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Springwood Avenue Rising:

Race, Leisure, and Decline in the 1970 Asbury Park Uprising

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Introduction

In 1978, Asbury Park, New Jersey, the once-glorious, one-square-mile resort town beloved for its boardwalk, beaches, and shopping district, was officially designated the United States' 12th

most distressed urban area by the Brookings Institute.[1] Former resident Bruce Springsteen, who debuted in 1972 with an album titled "Greetings from Asbury Park, N.J.," stopped writing songs about the city.[2] Still, for some tourists on the Eastern seaboard, the decaying façade of the boardwalk was its selling point. "The irony of Asbury Park is that what it lacks in aesthetics and hygiene it makes up for in atmosphere," a *New York Times* feature opined.[3] In a decade marked by severe economic stagnation, visitors were still drawn to what the decay once represented: the halcyon days of the 1920s, marked by grand Victorian hotels, lofty department stores, and Beaux-Arts movie palaces and carousels. As Springsteen once sang, visitors could dream of finding a firework show at the pier, playing pinball at dusty arcades, and chasing after "factory girls" underneath the boardwalk. Thus, for a city without industry, the key challenge for urban planners seeking to revive Asbury Park was, according to the *Times*, "[revamping] a dying city without disturbing its fragile nostalgia."[4]

Press observers, residents, and city officials attributed its decline to a week of disturbances in 1970, when, over Fourth of July weekend, the city's predominantly African American commercial district, called the West Side, went up in flames. The "troubles" began on the evening of July 4, 1970, when two cops were called on a group of Black teenagers throwing rocks and bottles at passing cars on Springwood Avenue, the area's primary commercial thoroughfare. As the police arrived, another crowd leaving from two teen dances emptied onto the street. Tensions flared, more rocks and bottles came flying, and, soon, the entire 50-man Asbury Park police force was called in. Over the next few days, Springwood Avenue saw massive fires, smashed windows,

[1] "Asbury Park: Comeback Without Gambling," *New York Times*, May 7, 1978.
[2] Daniel Wolff, *4th of July, Asbury Park: A History of the Promised Land* (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2005), 217.
[3] *New York Times*, May 7, 1978.
[4] Ibid.

looting, and injuries. As the violence escalated, so too did the police presence. Mayor Joseph Mattice instituted a curfew and called in reinforcements from neighboring police departments and the New Jersey State Police. With the attention of City Hall, West Side leaders presented a list of 21 specific reforms to Mattice and City Council at Monmouth Community Action Program headquarters. At the same time, however, the confrontations between members of the crowd and State Police reached a climax when, as the violence was on the verge of spilling over the railroad tracks and onto the east side business district, state troopers were ordered to fire shots into the crowd. Though the shooting resulted in no fatalities, accusations of police misconduct led to a long, albeit inconclusive, probe by the state government. As the number of incidents subsided and police gradually withdrew from Asbury Park, the future of the West Side, and the city, was uncertain. Mounting pressure from national media outlets and the new public relations problem posed to beachside businesses enabled Black community leaders, led by Rutgers University administrator and former City Council candidate Willie Hamm, to continue negotiating with the Mattice administration. As this study shows, the following month of failed interventions, cancelled meetings, and public disagreements marched the city down the long, painfully slow path of urban decline.

The incident, concentrated in this quadrant of Asbury Park, saw 180 people injured, 167 arrested, and $4 million in property damage.[5] To the East Side – tourists, local officials, and wealthier white residents – the "troubles" were also terribly reminiscent of the deadly race riots that swept 159 towns and cities, including Newark, just three years prior. At the peak of the unrest, the *Madison-Florham Park Eagle* wrote, "Suburban residents are getting a bit jittery as 'hot-

[5] Joseph Bilby and Harry Ziegler, *Asbury Park: A Brief History* (Charleston: The History Press, 2009), 108.

summer' violence this week hit Asbury Park with a "little Newark" blow that not only wrecked whole sections of the seashore resort but threatens to kill vital vacation business in the city."[6]

While tourists avoided the troubled Asbury Park out of fear, residents, business owners, and local officials were unhappy with what they felt was sensationalized news coverage. News clips of debris, heightened police presence, and angry Black residents revealed a city more wracked by poverty and violence than it was willing to admit, but they also presented a difficult public relations problem. When NBC's Channel 4 blamed the disorders on the cancellation of English rock group Jethro Tull at Convention Hall, the boardwalk's Beaux-Arts indoor exhibition center, promoter Moe Septee turned to the *Asbury Park Press* to set the record straight. "Both that concert and the one which replaced it were attractions which do not lure [Negroes]," he explained.[7] Meanwhile, a resident in Interlaken, New Jersey drew attention to a sympathetic reporter on Channel 11, who could not help but notice the "sharp division between the poor people of Springwood Avenue and the rich people sunning themselves on the beach." The resident quipped that the reporter failed to notice that, "looting and vandalism is wrong and that those people on the beach were middle class and poor and of all colors."[8] To East Side businesses and their patrons, the violence that rocked Asbury Park was squarely a West Side problem and, whatever the problem was, it had nothing to do with the boardwalk. To West Siders, it seemed that decades of neglect, mismanagement, and outright racism toward its Black community were brought to bear. Reverend Verner R. Matthews of the Second Baptist Church in the *Asbury Park Press* pointed to a "long and general dissatisfaction" brewing in the neighborhood about the lack of jobs, poor housing conditions, inadequate education, and neglect by town officials. "The political leaders are only

[6] "Asbury Riot has People Jittery," *Madison-Florham Eagle*, July 9, 1970.
[7] "TV Coverage of Disorders Spurs Disgust from Many," *Asbury Park Evening Press*, July 9, 1970.
[8] Ibid.

interested in the main source of revenue for the city – the Boardwalk."[9] Ermon K. Jones, president of the Asbury Park-Neptune chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), drew a stronger connection between poor conditions on the West Side to violence. "The potential for the riots has always existed in Asbury Park," he told the *Press*. "It was just a matter of time before the potential reaches the surface and explodes."[10]

By 1970, it seemed as if every city in the United States was biding its time until it was done under by another episode of mass racial violence. When Asbury Park joined the hundreds of other American cities that burned in the 1960s and 1970s, its story blended in, too. As historians Thomas Sugrue and Andrew Goodman have argued, similar problems of poor housing, lack of quality education, segregated public facilities, and police brutality troubled northern cities. But such generalizations have obscured crucial distinctions about the tensions and dynamics that affected each municipality. This is exacerbated by the fact that most scholarship on the unrest of the 1960s has overlooked smaller towns and cities. In the "long hot summer" of 1967 alone, 45% of its 163 riots occurred in cities with populations under 100,000 and 28% in cities with populations under 50,000.[11] Even less attention has been paid to unrest after 1967. Historian Alison Isenberg further notes that, at the same time as Asbury Park, smaller towns and cities across the country such as New Bedford, Massachusetts, Homer, Louisiana, and Peoria Illinois were too in upheaval,[12] but they have similarly received little scholarly attention compared to Los Angeles, Newark, and Detroit. In this study, then, I argue that the racialized geography of Asbury Park, a product of historical segregation, redlining, and an uneven process of integration, critically transformed the

[9] "Disorders Wrack City; Mayor Orders Curfew," *Asbury Park Evening Press*, July 6, 1970, 3.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Thomas Sugrue and Andrew Goodman, "Plainfield Burning: Black Rebellion in the Suburban North," *Journal of Urban History* 33:4 (2007), 569.
[12] Isenberg, 231.

course of events as it experienced its own disorder. When understood in the context of Asbury's history, the Civil Rights movement, and new scholarship on political movement within space, the disorder in Asbury Park in July 1970 can actually be interpreted as the Springwood Avenue uprising.

As historian Amanda Seligman has observed, only contemporary scholarship has located the disorders of the 1960s and 1970s within a longer Black freedom struggle. Yet, these disorders, as she writes, continue to "sit uneasily in this literature."[13] Riots, she argues, are as much discursive constructions by journalists, policymakers, and politicians as they are historiographical ones. Writing such as Thomas Sugrue's *The Origins of the Urban Crisis* has made "riots seem an apocalyptic climax, an explosive, unproductive response to decades of northern racism."[14] In this vein, historian Daniel Weeks has called for the events in Asbury Park to be remembered as part of the 'Black Revolt' of the 1960s. "Asbury Park provides a model for understanding the connection between urban upheaval, declining economic conditions, discrimination, segregation, and the relative political influence of whites and blacks in a segregated community."[15] Weeks' "Black Revolt" is an important framework for interpreting the disorders beyond inexplicable rage embedded in a historical and cultural moment of chaos and rapid transformation. Over four days of violence, Daniel Weeks writes, a chance evening of teenage misbehavior evolved into an opportunity for both ordinary citizens and formally organized civil rights institutions such as the local Black churches, Monmouth Community Action Program, and NAACP to challenge the status quo.[16]

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[13] Amanda Seligman, "'But Burn—No': The Rest of the Crowd in Three Civil Disorders in 1960s Chicago," *Journal of Urban History* 37:2 (2011), 231.
[14] Ibid.
[15] Daniel Weeks, "From Riot to Revolt: Asbury Park in July 1970," *NJS: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, July 2016, 83.
[16] Ibid., 103.

Furthermore, Seligman proposes returning the history of urban unrest to the physical site in which it occurred. Because existing interpretations of riots miss key details about who comprised the crowd and their motivations, she proposes zooming out from the perspective of the psyche of the individual rioter and looking at the broader physical space in which the civil disturbance occurred – "spaces that police and military forces attempted to cordon off as part of their riot suppression effort."[17] Through close examination of three 1960s incidents on the West Side of Chicago, "cracking open" urban unrest and "examining their anatomy," Seligman demonstrates that there were more actors on the streets than just the participants who looted, pitched rocks, and set fires; there were bystanders, children, displaced neighborhood residents, religious workers, and "counterrioters."[18] By looking directly inside the "anatomy" of a disorder, she connects the actions of people on the street to a long Black freedom struggle. In this study of Asbury Park, then, I zoom out from just Springwood Avenue between July 4, 1970, when the first teenagers confronted local police, and July 11, 1970, when state troopers finally withdrew. I argue that a more precise understanding of the significance of these events also requires careful attention to the historical relationship between the West Side and the boardwalk starting from the founding of the city in 1871, the immediate aftermath of the unrest, and continuing efforts in the present-day to remember the legacy of the Springwood Avenue uprising.

In Chapter 1, I expand the physical context of the Springwood Avenue uprising to encompass the entirety of Asbury Park by assessing the fraught, complex relationship between the West Side and the boardwalk. The problems that the city faced resembled those of both the country's biggest cities and its cookie-cutter suburbs. Sometimes, in its rationally planned city streets, seasonal population, and precarious place in the American imagination, Asbury Park even

[17] Seligman, 232.
[18] Ibid.

seemed to exist in a category of its own. Unlike deindustrializing New Bedford, Hartford, and Peoria, this was a small resort town on the Jersey Shore, which, for much of the twentieth century, was known as the nation's playground. The boardwalk and its surrounding hotel, retail, and music industries were part of an entire imagined world of leisure, recreation, and pleasure borne from the West Side's labor. In its heyday, Cookman Avenue, the East Side's primary retail corridor, was a premier shopping destination for consumers throughout the Jersey Shore. The commercial hub of Cookman was Steinbach's, a glamorous and comprehensive department store stocked with five floors of showcases, men's and women's clothing, crockery and hardware, and luxury furniture.[19] While white beachgoers and shoppers freely traversed the East Side and enjoyed its multitude of modest luxuries, West Siders lived in decrepit public housing, received meager salaries, and were expected to use the integrated beaches miles down the shore in Belmar or Seaside.[20]

In the twentieth century, local civil rights activists, operating through established civil rights organizations like the Asbury Park-Neptune chapter of the NAACP and a constellation of community organizations, demanded consumer rights and the integration of public facilities. In this tradition of community organizing, after the first two days of unrest on Springwood Avenue, West Side leaders quickly voiced to the *Asbury Park Press* that discontent mainly resulted from the lack of recreational facilities and the lack of jobs on the boardwalk. First, as the history of segregated recreation shows, the irony of charging a city sustained almost singlehandedly by its leisure economy with having inadequate recreational facilities reveals that this inequality was deliberate. Second, the lack of jobs on the boardwalk, which employers and Joseph Mattice claimed were in abundance, is actually related to the larger trend of postwar Black migration to the North. As labor economist Leah Boustan shows, the influx of Black workers in a job market

[19] Bilby and Ziegler, 57.
[20] Ibid.

already reluctant to hire them further limited the number of available opportunities. In Asbury Park, Black consumers were, at most, hardly welcome guests at its popular recreational facilities. When ideas about Black freedom and equality intersected with ideas about consumer rights, it revealed that their access to the full material privileges of citizenship was conditional, too. However, these conditions, along with suggestions that the violence was a targeted, rational response against exploitation, did not help community leaders explain why the destruction was concentrated entirely on Springwood Avenue, a beloved Black business district. Within this disconnect, suggestions that the violence was the product of criminal materialism, greed, and malice were more compelling explanations, ignoring an underlying current of activism and desire for positive change on the West Side. As historian Victoria Wolcott has observed in her recent survey of racialized violence in segregated recreational facilities, nostalgia for the lost golden age of urban amusements has pointed to African Americans' criminality after desegregation as the cause of decline.[21]

In Chapter 2, following Amanda Seligman's model, I explore the "internal anatomy" of the disorder's climax – a dramatic militaristic confrontation between an agitated crowd and state troopers along the border between the West Side and East Side. How did a small neighborhood in a one-square-mile resort town on the Jersey Shore attract this much police attention and level of property damage? How can this destruction involving mostly Asbury Park's own residents contribute to the long Black freedom struggle? Here I suggest that the year 1970, though certainly still connected to the social upheavals of the 1960s Civil Rights Movement, represented a point of departure in the way that governments handled urban unrest. After the deadly 1967 Newark rebellion, the New Jersey State Police developed new strategies for suppressing political

[21] Victoria Wolcott, *Race, Riots, and Roller Coasters: The Struggle over Segregated Recreation in America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 12.

movement, instructing officers on techniques crowd dispersal, heavy-handed equipment for riot control, and framing gatherings of agitated crowds in the framework of Black criminality and public nuisance. Asbury Park, then, was one of the first civil disturbances in which these new riot control strategies were deployed. In the process, memories of spectacular violence etched over the persistent tide of community organizing and activism on the ground, while accusations of police misconduct and their role in the destruction faded quietly into the archive.

At the same time, I propose shifting the locus of analysis from the press, police, state officials, and prominent community leaders, to the ambiguously defined, amorphous conception of the "crowd," sometimes known as the "mob." Paying particular attention to this confrontation, I examine the movements of both the troopers and the crowd using Andre Lepecki's formulations of *choreopolice* and *choreopolitics*.[22] While the troopers executed a particular strategy conceived and reconsolidated in the aftermath of the civil rights disturbances of the 1960s, I suggest understanding the movements of the crowd as more than simply irrational, angry, or criminal. As the crowd approached the East Side, *toward the boardwalk,* toward their imagination of a different reality, toward freedom, I argue their movement is distinctly tactical, political, and improvisatory, when juxtaposed with the presentation of demands by West Side community leaders to Joseph Mattice. Expanding from Seligman's call to understand unrest in the context of its particular physical space, I suggest that this confrontation was not squarely about defending and controlling space but rather mobility and movement within and across racialized spaces.

In Chapter 3, I examine the effectiveness of protestors' political movement during the unrest by assessing its immediate aftermath. This study additionally pays close attention to the persistent efforts of leaders such as Willie Hamm, who collaborated over a series of effective

[22] Andre Lepecki, "Choreopolice and Choreopolitics: or, the task of the dancer," *TDR: The Drama Review* 57:4 (2013), 13-27.

tactics. During and after the unrest of Asbury Park, civil rights advocates and community organizers – a broad coalition of teenagers, adults, ministers, and government workers – actually made small but genuine gains for the West Side. They articulated their grievances in a list of clear demands that required yes-or-no answers, and no request – from the hiring of a permanent city manager to the naming of a new middle school – was too big or too small. They demanded that City Council meet them on the West Side and not in City Hall. When City Council's initial responses were unsatisfactory, they planned a boycott of East Side businesses and threatened to sit-in at City Hall. In the year following the unrest, though Joseph Mattice backtracked on many of his initial promises within the first month, organizers also added momentum to long-dormant urban renewal projects, pushed for immediate funding for a rat fumigation program in its public housing projects, and negotiated a historically difficult relationship between the West Side and Asbury Park's municipal government.

Today, the Asbury Park Historical Society's quick overview of the town's history writes: "The advent of the Garden State Parkway, Six Flags Great Adventure in Jackson, and major shopping malls took tourists, businesses, and shoppers away from Asbury Park and the city saw hard times from around 1970 to the turn of the century."[23] The ambiguous reference to the year 1970 does not explicitly mention the disorders, but it recognizes that this was a decisive moment in shaping the future of the city. On the surface, Asbury Park seemed to represent the "typical 'declension' narrative" described by historian Bryant Simon in his history of neighboring competitor Atlantic City. The "typical 'declension' narrative" describes a specific, recurring timeline of "urban decay, white flight, rise of the suburbs, and the use of quick fixes, like gambling,

[23] "The History of Asbury Park," *Asbury Park Historical Society*. http://www.aphistoricalsociety.org/history.html. Accessed March 10, 2020.

to solve deep and vexing economic and social problems."[24] In Atlantic City, Simon argues that the boardwalk sold a fantasy of luxury and social mobility to blue-collar and middle-class white Americans, while African Americans pushed rickshaw-like rolling chairs, worked as personal servants, and cleaned hotel rooms. Until the civil rights movement, not-so-subtle city codes, public ordinances, and rules of respectability excluded African Americans from participating in these public spaces as consumers. When legal integration increased African Americans' access to public spaces, shedding the "fantasy of racial deference," white Americans fled to even more racially exclusive tourist destinations like Disneyland, which opened in 1955.[25]

Despite their shared "urban" problems and resort industries, though, Asbury Park is still distinct from Atlantic City in that these dynamics boiled over into a dramatic, militaristic confrontation between its residents and the police. However, by reconstructing these events through newspapers articles, New Jersey State Police records, Mayor Joseph Mattice's papers, and self-published memoirs by residents, we too might look beyond the rubble on Springwood Avenue and see instead the multiple, if small victories, that resulted from and needed an uprising.

Chapter 1: 4th of July

On the evening of July 4, 1970, Donald Hammary, a representative at the Monmouth County Action Program in Asbury Park, was hanging outside Cuba's Night Club when some kids, running around throwing bottles at each other, accidentally hit a passing car. He had just locked up his father's billiards hall on Springwood Avenue.[26] Business was slow, since most kids in the neighborhood were attending one of two Black teen dances in the West Side Community Center and a nearby Catholic church. There was no incident with this driver, but, "next thing you know,"

[24] Bryant Simon, *Boardwalk of Dreams: Atlantic City and the Fate of Urban America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 12.
[25] Ibid., 14.
[26] Wolff, 180.

he told journalist Daniel Wolff, "one of the kids is up on the roof [with] bottles full of water…waiting for a convertible to come. Ditta-da-ditta-da-ditta!"[27] And it just so happened that, shortly after midnight, both teen dances let out onto Springwood. Two cops, both Black, soon arrived onto Ackers and Springwood. According to officer David Parreott, white policemen often deferred calls from Springwood to one of their twelve Black colleagues, considering it "black cops' turf."[28] Tonight, for some reason, the crowds wouldn't budge. These two officers found themselves quickly outnumbered by the swelling crowd. While one officer called for backup, the other pulled out his gun to press the pack back.

Just over a year before, in 1969, when Joseph Mattice was sworn in as mayor, he reassured the city – and perhaps also potential visitors, the West Side, and himself – that Asbury Park was doing just fine. Like the generations of Asbury Park mayors before him, Joseph Mattice was a career politician, having previously served as a district court judge, member of the Monmouth County Board of Elections, and president of the Asbury Park Democratic Committee. In 1957, he was the only Democrat elected to city council and served 12 years before being elected mayor in 1969, in a bitter race against fellow councilman Henry Vaccaro.[29]

"Some people say the city is decaying. I don't think that's so. I think we've been dormant," he told the *Asbury Park Sunday Press*.[30] For the previous decade, public quarreling, shifting allegiances, and mixed messaging marked local politics. Notably, City Hall was torn over whether to admit publicly that the city's financial condition was poor or at least in need of improvement. In 1967, Mattice and fellow councilman Henry Vaccaro, then allies, co-authored an open letter against the acting city manager for "frivolous and damaging" statements about the city's financial

[27] Ibid.
[28] Wolff, 181.
[29] "Mattice is Elected New Mayor," *Asbury Park Evening Press*, May 28, 1969.
[30] "Mattice Aims to Revive City, Civic Pride," *Asbury Park Sunday Press*, June 8, 1969.

condition and "apparent dedication to a policy of fright and hysteria."[31] In 1966, the city operated on a budget deficit of $17,329, and the surplus fund had dwindled to only $621.[32] Vaccaro insisted that Asbury's total debt of $7,658,976 was still half the value of the city's beachfront property, suggesting that their liabilities opened up opportunities for future growth and development rather than suggesting serious financial difficulties.[33] Setting aside the question of whether Asbury's budget was adequately managed, the strong reaction from Vaccaro and Mattice suggested that there was more at stake than just the city's financial conditions. Driven by its tourist economy, the city of Asbury Park needed potential visitors to believe its beaches, boardwalks, and department stores were impervious to decline, even as profits waned and buildings visibly decayed.

In 1970, Asbury Park's carnivalesque ruse was still convincing. Even on a muggy Fourth of July that year, oceanfront hotels and motels in Monmouth County found their rooms booked to capacity.[34] Enough people were headed for the Jersey Shore that New Jersey State Police ordered all available personnel on patrol for the weekend and assigned helicopters to keep tabs on bumper-to-bumper traffic and possible auto accidents.[35] That weekend, British rock band Jethro Tull was slated to perform at Convention Hall on the boardwalk, and a young Bruce Springsteen was playing at The Upstage.[36] Across the state, local and state officials were on high alert to any disturbances on one of the busiest weekends of the year. Though, as police chief Thomas Smith would later note, there would be no indication of "impending trouble."[37]

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[31] "Vaccaro Seeking Censure," *Asbury Park Evening Press*, March 6, 1967.
[32] $118,119.43 in 2020 adjusted for inflation.
[33] *Asbury Park Evening Press*, March 6, 1967.
[34] "Eatontown Celebrates in Rain," *Asbury Park Press*, July 5, 1970.
[35] "Jersey exodus despite weather," *Newark Star-Ledger*, July 4, 1970.
[36] Tom Jones, dir., *Asbury Park: Riot, Redemption, Rock & Roll* (London: Trafalgar Releasing, 2019), Film.
[37] [37] James McCormick and John Wheeling, "Business Damaged; Many Held," *Asbury Park Evening Press*, July 6, 1970.

By 1970, Springwood Avenue was a vibrant center of Black culture on the Jersey Shore. Alongside bordering Neptune Township, the West Side was the largest African American community in Monmouth County.[38] Self-published in 2007, Madonna Carter Jackson's *Asbury Park: A West Side Story* reminds its readers of the intimate network of families, teachers, business owners, artists, and activists that comprised the West Side, through the lens of the father's camera and her personal recollections. West Siders lived in public housing developments like Asbury Park Village, the Boston Way apartments, and Lincoln Village. They shopped on Springwood, got their hair cut at Eureka's Barber Shop and B Evans Beauty Salon, and met friends for drinks at the Turf Club and Elk Lodge. After a long week of work, West Siders took to Springwood on Friday and Saturday evenings to cool off, hang out, and have fun. Together, churches, the West Side Community Center, and other social organizations provided important services, gathering spaces, and networks for residents. The West Side Community Center on Dewitt Avenue, founded in 1942 by the Asbury Park Urban League, provided dancing and piano lessons, hosted birthday parties and funeral services, and held fundraisers for scholarships, leadership programs, and local charities. The New Jersey Association of the Masonic Lodge, a fraternal African American organization, presented an annual beauty pageant. "The 'It takes a village to raise a child' theory was in effect before the titled book was written by Hillary Clinton," Jackson remarks. "The ladies of Asbury Park have generations of children, including myself, who are thankful for their gifts of time and extended kindness."[39]

This memory of Springwood Avenue, before it was re-inscribed with images of shattered windows and torched buildings, is not entirely lost. Today, the Asbury Park African-American Music Project, a volunteer-run digital humanities project directed by historians, community

[38] Greason, 42.
[39] Jackson, 127.

members, and longtime residents, organizes oral histories, research, writing, and programs celebrating the music heritage of Asbury in its entirety, often remembered only for its East Side industry and, notably, Bruce Springsteen. The project invites residents to contribute artifacts to its archive and features a digital museum, mapping and documenting significant places.[40] Throughout the twentieth century, Springwood Avenue's venues allowed for the emerging genres of spirituals, jazz, blues, soul, and gospel music to flourish.[41] Much as the Boardwalk's venues attracted major artists, through music promoter Moe Septee, Springwood, too, hosted its fair share of star performances and homegrown musicians, particularly in jazz. Cuba's, right next to Hammary's father's billiards hall, once featured a lineup of popular entertainers including Billie Holliday, Cab Calloway, and Billy Eckstine.[42] Meanwhile, the Orchid Lounge attracted jazz acts like Jimmy Smith, Jack McDuff, and Lonnie Liston Smith.[43] "Singing, dancing, entertaining, or being entertained was a pleasure after a long week of working at the shore restaurants and hotels," writes lifelong resident Madonna Carter Jackson, in a self-published collection of photographs taken by her father. "Making sure the rest of the world had conveniences during their stay at the beach resort was a sun up to sun down job."[44]

As historian Walter Greason has demonstrated, local historians, many of whom are Black women, have extensively documented and shared the contours of everyday life on the West Side. These women, Greason notes, were not only central actors in the community, working while also performing the unrecognized labor of fundraising, canvassing, teaching, raising children, and maintaining the household. Through projects such as Madonna Carter Jackson's *Asbury Park: A*

[40] More information about the Asbury Park African-American Music Project: https://www.asburyamp.org/.
[41] Wolff, 195.
[42] Jackson, 12.
[43] Wolff, 177.
[44] Madonna Carter Jackson, *Asbury Park: A West Side Story, A Pictorial Journey Through The Eyes of Joseph A. Carter, Sr.* (Self-published, 2007), 16.

West Side Story, they were also the "final arbiters of familial knowledge about the past across multiple generations."[45] Her text is also uniquely interactive, offering space for readers to jot down reflections and even fill in the gaps in Jackson's memory.[46] By initiating a dynamic process of remembering with her audience, she produces an active, collaborative memory in stark contrast to present-day, more authoritative nostalgia for the golden age of Asbury Park. Stories of revival need a story of decline and, as various state actors, press observers, West Side community leaders, and residents negotiated the meanings, and final memory of the unrest, the destruction of the West Side would be implicated. While Springwood Avenue's decline has become directly responsible for Asbury Park's decline, histories like Jackson's persist as practices of recovery and resistance.

As Walter Greason further documents in his study of civil rights in suburban and rural New Jersey, an extensive network of leaders and community organizations historically tied together the Black communities of Asbury Park and Neptune and consistently protested segregation and outright racism.[47] Though Asbury Park would not develop as centralized a civil rights infrastructure as other major urban centers, Black residents consistently advocated for better material conditions through local civil rights organizations, churches, and community groups, whose memberships frequently overlapped. At churches like the Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, minister James Francis Robinson led indignant public responses to Bradley's racist city codes in 1887.[48] By 1940, Asbury Park had founded its own chapters of the United Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), National Association for the Advancement of Colored People

[45] Greason, 30.
[46] Ibid., 40.
[47] Ibid., 47-59.
[48] Bilby and Ziegler, *A Brief History*, 28.

(NAACP), and Urban League.[49] In 1941, the Asbury Park UNIA petitioned for the desegregation of the Bangs Avenue School and promoted the Black assistant principal to principal.[50]

These portraits of cheery families, singers, and beauty queens dispute dominant perceptions of the West Side as an urban slum. Nonetheless, it was still an area still marred by economic challenges, exacerbated by an inefficient and often incapable municipal government. As early as 1938, the Asbury Park Housing Authority described the primarily African American neighborhood as "definitely blighted."[51] A 1945 state report noted that nearly a third of the neighborhood's dwelling units were substandard.[52] After the war, the city struggled to stabilize its tax base. In August 1946, Asbury Park started selling its delinquent properties and empty lots to private owners in the hopes of increasing tax revenues.[53] Meanwhile, the city was preoccupied with accommodating rising car ownership, converting green lawns along Wesley Lake into parking spaces. In 1958, the city was finally granted federal funds for a new urban renewal project and razed the West Side for development, but construction was quickly stalled by bureaucratic red tape, government inefficiency, and alleged corruption. By 1960, the city started applying to newly created state and federal urban renewal programs to meet municipal obligations, having stopped assessing most of its commercial and residential properties; rumors quickly circulated that politicians were pocketing public funds.[54]

In 1970, the West Side was marked by empty lots from delayed urban renewal projects, deteriorating public facilities, and, especially, high unemployment. Press observers seeking a clear-cut explanation for the unrest found unemployment compelling, citing discontent over the

[49] Greason, 150.
[50] Ibid., 78.
[51] Weeks, 92.
[52] Ibid.
[53] Helen Chantal-Pike, *Asbury Park's Glory Days: The Story of an American Resort* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2005), 186.
[54] Helen Chantal-Pike, 186.

lack of jobs on the boardwalk. National and even international news coverage continued to reinforce this narrative. An international paper wrote that the unrest stemmed from anger from Black teenagers, over "discrimination in the lucrative summer-job market along the beaches."[55] To West Siders, it seemed that more boardwalk jobs were going to white teenagers from out-of-town.[56]

Mattice would later adamantly refute this narrative, insisting that the disorders had more to do with Black criminality than a scarcity of jobs. In a letter to a disgruntled critic months after the disorders, he wrote: "It is true that white students come to Asbury Park each summer to work for a two-month period to help defray their college expenses," Mattice wrote in a letter to a disgruntled citizen after the disorders. "But we have no applications for black waitresses from the boardwalk, and the amusement centers employ 33 1/3 black from Asbury Park."[57] Meanwhile, Donald Hammary claimed he received 700 job applications for 40 jobs. Just the year before, MCAP's federal funding for jobs was slashed in half.[58]

Despite these conflicting understandings of the job market, one thing was clear: the Boardwalk, which once heavily relied on Black workers from the West Side, seemed not to be hiring them anymore. Recent research from labor economist Leah Boustan, however, suggests a more complicated picture of hiring practices and Black economic opportunity in the North. As Boustan has found, the persistent in-migration of Black workers from the South to the North and West between 1940 and 1970 created competition among existing Black workers for the same few jobs.[59] Employment opportunities were further limited by the fact that white and Black workers

[55] Clipping from International Newspaper, November 7, 1970, Joseph F. Mattice Papers.
[56] Max Gunther, "What Really Happened in Asbury Park?" *TV Guide*, September 26, 1970, 8.
[57] Joseph Mattice to Winifred Haupt, November 10, 1970, Folder Critical Letters, Box 1, Joseph F. Mattice Papers, John Hope Franklin Center, Duke University.
[58] "Joblessness Seen Created Atmosphere for Disorders," *Asbury Park Evening Press*, July 10, 1970, 1.
[59] Leah Platt Boustan, *Competition in the Promised Land: Black Migrants in Northern Cities and Labor Markets* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017), 67.

were not often considered substitutable, either because of differences in schooling quality or the employer's views about race. Even within integrated workplaces, Black workers were still often restricted to the most dangerous and undesirable working conditions. However, Boustan also observed that pre-market discrimination, such as low-quality schooling in the South, set Black migrants at a greater disadvantage *before* they even applied for jobs.[60] In line with her observations, between 1940 and 1970, the total Black population of Monmouth County more than doubled, from 14,162 to 38,044.[61] What appeared simply as a problem of discriminatory employers hiring out-of-town white teenagers instead of local Black workers was actually weakening labor demand, caused by the influx of Black migrants, coupled with employers' desires to limit the visibility of African Americans on the newly integrated boardwalk.

On the evening of July 4, Police Chief Thomas Smith was at a club when he received a call that an unruly crowd of teenagers was causing trouble on Springwood. Smith was a local – a long-time resident, former star guard of the Asbury Park Public High School football team, and World War II Army veteran. In 1968, after 27 years in office, he was handpicked by his predecessor Maurice Fitzgerald to serve as Asbury Park's first Black police chief, a posting he held until 1979.[62] He eventually served on town council from 1985 to 1989 and mayor from 1989 to 1993, before serving as a state assemblyman for New Jersey's 11th District. At the time of his death in 2002, he was the only Black Republican legislator in the New Jersey State Assembly.[63] As a member of the police but one of the few African Americans in local power, Smith often found himself as a spokesperson to rather than for the West Side, appearing frequently at community

[60] Ibid., 65-92.
[61] United States Census 1940; United States Census 1970.
[62] "We Must Increase Our Efforts…," *Asbury Park Evening Press*, December 6, 1970, 1.
[63] New Jersey State Legislature, "Assemblyman Thomas Smith," https://web.archive.org/web/20021108003448/http://www.njleg.state.nj.us/members/smitht.asp (accessed March 20, 2020).

events and on the news about solving Asbury Park's "drug problem."[64] In an interview with the *Press* five months later, Smith would come to consider the Asbury Park uprising his career's greatest disappointment.

Eager to restore law and order on Springwood Avenue, Smith mobilized Asbury's entire fifty-man police force. But the increased presence of patrolmen seemed to agitate the crowd. Soon, the rock and bottle throwing escalated to shattering windows and breaking into stores. Before long, the crowd was running past the Second Baptist Church and busting liquor stores and drugstores up and down Springwood. "Get rid of them black pigs!" the crowd shouted at Black police officers, according to Hammary.[65] For hours, the crowd and arriving patrolmen pushed back-and-forth until, at dawn the next day, the crowd finally dispersed. Aside from some smashed windows and looted storefronts, the incident failed to garner much attention. In fact, it barely made it on the radar of West Side residents themselves, who continued to don their Sunday best and head to church. For the West Side, these kinds of incidents were not so uncommon. Resident Gilbert Reed recalled to historian Daniel Weeks a similar "rock and bottle festival" occurred just the week prior at a youth basketball league in in the neighboring town of Neptune.[66] On the beaches, tourists were enjoying the first sunny day that weekend. Clashes between West Side residents and police might have been so routine that it did not cross anyone's mind.

Most importantly, the events of Saturday, July 4 did not appear in the *Asbury Park Press* the next day. Its front-page editorial did opine, rather prophetically, that the nation's most crowded urban centers were in dire need of more parks and recreational facilities.[67] "There are millions in

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[64] "Shore Area Church Notes," *Asbury Park Evening Press*, March 21, 1970, 9; "Target" Ad, *Asbury Park Evening Press*, June 24, 1970, 50.
[65] Wolff, 181.
[66] Weeks, 86.
[67] "The Press Believes: There is Great Need for More Parks, Especially in Crowded Urban Areas," *Asbury Park Evening Press*, July 5, 1970, 1.

the crowded cities who have little if any opportunity to enjoy a county park 10 miles from their homes, let alone such national preserves as spectacular Yosemite and Yellowstone," the *Press* wrote. "Most of these people have neither the means nor opportunity for visiting a distant park and thus it has become necessary to bring the park to them."[68] The editorial then moved to cite Asbury Park as a shining example, not of the lack of recreational facilities but rather of their added value. Just recently, a group of "private citizens" on the West Side organized the construction of a swimming pool. The initiative was apparently successful, drawing thousands of people, youngsters and adults, from all over Monmouth County. The *Press* believed that these were encouraging signs that the county should invest in more swimming pools, small parks, and playgrounds.

In the resort town of Asbury Park, this charge took on a particular valence. By situating the West Side alongside the "millions" crowded in the country's urban centers, the *Press* sympathized with the neighborhood's poor quality of life. At the same time, they also made it easy to forget that Asbury Park, only one square mile, was founded for and sustained by leisure and recreation, nearly its entire economy structured around its boardwalk, beach, and entertainment industry. In the *Press*'s view, the Boardwalk and the West Side were two separate entities, the Boardwalk was a unique place of leisure, while the West Side was essentially indistinguishable from the inner-city ghettos of cities across the country. Tellingly, the *Press* was not interested in calling for reduced ticketing prices, the desegregation of its beaches, or increasing access to any of its existing recreational facilities. Their sympathy with the plight of the West Side extended only insofar as it did not inconvenience or fundamentally alter the way of life on the east.

After court-ordered integration of public facilities, northern public facilities would operate via more subtle mechanisms of exclusion, such as high ticket prices, tight membership restrictions,

[68] Ibid.

and unspoken rules about respectability.[69] However, as Bryant Simon argued in his history of nearby Atlantic City, persistent images of Black criminality and violence disrupted racialized notions of safety once advertised by the boardwalk. With the opening of Disneyland in 1955, Simon contends, boardwalks, as did America's downtowns,[70] increasingly deteriorated as their white patrons and their dollars increasingly fled to "safer," more racially exclusive alternatives. To white families on the Eastern seaboard, Disneyland's "Main Street" served as a "less urban, small-townish version of the Boardwalk," free from noisy motorways but still lined with luxe storefronts and impressive fake Victorian buildings.[71] In Asbury Park, the city's veneer of luxury was maintained by strictly regulating who could be seen and when. In the 1880s, when the city was just established, founder James Bradley limited Black people's access to the beaches to after 10:30 p.m. and banned "visibly ethnic" musicians from performing on the boardwalk.[72] In 1928, the Asbury Park-Neptune NAACP reported that police officers requested Black people on beaches to "move down where the colored people belong."[73] In 1970, as the city of Asbury Park confronted a shrinking tax base and dwindling profits on the Boardwalk, there was an ever-greater urgency to contain the West Side's problems discursively and, later, physically on the West Side.

Yet, as West Side community leaders stepped up in the *Press* to offer explanations for the unrest, they too would repeatedly allude to the need improved recreational services, alongside more jobs on the boardwalk. Deputy director of the Monmouth Community Action Program Wilbert C. Russell told the *Press* on Tuesday, July 7 that he sent 15 representatives into the crowds

[69] Wolcott, 8.
[70] For more on the economic effects of integration on American downtowns, see Isenberg, *Downtown America*, 203-254.
[71] Simon, 127.
[72] Walter D. Greason, *Suburban Erasure: How the Suburbs Ended the Civil Rights Movement in New Jersey* (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2013), 77.
[73] Ibid.

to gather grievances and listen to the community.[74] The most frequent complaints, according to MCAP director Joseph Taylor, were of poor housing conditions and, unsurprisingly, the demand for more recreation on the West Side.[75] In other incidents of social unrest across the country in the 1960s, this was not an uncommon call. In fact, Victoria Wolcott's extended survey of "recreation riots" in the twentieth century demonstrates the extent to which segregated public facilities were contested sites for civil rights activists and community organizers. Similarly, Thomas Sugrue and Andre Goodman's research on the 1967 disorders in Plainfield, New Jersey demonstrate that, alongside problems of high unemployment, police brutality, residential segregation, and educational inequality, the near complete lack of swimming pools and ball fields in the suburb's African American neighborhood festered discontent among its young people.[76] In an anonymous letter to the *Asbury Park Sunday Press*, a resident recalled that the new West Side swimming pool celebrated by the July 5 *Press* editorial was hardly a straightforward, democratic initiative. It remained the neighborhood's only pool, and it was built only after a few residents frustrated with the failed promise of a "vote-hungry politician" dipped into their own bank accounts to fund the project.[77] To the author, the incident represented a broader trend of neglect, inefficiency, and lack of accountability from local politicians and municipal agencies. In Asbury Park in 1970, as protestors clashed with local and state police, resentment against the lack of inadequate recreational facilities on the West Side revealed how the "racialized fantasyscape"[78] of the boardwalk came into conflict with Black Americans' vision of a better life.

[74] "Many Ask Questions on the Cause," *Asbury Park Evening Press*, July 7, 1970.
[75] Ibid., 5.
[76] Sugrue and Goodman, 574.
[77] "Now Let's Go Forward," *Asbury Park Sunday Press*, July 12, 1970, A16.
[78] Simon, 118.

At 11 p.m. on July 5, the second night of unrest, the windows started to break again. The 50-man Asbury Park Police Department could no longer handle the masses alone, as rocks and bottles came flying at township cars. Chief Thomas Smith described to the *Press*, "My men would move in, disperse a large group of about 200 people. They would separate, move a couple of blocks and form up again."[79] Unlike the night before, Weeks notes, the crowd was more organized, violent, and difficult to disperse. Neighboring Neptune township sent 33 police officers; at midnight, 75 to 80 teenagers, according to police estimates, hurled stones at the Neptune Diner on the intersection of Routes 33 and 35 while 12 patrons dined inside. "It all happened so fast, that no one knew what was going on until it was over," diner owner Teddy Kyriakip later told the *Press*.[80] At 3 a.m., Mattice declared a state of emergency and instated a 10 p.m.-to-6 a.m. curfew for the next day. By 6 a.m. the next day, July 6, when the unrest quieted down to just sporadic window-breaking, six policemen were injured, twenty persons were arrested, and 75 percent of Springwood's businesses were damaged, looted, or set on fire.[81]

To press observers, local officials, and East Side residents, the trouble was nerve-wracking; they struggled to wrap ahead their heads around why another Black community wanted to destroy and "paralyze" its own neighborhood.[82] Yet they were just as preoccupied with the "inevitability" of the unrest. The *Press* and West Side leaders alike situated the plight of their neighborhood more so within a larger historical moment, as the country's crowded urban centers also violently rebelled against poverty, crime, poor housing, and inadequate social services. As historian Alison Isenberg observes in *Downtown America*, the social upheaval of the 1960s cultivated anxiety about Main

[79] Wolff, 182.
[80] "Disorders Wrack City; Mayor Orders Curfew," *Asbury Park Evening Press*, July 6, 1970, 1.
[81] "Disorders Wrack City," *Asbury Park Evening Press*, 6 July 1970.
[82] Ibid.

Streets across America, seen as breeding grounds for violence and lost profits.[83] This anxiety was entangled with two key explanations for riots, both of which shaped the Asbury disorders as press observers, politicians, and residents negotiated over the meanings of the unrest.

A dominant theory, as Isenberg suggests, is that the violence was premeditated and targeted specific establishments. This theory posited that poor Black residents were violently confronting white merchants who effected "inflated prices, inferior goods, expensive credit, and rip-off schemes."[84] While this "exploitation theory" gained traction among scholars, national press, and Black separatists, it was, to its credit, also difficult to prove. In other urban disorders, many African American establishments were damaged alongside white ones, and the role of white provocation and vandalism was either difficult to parse or underreported. In Asbury Park, these uncertainties were especially prescient, given the pervasive influence of the riffraff thesis. On the West Side, amid the establishments swept in flames was the neighborhood staple, Fisch's Department Store, a major employer of West Side residents. 21-year-old Ronald Harris related to the *New York Times* later that Fisch's was a "sore point" with many West Side residents because the owner recently sold the store to local businessman Al Steinman, a white man.[85] Tony Maples, head of the United Black Brothers, told the *Evening Press* the next day, "We want the stores in our community to be run by black businessmen."[86] But, as Weeks duly observes, the torching of Fisch's was more likely an unfortunate accident of the Capitol Bar fire than an act of arson in response to its new ownership. Black-owned businesses were also looted and burned, and George D. Fisch, the original owner, alleged that no Black buyers ever made bids for the store.[87] Though people on the

[83] Isenberg, 240.
[84] Ibid., 232.
[85] "Asbury Park Lists 21 Demands, Putting Emphasis on Jobs," *Asbury Park Evening Press*, July 8, 1970.
[86] "Fire is Climax of Fisch's Troubles," *Asbury Park Evening Press*, July 7, 1970, 2.
[87] Weeks, 96.

streets might not have been directly targeting white-owned businesses, the claim that Black residents were being exploited was a powerful rallying point. For West Side community leaders negotiating with City Hall, the threat of additional violence turned negotiations with Hall into an opportunity to push additional reforms.

Outside of the West Side, the presence of out-of-town teenagers on the streets quickly enabled press observers, politicians, and East Side residents to blame "out-of-town agitators," or "riffraff," for inciting impressionable young people to violence. According to this narrative, these outsiders were reckless teenagers driven by greed and "pure criminal materialism."[88] Though promptly discredited by the 1968 Kerner Commission,[89] this theory, termed the "riffraff thesis," offered an important discursive distinction between violence perpetrated by individuals rather than violence stemming from economic and social discrimination. In his study of the Asbury Park disorders, Daniel Weeks draws from historian George Rudé's work on collective action to position riot participants within a simple binary – "rioters on one side, and the forces of order on the other."[90] This was indeed the narrative pushed by local officials, East Side residents, and the *Asbury Park Evening Press*. As violence and destruction escalated, Joseph Mattice told the press he felt "the disorders could be quelled once [they] get rid of the outside elements."[91] Even after a dramatic confrontation between state troopers and an Asbury crowd on July 7, Mattice continued to insist that rioting was the "work of outside agitators."[92]

In the *Press*, standard reports of destruction, detailing cost of damages, arrests, and injuries, were often supplemented by highly descriptive accounts of rioters. This further characterized them

[88] Isenberg, 233.
[89] Ibid., 233.
[90] Weeks, 82.
[91] "50 Hurt in Asbury Violence," *Newark Star-Ledger*, July 7, 1970,
[92] "Asbury Park Calm After 46 Shootings," *Trenton Evening Times*, July 8, 1970,

as juvenile delinquents without clear political aims. Following the second day of disorder, reporter Gene Ritchings opened his article with the image of an older "Negro woman in a white dress" at the corner of Railroad and Springwood Avenues, between the West Side and the East Side, feeling helpless and anxious about her son's involvement in the ensuing chaos.

> "Take me down there," she said to [a group of men gathered at the corner] at large. "I want to find my son."
> She shook her head and looked away down the street again. The she turned, on bare feet, and began walking north up the railroad tracks, away from the anger and confusion, wringing her hands.
> Carloads of cruising Negro youths flashed by, weaving in and out of the police barriers…
> "You from the Press?" a youth said, bouncing past. "You gonna take my picture?"[93]

In this article, Ritchings stressed the nameless [Negro] woman's gender, her innocence emphasized by her "white dress," and her maternal instinct, in order to situate her between the forces of order and chaos, figured in the imagination of readers as the orderly imagined world of the boardwalk and the eruption of anger on the West Side. She symbolizes the human toll of what the reporter interprets as youthful indiscretion. Another Black resident seeking refuge from the violence, who has lived in Asbury for 20 years, is described simply as a "Negro in a straw hat."[94] Taken together, West Siders not directly implicated in the violence are characterized as passive, provincial, and helpless. Ritchings's account of haughty teens and helpless West Siders is also interspersed with accounts of exasperated yet courageous and dutiful policemen. The article also features an officer who stops home to check in with his wife, before continuing his patrol. "This is a rotten night for any cop's wife," the cop's partner told Ritchings, apparently, shaking his head. The report closes solemnly, a scene of a police car carrying an injured officer was speeding toward the East Side, trying to avert "a barrage of bricks and bottles poured forth from a dark, empty lot."

[93] "City's West Side Paralyzed," *Asbury Park Evening Press*, July 7, 1970, 3.
[94] Ibid.

In the back seat of the car, Ritchings writes, "his helmet thrown back, a blue-uniformed cop held his lowered head in his hands."[95] In a moment when stories about riots no longer shocked readers, Ritchings perhaps hoped to offer an alternative, humanized account of the toll of violence on human lives. However, his account is rife with not just simple stereotypes about rioters and the "forces of law and order," as Weeks describes, but stereotypes about Black residents and policemen.

These characterizations of Asbury Park residents and officers stand in stark contrast to the "cruising Negro youths" seeking attention, fame, and entertainment, criminalizing the young Black men gathered on the corner, visible, occupying public space. The crowd remains faceless. We hear sounds of breaking glass, shouts and firecrackers, and we see smashed store windows and bits of rock littered; but we do not see bodies. As Isenberg further writes, after the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., "any lightheartedness detected amid the looters implicitly challenged whether their actions were at all politically motivated."[96] But the allegation that the violence was merely inflicted by out-of-town riffraff was untrue. State Police records further show that, of the 189 people were treated at the Jersey Shore Medical Center between July 5 to July 7, the majority of injured civilians hailed from Asbury Park or Neptune.[97]

A few weeks later, a Major McGeorge sent a postcard to Mattice asking that the mayor, "Take census in Asbury and find out what colored people belong in Asbury and those that don't and then hand out [an] order to those that don't belong to get out of New Jersey before federal troops come."[98] While an extreme view, the postcard signaled that to local officials and white

[95] Ibid.
[96] Isenberg, 233.
[97] "Persons Injured – Asbury Park Riot – July 7/5-7/70," (New Jersey State Police, West Trenton, 1970).
[98] Major McGeorge to Joseph Mattice, July 30, 1970, Folder Asbury Park Riots July 1970 – Separatist/Hate Speech, Box 1, Joseph F. Mattice Papers.

residents, the unrest was not about unemployment, recreation, or education. Rather, it was about who did and did not belong in Asbury Park. Specifically, they designated protestors who did not agree with the status quo – inadequate housing and education on the West Side – as outsiders and criminals. In other cities, the supposed presence of "criminal riffraff" engendered anxiety in merchants about the decline of urban commercial life and prompted divestment from Main Streets.[99] In Asbury Park, it became a meaningful interpretation of the unrest, employed by City Hall to vindicate the significant escalation of police presence and force in the coming days.

In 1970, historian Richard Hofstadter and the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence, as Wolcott notes, accused the American public of "historical amnesia,"[100] stressing that concerns over Black criminality were, in fact, preceded by an era of white terrorism and violence. As this chapter suggests, a similar "historical amnesia" has washed over long-term historical processes, as well as the exigent political pressures and economic uncertainties that produced the West Side. In public discourses, nostalgia for the "golden age" of downtown commerce and boardwalk recreation further implicated unrest in the decline, ignoring a pattern of segregation, neglect, and city mismanagement that long predated 1970.

Concerns over the lack of jobs on the boardwalk pointed to scarcity of available employment opportunities for Black workers, which, as Leah Boustan shows, was both a problem of over-supply and weakening demand. At the same time more southern Black workers were seeking better wages in the North, discriminatory employers refused to hire Black workers, or Black workers were disadvantaged by pre-market inequalities such as poor schooling. The call for improved recreational facilities further emphasized the inequality between the West Side and the boardwalk, within a mile's reach and lacking in anything but recreation. While the labor of mostly

[99] Isenberg, 240.
[100] Richard Hofstadter qtd. in Wolcott, 195.

Black workers from the West Side built and maintained the luster of Asbury Park, the city's success came from excluding this population from its public spaces. Social codes and public ordinances governing respectability cast Black people as criminals. This image was reinforced as the city continually developed the Boardwalk, at the expense and active neglect of the West Side. As the Jersey Shore increasingly lost consumers to more exclusive tourist sites like Disneyland and Las Vegas, Asbury Park's decline disproportionately affected the West Side. By 1970, the "shadow city" of the West Side was thus seen alongside the inner-city slums also coming up in flames across the United States in the 1960s.

West Side community leaders, sympathetic press observers, and some urban historians suggested the unrest was a calculated, "inevitable" response to the exploitation of Black workers. While the "exploitation theory" locates the Asbury Park disorders within a history of Black resistance and activism, it also makes broad generalizations about the motivations and composition of the crowd. Specifically, it assumes all actions taken during the disorders were committed in direct reaction to exploitation, even when the "targeting" of white establishments might have been accidental, and as many Black businesses were devastated. Meanwhile, Joseph Mattice, City Hall, and anxious east side residents were quick to point fingers at outsiders driven by "pure criminal materialism." Specifically, the *Asbury Park Evening Press* and Mattice, relying on already circulating images of Black criminality, blamed the destruction on the recklessness on the Black male teenager, reckless, indolent, and even malicious. In a press conference at the corner of Main Street and Springwood after five days of turbulence on the West Side, Mattice, when asked by the *New York Times* to explain the cause of the unrest, pointed to "a dozen black boys and girls milling about the storefronts of Main Street" and said, "That's the reason. It's young people like that."[101]

[101] Rudy Johnson, "Asbury Park Lists 21 Demands, Putting Emphasis on Jobs," *New York Times*, July 8, 1970.

This construction helped explain that the lack of jobs and decrepit state of the West Side had more to do with a culture of laziness and disrespect for authority than systemic inequality or criminal neglect by the government.

As the following chapter will demonstrate, the exploitation theory enabled West Side civil rights activists to push reforms about housing, employment, and education already in the works for decades prior. Meanwhile, the riffraff thesis enabled local officials to escalate significantly the police presence resulting in a dramatic militaristic confrontation between the crowd and New Jersey State Troopers on Tuesday, July 7. As the following chapter shows, this incident, enabled by the public's existing "historical amnesia," was covered up by State Police following a militaristic clash with protestors. However, I suggest the events of July 1970 represent a critical inflection point in the fight for improved material conditions and dream of a better life. As community memory and, on which Chapter 3 will elaborate, civil rights activism and organizing demonstrate, a through line of resistant practices on the West Side of Asbury Park extended onto Springwood Avenue during the unrest. As Amanda Seligman suggests, this presents an alternative narrative about "riots" as unmitigated, unproductive responses to exploitation.[102] Through closer study of the key origins and explanations for the Asbury Park unrest, we might disentangle the deeply intertwined but discordant narratives of urban unrest and decline.

Chapter 2: Agitators

On the afternoon of Monday, July 6, trains on the Central Railroad of New Jersey and Penn Central lines skipped the Asbury Park stop on Main Street.[103] The suspension of service came after reports of rock and bottle throwing at railcars, but it also suggested some tired familiarity with stories of urban unrest across the country in the decade prior. Everyone seemed to know what was

[102] Seligman, 231.
[103] "It Could Have Been Watts," *Asbury Park Evening Press*, July 7, 1970, 3.

coming and why. According to Daniel Weeks, the predictable narrative of the Asbury Park disorders originates from the tendency of both state and non-state actors to resort to "well-worn stereotypes"[104] about crowd behavior. In his study, Weeks draws from historian George Rudé's work on collective action to position riot participants within a simple binary, "rioters on one side and the forces of order on the other."[105] While police and government officials categorized crowd participants as criminal "rabble," the participants themselves and their sympathizers often cast the violence as rebellion against the structures of injustice. Taken together, Weeks argues that the contested meanings of the Asbury disorders, negotiated largely in the media, shaped the course of events in the following days. However, I push Weeks's analysis further and suggest that these "well-worn stereotypes"[106] are embedded not only within George Rudé's broad history of crowd behavior but, rather, the specific memory of the deadly Newark and Plainfield rebellions of 1967, the implementation of Great Society antipoverty programs (often called "anti-riot tools"), and civil rights activism. Thus, it was no surprise that, at the end of the disorders, the *New York Times* opined that the "'Hot Summer'" finally came to Asbury Park.[107]

At 3 p.m., a fire beginning behind Capitol Bar on Springwood quickly spiraled out of control. Rock and bottle-throwing and sporadic looting escalated to arson. Amid the establishments swept in flames was a neighborhood staple, Fisch's Department Store, a major employer of West Side residents just sold to local white businessman Al Steinman in June, one month prior. Much as Alison Isenberg described in *Downtown America*, press, local residents, and state officials were quick to characterize the destruction of Fisch's as a targeted reaction to exploitation by white-

[104] Weeks, 82.
[105] Ibid.
[106] Ibid.
[107] "The 'Hot Summer' Comes to Asbury Park," *New York Times*, July 12, 1970.

owned businesses.[108] Steinman's ownership was indeed a subject of controversy on the West Side. Tony Maples, head of the United Black Brothers, told the *Evening Press* the next day, "We want the stores in our community to be run by black businessmen."[109] But, as Weeks duly observes, the torching of Fisch's more likely stemmed from the Capitol Bar fire than an act of arson in response to its new ownership. Black-owned businesses were also looted and burned, and George D. Fisch, the original owner and a Jewish man, alleged that no Black buyers ever made bids for the store.[110] Yet, the exploitation theory for the burning of Fisch's and, more broadly, the Asbury disorders still served as an important rallying point for West Side leaders, who would soon mobilize to demand reforms, and the local government, ready to take action to protect its white-owned businesses from the disorder.

While Fisch's burned, Mayor Joseph Mattice declared a state of emergency and Deputy Chief Flanagan called in, as mayors have in years past, the New Jersey State Police. By 5 p.m., 200 heavily armed state and local police from neighboring towns streamed onto Springwood Avenue to restore order. As the next section will demonstrate, the decision to augment the local Asbury Park police force, ill-equipped to handle this crowd, with state troopers and officers from neighboring towns significantly escalated the use of force against Asbury residents.

Overnight into Tuesday, July 7, spray-painted slogans began appearing on boarded-up windows and storefronts, reading "Kill the Pigs," "We want pig blood, Pigs go home," "Kill Whitey," and "Black power is go Power."[111] The community was aggrieved about the previous day's escalation of police presence on the West Side. Moreover, they perceived the presence of a

[108] Isenberg, 235.
[109] "Fire is Climax of Fisch's Troubles," *Asbury Park Evening Press*, July 7, 1970, 2.
[110] Weeks, 96.
[111] DSFC John J. Toth, "Civil Disturbance at Asbury Park, July 7, 1970." New Jersey State Police, Criminal Investigation Section. West Trenton, NJ: 15 July 1970.

largely white police force on Springwood as white encroachment on Black territory. By the end of the week, local officials in neighboring Shore communities with significant African American communities, like Freehold, Red Bank, New Shrewsbury, and Long Branch, were puzzled by their towns' own slew of fires, smashed windows, and arrests.[112] In Red Bank, Mayor Daniel Joseph O'Hern ordered more than 70 policemen from eight towns to patrol the streets as fires broke out and store windows shattered.[113] In Freehold, Mayor J. William Boyle ordered the town's 26 on-duty armed and helmeted officers to shoot looters on sight, while firefighters addressed five fires set off by crude incendiary devices.[114]

Back in Asbury Park, at 5 a.m. on Tuesday, in the small office of the Monmouth Community Action Program (MCAP) at Springwood and Main,[115] Willie Hamm, an assistant administrator at Rutgers University, greeted Joseph Mattice, councilmen Edward R. English and Ascenzio R. Albarelli, acting city manager Samuel Siciliano, and other representatives from City Hall. More than 100 people crammed into the room as Hamm prepared to present a list of demands to the government officials. On his side, he was joined by a coalition of representatives from the West Side, including MCAP director Donald Hammary, MCAP deputy director Wilbert Russell, and Tony Maples of United Black Brothers. Just a year earlier, Hamm appeared on a slate for the 1969 city council elections alongside incumbent mayor Frank Rowland, then-Councilmen Mattice and Ascenzio Albarelli, and Ray Kramer of the city's Housing Authority as one of the "Concerned Five."[116] His run was endorsed by Ermon K. Jones, president of the local NAACP chapter.[117] Curiously, in the days before the election, a pamphlet circulating on the West Side replaced Hamm,

[112] "State Ends Policing of West Side," *Asbury Park Evening Press*, July 11, 1970, 1.
[113] "Get-Tough Policy Set by O'Hern," *Asbury Park Evening Press*, July 8, 1970, 1.
[114] "Shoot Looters, Police Told, As Freehold Fights Fires," *Asbury Park Evening Press*, July 8, 1970, 1.
[115] "Demands Not Met, Negroes Maintain," *Asbury Park Evening Press*, July 8, 1970, 1.
[116] "City of Asbury Park Notice of Election," *Asbury Park Evening Press*, April 29, 1969, 9.
[117] "Hamm Council Bid Backed by 3 Organizational Leaders," *Asbury Park Evening Press*, March 16, 1969, 2.

the only Black candidate on the "Concerned Five" ticket, with Independent candidate Bernard Greenberg.[118] As president of the Concerned Citizens Council, he had, in just the previous year, sharply criticized John Lumley, Housing Authority director, for failing to repair poor housing conditions on the West Side.[119] In fact, Hamm warned councilmen in May that there would be "racial turmoil" if they didn't take decisive action to improve conditions on the West Side.[120] And just a few months prior, Hamm was passed over for an appointment to the Board of Education.[121] Facing his former running mates and now targets for reform, Hamm and the West Side community leaders saw the meeting as an opportunity to re-articulate grievances accrued against the local government in previous years, including tasks that the mayor and city council likely had little authority to execute.

The first of the West Side community leaders' twenty demands requested amnesty for all persons who had been arrested in the preceding days of violence; Donald Hammary, MCAP director, argued many of those arrested were simply on the street to keep the peace.[122] They also called for the removal of Judge Eugene Capibianco, a contentious figure on the West Side;[123] the removal of John Lumley; adequate police protection; the construction of a rehabilitation center for drug users and strict law enforcement of narcotic offenders; and the hiring of a qualified city manager. As other West Side residents had complained before, they sought redress for the irony of living in a resort town with a severe lack of recreational services, at least on the West Side. Thus, the longest and most arguably well-developed point on the list is for the establishment of a recreation commission, staffed by a full-time director and employees, to study in detail the town's

[118] "Change is 'Carded' In City Vote Bout," *Asbury Park Evening Press*, May 12, 1969, 1.
[119] "City Officials Called Corrupt; Mayor, Judge Urged to Quit," *Asbury Park Evening Press*, July 23, 1969, 21.
[120] "Hamm Optimistic on City's Future," *Asbury Park Evening Press*, July 8, 1970, 4.
[121] "Hamm Optimistic on City's Future," *Asbury Park Evening Press*, July 8, 1970, 4.
[122] "Demands Not Met, Negroes Maintain," *Asbury Park Evening Press*, July 8, 1970, 4.
[123] Weeks, 101.

recreation needs, install flood lights on basketball courts, and set up a vest pocket park, a small public space often constructed on a single vacant plot or building lot. Echoing the concerns of Black teenagers and young adults of the West Side, the leaders also asked for the immediate employment of "Negro youth" for summer jobs, with a minimum wage of $1.60 per hour. Finally, they asked for the immediate removal of all state and outside police from the city. Hamm's claims, supported by other West Side leaders like Reverend Verner R. Matthews of the Second Baptist Church, that the "troubles had been a long time coming"[124] were not simply prophetic, pessimistic references to the decade of social upheaval that preceded the unrest in Asbury Park. The same complaints enumerated by the West Side representatives in the MCAP office, as well as the teenagers and young people protesting on Springwood Avenue, had been voiced and ignored by local government for years.

At the same time West Side leaders and City Council met at the MCAP office, an additional fifty troopers arrived to relieve the existing hundred-man detail. These troopers were not ordinary police. In fact, they were specially trained to handle disorders like these, very much with the memory of the deadly Newark and Plainfield uprisings in 1967 in mind. In the Governor's Commission to investigate the causes of the Newark riot, Colonel David Kelly testified extensively on the "preparedness" of the State Police to handle these crowds and establishing an effective timeline for deployment to Newark.[125] Preoccupied with the question of preparedness, then-Governor Richard Hughes directed Kelly to establish "Operation Combine" in 1968. The comprehensive two-week training course instructed police to handle and contain civil disorders. In 1970, "Operation Combine" was accompanied by an update to the original 1960 New Jersey

[124] "Businesses Damaged, Many Held," *Asbury Park Evening Press*, July 6, 1970, 1.
[125] Mark Krasovic, *The Newark Frontier: Community Action in the Great Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016), 161.

State Police Riot Control Manual, effective January 1. Distributed to all personnel as part of their assigned equipment, the manual covered all things riot control, from police responsibilities, squad tactics and procedures, and interagency cooperation to rumor control and community relations. Thus, the disorder in Asbury Park represents one of the earliest test cases after the New Jersey State Police had reorganized and strengthened its antiriot strategy.

Against the outburst of anger from the West Side, media and public officials assured anxious white citizens that the State Police, augmenting local police from Asbury Park and neighboring towns, would reestablish law and order. The *Asbury Park Evening Press* front-page headline boldly announced, "State, Local Policemen Guard West Side Ruins."[126] They assumed the impartiality and objectivity of the law, sympathetic to the plight and "repressed emotions"[127] of minority communities but unforgiving to mob violence and threats to public safety. In the State Police's view, the "crowd/mob" was irrational, much in line with Daniel Week's observations. The manual makes clear the definitions of a crowd and a mob. In particular, a "crowd, although gathered together for a common purpose, does not have a common goal."[128] Meanwhile, the manual writes, a "mob does have a common goal or intent, the commission of lawless acts, usually under guidance of a leader…Mobs are ruled by emotion as opposed to reason, and the means of accomplish their objective are not important as long as they realize their objective."[129] The mob allowed individuals to take drastic actions under the guise of anonymity, safety in numbers, and peer pressure and ideas "spreading like a disease."[130] Individuals who acted separately from crowd groupthink, often going unnamed in police reports, were cast in the manual instead as "agitators"

[126] *Asbury Park Evening Press*, July 8, 1970.
[127] New Jersey State Police, *Training Regulation Number 70-1, Civil Disturbance/Riot control Manual* (New Jersey, 1970).
[128] Ibid.
[129] Ibid.
[130] Ibid.

who themselves employed their own "violence producing techniques"[131] to incite their peers to violence.

Most notably, the manual sought to emphasize a newly "refined" intelligence system between local, state, and federal police, encouraging increased surveillance over potential "leaders and agitators" of violence. The manual designates personnel to serve as "Observers," operating in civilian clothes to "infiltrate the participating groups and identify leaders and agitators."[132] The "Observer" team was tasked with collecting information on community leaders and businessmen, organizations and agencies, school officials and students, and labor and trade union personnel. Through coordination with local police, the intelligence collected by Observers was critical to State Police as they assessed whether to escalate the use of force.[133] Beyond the scope of basic crowd control, the designation of undercover police operatives suggests a targeted and focused attempt to suppress and subvert forms of political dissent. This contradicted with the State Police's explicit, wholesale characterization of crowds and mobs as blindly angry threats to public order and implicitly acknowledged the presence and fear of organized action. The updated New Jersey State Police riot control strategy and tactics formed in response to the uprisings of the 1960s ushered in a new era of state response to civil resistance. In other words, at the same time it made important concessions to the demands of civil rights activists, the state reconsolidated the use of force to suppress dissent outside prescribed channels for petitioning the government.

After a break spent at City Hall, Mattice and his colleagues returned to the MCAP office without much to offer. The only immediate action they were willing to take was the appointment of Willie Hamm to the Board of Education. To the remaining demands, they vaguely suggested

[131] Ibid., 2.
[132] Ibid., 24.
[133] Ibid., 22.

support, that the demand had already been addressed, or that they had applied for state and federal funding and were awaiting response. To the demands calling for the removals of Judge Capibianco and John Humley and the withdrawal of arrest charges, Mattice and his colleagues argued it was not within their jurisdiction to do so. Nevertheless, Mattice still commented to the press, "I don't think they felt we got together on the demands. But we did leave with a good feeling."[134] MCAP deputy director Wilbert Russell was less hopeful. "I'm afraid the mayor and Council are depending on the state police to protect them. If they do nothing about these demands, when the police leave, there's going to be trouble. And this time they're going east. It may not be tonight or next week, but it will happen."[135] Russell's prediction, or threat, was not far off at all. In fact, a crowd was already gathering nearby.

A few blocks away from the MCAP office, 16-year-old Billy Walker met up with a group of local high school students and community members on Springwood, just south of the railroad station. Journalist Max Gunther, in a *TV Guide* report months later, recalled about 200 Black teenagers in an apparently angry mood, voicing complaints against alleged inequalities in housing, school curriculum, and jobs.[136] According to Kelly Walker Edwards, Billy's niece and author of a self-published biography of her late grandmother's life in Asbury, the kids were organizing a peaceful protest for a more inclusive curriculum at the local high school and to increase youth employment opportunities, very close in line with the demands presented by Willie Hamm and the West Side leaders. The walk was supposed to begin on Springwood and end after crossing the railroad tracks onto the East Side. According to Gunther, the teenagers were already inflamed. They discussed how white teenagers from other towns, rather than local Black residents, were

[134] "Demands Not Met, Negroes Maintain," *Asbury Park Evening Press*, July 8, 1970, 1.
[135] Ibid., 4.
[136] Max Gunther, "What Really Happened in Asbury Park?" *TV Guide*, September 26, 1970, 8.

scoring the brunt of summer jobs along the beaches. "What's left for us," a Black teenager later told Gunther, "is the lousy dishwasher jobs."[137]

As the meeting at the MCAP office broke up, Lieutenant Joseph A. Rogalski, Troop "C" deputy commander, arrived at the Asbury Park Police Department for a status update on trooper patrols. Rogalski learned from Lieutenant Thomas Lawson that ten posts had been established squarely along the perimeter of the "troubled area," the region under heightened police surveillance, bordered by the railroad tracks on the east and the Asbury Park-Neptune border on the west. Three men were assigned per post, armed with batons, helmets, sidearms, and gas masks. An additional five mobile patrols – two men each, armed with one shotgun – surveyed Main Street and the perimeter. Their main duty was, perhaps best articulated in Lawson's own terms, to "keep whites out of the area" because their cars were being stoned and damaged.[138] That day, four troopers on the ground gathered intelligence that suggested the crowd wanted to "get whitey" and burn down the East Side, targeting Steinbach's Department Store in particular.[139]

It was no surprise that, later that afternoon, the highpoint of aggression between police and the Springwood crowd unfolded along the railroad tracks, which literally cordoned the primarily Black West Side from the Asbury Park boardwalk. The confrontation represented the extent to which this battle for employment, better housing and living conditions, and access to recreational services manifested as a contest for space and control of the West Side. Lieutenants Rogalski and Lawson were discussing curfew and the possibility of reconciliation, with Asbury police chief Thomas Smith as lead negotiator, when they received notice that unrest was picking up again on

[137] Gunther, 8.
[138] Lieutenant Joseph A. Rogalski, #1118, "Bond Paper Report: Asbury Park Detail – July 7-8, 1970" (New Jersey State Police, Ewing, 1970).
[139] Lieutenant Joseph A. Rogalski, #1118, "Bond Paper Report: Asbury Park Detail – July 7-8, 1970" (New Jersey State Police, Ewing, 1970).

the West Side. A large group – consisting of "negroes," as the reports are sure to mention – had crossed Main Street into Cookman Avenue, the "business district" of Asbury Park. Sensing rising tensions, Rogalski and Lawson, joined by trooper Roy Bloom, a pepper fogging machine and two gas grenades, left for Springwood Avenue.

As, what Edwards called, "opponents to the demonstration" filtered onto the streets, the crowd quickly grew unruly, throwing rocks and bottles at store windows. "No one knows for sure how the first fire started," she explains.[140] The *Asbury Park Evening Press,* however, would report the scene differently. In their view, the mob acted in complete unison, "moving vaguely, restlessly toward the city's main (predominantly white) shopping district a few blocks away."[141] Edwards's account, however fuzzy and constructed from the memory of another person's memory, challenges official state and media presentations of a West Side united in hatred against innocent white bystanders, as a single, violent, self-destructive entity.

Edwards's memory further proves Amanda Seligman's observation that the crowd on the streets of a social disorder was diverse. In addition to a few violent individuals, there were also protestors, peacekeepers, and bystanders.[142] Yet, as Seligman would also suggest, it is not simply through the presence of protestors with explicit political aims which defines the crowd as political. It was the fact that the crowd, in its totality, occupied this space in opposition to the New Jersey State Police. Here, drawing from performance studies scholar Andre Lepecki, I would also suggest it was not just *where* the crowd occupied space but also *how*. In "Choreopolice and Choreopolitics: or, the task of the dancer," Lepecki conceives of political movement beyond protest and organizing

[140] Kelly Walker Edwards, *Now is the Acceptable Time: A Modest Memoir of a Memorable Life* (Self-published, 2019), 110.
[141] Gunther, 8.
[142] Ibid.

legislative processes and procedures.[143] Rather, political movement should be understood as a dialectical relationship between the *choreopolice* – an agent which produces and reproduces systems of obedience through choreographed movement – and the choreopolitical – movement which veers toward freedom.[144]

His kinetic theory of "police," drawn from Jacques Rancière's antinomy politics/police, encompasses any movement that "predetermines pathways, establish routes for circulation, and fits both into one single mode of being."[145] In this confrontation, police officers were instructed to "keep whites out of the area," because it seemed as if their cars were being targeted by the Black crowd. In response, they wielded their training, legal authority, and legitimized use of force to dictate where and how Black bodies could move. Thus, these pathways "produce, tabulate, and impose space," as Michel de Certeau would suggest, organizing power relations across physical space.[146] As the crowd appeared to encroach the "neutral," or more explicitly, non-Black district of Asbury Park, the police were compelled to assert their control of this space. Accordingly, I propose the institution of the New Jersey State Police in the aftermath of the civil rights movement, rather than just the troopers on Springwood Avenue and Main Street, as the *choreopolice* agents in this story.

In response to heightened crowd movement, state troopers and local police streamed onto Springwood in droves, further agitating the crowd. For half an hour, Rogalski reports, "the Troopers were under continuous attack by the mob."[147] Not more than 150 feet separated the mob

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[143] Andre Lepecki, "Choreopolice and Choreopolitics: or, the task of the dancer." *TDR: The Drama Review* 57:4 (2013), 13-27.
[144] Ibid., 20
[145] Ibid.
[146] Michel de Certeau, "'Making Do': Uses and Tactics," *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980, 29.
[147] Lieutenant Joseph A. Rogalski, #1118, "Bond Paper Report: Asbury Park Detail – July 7-8, 1970" (New Jersey State Police, Ewing, 1970), 2.

and the troopers. Trooper Cornel E. Irving recalls that the crowd started to smash windows and loot storefronts and before long heaved rocks, bricks, and bottles at police.[148] Molotov cocktails ignited trooper uniforms. The mob stoned and set aflame a Volkswagen passing through the scene, driven by a white woman in a waitress uniform. Minutes later, another car came from behind, also carrying white female occupants, and came under attack as well; a teenager allegedly jumped on the roof of the car. Hell was breaking loose. The *New York Times* described the scene, "several hundred blacks came screaming across the Penn Central tracks."[149] Meanwhile, a man slowly paraded up and down the street, waving a Black Liberation flag, as others joined with their fists raised.[150]

Rogalski, being the most senior officer at the scene, took charge. As more rocks and bottles were hurled across the tracks, the crowd reportedly swelled to around 800 people.[151] The pepper fogging machine was briefly started to disperse the crowd, but it was to no avail; wind conditions started blowing the fog back toward the troopers.[152] Amid mounting tensions, three unidentified members of the crowd stepped across the tracks to negotiate. "They asked that no action be taken by our Troopers until they had a chance to talk to their people. One of them was given our bullhorn and when he went forth, the crowd enveloped him, showered him with blows."[153]

Examining the scene once again, the troop lieutenant felt he had no choice but to escalate the police response. The crowd crossed the line by attempting to storm the East Side, possibly threatening its white shoppers, and needed to be driven back. The few extensive accounts of the history of the New Jersey State Police exist have characterized the use of force in crowd control

[148] Tpr. Cornel E. Irving #2570, "Asbury Park Civil Disorder Ref: 3082 File 14 SP Morristown," New Jersey State Police, Criminal Investigation Section. West Trenton, NJ: July 1970.
[149] Paul L. Montgomery, "46 Shot in Rioting At Asbury Park; Curfew Imposed," *New York Times*, July 8, 1970.
[150] Wolff, 186.
[151] Rogalski, 3.
[152] Ibid.
[153] Rogalski, 3.

as measured, justified, and valiant figures sent to reestablish law and order in an era of vaguely described social disorder. Retired trooper George J. Wren, Jr., who chronicled the stories of Jersey troopers from 1971 to 2006, wrote: "Unfortunately, the troopers dispatched to these incidents were viewed as the strong arm of the government establishment, sent in to quell the situation by force."[154] Their monopoly on force and violence also required and enabled the erasure of alternative narratives. As historian Daniel Weeks has noted, drawing from George Rudé's classic study of crowd behavior, police, government officials, and news media in Asbury Park were quick to categorize crowd participants as "rabble" or "mob." Thus, officials quickly diminished the West Side's political aims and to emphasize their criminality.[155]

Implicit in the characterization of the political crowd as "mob" and the offensive formations of the state troopers is that organized movement is legitimate only by entering "predetermined pathways" for reform. This, to Lepecki, is ostensibly anti-political. The predetermined pathways for reform were slow, ineffective, stagnated. The movement of the political crowd, Lepecki's on the West Side of Asbury Park, on the other hand, was quick, urgent, and tactical. The political crowd moves tactically. That is, it moves via "calculated action determined by the absence of a proper locus."[156] The political crowd has no leader or core leader, but it necessarily moves toward freedom. In Asbury Park, freedom was jobs, better housing, and better education. And it was unpoliceable, even to the State Police. The manual itself conceded that, while its squad formations were extremely effective for controlling massed mobs, they still rendered troopers vulnerable. "Even when a large mob has been split up, the small dispersed segments of the mob may engage in such tactics as sniping, looting and burning."[157] The political

[154] George J. Wren, *Jersey Troopers II: The Next 35 Years (1971-2006)* (Bloomington: iUniverse, 2009), 171.
[155] Weeks, 84.
[156] De Certeau, 36-37.
[157] State Police, 107.

crowd sought redress for restricted access to the imagination of the American boardwalk and for the concentration of poverty on the West Side. As the crowd moved toward the boardwalk, they agitated toward freedom.

In Wren's history and state police reports, activists, peacemakers, and negotiators either go unnamed or unmentioned, faceless exceptions to an otherwise irrational, inconsolable mob. Three troopers loaded their arms and posted up in front of the skirmish line. On Rogalski's orders to "move out," they raised their shotguns and fired volleys over the crowd. In retaliation, even more Molotov cocktails came flying, and the squad shuffled to secure the rear and flanks. A nameless "peace group," including the minister of a local church, crossed the tracks and approached the police, asking for permission to address the mob and convince them to go home. The "Peace Emissaries" circulated the crowd and, when they returned, approached Rogalski with two proposals: 1. If the troopers withdraw, the crowd will withdraw, and 2. If the half the troopers withdraw, half the crowd will withdraw. Rogalski flatly refused and gave another order to move out. Nearby, a Chevrolet sedan burst into flames. Staff Sergeant John J. DiLorenzo distributed an additional twelve shotguns and ammo bandoleers, and the troopers fired again, apparently, into the crowd.[158]

Dell Wade fished out his tape recorder. "They're shooting people! They just pushed a man through a plate-glass window!" He shouted. He later detailed to Max Gunther at *TV Guide*, "[The troopers] started firing. I didn't actually see anybody hit, but I did see that the police were shooting *level*—I mean, not into the air. *Shooting level*."[159] Officer Pat Barrett, who was interviewed alongside Wade, assured Max Gunther, that nothing of the sort was happening, that the crowd was pushing back without the direct use of force. Still seeing the reporter flagrantly disobeying orders

[158] Wren, 175.
[159] Gunther, 10.

to stay behind the tracks, a lieutenant ordered Wade's arrest. Barrett said he had grabbed Wade by the arm, when he began throwing punches and only applied force to hold him down and place plastic restraints on his wrist. Wade, of course, had a different story. He alleged the troopers came out of nowhere, kicked him, and whacked him with sticks. During the fray, he somehow lost his tape recorder and tape.[160]

All in all, of ammunition issued, 52 rounds were used.[161] 44 people were sent to the Jersey Shore Medical Center from Springwood Avenue with gunshot wounds. 14 were minors, and none were police. Local and state police did sustain injuries, though they were mostly cuts, bruises, and broken bones from projectiles and physical confrontations.[162] A doctor later told Max Gunther that most of the wounds were small – "like birdshot, not police bullets."[163] 18-year-old Robert Ivey remained in critical condition for days.[164] Another was Billy Walker. Hospital records from July 7 corroborate Edwards's account, noting a 16-year-old William Walker who was shot in the groin and brought in at 5:30 p.m. on July 7, 1970.[165] According to Edwards, who rushed to the hospital with her grandmother upon hearing of Billy's injury from a neighbor, Billy lost a lot of blood but the bullet was successfully removed. They later learned, apparently, that warning shots were expelled to disperse the crowd on Springwood, and Billy was somehow caught in the crossfire. To

[160] Gunther, 10-11.
[161] Sergeant Robert Boots #1238, "Action Taken Asbury Park Riot," New Jersey State Police Museum, Ewing, NJ, July 1970.
[162] "Persons Injured – Asbury Park Riot July 7/5-7/70," New Jersey State Police Museum, Criminal Investigation Section, West Trenton, NJ.
[163] Gunther, 11.
[164] "One Casualty of Disorders Still Critical," *Asbury Park Evening Press*, July 9, 1970.
[165] "Persons Injured – Asbury Park Riot July 7/5-7/70," New Jersey State Police Museum, Criminal Investigation Section, West Trenton, NJ, 5.

her recollection, it was the National Guard that was called in to Asbury Park, rather than the State Police.[166] Billy's is just one of many stories of police misconduct that were swept under the rug.

Freddie Mincie, a 22-year-old Neptune resident, claimed he was sitting on his car watching a confrontation between kids and police officers when he was thrown down by three troopers, illegally searched, and tied up. Not wanting to get blood on the backseat of their car, the troopers placed Mincie in their trunk for an hour. Witness Monica Fairfax, an employment counselor at MCAP, said she saw the troopers laugh as they walked away. Detective Arthur Harris of the Asbury Park Police also corroborated the story, but placed the events at 4 to 5 p.m., at the height of the disorders, and offered that the troopers were not able to tend to their duties and guard Mincie at the same time. Thomas H.L. Brown, head juvenile officer at the State Home for Boys in Jamesburg, New Jersey, claimed he was at the corner of Springwood and Atkins with a small group talking to Asbury officer David Parreott, Jr. when about 20 to 25 state troopers ordered them all off the street. While leaving the scene, Brown claimed the troopers followed them and harassed them, pushing their backs with their riot-guns and fired; though they did not aim at Brown and his group, he believes the pellets ricocheted off the ground and hit him in the leg.[167]

These misconduct complaints are today publicly available at the New Jersey State Police Museum, featuring a range of stories about troopers beating bystanders at random, looting stores and stealing cash, and indiscriminately firing their shotguns. At first glance, it seems a genuine attempt at government transparency and even reconciliation for past wrongs. The misconduct complaints all feature similar depictions of disorderly, negligent state troopers, which contradict

[166] Though this part of the account is untrue, it is also not an unreasonable mistake given the National Guard's history of involvement in social unrest in the previous decade, and the sheer number of police who were called into support the local forces.

[167] "Thomas H.L. Brown Shooting (Complaint #2)," New Jersey State Police Museum, Criminal Investigation Section, West Trenton, NJ: July 1970.

the image of dignified, stately guardians of law and order offered by George Wren, Jr. and the *Asbury Park Press*. But they almost all conclude by emphasizing possible discrepancies in the accusations or witness testimonies – for example, whether or not a key was used to unlock the trunk where troopers allegedly held Freddie Mincie, whether it was the State Police or National Guard, the number of or identities of troopers involved in harassment claims. The State Police's tradition of honor and duty simultaneously fostered a culture of impunity, justifying the use of force under duress and in the interest of public safety. By consistently privileging police testimony over witness statements, these records also systematically vindicated officers from allegations of misconduct while erasing any memory of political activity from the crowd.

In his report to his superiors, Rogalski would finally admit that, though he intended on keeping the shots fired to a minimum, he saw a "number of shots deflected from the pavement, thereby striking the rioters and causing them to scatter and flee."[168] In a follow-up report to Colonel David Kelley, Rogalski's immediate superior, Captain Robert Dorrian, reiterated his support for the lieutenant's actions: "Lt. Rogalski…did take the initiative and offered positive action in order to protect the lives of his men involved in the melee, outnumbered by hundreds of unruly, violent rioters, determined to do bodily harm to the 'Pigs' or 'kill Whitey' and bent on destroying the east side of Asbury."[169] Governor Cahill backed the troopers quickly. "I think we have to realize that in emotional and dangerous situations, there will always be complaints," he commented at a news conference. "And there may even have been some excesses brought on by the exigencies of the moment. But I think they acted with restraint under the circumstances."[170]

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[168] Rogalski, 6.
[169] Robert Dorrian, "Civil Disturbance – Asbury Park – July 7, 1970," New Jersey State Police Museum, Criminal Investigation Section, West Trenton, NJ: July 1970.
[170] "Cahill backs Asbury troopers," *Asbury Park Press*, July 10, 1970.

Reports on the shooting would never make it to the public, and no one was ever held accountable. In October, when the report was turned over to Attorney General George F. Kugler, Jr. for review, he explained the report was "not public information," citing possible interference in ongoing salary negotiations between the attorney general and police.[171] In April 1971, Frank Galey, a confidential aide of the state attorney general, announced that the question of the report's publication was still under consideration but, in all likelihood, it would never see the light of day; Kugler could not be reached for comment.[172] A few months after the disorders, reports emerged that a Raymond Tull of Belmar, who alleged he was shot on Springwood on July 7, intended to sue Kugler, Colonel David Kelly, the city of Asbury Park, acting city manager Samuel Siciliano, and Police Chief Thomas Smith, and the unidentified trooper who shot him.[173] Tull charged the State Police for firing the weapons "in a manner which was violent and not authorized by law."[174] Unsurprisingly, the story does not appear again. Meanwhile, 125 people would be arraigned in court for crimes committed during the unrest, for possession of stolen property, possession of a weapon, assault, and disorderliness.[175] At the same time New Jersey State Police enforced a highly militarized, choreographed protocol for crowd control, they also afforded ample space for discretionary action. Confronted with rocks, bottles, and Molotov cocktails, frightened troopers were simply urged not to be frightened, and so any action they took, so long as it was decisive and deemed in the interest of the law, was protected by the authority of the State Police. Under the protection of the law, State Police were able to make authoritative claims about the underlying meanings for civil disturbances and acquit themselves from claims of misconduct or wrongdoing.

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[171] "Shootings Report Is Kept a Secret," *Asbury Park Evening Press*, October 2, 1970.
[172] "Findings in Probe Withheld," *Asbury Park Sunday Press*, April 25, 1971, A-14.
[173] The Jersey Shore Medical Center records do not list a Raymond Tull as one of the injured people from July 7, 1970. However, there is an entry for a Harold Tull of South Belmar admitted with a gunshot wound and listed in critical condition.
[174] "Asbury Park Victim Files Suit," *Central New Jersey Home News*, September 16, 1970, 32.
[175] "Total Arraigned in Asbury Park Riots Hits 125," *Asbury Park Evening Press*, July 9, 1970, 2.

After the fatal 1967 civil disturbances in Newark and Plainfield, the New Jersey state government amped up surveillance initiatives across the state to identify possible "leaders and agitators" of violence. As the manual came into effect January 1, 1970, the July disorders in Asbury Park represented one of the first test cases of the updated protocol. Questioned about the "preparedness of the state police" to handle civil disturbances and unruly crowds, Colonel David Kelly's series of reforms and the *1970 State Police Riot Control Manual* documented in detail the procedures for surveillance, mobilization, and mob dispersal. It also formalized the use of violence, through the deployment of militaristic tactics and weapons, the emphasis on incapacitating violent offenders, and the anonymization and depoliticization of the mob. Additional property damage and police misconduct flourished as the use of violence by state troopers and local officers was legitimate, while force or activity by protesters or the crowd at large was not.

Beyond "containing" mob behavior, often characterized as a contagious disease, within the "affected area," crowd control by the State Police also attempted to deny access to space. Police officers were instructed to "keep whites out of the area," because it seemed as if their cars were being targeted by the Black crowd. Squad formations were specifically designed to "divide the mob into manageable segments" and then to "push and drive crowds/mobs straight back across an open area or up a city street."[176] As evidenced by the climactic confrontation between troopers and the crowd along the railroad tracks, these strategies and tactics ensured that the madness of the West Side remained solely on the West Side. This incident strongly suggests that the Asbury Park disorders were a battle for jobs on the boardwalk or better housing, or the containment of Black disorder, manifested as a contest for space amid creeping anxieties about urban decline.

[176] State Police Manual, 107.

State Police strategies, press coverage, and reactions from white citizens make legible the fears surrounding the failures of integration and the resulting epidemic of urban violence. However, as Alison Isenberg shows in *Downtown America*, the realization of people's worst fears, coupled with inadequate social programs on the West Side, prompted the divestment of capital from Asbury Park. Thus, the appearance of destruction directly implicated urban violence and rebellion into Asbury's and especially the West Side's decline, despite the ostensibly political aims of the crowd. As the following chapter will demonstrate, West Side residents continued to organize to improve housing conditions and education in their neighborhood by directly petitioning the government and running for city council, and indirectly, through public history projects which contest dominant press and state narratives about the West Side's purported decline.

Chapter 3: Renewal/Decline

State troopers finally withdrew from the West Side on Saturday, July 11 after three days of peace.[177] Trouble in Red Bank, Freehold, Long Branch, and New Shewsbury, had quieted down as well.[178] As merchants began replacing broken glass and sweeping debris from their storefronts, residents, businesses, and City Hall eagerly sought a return to normalcy. On Wednesday, July 8, the curfew was extended to 8:30 p.m. to 6 a.m., patrolled by both state police and a 28-member peace patrol comprised of Black teenagers from the West Side.[179] As the Mattice administration started relaying answers to the community's demands, the mayor agreed to only one stipulation: the appointment of Willie Hamm to the Board of Education. Judge Elvin Simmill released a few people arrested during the unrest and refused to dismiss the charges of over ninety others. While Chief Smith announced that police officers from neighboring communities were no longer needed,

[177] "State Ends Policing of West Side," *Asbury Park Evening Press*, July 11, 1970, 1.
[178] "Calm Prevails in the City," *Asbury Park Evening Press*, July 12, 1970.
[179] "$4 Million in Damage Estimated," *Asbury Park Evening Press*, July 9, 1970.

the 200 remaining state troopers shifted headquarters from the city police headquarters to the high school.[180]

On Thursday, amid a second day of quiet and only six arrests on record, Governor William T. Cahill arrived at the high school by helicopter and toured the West Side for 10 minutes. In a press conference after his tour, he declared the city of Asbury Park a major disaster zone. He hoped recognition from President Richard Nixon would grant emergency federal funding for the West Side's recovery. Meanwhile, the Trenton field office of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutritional Service declared an emergency food shortage on the West Side and trucked in hundreds of cases of dehydrated potatoes, nonfat milk, canned green beans, canned meat, peanut butter, and corn syrup from Jersey City.[181] On Friday, New Jersey Attorney General George Kugler paid a visit to State Police headquarters at Asbury Park Public High School before the West Side with Colonel David Kelly. He publicly praised the State Police for successfully quelling the riots. "You can't expect the state police to stand out there with pillows trying to fend off an angry mob," Kugler told the *Press*, defending the use of force.[182] David Geliebter, deputy director of the state Division of Civil Rights, were looking into complaints that local policemen broke a shop owner's store window, removed stools from his shop, and sat outside smoking cigarettes. However, he clarified he did not have legal grounds to launch a formal investigation.[183] The question of the state police shooting on Tuesday remained open.

While the worst seemed to be over, anxiety about a resurgence of violence and, worse yet, its continued affront to potential customers pervaded the city. Seven days after the first rocks and bottles flew, 180 people were injured, 167 arrested, and an estimated $4 million in property damage

[180] Ibid.
[181] "Food Distributed on West Side," *Asbury Park Evening Press*, July 10, 1970.
[182] "Performance of State Police Hailed by Attorney General," *Asbury Park Evening Press*, July 11, 1970.
[183] Ibid.

incurred.[184] In addition to property damages, the city amassed $30,000 in overtime pay for police, firemen, special police and civilian guards on the beach, and public works employees.[185] According to Siciliano, the city usually only spent between $8,000 to $10,000 on overtime pay for police. Irreparable damage to commercial properties, including those on Springwood, also cost the city $66,000 in tax revenues.[186] 18-year-old Robert Ivey was still in critical condition at the Jersey Shore Medical Center from gunshot wounds sustained on Tuesday.[187] David Sancious, a prominent Asbury musician best known as an early member of Bruce Springsteen's backing band, described Springwood Avenue in the aftermath of the violence: "Just razed. Buildings burnt out. And after they put out all the fires and stopped it, they bulldozed it…like a ghost town."[188]

As the dust settled, West Side community leaders and City Hall continued to deliberate the future of Asbury Park. Bill Reed, owner of Asbury Liquors, summed up to the *Press*, "Everything now depends on the mayor and Hamm."[189] On Sunday, without a pause, the community reconvened at the Community Center to discuss City Council's response to their list of 22 demands. Deciding they were unsatisfied, Willie Hamm telegrammed the mayor's office to redress their grievances. Mattice quickly invited Hammary, Hamm, and other community leaders to City Hall to meet at 8 p.m. The next day, two hours after they were scheduled to arrive, the West Side leaders appeared at City Hall to request that the meeting be moved to the Community Center gymnasium; Mattice would later tell the *Press* that he and the Council intentionally traveled to the West Side in good faith, to demonstrate their desire to cooperate and listen to their concerns.

[184] Bilby and Ziegler, 108.
[185] "City Faces Fiscal Squeeze As Disorder Costs Mount," *Asbury Park Evening Press*, August 2, 1970.
[186] "City Faces Fiscal Squeeze As Disorder Costs Mount," *Asbury Park Evening Press*, August 2, 1970.
[187] "Calm Prevails in the City," *Asbury Park Evening Press*, July 12, 1970.
[188] Wolff, 196.
[189] "Springwood Avenue Starts Cautious Return to Normalcy," *Asbury Park Sunday Press*, July 12, 1970.

At the meeting, youth organizer Rochelle Sweet presented 12 additional demands, ranging from the immediate recovery of Springwood Avenue, improved relations between the Black community and government agencies, and the long-term improvement or establishment of services and facilities. Her designation as the community's spokesperson sent a powerful message to City Council that the West Side was serious about its future. It suggested that the path forward as a city was a multigenerational effort that required contending with the legacy and pains of the past, while signaling willingness to collaborate with City Council for the future. Finally, Sweet stood in stark comparison to the images of teenage mischief and materialism, articulating clear, actionable demands on behalf of the thousands of Black people on the West Side. She embodied the grievances of the people on the streets, many of whom were apparently young people railing against the lack of jobs on the boardwalk, and made them legible to the East Side.

For Springwood, they asked for immediate restoration of the neighborhood's crumbling physical condition, such as the removal of debris still scattered on the streets and repairs on Housing Authority projects. The demands also emphasized community control over new establishments, asking that the new Black cultural center and any new businesses rebuilt, managed, and staffed by Black workers. In this vein, they hoped for the designation of liaisons to City Council, as well as to state and federal agencies, establishing direct channels of communication between West Siders and their politicians. They demanded the establishment of a year-round employment agency, and to add the West Side onto the bus line. They demanded a public high school curriculum that better reflected Black experiences and to name the new middle school after Malcolm X or the late Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., especially with Coretta Scott King due to appear at the school's opening ceremony. For the youth, they demanded that the local summer

school, on pause since the unrest, restart and to build a protective fence near the railroad tracks, where children had been getting injured.[190]

On Springwood, Mattice claimed the city was warned not to touch damaged properties until insurance claims had been settled. They cited dwindling state funds for the lack of adequate bus services on the West Side, and they claimed they had no legal authority, as a local government council, to affect procedures related to the Asbury Park Housing Authority, a federal agency. To the West Side, none of City Council's promises conveyed any urgency or intention to leverage political influence or take meaningful action. In response, a teenager in the audience unsatisfied with the mayor's noncommittal responses called him an "artist in semantics," while another youth organizer shouted, "I don't know if you're stupid or just don't have any sense."[191] Recapping the meeting to the *Press*, Mattice asserted, "We feel we have done all in our power to cooperate, and feel we had reached complete agreement on the requests submitted."[192]

Over the next month, as boardwalk businesses scrambled to salvage the final month of the summer season, West Siders continued to meet, organize, and rally support. When the USDA stopped trucking in food, it was West Side resident and Housing Authority chairman George Rucker, who teamed up with local white clergy, to distribute 1,156 bags of food.[193] Unconvinced by yet another meeting with City Council, 500 West Side residents voted to boycott East Side businesses. Instead, 25 cars would transport shoppers to out-of-town businesses; on one day, Hamm singlehandedly transported 75 shoppers.[194] On July 22, the many organizations in town meeting under the name Asbury Park West Side Coalition collaborated on issues of business

[190] "No New Incidents Reported," *Asbury Park Evening Press*, July 14, 1970, 3.
[191] Ibid.
[192] Ibid.
[193] "Federal Officials Investigate Claims of Illegal Stamp Use," *Asbury Park Evening Press*, July 23, 1970.
[194] "Action Needed, City Told," *Asbury Park Evening Press*, July 19, 1970.

development, employment opportunities, housing development, and fund development. The coalition included nearly 50 people covering broad constituencies and interest groups, such as Concerned Citizens Council, the Puerto Rican Association, Professional Businesswomen of Monmouth County, the Black Parents' Advisory, Head Start, and the Asbury Park-Neptune Youth Council.[195] The housing committee, chaired by George Rucker, was tasked with producing a plan to rehabilitate substandard housing on the West Side. Another committee was responsible for organizing meeting the social, educational, and recreational needs of residents. Though a number of coalition members were employed or involved with local government or state and federal agencies, it was clear that City Council was not going to organize task forces of its own.

As the West Side has since its inception, in the absence of adequate government services, individuals developed alternative means of community-building. As Amanda Seligman suggests, the history of social upheaval of the 1960s, in its emotional, physical, and financial tolls and cost to human lives and livelihoods, "sit uneasily" in literature on the Black struggle for freedom and equality.[196] But, in the aftermath of the Asbury Park unrest and because of it, the West Side could now leverage new momentum, a direct and however uneasy line of communication to City Hall, national media attention, and the fate of the summer holiday to demand long delayed reforms.

At the same time Rochelle Sweet was presenting additional demands to City Council, a committee of about 30 oceanfront businessmen gathered at Convention Hall to debrief the effects of the unrest on their businesses. The meeting was chaired by a committee of three – Moe Septee, music promoter, Seymour Weinblatt of the Metropolitan Hotel, and John Belluci of Bootlegger Bar and Grill – and hoped to present a statement to City Council. Though there were hardly any incidents past the railroad tracks even at the height of the violence, tourists were frightened by

[195] "Negro Coalition Formed in City," *Asbury Park Evening Press*, July 22, 1970.
[196] Seligman, 231.

rumors that arsonists and looters would eventually come for the boardwalk. The owner of the Hotel Del Monte told the *Newark Star-Ledger*, "Guests are doing now what they usually do on a rainy day when they can't go out."[197] To occupy guests as they sheltered indoors, the Berkeley-Cartaret Hotel organized a talent night in its grand ballroom. On Sunday, after troopers withdrew, the boardwalk remained empty into the late afternoon.[198] For the next month, boardwalk businesses continued to fall 60% compared to July 1969, with some businesses reporting as much as 80% in losses.[199] In August, Republican congressional candidate William F. Dowd telegrammed the Federal Communications Commission to investigate "biased and distorted" broadcast coverage of the unrest by WABC and WCBS. "Asbury Park is very much alive and its resort facilities remain outstanding vacation attractions."[200] In 1970, the connection between the unrest to Jacquelyn Dowd Hall's "long civil rights movement" and the Black freedom struggle roused as much anxiety in white consumers as it did energy in Black activists and organizers. Like the *Asbury Park Evening Press*, editorials in the *New York Times* and *Defender* linked the unrest to a nationwide pattern of police brutality that was already accelerating a process of white flight from inner cities.[201] In Asbury Park, with alternative vacation spots on the Jersey Shore and, especially with the advent of Disneyland and Las Vegas in the mid-twentieth century, white tourists were similarly running out of reasons to go to its beaches and boardwalk.

At Convention Hall, business owners acknowledged that their industry could not dissociate from the problems that afflicted the Black community. During the unrest, Moe Septee expressed support for the West Side even at the height of violence. "Maybe we can do something to correct

[197] "Fears and hopes by the boardwalk," *Newark Star-Ledger*, July 7, 1970.
[198] "Springwood Avenue Starts Cautious Return to Normal," *Asbury Park Sunday Press*, July 12, 1970.
[199] "Dowd Asks FCC Probe TV 'Bias' on Disorders," *The Red Bank Daily Register*, August 4, 1970.
[200] Ibid.
[201] Weeks, 108.

the image of Asbury Park," he told the *Press*. "I'm only speaking as an individual but I'm wondering if now isn't the time for us to get together. I'm willing to contribute both money and time."[202] However, they were ultimately divided over the best course of action. While year-round business owners hoped the meeting's resolution would express sympathy and a desire to help for the well-being of all citizens in Asbury Park, seasonal business owners were concerned about recouping their losses. In their resolution, they proposed the hiring of a publicity firm and asked the city to subsidize advertising in out-of-state newspapers and broadcast media. They needed to rehabilitate the city's image by reassuring the public that the boardwalk was unharmed by the unrest and, especially, as safe as it has ever been. Business leaders remained mum on the effectiveness of the boycott. "The minister came out with statements to let us know their position, but the hotel association, the boardwalk association, and the business district haven't said one thing,"[203] Hamm said. Much as Joseph Mattice claimed that the city was not decaying when he was elected in 1969, white business owners also had reason to reassure shoppers that business was as usual. Willie Hamm countered, though, that the boycott was successful and resulted in the loss of thousands of dollars in revenue to the East Side.[204] Yet the suggestion that Asbury Park bore a poor quality of life presented a difficult public relations problem for a city that prided itself on the appearance of luxury. Admitting that they depended on Black consumers would further drive away white customers already spooked by the recent violence.[205] Publicly, business owners wanted what was best for the future of the city. Behind closed doors, though, what was "best" was getting their visitors back as soon as possible, leaving the West Side without allies on the boardwalk against City Hall.

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[202] "Season Business Forecast Gloomy," *Asbury Park Evening Press*, July 8, 1970.
[203] "Action Needed, City Told," *Asbury Park Evening Press*, July 19, 1970.
[204] "Action Needed, City Told," *Asbury Park Evening Press*, July 19, 1970.
[205] Isenberg, 208.

In the month following the disorders, the new relationship between the West Side and City Hall gradually broke down. On Monday, July 20, Samuel Siciliano released a statement announcing 13 actions taken by City Council in response to the demands. For residents who wanted to crackdown on drug dealing and use, the police set up a new private telephone line for reporting narcotics offenders and hired four patrolmen. For the teenagers needing jobs, the city, Housing Authority, and Board of Education together hired 108 youths. However, as an *Asbury Park Press* investigation quickly pointed out, City Council was not as cooperative as they wanted to appear. Their replies were vague or misleading, reflected initiatives already underway, or completely reneged on promises made during the unrest.[206] Police Chief Thomas Smith clarified to the *Press* that there were already four patrolmen assigned to the West Side, and the hotline to report narcotics violations had been in operation for several months. To the question of why Willie Hamm had not been appointed to the school board, Mattice offered no explanation besides the lack of an available seat, even though the city was entitled to create a vacancy under a 1969 state law. To the question of why no action had been taken on the construction of two vest pocket parks, in an initiative to expand recreational facilities on the West Side, Mattice simply cited "problems," and Asbury Park Housing Authority director John C. Lumley asserted there was no available property for the park.[207]

Where City Council could outsource responsibility to other agencies, they did; if those outside institutions failed to act, Siciliano could claim that the Council already had done everything in their power to appease the West Side. For example, per the West Side's demands, they asked the Jersey Central Power & Light Co. to survey the West Side to assure proper street lighting and

[206] "Study Shows Discrepancies in City's Replies to Demands," *Asbury Park Evening Press*, July 31, 1970.
[207] "Study Shows Discrepancies in City's Replies to Demands," *Asbury Park Evening Press*, July 31, 1970.

placed advertisements across the state and country in search of a permanent city manager.[208] In an area where City Hall had full direct authority to act, such as rescheduling public meetings to evening hours so more working residents could attend, the mayor added only two additional 5:30 p.m. meetings, before announcing he would not make additional changes until the negotiating committee accepted the council's answers. When asked why the city still had not acted on more of its promises, Samuel Siciliano told the *Press* they hoped to "package" their initiatives rather than dole them out "piecemeal."[209] In an interview with the *Press*, Mattice would later deny ever making an outright promise to appoint Hamm to the Board of Education; at the height of the unrest, this was the only concession to which City Council reportedly agreed.[210] Finally, the city failed to communicate their decisions directly with the West Side. "The only way that we on the West Side find out what is happening is by reading it in a newspaper," Hamm expressed.[211]

In a short month, by early August, the new line of communication between the two parties dissipated and even turned sour, as the semblance of cooperation in a pressing moment to rethink the future of Asbury Park transformed into a publicized row full of ad hominem attacks and calls for resignation. The clashes also emphasized the history of Mattice's fraught relationship with the local Black community. A 1938 pamphlet by Lorenzo Harris, who founded the Asbury Park-Neptune chapter of the NAACP, once wrote: "Negroes in Asbury Park must rise as a solid mass and dump into deep oblivion the political dictatorship and skullduggery of the city chairman, Joseph Mattice and his weak, wobbly, supine Old Deal county committeemen in the third, fourth

[208] "Demand Status in Dispute: Siciliano Lists City Actions; Hamm Critical," *Asbury Park Evening Press*, July 21, 1970.
[209] "Siciliano Says City Seeking to Package Demand Action," *Asbury Park Evening Press*, July 22, 1970.
[210] "Hamm Urges Mattice Quit; 'I Don't Scare,' Mattice Says," *Asbury Park Evening Press*, August 3, 1970.
[211] "Demand Status in Dispute: Siciliano Lists City Actions; Hamm Critical," *Asbury Park Evening Press*, July 21, 1970.

and fifths districts."[212] In a front-page feature with the *Press* entitled "I Feel Personally I Know Their Problems," Mattice reaffirmed he had been "in contact" with the Black community for 30 years and intimately understood their concerns. When asked if he felt he better understood the socioeconomic problems facing Asbury Park, he named the city's aging infrastructure, lack of industry, and the closing down of hotels; he did not mention the West Side.[213] The next day, Hamm alleged that Mattice was "blinded by an egotistical and political mind, filled and obsessed with hatred." The mayor retorted, "I would love to resign, but I don't scare easily," and declined to comment further.[214]

On the streets, residents and the police continued to clash once again in scattered incidents over the month. Just over a week after state troopers withdrew from the West Side, a 15-year-old boy was arrested at 1:30 a.m. in the downtown business district in a string of window-breaking incidents. The arrest attracted a crowd of teenagers, who were quickly dispersed after the arrest.[215] About another week later, Springwood saw a series of "renewed disturbances" over three days after police attempted to break up a dice game on the street. The first night resulted in sixteen arrests, two fires, and a policeman wounded by shotgun pellets. As 20 extra local officers were called in, the crowds became increasingly agitated, pelting rocks and bottles at policemen. After police fired rounds from a shotgun into the air, the crowd finally dispersed.[216] On the second night, a 19-year-old from Asbury Park Village was charged with assault with a deadly weapon after allegedly throwing a fire bomb from the roof of the Paramount Paint Store on Springwood.[217] Police were careful to distance themselves from the actions of state troopers just a few weeks ago.

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[212] Lorenzo Harris, *Negro Voters of Asbury Park Battle for a New Deal and Against the Raw Deal* (Self-published, 1938), 3. Pamphlet.
[213] "I Feel I Personally Know Their Concerns," *Asbury Park Evening Press*, August 2, 1970.
[214] "Hamm Urges Mattice Quit; 'I Don't Scare,' Mattice Says," *Asbury Park Evening Press*, August 3, 1970.
[215] "City Police Disperse Crowd After Windows Are Smashed," Asbury Park Evening Press, July 20, 1970.
[216] "City Police Break Up Renewed Disturbances," Asbury Park Evening Press, July 28, 1970.
[217] "2 Arrested As Crowd Dispersed," *Asbury Park Evening Press*, July 29, 1970.

Deputy Chief Thomas Flanagan reaffirmed to the *Press*, "We have no record of our men shooting anyone. None of our men reported shooting at anyone…When and if it becomes necessary to shoot an individual we will not deny it."[218] That same night, two 16-year-olds and a 15-year-old were questioned by police in connection with a fire that destroyed two Main Street stores, started apparently by Molotov cocktails.[219] Regardless of the fires' actual connection to the disorders earlier that month, it certainly remained a prescient memory in the minds of local business owners. Frank Fritz, owner of Monmouth Awning & Casual Furniture Co. for 35 years, lost $70,000 worth of furniture and his building would have been worth at least $100,000. He told the Press, "I'll never rebuild there, and I don't even know whether I'll re-open in Asbury Park. I think this town has just about had it."[220] As Alison Isenberg points out, in the aftermath of urban unrest, investors were forced to reconsider their responsibilities and priorities.[221] For business owners like Frank Fritz, as fear of violence and destruction turned off customers, it was also due time to take their capital elsewhere.

West Siders' efforts to leverage consumer power were additionally complicated by an emergency food stamps plan funded by the federal government, established when Asbury Park withdrew its state-of-emergency declaration and the USDA stopped trucking in food. In light of an urgent food shortage from the damage to businesses and neighborhood power failures resulting in spoiled food, the program bypassed screening applications and immediately authorized all Asbury Park and Neptune residents to purchase the stamps. Sold at 50 cents or $2 for about $100 worth of food, the stamps instantly attracted large crowds at the Asbury office of the Monmouth County Welfare Department. Over three days, 1,400 families reportedly lined up to claim stamps,

[218] Ibid.
[219] "3 Juveniles Are Suspects in City Fire," *Asbury Park Evening Press*, August 2, 1970.
[220] Ibid.
[221] Isenberg, 254.

and the office at one point called for police to maintain order.[222] The no-questions-asked program did not last long. After incurring a $200,000 cost in less than two weeks, it abruptly ended over allegations of "abuse" by purchasers in witness reports to local police. An additional rush of applicants at the Monmouth County Welfare Office apparently resulted from miscommunication with the USDA field office about whether or not to open to the public. According to the *Press*, residents of Red Bank, Long Branch, and Belmar also attempted to purchase stamps; caseworkers reported applicants returning to the line multiple times. Others apparently claimed large family sizes, and rumors circulated that black-market sellers were peddling hundreds of dollars' worth of food for a fraction of the cost. Meanwhile, a butcher reported to the *Press* that he saw customers using the stamps to buy filet mignon.[223] In this attempt to vote with their dollars, some West Siders found their dollars were limited by the constraints of the food stamps program. Debates over eligibility for and proper usage of food stamps limited and decided who was deserving of the full material privileges of citizenship. Federal antipoverty programs succeeded only insofar as residents fit their exclusive criteria.

While activists attempted to organize broad constituencies at a hyperlocal level through the West Side Coalition, City Council placed its bets on the federal government to provide emergency funding for the city's recovery. Federal support was initially promising. Two representatives from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, accompanied by Samuel Siciliano and Willie Hamm among other government officials and community leaders, surveyed possible sites for a new youth center. Hamm made sure the site was far enough from the business district and required the least relocation of residents.[224] But the request to recognize the West Side as a disaster

[222] "$200,000 Food Stamp Plan is Ended as Abuses Abound," *Asbury Park Evening Press*, July 21, 1970, 1.
[223] Ibid.
[224] "City Seeks Grant for Youth Center," *Asbury Park Sunday Press*, July 19, 1970.

area, initially proposed by Governor Cahill and backed by the NAACP,[225] was denied by the federal Office of Emergency Preparedness (OEP); the aid was reserved for natural disaster recovery only. Per the OEP's recommendation, Siciliano subsequently applied for interim assistance from HUD to demolish damaged buildings and establish small parks, while a HUD official looked into expanding the West Side's existing urban renewal projects. In late August, the Department of Housing and Urban Development finally approved $85,746 to demolish 14 buildings, including Fisch's Department Store, on Springwood Avenue; the city was responsible for an additional $42,062.[226] HUD officials emphasized that demolition must be followed by the swift completion of the city's urban renewal program and the approval of residents in the affected area.

While funding for the urban renewal program initially seemed like a win to the West Side, it was ultimately up to City Council to make good on their promises and actively work with residents. Instead, government stagnation, resistance from displaced residents and community organizations, and, as evidence suggests, corrupt public officials who skimmed federal funds slowed construction and the possibility for economic growth. As the HUD renewal program was implemented, disputes over demolition would continually be settled behind closed doors instead of in public meetings, counter to HUD's mandate for active community participation. In December 1970, the *Press* reported that building owners paid for the demolitions themselves, leaving federal funds unused.[227] Mattice countered that there were no other ways to apply the funds, and he was reluctant to participate in any programs that would cost the city more money. "It's been my experience that there are never any funds you get free," the mayor said, still having yet to contact

[225] "NAACP Urges Federal Aid," *Asbury Park Evening Press*, July 18, 1970.
[226] "U.S. Grants City Demolition Aid," *Asbury Park Evening Press*, August 27, 1970.
[227] "Cahill Says Mayor Didn't Seek Help," *Asbury Park Sunday Press*, December 13, 1970.

Governor Cahill for help. State Senator Alfred Beadleston, who attempted to pursue legislation to reimburse 75 percent of the overtime pay expenses, noted that he was similarly unable to reach the mayor's office after calling several times. An aide in Governor Cahill's office relayed to the *Press* that, had the governor's office received a request for help for the West Side's recovery, they would have expedited the process in their state agencies.[228] Mattice had been similarly evasive in the *Press*. Back in August, when a *Press* reader asked what became of $50,000 that the city received in 1962 to develop West Side recreation, the mayor, instead of naming recreational facilities built, responded simply, "Anyone with common sense would know any money received by the city would have to be accounted for, because our books are audited yearly."[229] Whatever funding was coming into the Asbury Park, it was clear it was not going to the revival of Springwood Avenue.

In spite of the City Council's delays and efforts to exclude West Siders from decision-making processes critical to rebuilding the West Side, residents continued to organize for better conditions. Five months later, the neighborhood's pest problem spiraled into the city's worst-ever infestation, when rats that fled burned out commercial buildings invaded nearby homes.[230] Like the neighborhood's deteriorating infrastructure, the infestation was yet another West Side problem made legible and exacerbated by the July disorders.[231] And because its unpleasantries were hard to ignore, it also brought the *Press* and government agencies' into people's homes and emphasized the quality of life on the West Side. "We're all sleeping in the big front bedroom now," a resident of the two-story building at the epicenter of the infestation told the *Press*. "The rats were coming into the kids' beds at night, so nobody stays in the back anymore."[232]

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[228] Ibid.
[229] "I Feel I Personally Know Their Concerns," *Asbury Park Evening Press*, August 2, 1970.
[230] "Living With Rats: 'They Meet You At the Door,'" *Asbury Park Sunday Press*, January 3, 1971.
[231] Ibid.
[232] Ibid.

Following a pattern deeply frustrating for West Siders, city administration insisted they already pursued all possible channels for funding a rat extermination program, to no avail.[233] But when a group of tenants led by 27-year-old resident Moses Williams, whose furniture store burnt down in the disorders, threatened to camp out at City Hall in December, Mattice and City Council voted to start fumigating immediately. To Williams, though, extermination program was just a start, as the success also opened up opportunities to demand restoration of the rent controls of 1960 and an educational program to train the community on household care, budgeting, and personal grooming.[234] As generations of West Siders had before, Williams and the Rent Strike committee, as they were called, petitioned their government for a better quality of life – making urgent repairs, effecting systemic changes, and equipping individual community members with the educational resources for a better, sustainable lifestyle. What might have also appeared as a decentralized civil rights infrastructure with too many organizations, leaders, and voices might also be interpreted as various residents coming together in creative, various ways to demand action from sluggish city officials.

Two years later, in 1972, the city still lacked a precise plan for redeveloping Springwood Avenue. This was partially because residents filed an injunction to stop renewal planning until City Council adequately involved the West Side in the process. While the original West Side urban renewal project to fix public housing was by then completed, a modified project now intended on fully redeveloping Springwood.[235] As Madonna Jackson Carter recalls, this second project required the demolition of many two- to three-story homes to make room for new residential and commercial dwellings.[236] The West Side Coalition, led by Hamm, charged that the HUD-mandated

[233] "Hopeful Signs of Progress," *Asbury Park Sunday Press*, January 3, 1971.
[234] "Williams Calls Attack on Rats a 'Beginning,'" *Asbury Park Evening Press*, January 3, 1971.
[235] "Hamm Gives Council Notice Of Move to Stall Renewal," *Asbury Park Evening Press*, June 18, 1972.
[236] Jackson, 200.

Project Area Committee (PAC) did not represent the community; the committee consisted of Ruth Bell of the Housing Authority, George Rucker, the Authority chairman, and David Parreott, head of the Asbury Park Police Department's community relations unit. In a public meeting with City Council, Hamm described unsuccessful efforts to investigate how and why the Asbury Park Housing Authority spent $12,000 on undisclosed services.[237] Furthermore, Hamm expressed to City Council, "There has never been a meeting at which the coalition was allowed to state what it wanted and would approve."[238] While City Council could not fully bar citizens from urban renewal planning, they employed different strategies to phase them out from the project.

Throughout the 1970s, the West Side and Asbury Park City Council continued to butt heads over the future of the city's urban renewal program, securing key wins while suffering enduring defeats. In 1973, the West Side elected Dr. Lorenzo Harris as the city's first African American councilman, whose anti-Mattice campaign eventually cost the mayor his reelection.[239] In 1974, Mattice was indicted on 87 counts of conspiracy, falsifying nominating petitions, entering false statements, and forgery, in a plot to control his seat on the Asbury Park Democratic Committee.[240] Meanwhile, buildings continued to decay, debts mounted, and more and more of the city's tax base eroded as wealthier white residents fled to other suburbs. The same year Mattice was indicted, the popular Mayfair, a once grand movie palace, and the neighboring St. James were demolished.[241] In 1979, Steinbach's closed and in the 1980s, even the *Asbury Park Press*, moved to Neptune.

As the events of July 1970 slowly faded into an uncomfortable memory for East Siders, the riot, as it was called, would take the blame. As Alison Isenberg writes, violence in downtowns

[237] "Hamm Gives Council Notice Of Move to Stall Renewal," *Asbury Park Evening Press*, June 18, 1972.
[238] Ibid.
[239] Bilby and Ziegler, *A Brief History*, 109.
[240] "Asbury Park's ex-chief Mattice indicted in plot," *Central New Jersey Home News*, September 19, 1974.
[241] Bilby and Ziegler, *A Brief History*, 110.

across the United States forced investors to reconsider their responsibilities and generated opportunities for reinvestment.[242] What did that mean for Asbury Park's Springwood Avenue, a product of historical segregation where businesses were mostly tailored for, frequented by, and often run by Black consumers? From the perspective of the boardwalk businesses, they never wanted much to do with the West Side in the first place and even less so after the disorders. While remaining mum on the West Side's political demands, East Side business owners instead focused on how to convince frightened white consumers to come back to their boardwalk and department stores. From the perspective of City Council, "urban renewal" became less a matter of recovering an already struggling neighborhood but rather what they could build in place of the ashes and debris. It was an opportunity for the federal government to subsidize the razing of the troubled Springwood Avenue and expand Cookman Avenue. Through eviction orders, closed-door settlements with residents, and increasingly hostile negotiation practices with West Side community leaders, City Council, one might argue, did not seem interested in getting Springwood Avenue back.

In a moment when Asbury Park needed definitive decision-making to recover Springwood Avenue, from damages sustained during the unrest and its already ailing infrastructure, Joseph Mattice and City Council pursued an inadequate urban renewal program that left hundreds of residents displaced. The disorders torched Springwood Avenue, and many already struggling businesses never reopened. But the violence also set up direct lines of contact between many actors, including organizers and activists who seized the opportunity and newfound attention to demand long delayed reforms.

[242] Isenberg, 253.

As negotiations between the West Side and City Hall broke down and the unlikeliness that emergency federal funding would be approved, though, Springwood Avenue and its constituents fell further into a cycle of debt, deteriorating infrastructure, and unemployment. To the rest of the country and the broad lens of urban studies, the debris-laden West Side became yet another urban Black neighborhood undone by its own rage. Because of Asbury Park's status as a popular tourist destination for much of the twentieth century, its disturbances received widespread, albeit short-lived, national attention. By the time the "troubles" subsided, the story had been picked up by major broadcast networks ABC, NBC, and CBS. Reports appeared across the state in the *Trenton Evening Press* and *Newark Star-Ledger* and eventually across the United States, from the Washington D.C. *Evening Star* to the *Sacramento Bee*, *San Francisco Chronicle*, and the *Charlotte Observer*. Editorials appeared in the *Asbury Park Evening Press*, the *New York Times*, and the *Chicago Daily Defender*, one of the nation's most prominent African American newspapers at the time. Governor William T. Cahill paid a visit to the city and even went so far as to ask President Richard Nixon to declare the city a natural disaster area. This was unusual especially because, by 1970 as historian Alison Isenberg notes, "riots had lost their power to shock and even major unrest rarely made it into the national news anymore."[243] In a *Vanity Fair* interview for his 2019 documentary on the social and musical history of Asbury Park, director Tom Jones remarked, "Howard K. Smith put it on the national news three nights in a row. It scared everyone. It was just a big enough town that people had heard of it, but it was smaller than Detroit, smaller than Newark. It meant this could happen in your town."[244]

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[243] Alison Isenberg, *Downtown America: A History of Place and the People Who Made It* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 231.

[244] Jordan Hoffman, "In *Asbury Park: Riot, Redemption, Rock 'N Roll,* Bruce Springsteen Goes Home Again," *Vanity Fair*, May 22, 2019, https://www.vanityfair.com/hollywood/2019/05/bruce-springsteen-asbury-park-documentary-movie.

The community's resilience is all the more remarkable considering the town's economic struggles were accompanied with a resurgence in outward hostility against the town's Black community. One night in March 1971, a 4-by-6-foot cross soaked in kerosene rags hung up in downtown Asbury.[245] The Ku Klux Klan, once an active presence on the Jersey Shore but having been dormant for several years, returned. The following month, police sergeant Joseph Monteparo was stabbed to death on Springwood Avenue by a former mental patient and Black man. On the morning of his funeral, another cross burned outside the MCAP building.[246] However, I argue that these public deliberations over the future of Asbury Park stem from, contend with, and advance a long history of civil rights activism and community organizing that began long before the unrest and continued long after. Though facing constant pushback by a negligent government, community organizers successfully, though slowly, negotiated with City Council for a series of important, yet small and piecemeal, victories, made possible only in the aftermath of the unrest. As Madonna Carter Jackson commented on a photograph of the Asbury-Neptune NAACP at the March on Trenton a month before the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, "Change didn't come without violence."[247]

Epilogue

In March 2019, Asbury Park residents Pamela Major and Diane Shelton were at Kula Café, a community eatery training local young people for the hospitality industry, when they realized that the following year marked the 50th anniversary of the July 1970 disorders on the West Side. Major, who grew up in Englewood, has lived in Asbury since 2014 and, since 2016, has been running her own consulting company, Melia Bloom, which focuses on the personal and

[245] "Cross Burned in Asbury Park," *New York Times*, March 15, 1971.
[246] Wolff, 197; "X", *Asbury Park Evening Press*, April 28, 1971.
[247] Jackson, 192.

professional empowerment of clients and organizing community service projects.[248] Shelton, a Neptune native and clinical social worker, now serves as an outreach specialist for nonprofit Interfaith Neighbors, which operates Kula Café. She was a high school sophomore during the disorders and tells the *Asbury Insider* in an interview that she does not remember much about the event. Through independent research, she encountered Daniel Weeks' study of the disorders and found that half of the people she surveyed in the community, of all ages, were interested in commemorating the history of Asbury Park. Soon, Major and Shelton teamed up with Nina Summerlin, also a Neptune native, who has been president of West Side Citizens United for over five years and director of the Alliance for a Healthier Asbury Park for four.

Summerlin explains the initiative's purpose is to "understand the history of Asbury Park the way they should and feel a sense of pride."[249] In the last 15 years, she explains that community members have grown increasingly skeptical and discouraged by the pace of development on the oceanfront by private real estate firms like iStar. Exactly fifty years after the unrest, the revival of Asbury Park has taken a different shape; it is no longer competing with just Atlantic City for white middle-class families seeking modest luxury and historic cityscapes. Since 2006, a billion-dollar private development project led by real estate firm iStar has been planning to divert the "Hamptons crowd," wealthy East Coasters seeking scenic, trendy vacation homes, from Long Island to New Jersey. iStar is planning 25 luxury dwellings along 35 acres of oceanfront properties, including a mixed-use 110-room hotel, 34-unit condominium, and retail project called the Asbury Ocean Club, fit with a state-of-the-art music venue and bowling alley.[250] In a 2019 interview with *Elle Décor*,

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[248] "From Uprising to Rising Up!" *Asbury Insider*, September 13, 2019. https://asburyinsider.com/from-uprising-to-rising-up/?fbclid=IwAR19t7CXFCq3MeNuhrvdx42qRCPbPHMAngyc3R-wLmO4Y_UHgaHSfHIk5fc

[249] Ibid.

[250] "Touring the New Asbury Park with iStar's Jay Sugarman," *The Real Deal*, May 20, 2019. https://therealdeal.com/tristate/issues_articles/touring-asbury-park-with-istars-jay-sugarman/

CEO Jay Sugarman described Asbury Park as, "If Montauk and South Beach had a baby. It's got beach[es], boardwalk, music, and now sophisticated design."[251] A Rutgers urban planning student described the new East Side in a blog post as a "hipster and millennial wonderland filled with a variety of restaurants, all of which you have different toasts you can put your avocados on."[252] As the urban renewal projects of the 1960s and 1970s attempted, Sugarman hoped private sector redevelopment could tap into the allure of Asbury in the early twentieth century, pre-integration, when it was "one of the great cities of the East Coast."[253] According to Sugarman, the campaign was already proving to be a success. "We have a bunch of people from East Hampton who have moved there. It's faster to get to and more fun." As of April 2020, the city had still not yet imposed any affordable housing provisions on new projects, meaning that the redevelopment project could drive up rents for existing properties across the board and displace low-income residents.[254] To this day, nostalgia for the city's glory days, however fraught, painful, and tainted by its "seedy past," as the *New York Times* calls it, remains a powerful currency.

As the devastation of Springwood Avenue did in July 1970, Shelton, Summerlin, and Major hoped their programming could bring together the community in creative ways in order to assess and articulate their present-day needs. For Summerlin, she wanted to see more commercial spaces instead of boarded-up buildings on Springwood, which had not received nearly the same recent media attention and construction as the waterfront. Major added that she wished the community "will begin to have a voice." Despite some improvement in relations between the West Side and City Hall, many residents still felt excluded from city governance and ownership over

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[251] Charles Curkin, "Will Asbury Park Soon Be Replacing the Hamptons?" *Elle Décor,* June 17, 2019. https://www.elledecor.com/life-culture/travel/a27887323/jay-sugarman-asbury-park-asbury-ocean-club-hotel/
[252] kylebenji17, *Zoning the Garden State*, October 4, 2018. https://zoningthegardenstate.wordpress.com/2018/10/04/asbury-park-stopping-tides-of-gentrification-is-it-too-late/.
[253] Curkin, *Elle Décor.*
[254] Austin Bogues, "Asbury Park: Affordable housing could be required of 20% of news homes outside of the waterfront," *Asbury Park Press,* April 1, 2020.

their neighborhood. For Springwood Avenue Rising, the process of producing a body of art, writing, and knowledge represented an opportunity for community building. As they celebrated the enduring life and spirit of the West Side, they also organized their concerns with the legacy of segregation, failed development, and urban unrest and communicated them to City Hall. "It would be wonderful to have a mural on Springwood Avenue," Major commented. "Let the community get involved in the process, allow them to be responsible for the outcome of their community. Citizenship is responsibility."

In fall 2019, Springwood Avenue Rising, led by its three founders, started meeting at round tables in Rebirth Church, attracting participants from all over the community. In attendance were graduate students from the Master of Social Work program at Monmouth University, Robert Stewart and Kathleen Melgar of the Asbury Park Public Library, Shelton's colleagues at Interfaith Neighbors, local reporters, and lifelong residents of Asbury Park.[255] The meetings also drew historian, activist, local business owner, and educator Kay Harris. For the last twelve years, Harris, daughter of Dr. Lorenzo Harris Jr. and granddaughter of Lorenzo Harris, has operated the Asbury Galleria on the boardwalk, which displays and sells Asbury historical and rock and roll memorabilia, photography, and books and cards about the Jersey Shore.[256] In the same year, Harris, alongside a coalition of activists, environmentalists, and surrounding residents under the name Save Asbury's Waterfront, publicly spoke out against an iStar plan to open an expensive private pool club.[257] In December 2018, Harris directed the opening of a pop-up museum documenting the history of Asbury Park. In three weeks, with the help of volunteers and without funding, the boardwalk exhibit debuted featuring objects donated by music historians Pam and Charlie Horner

[255] Springwood Avenue Rising Meeting Minutes, November 7, 2019.
[256] "About Us," Asbury Galleria, https://www.asburygalleria.com/about-us/ accessed April 21, 2020.
[257] "Black residents say pricey pool club will leave them out," *Asbury Park Press*, February 15, 2019.

and the Asbury Park and Ocean Township Historical Societies.[258] As of 2020, Harris is still searching for a permanent home for the museum.[259]

In December 2019, Springwood Avenue Rising had organized into six committees – fundraising/finance, events, youth engagement, marketing, programming, and community engagement. The events committee hoped to plan a tour of the businesses that once ran Springwood Avenue, stage a reading of a play written by a Neptune native, and host a panel discussion, gospel brunch, and even a parade. Mayor John Moor made an appearance, raising concerns about insurance and liability and availability of city police and firemen. With the mayor's presence, organizers were also able to ask him, directly, to put the parade, which required high-level coordination, on the City Council meeting agenda. A resident also emphasized the importance of talking to the East Side for sponsorships. "Let the East Side know it's okay to come over here," she commented.[260] Kyle Weedon, an employee at the Asbury Park School District, presented his artistic interpretation of the unrest, as told to him by his mother when he was growing up. The work reads, "They called it black rage. We called it justice."[261]

Besides committee meetings, Springwood Avenue Rising also organized community members at "porch talks," a series of monthly gatherings at someone's home where the entire community is invited to mingle and share memories about Springwood, before, during, and after 1970. At their second porch talk, communications students from Monmouth University conducted oral histories with residents on tape, preserving the stories for longevity and further research.[262] The porch talks were inherently social, encouraging West Siders – long-term and new residents,

[258] "Asbury Park Museum Opens on AP Boardwalk," *Asbury Park Sun*, December 22, 2018.
[259] Kay Harris, Conversation with author, February 1, 2020.
[260] Springwood Avenue Rising meeting, December 5, 2019, attended by author.
[261] See Appendix 1.
[262] Springwood Avenue Rising, 2019. "Great PORCH TALK today that enabled us to tape memories of the Springwood…" Facebook, November 9, 2019.

children, teenagers, adults, and senior citizens, old friends and strangers – to grab some coffee, catch up, reflect, and learn more about Springwood Avenue Rising's mission. At the same time, nonprofits like Interfaith Neighbors, Coastal Habitat for Humanity, and Planned Parenthood were invited to offer resources to community members on topics including healthy eating, affordable housing, and family care. Beyond organizing celebratory events like the parade, the porch talks served as an active exercise in building and sharing community knowledge. At the same time people brought their memories of Springwood to the events, they also were connected to resources, caught up with neighbors, and learned about the committee's upcoming programming and how they could get involved. The porch talks reflected the initiative's understanding that thoughtful, collective reflection about their history was key to imagining a better Asbury Park. Springwood Avenue Rising is organized around a specific historical moment and fueled by the political exigencies of redevelopment and social upheaval occurring nationally, but it is necessarily oriented toward the future.

At the same time, nowhere in Springwood Avenue Rising's messaging or core values – People, Pride, Purpose, and Progress – do they publicly advance any specific interpretation of the 1970 unrest. Diane Shelton, referencing Daniel Weeks's study of Asbury Park, acknowledged that the events were variously described as a "riot, revolt, or civil unrest," depending on who was asked or interviewed. Much of this, I suggest, might be attributed to the fact that, like the many other small towns in the 1960s and 1970s that erupted in violence, Asbury Park has received limited scholarly attention. Furthermore, living residents tend to conflate the week-long event into a couple key moments – the burning of Fisch's, the shooting in the streets, and the protests. For example, Kelly Walker Edwards's self-published biography of her grandmother's life in Asbury Park, *Now is the Acceptable Time*, briefly describes her uncle's involvement in the unrest as a protestor but

is only able to narrate the dramatic episodes of July 7, when her uncle Billy's leg is grazed by a bullet at the standoff on Springwood.

But the initiative was not necessarily interested in breaking down a play-by-play of that week in July 1970: they wanted to recover the struggles that faced the West Side, and how community members rose up, and continue to rise up, to its challenges. "We're not focusing on the how, it's the why that's important," Summerlin remarked. To Shelton's understanding, the disorders unfolded when discontent over a lack of jobs, recreational facilities, decent living conditions, and representation on City Council came to a head. Summerlin added that some community members were also frustrated by the string of assassinations of civil rights leaders and politicians in the 1960s, of Martin Luther King Jr., Malcolm X, and Robert Kennedy. However, the organizers also remind readers that community leaders like NAACP president Ermon K. Jones, Monmouth Community Action Program head Donald Hammary, and West Side coalition leader Willie Hamm, organized residents, articulated their grievances, and negotiated with a reticent City Hall. While Springwood Avenue Rising's central conceit was remembering a decisive moment in the community's history, it was also about fostering civic engagement, active dialogue, and imagining, in real, practical steps, what a better, unified Asbury Park could look like. "Our vision is to see just one Asbury Park, a community that's together, with no division between east and west," Major said. She added that they hoped to involve the midtown section of Neptune, whose close ties to Asbury's Black community also meant that they were affected by the aftermath of the violence.

This is all not to suggest that the recovery of a forgotten history serves as adequate or even partially complete reconciliation between the city and the West Side, though it is certainly essential. Many residents still believe outsiders were responsible for the disorders, even when

arrest and hospital records comprised Asbury Park and Neptune residents. Mayor Joseph Mattice's correspondences, photographs, and clippings ended up at Duke University instead of in Asbury Park's repository. And, at the time of writing, all Springwood Avenue Rising programming is on pause in light of the 2020 coronavirus pandemic. But before and after July 1970, this quadrant of Asbury Park confronted high unemployment, moldy, rat-infested public housing, and the ever-present threat of the Ku Klux Klan. What Springwood Avenue Rising does remind us, though, is that the loss that the West Side faced was more than $4 million in property damages. For many people, Springwood Avenue provided a source of income, meeting spot, sustenance, and entertainment. When it went under a final time, it was not by looting and Molotov cocktails but rather by razing in an urban renewal program. Soon the story of Asbury Park in July 1970 bled into hundreds of other stories of cities burning, and press observers, local officials, as residents grafted the 1960s social upheaval's stock characters, themes, and storylines onto the West Side. Concerns over the lack of jobs and adequate recreational facilities morphed into narratives about Black criminal materialism or the uncontained explosion of anger. They were further reinforced by new State Police strategies. In time, these narratives, however erroneous, not only harmed the city's fragile public reputation but became easy reasons to leave Springwood Avenue behind.

I want to challenge the claims that the violence that rocked the West Side and the city's subsequent decline were inevitable, though they were certainly intertwined. When presented with a watershed moment in the West Side's history, and a chance to start over, local officials like Samuel Siciliano failed to take decisive action and stalled on recovery efforts, instead relying on a Hail Mary from President Richard Nixon. Mayor Joseph Mattice backed out of promises and even, as some have alleged, exploited the episode for personal financial gain. Meanwhile, business

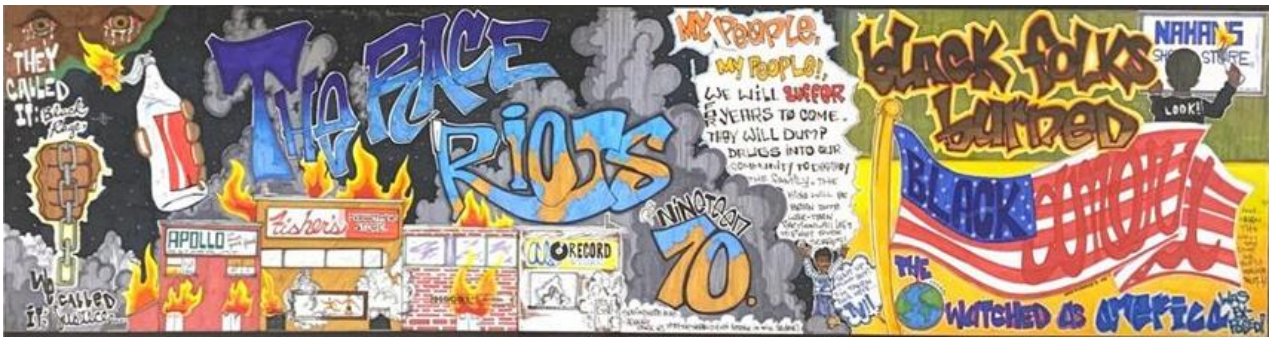
owners on the East Side remained silent, preoccupied with recouping their losses and reassuring tourists that the boardwalk's illusion of modest luxury was unscathed.

The microhistorical lens of this study points out that there were actors with faces and names, many of whom inhabited positions of power and created conditions that bred unrest. Though Victoria Wolcott assures us that arguing for a national civil rights narrative does not erase the social and legal nuances of specific localities, perhaps it does obscure the toll of violence on everyday lives. Paul A. Gilje discusses this quandary in his survey of rioting in America from the colonial period to the late twentieth century: "I [had] the problem of wanting to tell the reader too much. Each riot represents a special human drama that had great impact on the participants' lives."[263]

Accordingly, I hoped to bring to bear the special human drama in Asbury Park, and the human lives that shaped and were shaped by this moment of violence. Much like residents in years' past—the activists and organizers named in this thesis and the untold labor of countless young people and women—Shelton, Summerlin, and Major speak to the neighborhood's remarkable continuity of community organizing and civil rights advocacy. In 1970, despite the devastating loss of Springwood Avenue, it was the persistence of close community ties, emphasis on articulating grievances and demands, and the involvement of people of all generations who comprised what could have been a truly collaborative effort to rebuild Asbury Park. The 1970 Asbury Park uprising was devastating and costly. It was a series of tactics which brought different actors – onto the streets and into meeting rooms, where they could finally confront each other. Even if only through a multitude of small but enduring wins, it was successful. And finally, as

[263] Paul A. Gilje, *Rioting in America* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1999), x.

Pamela Major summed up in her interview with the *Asbury Insider*: "There's something to be said for people who are still here."[264]



Kyle Weedon, "untitled," 2005; presented at Springwood Avenue Rising meeting attended by author on December 15, 2019 and reproduced courtesy of the Springwood Avenue Rising public Facebook page.

Vayne Ong is from Malaysia and grew up in New Jersey. She graduated from Princeton University in 2020 with a degree in history and urban studies. She is currently the Program and Policy Fellow at Women Creating Change, a women's civic engagement nonprofit based in New York City. At Princeton, she was interested in the political economy of leisure and the histories of race, violence, and social movements in the 20th century United States. She plans to continue studying history and organizes political education workshops in her hometown in New Jersey and with a national activist collective. This paper was nominated for the Stellhorn Award by Professor Alison Isenberg.

[264] From Uprising to Rising Up!" *Asbury Insider*.