city's approach to countering it, was marred by accusations of Communism because it had some left-wing members, which dragged down the Urban League's reputation.<sup>218</sup>

215. Cunningham, "Will Negroes Get Fair Deal in Hyde Park?" *Chicago Defender*, March 8, 1958.

216. Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto*, 56.

217. *Ibid.*, 202.

218. *Ibid.*, 247.

Despite his focus on interpersonal relations, Weinstein did recognize that simply advocating neighborly goodwill would not be enough to prevent his congregants from fleeing to the suburbs. As Greenberg describes, even Jews who believed in integrated living didn't want to sacrifice safety or the quality of their children's schools, which often suffered in majority-black neighborhoods because of structural racism.<sup>219</sup> In February 1958 Weinstein lobbied the Chicago Board of Education to ensure that it would maintain the quality of Hyde Park High School, including its accelerated courses, even as the neighborhood integrated. His congregants, he explained, were deeply committed to living in an interracial neighborhood, but they were also Jews, with a tradition of emphasizing education, and they would prioritize good public schooling over everything.<sup>220</sup> As he wrote to his congregants, the greatest "pity" of declining public schools would not be that many would have to leave the neighborhood, but that the dream of an interracial neighborhood would die.<sup>221</sup> Weinstein, therefore, understood that white flight was not just about individual attitudes about race, but about the availability of resources and safety in all-white suburbs as compared to mixed or majority-black neighborhoods. A portion of K.A.M. members were willing to stay in the city not just because of their considerable enthusiasm for social justice, but also because their neighborhood had an urban renewal program aimed at rooting out slums. For Weinstein, therefore, the harms of urban renewal to poorer residents of Hyde Park were worthwhile to keep his white Jewish congregants in the neighborhood and to keep it integrated. Sacrificing economic diversity made "integration as lived experience" an easier choice by preserving middle-class neighborhood conditions.

219. Greenberg, "Liberal NIMBY," 452.

220. Jacob J. Weinstein, "An Open Letter to the Chicago Board of Education," February 18, 1958, box 4, folder 2, JJW Papers.

221. Jacob J. Weinstein to congregants, February 10, 1958, box 26, folder 6, JJW Papers.

In a letter to the *Sun-Times* on January 1958, Weinstein compared the ongoing housing crisis to the racist violence of the South, writing “I daresay that as many Negroes have been burned in our foul tenements as have been lynched by Southern mobs.” He called for remedies including federal low-income housing, open occupancy throughout the city, and regulation of exploitative landlords. Yet he also noted that white neighborhoods had an “absorptive capacity. . . , which can be disregarded only at the cost of a white exodus and the abandonment of interracial living.”<sup>222</sup> Weinstein did not see his calls for an “absorptive capacity,” or a limit on how many new black residents a neighborhood like Hyde Park might be able to take in, as contradicting his support for open-occupancy and just-housing policies. Instead, he saw it as a necessary part of city planning in order to prevent whites from fleeing and to create an interracial neighborhood.

According to Hirsch, many liberal Hyde Parkers used the goal of creating an interracial neighborhood to justify the price of urban renewal to themselves and ease their consciences troubled by demolitions and forced removals.<sup>223</sup> But Hirsch’s cynical framing of the goal of an interracial neighborhood as an ad hoc justification, rather than a driving force, underestimates the commitment many Hyde Parkers, such as the Jews of K.A.M., had to integration. Social justice was not just a side project but an essential component of faith and community for Weinstein and his congregation. Weinstein’s approach to neighborhood politics suggested not a willful misunderstanding of urban renewal’s consequences but a *miscalculation*. Weinstein was aware that there would be sacrifices, but believed that an integrated neighborhood was important enough to make them necessary. Of course, K.A.M.’s own interest was also at stake in the calculation. To concede that urban renewal was problematic would be to question K.A.M.’s entire identity as a liberal congregation, an identity rooted in carrying out the Jewish religious

222. Jacob J. Weinstein to the editor of the *Chicago Sun-Times*, January 27, 1958, box 4, folder 2, JJW Papers.

223. Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto*, 181.

mandates to treat others equally and adopting the support for civil rights that was part of Reform Jewish identity at the time. By focusing on the goals of Hyde Park’s urban renewal—creating an interracial neighborhood—rather than its negative consequences, and viewing those consequences in service of the goal, K.A.M. could place urban renewal within the narrative of how it saw itself: as a minority group dedicated to helping another minority group.

Furthermore, focusing on creating an interracial neighborhood became a way for K.A.M.’s Jews to bring a liberal Jewish identity into harmony with their newly earned whiteness. According to Weinstein, the Jews who stayed “found they could not visit their friends in the segregated suburbs without feeling a certain lack in the tone and texture in their friends’ lives,” indicating that many liberal Jews were averse to the prospect of simply blending into a white monolith. Through urban renewal, members of K.A.M. could distance themselves from suburban insularity without distancing themselves from the advantages of the suburbs. Many of the Hyde Park urban renewal projects, such as tearing down a dense commercial block to build a shopping center with a parking lot, reshaped the neighborhood landscape to more closely resemble the suburbs. Liberal Jews like Weinstein wanted the benefits that whiteness could bring, like clean, crime-free neighborhoods and high-quality schools, without the cost of dissolving into the white mainstream. To believe in the good of urban renewal was to believe that such an identity was possible.

## Epilogue

When Martin Luther King Jr. spoke at K.A.M. in 1966, nearly a decade after the passage of the urban renewal plan, he encountered a neighborhood where rates of black in-migration had leveled off and housing prices were on the rise. One year earlier, in 1965, a K.A.M. newsletter had announced data on where congregants resided: the largest proportion still lived in Hyde Park–Kenwood (45 percent) and South Shore (15

percent). The ground had been broken on new townhouses, and K.A.M. was hopeful that potential new members would move into them.<sup>224</sup> The dream of an interracial neighborhood had materialized: in 1960, Hyde Park's population was 59.9 percent white, 37.7 percent black, and 2.6 percent other. Internally, however, the neighborhood was not uniformly integrated; certain census tracts were heavily black and others heavily white.<sup>225</sup> By 2000, the neighborhood remained integrated: 45.8 percent white, 38.1 percent black, 11.3 percent Asian, and 4.1 percent Latino.<sup>226</sup> A 1990s history of K.A.M. Isaiah Israel produced by the congregation announced that K.A.M. and Isaiah Israel's actions in the face of demographic change were "certainly one of the proudest moments in our congregational history."<sup>227</sup>

On a racial dot map of Chicago—a map that represents each individual with a dot that is color coded by race, using 2010 census data—Hyde Park is a multicolored anomaly in a sea of segregated neighborhoods.<sup>228</sup> The integration of Hyde Park did not spread to the rest of the South Side; most South Side neighborhoods are majority black, many of them are low income and have suffered from years of disinvestment, with serious consequences. A 2017 Metropolitan Planning Council report found that if black-white segregation in Chicago was reduced to the

224. "K.A.M. News," June 2, 1965, box 9, folder 7, Hyde Park and Kenwood Interfaith Council Records, Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

225. Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto*, 262.

226. Max Grinnell, "Hyde Park," in *The Encyclopedia of Chicago*, ed. James R. Grossman, Ann Durkin Keating, and Janice L. Reiff (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), accessed April 4, 2017, <http://www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/622.html>.

227. Meites, "Chapter 12: They Lived What They Believed."

228. "2010 Census Block Data," Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service, University of Virginia, accessed April 4, 2017, <https://demographics.virginia.edu/DotMap/index.html>.

national median, income for black Chicagoans would increase by \$2,982 per person and Chicago's homicide rate would drop by 30 percent.<sup>229</sup>

Most contemporary scholars and commentators on the legacy of urban renewal do not share K.A.M. Isaiah Israel's tone of pride; instead, they place urban renewal within a longstanding history of Chicago's abuses towards residents of color.<sup>230</sup> Rather than provide a model of integration, Hyde Park's urban renewal contributed to further segregation by displacing black families and pushing them into other areas of the city, where they experienced overcrowding and slum conditions.<sup>231</sup> Hyde Park urban renewal also had national implications: Hirsch describes how Hyde Park's urban renewal program—including its emphasis on "conservation" and slum "prevention"—helped influence federal policy in the Housing Act of 1954.<sup>232</sup> When discussed today, urban renewal usually has a negative connotation. Indeed, when President Donald Trump talked about an "urban renewal agenda" in December 2016, the *New York Times* associated urban renewal with "vast destruction of minority communities, when entire neighborhoods were razed for housing, highways and civic projects."<sup>233</sup>

The legacy of urban renewal—the continuing segregation of Chicago—demonstrate how the efforts of Hyde Park Jews to both reap the benefits of whiteness and fight segregation through urban renewal fell

229. "The Cost of Segregation," Metropolitan Planning Council, n.d., accessed April 5, 2017, <http://www.metroplanning.org/costofsegregation>.

230. See Samuel Zipp, "The Cultural Structure of Postwar Urbanism," *American Quarterly* 66, no. 2 (June 2014): 477–88.

231. Richey, "Splitsville, USA," *New York Reporter*, May 22, 1963, 37.

232. Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto*, 271.

233. Emily Badger, "Why Trump's Use of the Words 'Urban Renewal' Is Scary for Cities," *New York Times*, December 7, 2016, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/12/07/upshot/why-trumps-use-of-the-words-urban-renewal-is-scary-for-cities.html>.

short. While Weinstein emphasized creating an interracial community as a model for the nation to justify the downsides of urban renewal, Hyde Park ultimately did not spur the creation of an integrated Chicago or nation. Weinstein and K.A.M. Jews were unable to avoid complicity in racist policy, despite their conviction that they were living up to their beliefs, which speaks to the power of white identity in conferring privileges and the magnitude of forces supporting segregation. While much has been made of the supposed golden age of alliance between blacks and white Jews in fighting for civil rights, Goldstein points out that the term “alliance” might be a misnomer given that blacks and white Jews have rarely stood on equal footing in the United States.<sup>234</sup> Many K.A.M. congregants could choose between living a middle-class life outside of Hyde Park or a middle-class life inside Hyde Park via urban renewal, while many of their black neighbors did not have the same access to a middle-class life. Therefore, even though they advocated for interracial living, Jews did so knowing they had the security to benefit from urban renewal and would not be displaced by it.

In a 1963 review of Rossi and Dentler’s study of urban renewal in Chicago, Herbert J. Gans argues that social programs that attacked the root causes of slum development could have benefited Hyde Park and its residents—especially displaced residents—more than urban renewal. To Gans, the lesson of urban renewal was that “our greatest urban need is to solve the basic economic and social problems of the people condemned to live in slums.”<sup>235</sup> Likewise, Greenberg notes that American Jews’ hypocritical choices “reflected the impact that racism had on every institution in this country and the failure of liberalism to dismantle those structural impediments to equality.”<sup>236</sup> Of course, violent white

234. Goldstein, *The Price of Whiteness*, 217.

235. Herbert J. Gans, “Planning and Power,” *Commentary Magazine*, February 1, 1963, <https://www.commentarymagazine.com/articles/the-politics-of-urban-renewal-the-chicago-findings-by-peter-h-rossi-and-robert-a-dentler>.

236. Greenberg, “Liberal NIMBY,” 463.

protests and McCarthyism’s association of leftist public policy with Communism made alternatives to urban renewal, such as scattered interracial public housing, hard to achieve in the 1950s.

The case study of Hyde Park suggests rethinking approaches to desegregation that prioritize individual choices—such as staying in a neighborhood versus participating in white flight—over tackling the roots of segregation, including loan discrimination, exploitation, and economic inequality. Furthermore, the history of Hyde Park provides lessons for future Jewish communal politics. According to Goldstein, “if Jews will ever be able to avoid the tensions between acceptance and group assertion that they have felt since the late nineteenth century, a necessary prerequisite is the ultimate dissolution of the dominant culture of which Jews have long strived to be a part,” by which he refers to whiteness.<sup>237</sup> The case of Hyde Park shows how the same prerequisite applies to white Jewish efforts in solidarity with black Americans. Despite good intentions, straddling the line between white middle-class comfort and dissent from the norms of whiteness was not enough for Hyde Park’s liberal Jews to make a lasting impact on Chicago’s segregation. For white Jews to truly reject participation in white domination would require an upending of the American social, cultural, and economic norms that privilege whiteness.

237. Goldstein, *The Price of Whiteness*, 239.



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