Introduction

The Great Depression began in the fall of 1929 with the Black Tuesday stock market crash on October 29. For African Americans in Baltimore, already burdened by employment discrimination and segregated housing, the economic crisis brought widespread job loss and deep poverty. The *Baltimore Afro-American* observed in a 1933 editorial that "Baltimore is a border city with Southern feelings" reflecting on the persistent racism of many white residents and elected officials.[1] In the 1930s, New Deal relief efforts through the Works Progress Administration and Public Works Administration reinforced the city's existing patterns of segregation and discrimination by using public money to tear down black "slum" housing and by providing black families smaller relief payments than white families. In response to these new challenges, African Americans in Baltimore, joined by some white supporters, organized and pursued a renewed campaign of protests, fighting for equal employment and education at home in Baltimore and around the country.

The rapid growth of the city's black population during the 1940s, following the beginning of World War II, pushed the issues of housing and criminal injustice to the forefront alongside continuing efforts to expand opportunities for black workers. After a Baltimore City police officer shot and killed a black private in the U.S. Army from Pittsburgh, a coalition of local activists organized the 1942 March on Annapolis—the largest Civil Rights demonstration in the history of the state—and won important new changes. The election of Republican Mayor Theodore McKeldin (after over a decade of leadership by Democratic Mayor Howard W. Jackson) provide African American activists with a potential ally after years of frustration.

After the war ended in 1945, Baltimore saw a wave of major changes as African American residents, who had struggled under a severe housing shortage for decades, began buying homes in an expanding area of west Baltimore (west of Fulton Avenue) and in east Baltimore. In 1951, the Maryland legislature finally changed state laws that had required racial segregation on trains and boats and, by 1953, five years of protests by activists and students finally forced the desegregation of Ford's Theatre on Fayette Street in downtown Baltimore. On the eve of the monumental Supreme Court decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*, the Civil Rights Movement in Baltimore had already started to radically transform life in the city.

Historian Prudence Denise Cumberbatch described the period between 1929 and 1945 as one of the "key social and political eras in the history of Baltimore".[2] Bruce Thompson observed that in the 1930s Baltimore became "a model for organizing blacks at the grassroots level to support the fight for black civil rights."[3] Not all activists took the same approach, as Cumberbatch reflects on the internal debates within black Civil Rights movement in this period of growth:

> [activists considered] whether or not their chances for success would be better if they formed alliances with radical political organizations, concentrated on intraracial campaigns, or placed their hopes in the policies of the federal government.

Cumberbatch concludes that African American activists in Baltimore incorporated all three strategies into their efforts to respond to the "immediate concerns of their community, be they mob violence or the treatment of workers in the steel mill."[4] In contrast to the nineteenth century, this new movement relied on *support* from churches but largely *followed* secular leaders.[5]

The transition to new leadership for the local movement began in 1931 when Juanita Jackson organized the City-Wide Young Peoples Forum. Thompson describes the list of prominent black speakers at Forum meetings between 1931 and 1935 as a "Who's Who of Black Americans" including: "W.E.B. Du Bois, Walter White, Roy Wilkins, William Pickens, Charles H. Houston … Mary McLeod Bethune, Nannie H. Burroughs, E. Franklin Frazier, James Weldon Johnson, Sterling Brown, George Schuyler, Congressman Oscar DePriest, Carter G. Woodson, Reverend A. Clayton Powell, Sr., and other prominent black leaders."[6] Activist Nannie H. Burroughs (1879–1961) called the Forum:

> the best, most progressive, and analytical organization of Negro young people in America. It feels, thinks, believes, acts.[7]

Building on the popularity of the group's regular meetings, Jackson and others recruited hundreds of young people to the "Buy Where You Can Work" campaign protesting businesses on Pennsylvania Avenue that refused to hire black workers. Two of the most visible supporters of the campaign were Thurgood Marshall and Lillie Mae Carroll Jackson. Born and raised in Baltimore, by 1934, Thurgood Marshall was a young lawyer just starting to work for the local Baltimore chapter of the NAACP. and, in 1935, Jaunita Jackson's mother Lillie Mae Carroll Jackson took over as the president of the chapter. The group had struggled with financial stability since its founding but Jackson, working with her daughter and Charles Murphy of the *Afro-American* newspaper, turned the group into one of the most powerful local NAACP branches in the country.

Others important organizers and activists included Dr. John E.T. Camper (d. 1977) with the Citizen's Committee for Justice and the Progressive Citizens of America (PCA); Victorine Q. Adams (1912–2006) with the Colored Democratic Women's Campaign Committee; and Edward Lewis with the Baltimore Urban League.

Others may not have served in formal leadership roles with civil rights organizations but supported the movement as plaintiffs, as workers integrating segregated institutions, and as participants in the growing use of direct action. NAACP's legal campaigns in Baltimore relied on the courage and persistence of individual plaintiffs such as Margaret Williams (b. 1923), Donald Gaines Murray (1914–1986), and Louise Kerr Hines (1916–2007). Others faced the challenge of being the first African American to integrate segregated institutions: Violet Hill Whyte (1897–1980) became Baltimore's first black non-uniformed police officer in 1937; Vivien Thomas (1910–1985) became one of the first black professional employees at the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine in 1941; Frederick I. Scott, Jr. (b. 1927) became one of the first black undergraduate students at Johns Hopkins University when he enrolled in 1945; and George Taliaferro became one of the first three black players for the Baltimore Colts football team in 1953.[8] Hundreds of other people marched in picket lines on Pennsylvania Avenue in the early 1930s, walked twenty-five miles to march on Annapolis in 1942, and sat down at lunch counters on Lexington Street in the early 1950s.

As new African American leadership and renewed organizing efforts emerged to lead Baltimore's Civil Rights movement, liberal white activists and interracial organizations reemerged after white support for black freedom collapsed in the late nineteenth century. The local Civil Rights movement had the sometimes controversial support of the American Communist Party (established in 1919) which expanded their advocacy for Civil Rights in Maryland during the 1930s. The ACLU of Maryland was founded on March 8, 1931 shortly before the ACLU's publication of Black Justice. This influential report on "legal discriminations against Negroes" included a Dr. Broadus Mitchell (1893–1988), an economics professor at Johns Hopkins University (1919–1939) and Socialist candidate for Governor of Maryland in 1934. Mitchell resigned from Hopkins in protest after administrators refused to admit Edward Lewis, an African American, the graduate school.[9]

By the early 1950s, Baltimore also had a local chapter of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE)—an interracial activist group founded in Chicago in March 1942. White Civil Rights supporter Sidney Hollander, Sr., established the Hollander Foundation which began publishing an annual report "Toward Equality," in 1946 to evaluate the condition of civil rights in Maryland.[10] As two leading black activists later recalled, "there were always a few whites who braved the wrath and scorn and the ostracism to work" for civil rights for black Baltimoreans.[11]

Electoral politics also reemerged as a major source of opportunity for change. A few months before the 1932 election, the Afro-American helped to organize a registration drive for black voters, highlighting the fact that in Baltimore City :

> 37,908 colored people are registered and ready to vote, and 54,000 of us are slackers and ineligible to cast a ballot because we have not registered.[12]

The drive won supported from former City Council member Walter S. Emerson, leading members of the A.M.E. Church, and, one account noted, "It is expected that leaders in the Socialist and Communist groups will be invited to participate".[13] In 1934, Baltimore's black voters helped to defeat long-serving Democratic Maryland Governor Albert Ritchie in favor of Republican Harry Nice. In 1943, the same voters helped to defeat long-serving Democratic Mayor Howard W. Jackson in favor of Republican Theodore McKeldin. McKeldin's liberal views on civil rights won him significant support from black voters who including many registered by the NAACP in the group's "Vote for Victory" drive.[14] Reverend Marion Bascom, a Civil Rights activist and leader of Douglas Memorial Community Church, later reflected on how as Mayor and later Governor Theodore McKeldin was accessible to activists:

> People didn't have to have a 'sit-in' demonstration to see Mr. McKeldin. Mr. McKeldin was available and this, I think, made all the difference.[15]

Support for Nice and McKeldin did not reverse the major realignment of black voters from the Republican to the Democratic Party. Black voters in northern cities were key to President Franklin D. Roosevelt's reelection in 1936 and 1940. In a column on Roosevelt's 1936 election, African American mathematician and writer Kelly Miller celebrated the end of the "Solid South" control over the Democratic party and called a "victory of liberalism over reaction," For example, on December 3, 1946, Victorine Q. Adams held the first meeting of the Colored Women's Democratic Campaign Committee. In 1954, Adams' efforts led to the election of Harry A. Cole, the first African American to serve in the Maryland General Assembly.

Changes to city and state politics and the renewal of activist organizations were both shaped by growth of the city's African American population. African American residents went from 17.66% of Baltimore's population (142,106 people) in 1930 to 23.70% in 1950 (225,099 people). The 60% increase in the city's black significantly outpaced the more modest 18% growth in the city's overall population. Two major factors drove this change: the large number of African Americans moving to Baltimore during World War II seeking work in wartime industries and the growing number of white Baltimoreans moving to segregated white suburban communities in the surrounding counties. In Baltimore County, the population more than doubled from 124,565 in 1930 to 270,273 in 1950. The African American population went from 11,764 in 1930 to 17,877 in 1950—a numerical increase but a marked decline as a share of Baltimore County's total population from 9.44% to 6.61%.

In the next section, the study highlights some of the places associated with the Civil Rights movement in this period. The study continues to describe four key themes in detail:

- **Criminal Injustice**: Baltimore activists participated in national anti-lynching advocacy and fought police and mob violence in Baltimore. Activist efforts led to the city's first black uniformed police officers following the 1942 March on Annapolis.
- **Employment and Education**: As the NAACP continued to campaign against segregated schools locally and nationally, black educators and administrators continued to build on the 1921 Strayer Report to improve conditions for Baltimore's black students. Black workers also sought better conditions and more job opportunities and found a partner in the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO).
- **Public Accommodations**: White allies and African American students served as key supporters for activist efforts that opened public parks and recreational facilities, along with some (but not all) shops, restaurants, and theaters by the early 1950s.
- **Housing**: A severe shortage of housing created difficult conditions for thousands of black Baltimoreans. This issue framed the struggle to build public housing for African Americans and pursue opportunities to purchase homes in formerly segregated white neighborhoods after World War II.

Associated Places

The pattern of racial segregation in Baltimore continues to result in a concentration of places associated with the movement in historically segregated black neighborhoods. Examples include the MeDoSo Club House (the meeting place for a group of black doctors who donated generously to the NAACP) was located in a house at 1800 Eutaw Place and the segregated black Frederick Douglass High School (built in 1924) at 1601 N. Calhoun Street; Edgar Allan Poe Homes (built 1938) and McCulloh Homes (built 1940)—two of the earliest public housing projects for African Americans. The residences of notable leaders were similarly in nearly all-black neighborhoods including the Dr. John E.T. Camper House (built c. 1885) at 639 N. Carey Street and the Dr. Carl J. Murphy House in Morgan Park.

However, the movement is also tied to places where activists fought against segregation including the former Catonsville High School (built 1925) which is closely associated with the case of Williams v. Zimmerman (1937); the Enoch Pratt Free Library – Branch No. 1 (built 1886) where Louise Kerr worked after successfully overturning a prohibition against black librarians in 1945; or the Baltimore Polytechnic Institute (built 1913 – now the central office for the Baltimore City Public Schools) at North Avenue and Calvert Street which began to desegregate on a limited basis in 1952.

Criminal Injustice

Euel Lee being transported to Baltimore City jail, 1931. Photo courtesy Washington Area Spark/Flickr.

Lynching and criminal injustice was at the center of black organizing and advocacy around Civil Rights and racial injustice in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Such cases highlighted the important role of the Communist Party in supporting African American Civil Rights as a strategy for build supporting among African Americans broadly.

On December 4, 1931, Matthew Williams was lynched at Salisbury, Maryland—as the Maryland Historical Society underbelly blog notes:

> On December 4, 1931, Matthew Williams, an African American man, shot and killed his white employer in Salisbury and then turned the gun on himself in an unsuccessful suicide attempt. That evening, a mob of more than a thousand dragged Williams from his hospital bed where he lay critically wounded, and hung him up on the courthouse lawn. His body was then dragged to the town's African American business district, and set on fire. The Williams murder was the 32nd lynching in Maryland since 1882, and the first since 1911.

On October 14, 1931, Euel Lee, known as "Orphan Jones", was arrested for the murder of a white family reportedly over a disagreement about wages. The Maryland Communist Party took Lee's case and lawyer Bernard Ades successfully moved Lee's trial to Towson in Baltimore County. Ultimately, Ades lost the case (Lee was executed on October 28, 1933) but in the process helped to combat the informal prohibition on black jurors in Baltimore County.[16]

Two years later, on October 18, 1935:

> a mob of a thousand or more people stormed into the Princess Anne jail house and hauled Armwood from his cell down to the street below. Before he was hung from a tree some distance away, Armwood was dragged through the streets, beaten, stabbed, and had one ear hacked off. Armwood's lifeless body was then paraded through the town, finally ending up near the town's courthouse, where the mob doused the corpse with gasoline and set it on fire.

In 1948, for the first time in the history of Maryland, a white man was sentenced to life imprisonment for the rape of a black woman.

Education and Employment

The issues of education and employment are not only intertwined in the present but were also clearly understood as closely related issues by Civil Rights activists in this period.

- Equality for segregated black schools
- Desegregation for students and educators

- Public relief for black workers and families
- Organizing industrial black workers
- Public employment for black workers

School equality

African American school administrator Francis Wood continued to use build on the changes suggested by the Strayer school survey in the early 1920s. Between 1929 and 1940, Wood increased attendance for black elementary and junior high school students to above 85% and above 90% for black high school students.[17] Beginning in 1926, Wood began to attend the annual conference organized by Carter G. Woodson's Association for the Study of Negro Life and History. Wood introduced a Negro History week in February to celebrate the history of African Americans. Johnson notes: "Each segregated school was responsible for creating and sponsoring their own Black History program.[18]

Wood also worked at the national level serving as the president of the Association for Colored School Teachers "which fought for better schools and equality.[19] However, Wood's investment in segregated schools may have come with an accommodationist perspective as Wood "warned African Americans that now was not the time to demand undue advantages."[20]

One key achievement in this period was the 1944 appointment of George F. W. McMechen, a 1895 graduate from Morgan College and an African American lawyer, to the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners.[21] The appointment followed a letter on April 9, 1942 from Dr. Carl Murphy, acting as chairman of the Baltimore Citizens Committee for Justice, to Mayor Jackson arguing for the appointment of an African American person to the school board.[22]

School desegregation

Even as Francis Wood, along with many black teachers and families, advocated for improvements to black schools within the segregated system, others fought to end school segregation at every level from elementary schools to universities.

The best known case in this period was Murray v. Pearson (1935) where Thurgood Marshall and Charles Hamilton Houston won Donald Gaines Murray the right to attend the University of Maryland School of Law. The court:

> noted the state's requirement under the Fourteenth Amendment, as it was understood at that time, to provide substantially an equal treatment in the facilities it provides from public funds. Since Maryland chose to only provide one law school for use by students in the state, that law school had to be available to all races.[23]

In 1947, Dr. Ralph J. Young became the first African American to join teaching staff at Johns Hopkins Hospital and, in 1950, Frederick I. Scott becomes the first African American to graduate from Johns Hopkins University. That same year, Juanita Jackson Mitchell becomes the first African American woman to graduate from the

University of Maryland Law School. In 1951, Hiram Whittle became the first black undergraduate to enroll at the University of Maryland and, on August 1, 1952, Polytechnic High School opened to African American students on a limited basis.[24]

Public relief for black workers and families

African American women and children receiving aid from the Baltimore Emergency Relief Commission photographed at home in their kitchen, 1934. Courtesy Enoch Pratt Free Library, Enoch Barker Collection, Digital Maryland, mdaa152.

In 1934, 13% of Baltimore whites and 40% of Baltimore blacks were on relief (?) according to a study by the Baltimore Urban League. While the federal government's New Deal programs brought some relief, discrimination persisted even in the administration of these programs. The *Afro-American* reported that an African American household with eight people recieved $8.94 a week for food but a white household of the same size recieved $12.70.[25]

Roderick Ryon notes:

> City relief was distributed by the Family Welfare Association, which reported in 1934 that 40 per cent of the city's blacks, compared to 13 per cent of its whites, were on relief. The Urban League and a local association of the unemployed, studied 150 white and black relief cases in the same year and discovered that black families typically received smaller relief sums and were removed from relief rosters before whites.[26]

Organizing black workers

Enoch Pratt Free Library Branch No. 1 on the northeast corner of Pitcher Street and Fremont Avenue, 1938. Courtesy Enoch Pratt Free Library, Enoch Barker Collection, Digital Maryland, mdaa020.

White unions affiliated with the American Federation of Labor continued to exclude black workers. The loss of and were subject to the policy of "last hired and first fired" leading to widespread job loss.

Cumberbatch also argues that by working "with both the Fair Employment Practices Committee and the CIO, civil rights leaders were able to break through racial barriers that had historically confined African Americans to the least paying and least desirable jobs."[27]

Roderick Ryon notes:

> Numbering 144,000 in a population of 817,000 in 1930, city blacks faced greater and different kinds of problems than whites. Substantial numbers were employed in 1930, but they occupied the lowest rung of the wage ladder. Indeed low wages for adult males had forced thousands of women, adolescents and the elderly on the job market to supplement meager family incomes. Eighty- five per cent of employable black males held jobs in 1930 compared to 77 percent of native whites, and 51 per cent of employable black women were wage earners, compared to 27 per cent of native whites.[28]

> Thus, the low-paying domestic service offered some 26,000 jobs to Baltimore blacks in 1930,but as conditions worsened, hundreds of white employers, determined to "take care of their own" first, preferred whites over blacks. As some city industries began to recover they employed whites rather than rehire blacks, and by 1936, seventeen percent of Baltimore's employable, skilled black males were out of work.[29]

> Conducting a survey of 115 retail and manufacturing firms in 1933, the Urban League discovered that blacks constituted 8.3 per cent of the firm's employees in 1933, compared to 9.2 per cent in 1930[30]

However, local unions, often, did little to help black Baltimoreans, as Ryon observed:

> In 1931 black longshore-men walked out of a meeting of the City Federation of Labor rather than accept Jim Crow seating. Local white unions occasionally violated or evaded even sacred commandments of labor. When black brick layers arrived in the city, union cards in hand, they were offered free train fare out of the city, not the traditional welcome of newcomers. Rather than work with black union hod-carriers,whites in the AF of L bricklayers' union used white scab labor.[31]

In the 1930s, African American activists put growing pressure on public and private employers to end segregated hiring and begin offering more opportunities to African American workers. This pressure included both a renewed legal efforts backed by the NAACP at the local and national level and a series of grass-roots protest actions organized by activist groups like CORE, inter-religious coalitions like the Baltimore Council of

Churches, and by students (especially from Morgan State College). Another important supporter of reform were black professional organizations such as the Progressive Engineers Association of Maryland (organized in 1938) and the MeDeSo (a club for black physicians and dentists established by Dr. J.E.T. Camper and others in 1942).

An early sign of progress came in July 1937 when the Baltimore Police Department hired Violet Hill Whyte as the city's first black police officer. Whyte, however, was not a uniform officer and did not carry a gun as part of her work. In 1941, President Franklin Roosevelt issued Executive Order 8802 which established Fair Employment Practices Committee (FEPC) and lay a foundation for broader activism against discriminatory hiring. Such efforts were frustrated, however, by the weak support of many industrial unions for black workers and the racism of white workers. This challenge is exemplified in the example of Bethlehem Steel in 1943 (?) when white workers walked off the job in protest over the hiring of black workers.

Public workers had more success in the years after World War II than some private workers. In 1945, the NAACP won a critical legal victory to end a segregated training program at the Enoch Pratt Free Library in the case of Kerr v. Enoch Pratt Free Library (1945).[32] In 1953, the Baltimore City Fire Department appointed their first African American firemen. In 1949, the Baltimore City Medical Society, a local professional association for doctors, voted to admit African American members.

Manpower: Negro bomber plant workers, 1942. U.S. Office of War Information. Courtesy New York Public Library, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture Photographs and Prints Division

Public Accommodations

In some cases, public facilities began to change willingly to include African American residents in ways they had not before. For example, the Baltimore Museum of Art held a "Negro Art Show" in 1947. However, many business owners maintained policies of segregation they had adopted in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The fight against segregated public accommodations expanded in this period with both formal Civil Rights organizations and individual activists taking part. Three notable locations for this activism and related conflicts include:

- Public parks and recreational facilities
- Theaters and stores
- Transportation facilities

Parks and recreation

Baltimore's growing African American population made it more difficult in the 1930s for Baltimore City to sustain segregation for the city's parks and recreational facilities.[33]

For example, in September 1934, the Carroll Park golf course partly opened to African American golfers but limited black players to specific days maintaining separation from white players through staggered play. In 1938, two black golfers Dallas Nicholas and William I. Gosnell sued Baltimore City to try to overturn this policy but were unsuccessful.[34]

On December 17, 1947, a group of white and black young people organized an integrated youth basketball game at Garrison Junior High School to protest segregationist policies. This pattern of interracial protest continued on July 11, 1948 when a group of young black and white tennis players organized a game on the tennis courts at Druid Hill Park. The protest led to a lawsuit against the city, Boyer v. Garrett (1949), that resulted in the court overturning the city's long-standing policy of racial segregation in city parks.[35]

Emboldened by this success, in 1950, a group of African American activists attempted to purchase tickets for the beach at Fort Smallwood Park a popular recreational park located in Anne Arundel County but owned and managed by Baltimore City.

Finally, in 1953, Governor Theodore McKeldin opened all state parks to African Americans.

Theaters and stores

Many downtown department stores refused to allow black shoppers to try on clothes, return clothes after a purchase, or provide service to black shoppers at all. In addition, store restaurants and lunch counters refused to seat African American diners offering them take out service or no service at all. In 1945 , the *Afro-American* newspaper began the "Orchid and Onion" campaign to celebrate stores that did not discrimination against black shopper ("Orchids") and shame downtown department stores with discriminatory policies ("Onions").[36]

Black people faced similar policies of separation and discrimination at local theaters as well as stores. In addition, theaters often refused to book black musicians and performers. On February 1, 1948, the Baltimore police arrested a group of Morgan State College students for picketing Ford's Theater on Fayette Street. The students and other activists soon returned and continued a five year campaign to end segregated seating at Ford's Theater. Finally, in 1953, Ford's Theatre ended segregated seating. After the Lyric Theatre on Mt. Royal Avenue refused to allow singer and activist Marian Anderson to perform, Baltimore's Commission on Human Relations intervened and persuaded the theatre owners to allow Marian Anderson to appear in January 1954. Despite this progress, however, most hotels and restaurants remained segregated so, after the performance, Sidney Hollander, Sr. hosted an afternoon reception with Anderson at his home.

Housing

The New Deal and World War II both led to major changes in the relationship of the city and state government to housing and transportation in Baltimore. During the Great Depression, the shortage of new homes for both white and black buyers kept existing homeowners fixed in place and stopped the process of racial transition that had been underway in west and east Baltimore neighborhoods from the 1880s through the 1920s.

The lines of segregation were further reinforced by the Home Owners' Loan Corporation (HOLC) (established in 1933) which used infamous "red-lining" maps to discourage lending in neighborhoods where African Americans lived. The National Housing Act of 1934 created the Federal Housing Administration and the Housing Act of 1937 provided a new source of federal funding for cities like Baltimore to engage in "slum clearance" and build new public housing projects. The federal government continued to shape housing policy after WWII with the approval of the Housing Act of 1949 on July 15, 1949.

These policy changes, and the U.S. Supreme Court decision in the case of *Shelley v. Kraemer* ending the legal enforcement of racial covenants shaped changes in the areas of:

- Public housing beginning in the late 1930s

- Private housing beginning in the mid–1940s through racial transition and "white flight"
- Transportation and land use policies that had a discriminatory affect on black neighborhoods

Across the country, housing starts dropped by over 90% from a high of 937,000 in 1925 to 93,000 in 1933.[37]

During the Great Depression, West Baltimore's "color line" had stabilized around Fulton Avenue. Beginning in the late 1940s, however, neighborhoods at the edge of Old West Baltimore began to transition from white to black. The change was driven by a number of factors including the rapid growth of Baltimore's African American population during the 1940s and 1950s, the intense overcrowding and deteriorating housing conditions within historically segregated African American neighborhoods, and the movement of white households out of the center city to the areas of new development in the Baltimore suburbs.

From January 1941 to November 1941 alone, housing vacancies for units open to African American occupancy shrank from .8% to .1%. In a letter to Mayor McKeldin in July 1945, in response to the efforts by a group of 350 residents in the Fulton Avenue area to prevent black residents from moving west, the NAACP argued "growth demands that we take in those streets that fringe our area since every attempt to enter new sections is vigorously denied." The Citizens Committee for Justice and the Baltimore Urban League observed "the need for more housing is most sharply felt in the Negro community, where there are virtually no vacancies of any type."[38]

An October 1948 editorial in the Baltimore Sun described the "colored section of most cities" as "already dangerously overcrowded" and noted that only 2% of new housing built in 1948 was open to African Americans, despite representing 20% of Baltimore's total population.[39] By 1950, Baltimore had 226,053 black residents, representing 23.8% of the population but occupying only 19.4% of dwelling units. This pattern continued into the early 1950s: of the 53,000 permits issued new homes in Baltimore metropolitan area from 1950 to 1953, only 3,200 of those were open to African American households, even as the black population increased another 10%.

Racial transition and "white flight"

When African American residents began responding to this housing crisis by purchasing homes in formerly segregated white neighborhoods some white resident met them with violence. In 1945, a group of people, described by the *Baltimore Afro American* as "hoodlums who resented having the Millers move into a white neighborhood," threw bricks at the home of James Miller and his family at 816 N. Fulton Avenue, breaking glass in the front door and windows.[40] The newspaper expanded on this account writing:

> Of at least fifty houses on Fulton Avenue now owned by colored persons between the 500 and 1800 blocks, only one case of violence has been reported by one of the three families now known to occupy homes there. The James Miller family, which moved into 816 N. Fulton Avenue on February 15, reported that bricks were thrown through a window and door panel on the following Saturday. The second floor of this house is occupied by the William Montgomery family... Among Fulton Avenue property owners are the Rev. Hiram J. Smith, Dr. Bruce Alleyne and the Medicos Club, an organization of physicians and dentists. "For Sale" signs may be seen all along Fulton Avenue.[41]

In August 1948, a house on the 1300 block of Payson Street just to the north of the district was subject to an arson attempt, attributed to retaliation against a white Jewish home-owner who had "broken" the block by selling a property to an African American homeowner in 1946.[42] In July 1950 after Ms. Beatrice Sessoms, a native of North Carolina who came to Baltimore in 1948, moved with her nephew to the 2300 block of Lauretta Avenue, her house was attacked.[43] Dr. Ed Orser quotes one black West Baltimore resident recalling the experience of white flight in the late 1940s:

> Black people started moving out of the confined areas somewhere around 1947 or 1948, but what would happen was that whites would evacuate a block or two blocks, and black people would move in. The evacuation would take place first. I remember streets like Fulton Avenue, Monroe Street—they were once totally white, and they went through the transition and changed somewhere between 1946 and 1949—that was the time I was in service. When I went in, there were no black people when I came out, there they were black streets... But it wasn't integration... it was an evacuation.[44]

These initial movements soon accelerated, particularly in west and northwest areas of Baltimore. Lula Jones Garrett, a columnist for the *Baltimore Afro*, observed in a column titled "Change-the-Address New Game on Baltimore Front" writing:

> What with the local yokels forsaking the ghettos and moving into swankier mansions, it takes a special edition of the directory to locate your best friends these days."[45]

The process of this rapid transition is closely associated with negative accounts of realtors or "block-busters" using a range of tactics to take advantage of both white sellers and black buyers. For example, during the 1940s and 1950s many African American households purchased home under land-installment contracts or buy-like-rent arrangements, also known as lease option contracts, that allowed home-owners to purchase property without an initial down payment or closing charges. However, these arrangements did not immediately transfer title to the property and the contract could still be terminated if the new home-owner missed a single payment. Although the black home-ownership rate rose by 194% between 1940 and 1950, in comparison to 58.8% for whites, a 1955 survey by the Maryland Commission on Interracial Problems and Relations found that 53% of their respondents had purchased their homes through such arrangements rather than regular financing.[46]

According to an interview with Antero Pietella, in 1947, Thomas Cripps witnessed a man with suit in the area around his home at 2323 Mosher Street carrying signs "This House is Not for Sale," with the implication that the neighborhood was imminently threatened with transition. Cripps' family became the first household on the block to sell their property to a black family when they sold their home in 1949 to Ellsworth F. Davage, a Baltimore County school teacher, and his wife Elizabeth.[47]

Although Baltimore evidently avoided widespread physical violence on a scale comparable to white antagonists in Detroit or Chicago, the State Commission on Interracial Problems observed in 1958, "The problem it said, is not with violence 'but with the frigid withdrawal' of whites from the Negroes." During the late 1950s, the State

Commission and others finally engaged with the ongoing process of racial transition with the beginning of advocacy and organizing efforts to promote "neighborhood stabilization."[48]

Transportation and land use

The issue of highway construction and the disparate impact of highway construction on black neighborhoods began to take shape in this period. At the most basic level, white households were more likely to own cars than African American households.

A series of road building and widening projects in the 1930s and 1940s brought increased noise and automotive traffic to largely black neighborhoods. Examples include the construction of the Howard Street extension and bridge over the Jones Falls in 1938 (displacing a large number African American households) and the initial expansion of Druid Lake Drive in 1947.[[49];;[50] Druid Lake Drive expanded again in 1964 despite significant opposition from nearby residents.] In 1949, the NAACP protested a proposal to convert Druid Hill Avenue into a one-way street but was unsuccessful in reversing the move.[51]

The most notable of the proposed road projects in this period was the 1944 plan for an east-west highway prepared by New York planner Robert Moses. The plan would have required the demolition of two hundred city blocks and nineteen hundred residents but Moses suggested, "Nothing which we propose to remove will constitute any loss to Baltimore."[52] Moses argued that the demolition of "slums" was a benefit as "the more of them that are wiped out the healthier Baltimore will be in the long run."[53]

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