

Peace Road 2020: Irmgard Baynes - Listen to the Language of the Unheard

Katarina Connery
September 3, 2020

"Certain conditions continue to exist in our society which must be condemned as vigorously as we condemn riots. But in the final analysis, a riot is the language of the unheard. And what is it that America has failed to hear?...It has failed to hear that the promises of freedom and justice have not been met. And it has failed to hear that large segments of white society are more concerned about tranquility and the status quo than about justice, equality, and humanity...Social justice and progress are the absolute guarantors of riot prevention." -Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., ["The Other America"](#), 1967

At the intersection of Springfield and 15th Avenue in Newark, NJ is a small patch of grass, "Rebellion Park," which holds a monument honoring the 26 men and women who lost their lives during the 1967 riots in Newark. Indeed, just down the road, at Springfield and Bergen, was the epicenter of the riots which occurred in the summer of 1967 and left hundreds injured, over \$10 million dollars in damage, a heavy toll on the families who had lost their siblings, parents, or children from the wanton violence, and much more. (Read more about the multi-faceted elements leading up the riots and the aftermath for the city [here](#).)



When Peace Road 2020 was announced with its focus on reconciliation and understanding between races, Irmgard Baynes, WFWP Financial Administrator, looked around for how she could contribute to her community. She came across [an article](#) about Rebellion Park published in 2017 on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the riots. Upon reading the article, she visited the park and saw that it was again sadly left in disrepair. The flowers surrounding the monument had been overrun with weeds and one could barely determine that there was a planter in front of where the names of the dead were etched. She felt inspired to do this one small act of kindness for those men and women of Newark who had died in tragedy.

Thus, on a rainy Wednesday morning, August 19th, Irmgard, her husband, Tyndol, and I visited the park to clear the weeds from the planter and replace them with some new flowers. Before departing we prayed in remembrance of those men and women and everything their deaths represented. We prayed that their voices, and the voices of many more, will not remain unheard and that we can take the steps necessary to amplify voices of "justice, equality, and humanity." Irmgard also decided that day to adopt the spot and keep it clean and free of garbage moving forward.

Of the [26 who were killed](#) during 5 days of rioting, two were police officers, two were in relation with looting incidents, and the remainder were civilians. For example, Eddie Moss, only 10 years old, was hit by a stray bullet from a National Guard checkpoint. Eloise Spellman, mother of 11 children, was mistaken for a sniper when she leaned out her apartment window and was shot by a National Guardsman. Rose

Abraham, a 45-year-old mother of 6, was looking for her children when she was shot. Several of those who were killed were by authorities looking for supposed snipers, though very little evidence had turned up to support the existence of snipers. In all, over 12,000 bullets were used by the National Guard and State Police over the course of the five days.



Though our planting and prayer is one small, symbolic act in remembrance of this history and more which is not written here, we hope it will be one step toward fighting complacency. We pray for the wisdom and foresight to hear the cries of the unheard long before rioting seems to be the last resort and to respond with love and compassion for those who have historically been disenfranchised. Surely as the flowers surrounding the monument to these 26 victims require care and attention, our relationships with each other and how we take care of those most in need demand careful and prayerful investment.

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Crossroads Pt. 1: Before 1967, a gathering storm

Updated Apr 02, 2019; Posted Jul 08, 2007



By [Brad Parks](#)

(This is the first of a four-part series. Click to read [Part 2](#), [Part 3](#) and [Part 4](#).)

He thought it was some kind of providence, the perfect confluence of a man, a time and a place.

The man was David Suchow, a 37-year-old pharmacist. The time was 1955. The place was the corner of Springfield Avenue and Bergen Street in Newark, where Suchow had just been given the opportunity to buy a pharmacy, Post Drugs, for no money down and a reasonable monthly payment.

To Suchow, it looked like a future. The location was in the middle of a two-mile-long commercial corridor stretching from Newark's downtown to its outskirts. In the days before shopping malls, Springfield Avenue was what shopping malls later would aspire to be. "It was a hustling, bustling area," said Suchow, now 89 and living in Hunterdon County. "Back in my day, we called it action. It had great action, a lot of foot traffic."

What he couldn't know in those optimistic times was just how quickly the action was changing. A little more than a decade later, Suchow's corner and the blocks around it were the epicenter of one of the most severe civil disturbances in American history, a spasm of racially steeped violence and destruction that began one hot July evening in 1967 and ended five days later with 26 deaths and \$10 million in damage.

As the city prepares to mark the 40th anniversary of the event, The Star-Ledger is examining the Newark riots from the vantage point of the neighborhood around Springfield and Bergen. Today and for the next three days, more than 50 years of the area's history will be revisited - from gilded commercial strip to riot-shredded shell, then from vacated inner-city

wasteland to urban-redevelopment success story.

Drawing on thousands of pages of documents recently discovered in State Police headquarters, four decades of scholarly research, and the living memory of dozens who crossed through the neighborhood, this four-part series will debunk some popular myths. Among them:

* The riots were responsible for the decline that turned Newark into one of America's most desperate cities. In reality, the city had long been in a downward spiral which by 1967 created an atmosphere ripe for unrest.

* The riots were sparked by a rumor that cabdriver John Smith had been beaten to death by police. In fact, the serious looting didn't begin until nearly 24 hours later, when a rally staged by community activists got out of hand. By that point, the rumor of Smith's death had already been dispelled.

* The riots caused most businesses along Springfield Avenue to immediately close. To the contrary, 83 percent of businesses in the riot area reopened. They shuttered in the coming months and years when owners realized their suburban customers were too scared to return.

The series also will reveal some never-before-reported details about the disorders. Among them:

* Mayor Hugh Addonizio did not want to call in the State Police and National Guard, going so far as to cancel a request from his police department for assistance. But a report of looting at Sears Roebuck, which sold guns, forced his hand.

* The "Soul Brother riots," when rogue members of the State Police shot hundreds of windows owned by black businessmen, appear to have been planned to coincide with a press conference, a time when most reporters and photographers were not on the streets to observe the troopers' behavior.

* The sniper fire, on which many of the 26 riot deaths were blamed, was mainly gunfire from authorities, not snipers, who unwittingly shot at each other as a result of a communication breakdown.

Springfield and Bergen was a main crossroads in the neighborhood where the trouble began, a hub around which much of the damage revolved, and it is now a symbol of the recovery that has taken place.

It also is a living reminder that in an ever-changing city like Newark, a junction like Springfield and Bergen is more than just a place where two roads cross. It is a place for intersections of other sorts - of people, events and the forces of history.

UNCONVENTIONAL WISDOM

Even now, 40 years later, what happened in Newark July 12 to 17, 1967, is like a kaleidoscope: Twist the canister and the scene changes.

Some people still see it as little more than a opportunistic shopping spree, a time when looters exploited a lapse in authority to steal things they were too lazy to work for. Others call it a rebellion, a willful act of defiance by an African-American community pushing back against centuries of oppression.

Aging white ethnic groups remember it as a time when they lost their city. Yet for a generation of black leaders, it was a time when they gained power.

"People put into the riots their own beliefs," said Max Herman, a Rutgers-Newark sociology professor whose research compares Newark's race riots with the hundreds of others that erupted throughout the 20th century. "The event essentially becomes a vessel for whatever ideology someone wants it to hold."

Yet for whatever baggage individuals bring to the subject, the academic community has, over the past 20 years or so, produced a fairly unified view of what led to the events of 1967. And it's a different take on What Happened to Newark than what many in New Jersey grew up believing.

"The conventional version of what happened in Newark and other American cities during the 1960s is that things were fine, and then the riots came, and then things went downhill," said Thomas Sugrue, a professor of history and sociology at the University of Pennsylvania who has written extensively on urban America. "That version has huge, huge flaws."

Scholars have come to view the 1960s civil disturbances as the result of more than 100 years of local, state and national policy decisions - the inevitable conclusion to a long series of choices by those who were in power and the frustration it created among those who weren't.

They were decisions about urban planning, housing and transportation that made America's suburbs flourish while systematically devastating its inner cities, Newark more so than most.

"There's a widespread belief Newark died in the riots," said John T. Cunningham, a historian who wrote what is considered the city's definitive history. "The fact is, the city was dead 30 years before anyone recognized it."

To David Suchow - and to most merchants and shoppers who crowded Springfield and Bergen outside the pharmacist's doors in the mid-1950s - it was awfully hard to see.

They regarded the long stretch of busy storefronts as evidence of the area's prosperity.

"You could buy anything you wanted on Springfield Avenue," said James Singletary, now 65, who has lived his entire life near Springfield and Bergen. "It was beautiful."

For a kid growing up in one of those stores, it was a kind of retail wonderland. David Silovitch, whose father owned Universal Shoes just up from Springfield and Bergen, spent his after-school hours each day popping into one store or another, such as the candy shop next door run by a kindly 80-year-old woman.

"She would pay me a dollar to mind the store while she was in back," Silovitch said, then laughed. "I found out later she was running numbers out of there."

There was plenty of business for everyone. A massive high-rise public housing development, Hayes Homes, opened in 1953, bringing thousands of new customers to Springfield and Bergen.

The neighborhood's racial mix quickly changed. Hayes Homes was designated for black residents, and blacks were moving into the nearby apartments that were once filled by Eastern European immigrants, who were either moving out or dying off.

While some merchants took advantage of the newcomers - charging them exorbitant interest rates on credit accounts or pounding them with late fees - other merchants happily accommodated them.

"I used to tell my help, 'I don't care if they're black, green or gray. If they come through that door, they'll put money in all of our pockets,'" Suchow said.

Little did Suchow know Springfield Avenue was already nearing its zenith. According to figures released by the Newark Economic Development Office in 1968, the city reached its peak of small-business production in 1958.

The next year, Newark's small businesses, which included all the mom-and-pop storefronts on Springfield Avenue, began a long, slow decline, both in terms of sales and total jobs.

One of the first to realize it was Samuel Sheitelman, who owned an appliance and furniture store, Sheitelman's, a few doors up from Post Drugs.

In 1957, Sheitelman opened the Mart Furniture Gallery on Route 22 in Union. Jerry Sheitelman said his father realized customers were moving to the

suburbs and wanted free parking and air conditioned stores, things they couldn't find in cramped, aging Newark.

"We were one of the first ones out on the highway," said Jerry Sheitelman, whose family is still in the furniture business, operating as Bassett Furniture in Middletown and Green Brook. "Everyone said my dad was crazy. He was crazy, all right, like a fox.

"My dad was smart enough to see the future wasn't in Newark."

THE SHRINKING CITY

How that happened - how Newark lost its future - is a story that begins in the 19th century, when, to 21st-century eyes, the city fathers made two critical mistakes.

The first was allowing industry to pollute the air and build shoddy housing for its workers, turning Newark into the kind of place people wanted to leave as soon as they had the means.

While white flight is popularly believed to be a post-riot phenomenon, Newark's newspapers were writing editorials as early as the 1920s, fretting over the departure of the city's leading citizens - its lawyers, its captains of industry.

That led to the second 19th-century mistake: failure to annex the suburbs. At a time when other American cities were adding huge chunks of land through annexation, Newark was shrinking. All of suburban Essex County and parts of what is now Union County peeled off from Newark during the 1800s.

It left a city of 24 square miles, smaller than any other city in the nation's top 100 in population.

In cities that expanded, the movement of well-to-do residents from the core to the periphery had no impact on the bottom line. Those residents still paid taxes to the city.

In tiny Newark, well-off residents looking to leave center city ended up in places like Montclair and Millburn, taking their checkbooks with them. This left Newark with less money for police and schools. It also created a greater tax burden on those left behind. That caused even more people to leave.

By 1967, Newark believed its property tax rate, \$7.75 per \$100 of assessed value, was the highest in the nation. If taxed at that rate today, an average home in New Jersey - valued at \$350,000 - would owe more than \$27,000 a year in property taxes.

Even though Springfield and Bergen was largely populated by rental housing, soaring taxes had an impact. Landlords, fearful that making improvements would increase their tax bills, began neglecting their properties.

Tom Sherman, 64, grew up in one of those buildings, a six-family house on Holland Street, just west of Springfield and Bergen. His parents moved out in 1960, when he was 17.

"You used to see people sitting on their stoops at night, and everyone knew each other," said Sherman, who now lives in Tennessee. "All of a sudden it seemed like the building wasn't being kept up and there was a lot of crime and unexplained fires. People were leaving in droves."

RED AREAS

But there were many other factors driving citizens, especially wealthier ones, from Newark.

Chief among them was the dream of home ownership, something the Federal Housing Authority - created as part of Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal in 1934 - was making possible for more Americans than ever.

But only in the suburbs, not the city. FHA guidelines forbade underwriters from approving mortgages in "crowded neighborhoods." They also were instructed to avoid "inharmonious racial groups."

The FHA's maps were even more explicit. The entire area around Springfield and Bergen - including every part of the Central Ward that would become a riot zone - was shaded red, the least-desirable rating. The maps soon became a self-fulfilling prophecy, as property values in red areas stagnated or dropped.

"People forget that it was the federal government that really created and codified red-lining," said Richard Cammarieri, a lifelong Newark resident who has spent a career in the city as a community developer. "From there, the private sector picked it up quite eagerly, and the banks refused to offer loans in these areas. But it started with the FHA."

According to Kenneth Jackson's book on suburbanization, "Crabgrass Frontier," the FHA approved 28 loans during 1936 in all of Newark. In Livingston, which had less than a hundredth of Newark's population, 37 loans were approved.

After World War II, the GI Bill - using the same underwriting guidelines - greatly exacerbated that trend, making it cheaper for veterans, most of them white, to buy a home in the suburbs than to rent in the city. Even

though one of every nine servicemen during World War II was black, only one in 670 mortgages insured by the GI Bill went to black veterans, according to "When Affirmative Action Was White," a book by Columbia professor Ira Katznelson.

"The myth of postwar suburbanization is that it was the whim of the marketplace that was leading whites to move out to places where they had green lawns," said Sugrue, the University of Pennsylvania professor. "The fact is, it was basically a massive federal subsidy that made possible the development of the suburbs. And New Jersey, as a largely suburban state, is ground zero for that."

What's more, the federal government was providing the highways that made it easy for people to leave.

With the passage of the Interstate Highway Act of 1956 - which used a gas tax to provide enormous funds for highway construction, while allotting no money for mass transit - New Jersey officials set about planning Interstates 78 and 280, which in coming years greatly hastened the flight from Newark.

'WHERE DID HE GO?'

The trickle of the upwardly mobile out of town was barely noticeable at first.

George Fontaine, who was born in Newark in 1930, grew up in a racially mixed neighborhood on Hartford Street, just off Bergen Street.

"It was the Germans, the Irish and us," said Fontaine, who is black. "And everyone was poor. And everyone was having a lot of babies."

Then, in the late\$?'40s and early\$?'50s, Fontaine watched as his neighborhood began to change.

"The person you knew as a child, he was a friend. You didn't see what color he was. And then suddenly one spring, you wake up and your neighbor is gone," Fontaine said. "Where did he go? He's moved to the suburbs.

"Basically it was: White people living on one side of a tenement house could use the GI Bill and buy a new home in Maplewood for about the same as they were paying in rent. Black people living on the other side had to stay in Newark."

For them, the federal government was encouraging a different kind of dwelling: public housing.

With the creation of the United States Housing Authority in 1937 and again with the passing of the Housing Act of 1949, the government made grants available to municipal housing authorities to clear slums and construct

public housing.

Newark grabbed the federal money with both hands. It was a move that, in the short term, pleased a diverse array of constituents: the poor who clamored to move into them, the reformers who applauded the clearance of slums, and the organized crime bosses who grew fat off the construction contracts.

The city soon had the nation's highest number of public housing units per capita.

"Those buildings were clean, functional. The hallways were bright white," said Roger Smith, who grew up in Hayes Homes, which towered over Springfield and Bergen. "There was a sense of organization and family at Hayes Homes."

It didn't last. Hayes Homes moldered quickly as management and tenant neglect led to problems like uncollected garbage and rodent infestation. By the eve of the riots, Hayes Homes was festering with discontent and Newark was already beginning to regret its former zeal for high-rise public housing.

"The buildings turned out to be unmanageable," said Gus Heningburg, a court-appointed special master of the Newark Housing Authority, charged with overseeing the settlement of a lawsuit involving the NHA. "It was too high a concentration of low-income families in too small a space."

OPPORTUNITY THWARTED

Yet even as public housing deteriorated through the '50s and '60s, poor blacks escaping the discrimination of the Jim Crow South continued to flock in.

"The only thing there was down south was farm work," said Ossie Boyd, now 75, who came up from Georgia in the 1950s and settled near Springfield Avenue. "Up north, there was opportunity for prosperity. All my friends were coming up."

Newark has long been a first stop for waves of immigrants, from German to Irish to Jewish to Italian, and the city was continually transformed by their energy and dreams. The new arrivals from North Carolina or Georgia were no different in their aspirations but had several disadvantages other groups didn't.

As the grandchildren and great-grandchildren of slaves, they were largely without education or skills beyond agriculture. Their attempts to gain those things, or to achieve any kind of social mobility, had been greatly hindered.

Coming north for factory jobs didn't help. After World War II, the nation's

economy began shifting from manufacturing toward service-based businesses. Between 1950 and 1967, Newark alone lost nearly 20,000 manufacturing jobs.

"These factory jobs had long been the first rung on the economic ladder that immigrant groups had grasped onto as they climbed upward," said Clement Price, a history professor at Rutgers-Newark. "Suddenly, that first rung was gone. And it dealt a serious blow to the ability of this group of African-Americans to replicate the success of other ethnic groups."

CAUGHT IN THE DECAY

No one was more cognizant of that failure than the blacks themselves. On July 3, 1967, The Star-Ledger began a survey of residents in Newark's ghettos, never realizing the city was less than 10 days away from exploding.

"A large number of those questioned," the paper reported, "voice a fervent wish for a better job to permit them to buy a home in the suburbs."

But without the means to move, they had to stay in neighborhoods like the one surrounding Springfield and Bergen, which had decayed rapidly throughout the 1960s.

With middle- and working-class residents fleeing, the people left behind were increasingly jobless or on public assistance. In the streets, seedy elements were taking over.

"It seemed like the only new thing opening on Springfield Avenue were bars," said Brenda Spellman, who grew up in Hayes Homes and whose mother, Eloise Spellman, was killed during the riots. "It was the worst thing that could have happened, because everyone started hanging out, drinking and spending money they didn't have."

For merchants and landlords, that translated into more customers who defaulted on credit accounts or tenants who refused to pay rent. Marvin Cohen, whose family owned H. Cohen and Sons clothing store, remembers watching the neighborhood turn.

"I saw a lot of black people staggering around drunk in the middle of the day," said Cohen, 58, now a co-owner of Sam's of Livingston. "Sailors would come in the store with prostitutes, because we were a women's store. Sometimes you could smell the marijuana on people."

Crime became rampant. Merchants no longer felt safe after dark.

After a rash of break-ins, James Petine, who with his brother Nick ran Petine's Deli, started bringing a gun to work.

Shortly before closing one night, they got a call from a fellow merchant, saying a man outside appeared to be casing the store.

"Nicky put his .45 under his belt and he swore that if that guy asked him for a cigarette, he was going to get it right in the gut," Petine said. "Sure enough, the guy came up to him and asked him for a match. Nicky put his hand in his trench coat, looked the guy right in the eye and, real serious, said, 'I don't smoke.' From the tone of Nicky's voice, I think the guy knew he meant business.

"After that, I said, 'Nicky, let's get out of here.'"

By the eve of the riots in 1967, it was clear to everyone passing through the corner of Springfield and Bergen that the area's heyday had long passed.

"It had been a beautiful thing, but the business that had been there was no longer there," Sheitelman said. "It was like watching a flower die."

And in its place, something far more foreboding had started to grow.

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Crossroads Pt. 2: 5 days that changed a city

Updated Apr 02, 2019; Posted Jul 09, 2007



By [Brad Parks](#)

(This is the second in a four-part series. Click here to read [Part 1](#), [Part 3](#) and [Part 4](#).)

In the second-floor office at 415 Springfield Ave., near the corner of Bergen Street in Newark, they had been publicizing the event for weeks, printing fliers on an overworked mimeograph machine and passing them around the neighborhood.

The final flier, dated Aug. 24, 1966, described the event simply as: "Stokely is here."

Stokely Carmichael, a 25-year-old African-American, had come to national prominence earlier that year, when he helped black candidates overthrow a slate of white incumbents in Alabama's Lowndes County. Then he began touring the country preaching something he called "Black Power."

His arrival in Newark came as the city was reaching a significant demographic milestone: For the first time in its 300-year history, Newark had a black majority. At 415 Springfield Ave., that was big news. The office was home to the United Community Corporation's Area Board No. 2, a federally funded anti-poverty program in Newark that had become a hotbed for African-American agitation. It was also the unofficial home of the Newark Community Union Project, a radical student group headed by community organizer Tom Hayden, a white man who came to Newark in 1965 because he believed the future of the civil rights movement was in the Northern cities.

In some ways, the tasks that occupied the UCC and NCUP were entirely prosaic - getting stoplights installed at dangerous intersections; teaching poor mothers how to stretch a dollar by buying in bulk - but there was no

denying their political agenda, which was wrapped in revolutionary rhetoric that made many whites uncomfortable.

And few were better when it came to rhetoric than Carmichael. By 8 p.m. on Aug. 25, about 400 people packed the UCC's stifling hot office on the second floor to hear him. Dressed in a white suit and loosely knotted black tie, Carmichael spoke from the front of the room.

"In all other cities, they're afraid of a rebellion," he said. "But in Newark, New Jersey, they're not even afraid of you."

He continued for 80 minutes, drenched in perspiration even after shedding his jacket and tie.

"Whether you know it or not, you are the majority in this town," Carmichael told the crowd. "You should already have taken Newark, New Jersey, over because it belongs to you."

And yet it did not. Nearly every authority figure in the city was white - from police, whose reputation for brutality was notorious among the black community, to teachers, to City Hall bureaucrats. The mayor, Hugh Addonizio, was white. And while he appointed blacks to some prominent positions and consulted a council of black ministers whom he felt represented the African-American community's interests, the people gathered to hear Carmichael were different.

They were young and frustrated by what they saw as a lack of progress in the civil rights movement, which had seemed to offer so much promise earlier in the decade. And they felt the time for Addonizio's tokenism had passed.

"The politicians in Newark thought certain black people represented the black community, never realizing that group was out of touch with the masses," said George Fontaine, now 77, then the second in command at UCC Area Board No. 2. "We wanted change a lot faster than anyone in the power structure was willing to give it to us."

In previous summers, what journalists started calling "riots" had been increasing in frequency and severity. In 1964, they touched 11 cities, from New York (in Harlem and in Brooklyn) to Cleveland. In 1965, the riots in the Watts section of Los Angeles resulted in the death of 34 people. In 1966, there were 43 civil disturbances of varying intensity across the nation.

Heading into the summer of 1967, Newark seemed primed for similar unrest. The city's application for federal funding under the Model Cities program, filed April 25, 1967, described conditions as follows:

"Among major American cities, Newark and its citizens face the highest percentage of substandard housing, the most crime per 100,000 of population, the heaviest per capita tax burden, the sharpest shifts in population and the highest rate of venereal disease, new cases of tuberculosis and maternal mortality. In addition, Newark is second among major cities in population density, second in infant mortality, second in birth rate, seventh in absolute number of drug addicts."

Still, Newark had not rioted. It was such a curiosity, Channel 4 dedicated a half-hour program to the question. It concluded that cooperation between black and white leadership kept a lid on any trouble. The show called Newark "the city with something to teach."

The Newark Chamber of Commerce seized the designation and slapped it across a slick promotional brochure.

Yet in the neighborhood surrounding Springfield Avenue and Bergen Street, what was being taught was a little more pernicious. One flier confiscated by police was titled "To Make a Molotov Cocktail." Its final instruction was, "Light rag, and throw at some white person or some white person's property."

On the bottom of the flier, in case anyone missed the point, was a sketch of Bamberger's Department Store with flames shooting from it.

CIRCLING THE SLUM

As Newark lurched into the summer of 1967, the unease felt around Springfield and Bergen had a variety of sources.

The mayor enraged the black community by selecting Councilman James Callaghan for Board of Education secretary, shunning Wilber Parker, a black man who served as the city's budget director and appeared to be more qualified. There had also been an incident reported in the newspapers about police beating up a group of black Muslims on the Newark-East Orange border.

But the issue that seemed to crystallize the discontent was the location for a new state-run medical school, the future University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey.

Addonizio wanted the school desperately for Newark as a replacement for Martland Medical Center, the city-run hospital known in the neighborhood as "the butcher shop on the hill." He made his chief of staff, Donald Malafronte, head of the negotiations.

As Malafronte tells it, the medical school's trustees wanted no part of

Newark but did not want to appear racist. So they declared that a world-class medical school would require a minimum of 150 acres, figuring a crowded city like Newark could never find the space.

Except Malafronte called the trustees' bluff, taking a city map and drawing a line around 150 acres of Central Ward slum.

"The mistake we made is that in the effort to win the medical school, we focused so much on winning - just winning - we lost sight of the impact that would have on the community," Malafronte said. "We were never going to give the medical school that much land. We just wanted to unmask the falseness of the demand for 150 acres."

But that was never communicated to the area's residents, most of them poor and black. What they got instead were notices from the Newark Housing Authority saying they would have to be relocated to make way for the medical school.

"These were people who were always being forced to move for one thing or another, whether it was a landlord ordering them out or another so-called urban renewal project," said Junius Williams, who today heads a school-reform group at Rutgers-Newark called the Abbott Leadership Institute. At the time, Williams was a young law student working alongside Hayden and the other student organizers. "They were tired of feeling powerless."

The grim joke circulating through the black neighborhoods was that "urban renewal" was really the white man's code for "Negro removal." And the forces opposed to such removal soon united under the banner of a charismatic character who called himself Colonel Hassan from the Black Liberation Army.

"He added a kind of mystique to the movement," said George Richardson, an assemblyman and leader in the black community. "He used to march around with these soldiers. (Police Director Dominick) Spina was convinced he had 5,000 men. I never saw more than five."

Hassan's real name was Albert Ray Osborne. He was a wig salesman from Washington, D.C., and something of a con artist who had been charged with passing bad checks. He was later revealed to be an FBI informant. But no one knew that at the time. They just knew his actions made for great theater.

At one particularly heated Planning Board meeting in late May 1967, one of Hassan's lieutenants toppled a stenography machine and Hassan threw it at the dais. It was the first time a protest by Newark's black community became physical.

THE CABDRIVER'S ARREST

It was about to become far worse. On Wednesday evening, July 12, 1967, two white Newark policemen, John DeSimone and Vito Pontrelli, arrested a black cabdriver, John W. Smith, for improperly passing them on 15th Avenue.

Differing accounts of what happened next have never fully been resolved. The policemen said Smith resisted arrest and had to be subdued. Smith said the cops started beating him after he asked why they pulled him over.

Either way, Smith was badly injured and could not walk by the time Pontrelli and DeSimone dragged him into the 4th Police Precinct on 17th Avenue - in full view of several residents of the Hayes Homes public housing project across the street.

A rumor soon flew around Hayes Homes: The police beat a cabdriver to death.

Before long, protesters were pelting the 4th Precinct with rocks, the opening melee of the Newark riots.

In the ensuing years, much has been written about Smith, what exactly did or didn't happen during his arrest, and why the beating of a cabdriver no one knew sparked such passion. Some now view that focus on Smith as misguided.

"The cops beat up cabdrivers every Saturday night in this city. It was sport for them," said Gus Heningburg, the founding president of the Greater Newark Urban Coalition. "There was nothing different about John Smith than there was about 1,000 other cabdrivers who were arrested 1,000 other times. To assign that one thing as a trigger is much too simplistic."

Bob Curvin, head of the local chapter of the Congress of Racial Equality, visited Smith in his cell the night of July 12 and informed the crowd outside that the cabdriver had not been killed.

Curvin now views Smith's arrest as "a red herring" that distracts people from a deeper understanding of the riot's causes: things like substandard housing and lack of economic opportunity for young blacks, things that had been brewing in Newark for years and had nothing to do with a cabdriver.

A Star-Ledger review of State Police archives, numerous interviews and an examination of film footage also suggests Smith's designation as the spark of the Newark riots has been overplayed.

The looting that followed Smith's arrest on the night of the 12th and morning

of the 13th, limited to a few stores and \$2,500 in damage, was minor compared with what was to come. An emergency command post at the Roseville Armory was activated in case the trouble spread. But it did not. By 3 a.m., the city was calm.

The headline in the Newark Evening News the afternoon of July 13 - "Disturbance in Central Ward called isolated incident" - reflected City Hall's belief that the previous evening was just one more in a history of minor flare-ups.

Authorities even shut down the emergency command post. According to the Roseville Armory's transmission log file, the order to deactivate was received at 4:45 p.m. on July 13. A minute later, the log indicates a phone call to New Jersey Bell Telephone asking for the armory's emergency phone lines to be disconnected. There appeared to be no need for them.

Still, at UCC Area Board No. 2, where less than a year earlier Carmichael urged a crowd to rebel, they did not want Smith's beating to go unnoticed. Fliers were printed informing residents of a protest against police brutality outside the 4th Precinct that night.

As dusk fell, several hundred local residents gathered along with a few TV trucks. The event stayed nonviolent until a woman - whose identity remains unknown - stepped out of the crowd with a metal bar in her hand and began methodically bashing out the street-level windows of the 4th Precinct.

"The people saw this and just went wild," said Malafronte, who saved footage of the event. "And then suddenly you had the famous police charge. I say that ironically. Their 'charge' is really six or eight guys stumbling out of the front door of the precinct wearing World War I helmets. They're bumping into each other, not sure what to do. By that point, people were running down the street and the real looting was starting."

Amiri Baraka, the playwright then known as LeRoi Jones, was one of the picketers.

"It was twilight when the protest broke up," he remembered. "As the sun started going down, people really started going wild. That was the start of the rebellion proper."

'JUST STEALING, THAT'S ALL'

The corner of Springfield and Bergen, just three blocks from the 4th Precinct, was soon besieged by looters.

Almor Furniture, near the corner, was one of the first stores hit. Fearing for his life, owner Morris Spielberg crouched in the back seat of a car as a black

employee drove him out of town.

"I flew 35 bombing raids over Germany during World War II, and I was never more scared than I was during that moment," Spielberg said.

Other stores around the intersection were quickly emptied, also. Frank Addonizio, the West Ward councilman (no relation to the mayor), later toured the area and still vividly remembers visiting one store, which he believes was Morris's Dress Shop on the northwest corner of Springfield and Bergen.

"It was a large store, and by the time we got there the only thing left on any of the racks was one empty hanger going back and forth, back and forth," Addonizio said. "The whole thing had been cleaned out."

David Suchow, the pharmacist at Post Drugs on the southwest corner of Springfield and Bergen, was a little more fortunate. He had a black employee named Charlie, a former heavyweight boxer, standing in the door, making it clear what would happen to anyone who dared enter.

Suchow, now 89, doesn't remember Charlie's last name. But he does remember this: "Nobody fooled around with Charlie."

Other merchants escaped the looters' wrath by writing "Soul" or "Soul Brother" in their store windows, indicating they were owned or managed by blacks.

If anything, the looting was festive at first. Morris Hatkinson, now 89, has been living at or near Springfield Avenue since 1922. He doesn't mind admitting he joined the fun.

"I just went in and grabbed me some liquor," Hatkinson said, laughing at the memory. "There were guys going in and taking TVs and radios. It was just stealing, that's all."

The profile that emerges of the typical looter from the 1,465 arrests made during the disturbance is of a black male (85 percent), who had a job (73 percent), lived in Newark or a surrounding town (96 percent), but was born south of the Mason-Dixon line (54 percent, versus 27 percent born in Newark).

There are no exact figures on how many people engaged in looting. Even if it was several thousand, that would be a small percentage of the city's black population, which then was close to 200,000. The majority of residents in the vicinity of Springfield and Bergen remained on the sidelines, horrified by the destruction of their own neighborhood.

Still, neither they nor the black community leaders who walked through the area, urging calm, could stop the storm.

Roger Smith, a Central Ward native who now works with at-risk youth in Newark and Elizabeth, was just 15 at the time. He watched with dismay as his favorite ice cream parlor was looted.

"This was in the middle of the summer, mind you," Smith said. "I remember thinking: Where are we going to get our ice cream now?"

LOSS OF CONTROL

The Newark police had bigger problems on their hands. Spina, the police director, always felt that preparing for a riot encouraged one, so his officers did not have equipment or training for what transpired as darkness fell on July 13.

A handwritten log of Newark police radio transmissions, preserved in State Police archives, reports that by 9:55 p.m., Molotov cocktails were being used at Springfield and Bergen. By 10:52, looting and fires covered a 10- to 15-block area.

An entry in State Police headquarters transmission logs summarize the reports received from Newark shortly after midnight July 14: "Presently bands of 8-to-15 people traveling on foot and cars looting and starting fires. 4 Policemen injured. 4 new areas have broken out within the past 15 minutes. There is still no organization within the Newark Police Department. All available transportation in use. The 4th Precinct appears to be running their own show. There are no barricades. No request for State Police assistance from Director Spina."

That appeared to change at 1:40 a.m., when transmission logs note a call from Newark Deputy Police Chief John Redden to State Police Maj. Eugene Olaff.

"I was on the phone with John Redden, who was looking for help," said Olaff, now 86. "The next thing I know, the mayor grabbed the phone and said, 'We don't need any help.' And he hung up."

For Mayor Addonizio, there was more than just a riot to consider. He was lining up a run for governor in 1969 - he even had campaign buttons made up. Calling for help would be admitting he had lost his city. And as for his gubernatorial aspirations, it would mean: "We are done, dead and cooked politically," said Addonizio's deputy mayor, Paul Reilly.

Addonizio's inner circle continued a spirited debate until they received a report of looting at the Sears Roebuck on Elizabeth Avenue.

"Sears and Roebuck at that time had a lot of rifles and munitions," said Frank Addonizio, the councilman. "So not only did you have a mob, it was an armed mob."

It was this report, say Malafronte and Reilly, that forced the stunned mayor to relent. At 2:20 a.m., he awoke Gov. Richard Hughes and made the formal request for State Police assistance.

"He told me," Hughes later testified, "the riot was out of control."

Hughes immediately mobilized the State Police and the National Guard. There was a brief discussion as to how forceful the state's response should be. But David Satz Jr., who then was the U.S. attorney for New Jersey, said Hughes was set on placing the operation in the hands of Col. David Kelly, the State Police's crew-cutted, no-nonsense State Police superintendent.

"We tried to sit on the State Police to the extent we could," Satz said. "But there was an attitude that said: 'We can beat them up. Let's go.'"

Up until Mayor Addonizio's call to Hughes, there had been only superficial injuries and no deaths. That was about to change.

SHOTGUN BLAST

As historians view it today, the disturbances in Newark essentially can be split into two events: a shopping spree (by looters) and a shooting spree (by authorities).

"The first phase was a commercial riot, when you have people breaking into stores and taking whatever they can carry," said Clement Price, a history professor at Rutgers-Newark. "The second phase was a police riot, when you have police and National Guardsmen firing their weapons indiscriminately. Both phases involve a level of lawlessness by certain individuals."

Both extracted a dear price. The looting eventually did more than \$10 million in damage (about \$62 million in 2007 dollars), to say nothing of what it did to the city's reputation. The shooting left 26 people dead.

The first deaths ringed the intersection of Springfield and Bergen as authorities moved to stomp out the looting. James Sanders and Tedock Bell were the riot's first fatalities, according to the time of death as reported by the Governor's Select Commission on Civil Disorder, a blue-ribbon panel later assembled by Governor Hughes to study the uprising.

Sanders was burglarizing a liquor store at Springfield and Jones, five blocks east of Bergen, at 4:10 a.m. on July 14 when, according to an Essex County grand jury, "officers pursued him through a vacant lot where Sanders, while

running, turned and threw a bottle at them. After he failed to comply with a command to halt, he was felled by a shotgun blast."

Bell, who lived at 411 Bergen St., one block south of the intersection with Springfield, was caught looting a store at Bergen and Magnolia at 4:30 a.m. "He was shot by an unidentified Newark police officer who had called him to a halt," the grand jury reported.

Other dead were not involved in looting. Eddie Moss was a passenger in a car when a stray bullet from a National Guard checkpoint hit him behind the right ear. He was 10.

Eloise Spellman was leaning out her 10th-story window in Hayes Homes when an unknown National Guardsman mistook her for a sniper and fatally shot her in the neck. She left behind 11 children.

FRIENDLY FIRE

At the time, many of the deaths - particularly those of Newark Police Detective Fred Toto and Newark Fire Capt. Michael Moran - were blamed on snipers. The State Police reported 79 separate "sniper incidents" from July 14 to 17. The corner of Springfield and Bergen had 13 incidents, making it the hottest corner in the city for sniper fire.

Many former guardsmen and police officers still talk about facing sniper fire during the Newark riots. Joseph Accaria, a retired Newark officer who lives in Florida, had a bullet pass through his leg. He said the angle of entry made it clear the shot had come from high up in Columbus Homes, a high-rise public housing unit in the North Ward.

And he says his colleagues were not shy about returning fire if the situation called for it.

"Once Fred Toto got killed, there was no stopping us," Accaria said. "You do what you got to do, you know what I mean?"

Despite those claims, historians now doubt how widespread sniping really was - or whether snipers existed at all.

Individual reports filed by state troopers detail hundreds of man hours spent searching hundreds of buildings. Yet police never found one sniper. And despite ample opportunities to shoot authorities - a total of 1,390 Newark police, 627 state troopers and 5,900 National Guardsmen were committed to riot detail - only Toto and Moran lost their lives. In each case, the source of the fatal shot was never conclusively determined.

"If there were any snipers," said Kenneth T. Jackson, a historian at Columbia University, "they were lousy shots."

There were certainly bullets flying around Newark: The State Police reported firing 2,905 rounds; the National Guard fired 10,414; the Newark police could not account for the number of rounds because of use of private weapons.

But with those three organizations on different radio frequencies, communication between them often was poor. Much of the "sniping" was really authorities unwittingly firing and returning fire at each other.

"There wasn't a sniper within 100 miles of Newark," says Kenneth Gibson, who was three years away from being elected the city's first black mayor. "There were just a lot of cops and guardsmen with guns, firing at shadows."

Claude Coleman, a Superior Court judge who was then a Newark police officer assigned to the 4th Precinct, says he realized as much at the time.

"At first, we spent a lot of time responding to state police or national guard who said they were pinned down by sniper fire," Coleman said. "But when you talked to them, they never had any specific knowledge of where the gunfire that had them pinned down was coming from. It took us a while to realize, but finally we figured out they were being pinned down by their own gunfire."

Sometimes all it would take was the echoing of a bullet fired several blocks away - or the landing of a bullet that had been shot in the air elsewhere - to make an officer think he was under fire. Sometimes, it was even less than that.

Craig Mierop, who was part of the 50th Armored unit of the New Jersey National Guard, was stationed at the No. 6 firehouse just east of Springfield and Bergen. His unit was told sniper fire was coming from across the street, and Mierop thought he saw someone move through a window, then duck.

"I told myself, 'If I see it again, I'll shoot,'" Mierop said. "Well, I saw it again but I realized it was just a curtain blowing. At that moment someone in my unit said, 'I see him,' and fired a shot.

"Suddenly the volume of fire was just ridiculous. I tried to yell 'Stop' and tell them they were shooting at a curtain, but who could hear me?"

STATE OF CONFUSION

Reports of sniping were not the only misinformation circulating around the city heading into the night of July 14.

One teletype from State Police headquarters instructed all departments "to be on the lookout for a 36-car caravan en route from New York City to either

Paterson or Newark areas and led by Stokely Carmichael." It warned, "Subjects may be armed."

Another teletype advised stations to "be on the lookout for a North Carolina registered vehicle traveling on Rt 1 supposedly carrying dynamite and headed in the direction of Newark NJ."

There were no dynamite blasts during the riots. And Carmichael? News reports later confirmed he was in London, visiting his sister, the entire time.

The confusion was particularly acute among some National Guardsmen, whose one-weekend-a-month training sessions had not included riot preparation.

"A lot of times you'd ask a question and the non-coms wouldn't have an answer, because they hadn't been told what to do, either," said Don Boonstra, a guardsman from the Paterson Armory, referring to the non-commissioned officers.

Other guardsmen were given more explicit instructions.

"There was one officer who pretty much told us to shoot at will," said Ed Poteet, who came out of the Westfield Armory. "To him, they (the looters) were just a bunch of animals who needed to be exterminated. To me, you don't kill someone for taking a television."

More than anything, Newark was a foreign place to most guardsmen, who were primarily middle-class whites with ordinary day jobs that did not take them to places like Springfield and Bergen.

"My unit had 50 guys and none of them were black," said Mierop, now a semi-retired commercial art director living in Montclair. "For most of them, their closest personal relationship with a black person was with a lady on a pancake box. It's not that they didn't like black people, they were just scared of them."

Albert Reid, who was part of the 117th Cavalry at the Westfield Armory, remembered an incident on Friday afternoon, July 14, as he arrived at Schools Stadium, a troop staging ground.

"There was an older black couple going around and offering us food. And I remember feeling badly that I didn't take it," Reid said. "It's a terrible thing to say, but I was suspicious. They were black and black people were rioting and we were white. It was just hard to know who was your friend and who was your foe."

CHASING AND CHASED

For the state troopers who found themselves at Springfield and Bergen, there was less confusion. They had been trained in crowd control, and many of them were law enforcement veterans who knew how to handle themselves.

"We were just doing our job," retired trooper Kenneth Newbauer said. "We'd come back at 3 to 4 in the morning, get a shower, try to get some sleep for a few hours and then head back out."

Newbauer remembered one arrest at a liquor store near the corner of Springfield and Bergen, where he found a looter hiding in a cooler with several bottles of Chivas Regal scotch.

"Naturally, when you arrested someone and got them up against the wall, they'd say it was because they were black," Newbauer said. "But the fact was they were in the wrong place at the wrong time doing the wrong thing."

Trooper James "Jes" Savadge remembers arriving at Springfield and Bergen to find one of his fellow troopers chasing half a dozen or so looters - and 10 other people chasing the trooper.

"I got between the trooper and the guys chasing him and ordered them to stop," Savadge said. "Even if you've got a riot, you still have to preserve the peace."

The State Police received many commendations for their conduct, from citizens groups and politicians alike. But there was one stain on their record: the so-called "Soul Brother" shootings, when a group of rogue troopers shot out hundreds of store windows owned by black merchants.

The Governor's Commission later acknowledged and denounced the shooting rampage, calling it "a pattern of police action for which there is no possible justification."

What allowed this to happen has never been known, but a Star-Ledger analysis of documents revealed a likely scenario. According to nine citizen complaints in State Police archives, the shootings happened sometime between 3 and 5 a.m. on Sunday, July 16.

During those hours, transmission log files at the Roseville Armory indicated Governor Hughes was holding a press conference. With reporters and cameramen at the press conference, the Soul Brother shooters apparently took advantage of the diminished media scrutiny to do their work.

"They were getting ready to leave," said Richardson, the former assemblyman, who received several complaints of State Police shooting at his office. "And they wanted to give us something to remember them by."

THE END

As the sun rose on Springfield and Bergen that Sunday, another problem was pressing on the riot-weary citizenry.

"You're not talking about people who had big refrigerators and pantries full of food," Fontaine said. "People didn't have anything to eat."

UCC Area Board No. 2, once home to so much idealized revolutionary fervor, had been converted into something more basic: a relief station.

Meanwhile, authorities were tiring as well. On late Sunday night, Satz, the U.S. attorney, brokered a meeting between the governor and black community leaders in his office.

"More than anything, people were beginning to talk to each other and ask, 'Where is this going? How does it end?'" Satz said. "There was just a general feeling of, 'How do we get out of this?'"

Curvin and Hayden both told Hughes the looting was long ended and only the police and National Guard were causing trouble. The suggestion arose that Hughes could pull out his men and, if trouble flared back up, he could always send them back.

Hughes agreed. The withdrawal took place the next day. The riots had ended.

Some of the more colorful activists - like Hayden and the infamous Colonel Hassan - left the city shortly thereafter.

For the residents of Springfield and Bergen, leaving was not an option. They simply had to clean up and face a future that, in the course of five days, had changed forever.

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Crossroads Pt. 3: After the riots, change is slow to come

Updated Apr 02, 2019; Posted Jul 10, 2007



By [Brad Parks](#)

(This is the third of a four-part series. Click to read [Part 1](#), [Part 2](#), and [Part 4](#).)

They were the first marchers to reach the corner of Springfield Avenue and Bergen Street, and they did so side by side.

Hugh Addonizio, Newark's embattled mayor, and Willie Wright, president of the United Afro-American Association, were leaders who had seldom found a commonality of purpose until that day.

What followed them was no less remarkable: a column of humanity - part white, part black - stretching through the ghettos of Newark for a mile and a half. Estimates put the crowd at 25,000. It took 45 minutes for the marchers, moving 10 abreast, to file through the intersection of Springfield and Bergen.

It was Palm Sunday 1968, three days after the assassination of Martin Luther King. In other cities, that tragedy provoked looting and violence. In Newark, it led to the "Walk for Understanding," a peace march that profoundly contrasted with what happened the summer before, when rioting led to 26 deaths and \$10 million in damage.

"In 1967, it just seemed like there was no real leadership in the community," said Claude Coleman, then a Newark police officer, now a Superior Court judge. "In 1968, it was different. There were leaders who stepped up. Everyone had learned something from 1967, and they weren't going to let it happen again."

The effort began in the hours immediately following King's death, as talk of rioting reverberated around a nervous city.

Police Director Dominick Spina convened an emergency meeting between

black and white community leaders, men like radical playwright Amiri Baraka (the former LeRoi Jones) and North Ward vigilante patrol boss Tony Imperiale, men who had never before shared a room. The results surprised everyone.

"It was kind of strained at the beginning," Spina told The Star-Ledger at the time. "At the end we were all calling each other by first names."

Addonizio, whose reaction to reports of trouble in 1967 had been to downplay and demur, also reacted quickly. He declared a day of mourning, took a walking tour of the Central Ward, then plunged himself into a series of meetings with the black leaders of the United Community Corporation, Newark's anti-poverty agency.

The UCC, which a year earlier had helped foment unrest, organized a group of teenagers to distribute black armbands and urge their peers to remain calm.

A series of fires did break out around the city - stoking fears of renewed trouble - but were later deemed accidental.

Then came the march. The event had already been scheduled by Newark's Queen of Angels Church weeks earlier as a chance for suburban whites to show an interest in the long-neglected city. It was immediately recast as a tribute to the murdered civil rights leader, and the attendance nearly tripled organizers' expectations.

The Newark Evening News reported that, for the first time since the riots, a "new feeling of hope" pervaded the city.

"It has been proven in the last few days that black people and white people can get together," Wright declared.

"It's magnificent," said Albert Black, executive director of the Human Rights Commission. And then - with unknowing prescience - he added, "If something comes of it."

For Springfield and Bergen, the unvarnished truth was this: Nothing really did.

WANTING TO STAY

All of the forces responsible for throwing the neighborhood into such decline in the decades leading up to the riots - suburbanization, highway construction, the erosion of the tax base, the massive migration of poor black Southerners into the city, the loss of manufacturing jobs, the decline of public housing, and so on - joined together to create a seemingly endless cycle of despair.

"Springfield Avenue after the riot experienced more than 20 years of free fall," said Clement Price, a professor of history at Rutgers-Newark. "It was really left to go to seed."

It did not happen instantly. If the popular myth of the riots is that it caused the merchants on Springfield Avenue to flee town as if someone had turned off a giant light switch, in reality it was more like a dimmer knob being slowly turned, darker and darker.

In August 1967, just a few weeks after the disturbance, the Newark Office of Economic Development went into the riot zone and completed a lot-by-lot survey of all 1,029 stores.

It found that 850 stores, or 83 percent, already had reopened.

It also reported 161 stores, or 16 percent, were "completely demolished" or "heavily damaged." The remaining 84 percent had moderate, light or no damage and a decision for their owners to make: stay or go.

"All my friends said, 'Move out, move out, don't stay there,'" said Monroe Bierman, who owns Fit Rite, a women's clothing store on Springfield Avenue. "But I had a lot of loyal customers and they didn't have cars. If I had moved to the suburbs, I would have had to start all over again."

Bierman remembers coming back to his store after the riots to find his mannequins in the street, their body parts strewn along the road. He kept his doors shuttered for six weeks as the area trembled with rumors of another riot.

Then he cleaned up and reopened.

"Pretty much everyone I knew said I was nuts for staying," Bierman said. "But I stayed."

Most of them did. At first. A later survey by the Office of Economic Development found only 13 percent of businesses in the riot zone closed immediately.

But within a year, an additional 19 percent had shut down.

One of them was Petine's Deli, a few doors up from the corner of Springfield and Bergen, owned by Herbert Maslo, who had bought it from the Petine brothers. Damage to his store during the riots was light - a few broken windows he quickly replaced.

What he couldn't replace was his customers. They used to come in from the suburbs to buy his fish cake sandwiches and sausages. After the riots?

"There was no way my customers were going to come back down there," Maslo said. "They were fearful. There was just such an animosity toward strangers who happened to be Caucasian."

ATTITUDE SHIFT

Fear proved to be as destructive to the neighborhood as the riots themselves.

"All of the factors that took American cities downhill were in place well before the riots," said Kenneth T. Jackson, a professor at Columbia University and one of America's leading urban scholars. "What changed after the riots is that people began to associate the city with danger, and they started to stay away from them. Newark suffered more from that than most cities because so many people died during those riots."

And unlike the attrition of Springfield Avenue's merchants - an erosion that took months and years - the change in attitude happened instantly.

"That's what has always amazed me after the riots, how quickly the mind-set of all of Newark changed when it came to race," said Steve Aduato, then as now a political power broker in the North Ward. "Blacks were no longer going to be reticent, and whites were going to be afraid."

John T. Cunningham, a historian who has written dozens of books about New Jersey, remembers how firmly that apprehension toward Newark gripped the suburbs.

High school kids who used to come in from Westfield or Millburn on a Saturday night went elsewhere. Their parents, who once came for the department stores on Broad Street, also stayed away. Suburban whites would still go down to Newark for a symbolic march - or for work. But that was it.

"Shortly after the riots, I was at one of those 'What can we do' meetings with blacks and whites," Cunningham said. "There was talk of touring the riot area, and a well-intentioned woman from Short Hills said nervously, 'I don't want to have to walk there tonight.' And a black woman piped up and said, 'How would you like to walk there every night?'"

Still, there was something of a post-riot honeymoon for Newark, a time when many diverse constituents rallied to "fix" the broken, ailing city.

Organizations like the Greater Newark Urban Coalition brought together captains of industry and community leaders as never before. New Communities and a host of other not-for-profit development agencies got their start. The University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey, the

state's first medical school, rose almost literally from the ashes of the riot with unprecedented community cooperation. Corporate giants like Prudential and PSE&G renewed their commitment to the city.

There were efforts at reconciliation both great and small.

The Springfield Avenue Merchants Association prevailed upon certain members to stop practices that had so enraged black customers - the steep interest rates, the high late fees on credit accounts, the price gouging. A complaints bureau was opened to stop future abuses.

In addition, three businesses - Fields Dress Shop, Bushberg Brothers Furniture and Almor Furniture - banded together in May 1968 to put on a free boxing match featuring Lloyd Marshall, a popular Newark fighter.

The Newark Symphony Orchestra hired its first black conductor, Henry Lewis, who began a series of free concerts in the neighborhoods, including one in July 1968 just a few blocks from Springfield and Bergen.

Later that summer, the Urban Coalition's "Love Festival" attracted more than 60,000 people to Weequahic Park.

In many ways, the positive momentum continued through 1970 and the election of Kenneth Gibson, the first black mayor of a major Northeastern city.

"I was on the cover of Newsweek. I was being interviewed on the nightly news," Gibson recalls. "There was a short amount of time where I was able to leverage that to generate large amounts of federal funds for the city. Every Cabinet member I talked to gave me money. I was a poor black guy with a poor city. They all wanted to help me."

But as the 1970s wore on, the nation's economy slumped and Washington's attention turned away from anti-poverty programs. For Gibson, the love, money and attention lasted only so long.

"A couple of years at best," Gibson said. "And when it dried up, it dried up in a hurry."

EXODUS

For Springfield and Bergen, the 1970s were a bleak time.

The trash cans had been removed from the streets - during the riots they had been used by looters to break open store windows - so garbage blew through the area like urban tumbleweeds.

Abandoned cars littered the landscape. Newark had become the car theft capital of America by that point, and it was popular to steal a car, joy-ride it,

then ditch it on Springfield Avenue, where it could rot for months before the city got around to towing it.

Other city functions, like snow removal and street cleaning, became haphazard as Newark suffered through one budget crisis after another. Many of the side streets surrounding Springfield and Bergen had never been paved, and when the old cobblestones came loose, they left potholes that could shake a car out of its chassis.

Then there were the fires. In the five years prior to the riots, Newark averaged a little more than 100 fires in vacant buildings a year. From 1970 through 1974, it averaged more than 800 a year, according to research by New Jersey Institute of Technology professor Stanley Winters.

Some were straight arson-for-insurance: As property values declined, desperate owners tried to recoup their investment by lighting a match.

Other were started by the homeless who had taken over vacant houses, like the fire Ossie Boyd found himself fighting with a garden hose one winter night in the early '70s. Boyd owned a three-family house one block from Springfield, on Littleton Avenue. Someone set a blaze in the kitchen of the abandoned six-family house just a few feet away.

"I had four kids in the house at the time, and one of them woke up and said, 'I smell smoke,'" Boyd said.

Boyd managed to put out the fire. But there were many, many others. The houses across the street caught fire, too. So did a group of houses one block up.

"There was a while where we didn't sleep all that well at night," Boyd said. "It seems like all I did was call City Hall and ask them to knock down another house."

One house at a time, Newark relentlessly emptied. The city demolished 7,001 structures from 1970 to 1977, an average of more than two a day for eight years. Newark's population, which had been declining steadily since 1950, plummeted at the rate of 50,000 per decade in the '70s and '80s, as more than a quarter of the city's inhabitants departed.

Herman Scott, 56, was one of them. He grew up along Springfield Avenue and wanted to stay in his hometown. But eventually there was nothing worth staying for.

"When I say it was a ghetto, I mean it was a ghetto," said Scott, who moved to South Orange. "It was nothing but empty lots, boarded-up buildings, unlivable buildings, drug addicts wandering around in the middle of the day.

"It was really hopeless. People just had that 'I don't care' attitude."

David Cunningham also grew up in the neighborhood.

"There was just nothing down here," Cunningham said. "It was a cesspool. The only reason anyone went down there was to buy drugs."

HEROIN AND BLIGHT

By the mid 1970s, the drug of choice was heroin - soon to be followed in the '80s by crack cocaine - and for the already depressed inner city, it brought even more despair.

Former assemblyman George Richardson remembers the effect on Nobby's, a popular neighborhood tavern just west of Springfield and Bergen that had once been as much a community center as a bar.

"Nobby's had been like a second home for a lot of people," Richardson said. "Now all of a sudden you were seeing the sons of the guys you knew, hooked on drugs, breaking into the place and robbing it. What was once an open community - a place where people didn't lock their doors - was a place where people were afraid to go out at night."

Few were hit harder by the crime than the merchants of Springfield and Bergen, who faced stickups during the day and break-ins at night.

"I used to go down and talk to the police all the time and ask, 'What can we do?'" said Morris Spielberg, who owned Almor Furniture at the corner of Springfield and Bergen and also presided over the Springfield Avenue Merchants Association. "Finally, there was one guy who said, 'Why don't you get a police uniform and hang it up in the store window, like a scarecrow?' So that's what we did. We figured, what the heck. And it worked for a little while."

"Then someone broke in and stole the police uniform."

What made it even harder is that, with each passing year, stalwarts like Spielberg found themselves increasingly alone.

A land-use survey by the Center for Urban Policy Research at Rutgers found that from 1971 to 1994, the number of businesses in the area bounded by Springfield Avenue and South Orange Avenue declined 65 percent. By 1997, one-third of the land abutting Springfield Avenue was vacant or abandoned.

Simply put, stores that went empty tended to stay that way. There were no investors outside the city willing to locate in a neighborhood like Springfield and Bergen. And within the city, there were no new entrepreneurs with the

will - or, more important, the financing - to replace the ones who left.

Many would-be business owners lacked the personal credit history needed to secure a loan. And government programs like the Small Business Administration were little help. The SBA's criterion for guaranteeing a loan was "that there is a reasonable assurance that the loan can be repaid from earnings of the business."

On Springfield Avenue, the only thing that seemed assured was more blight.

"It was a hard time to stay in Newark. All we did was watch businesses leave and people leave," said Feldman Middleton, who had a strip-mall restaurant that failed when the mall went bankrupt.

"There was a sense of despair that was everywhere. You just couldn't seem to get anything going on Springfield Avenue," said Middleton, now part-owner of the Applebee's at Springfield and Bergen.

FAILURE TO TRICKLE

City Hall did little to help matters. Gibson said there was a very simple reason for that: It couldn't.

"Springfield Avenue was developed by small merchants. It wasn't built by the city and the city didn't have money to rebuild it," Gibson said. "When I took office, Newark had the highest rates of TB, VD, maternal mortality, infant mortality, you name it. We were basically the sickest city in the nation.

"I don't want to say redevelopment of Springfield Avenue wasn't a priority. But when you have babies dying, it's hard to focus on Springfield Avenue."

By the 1980s, other parts of Newark began to show signs of coming out of the slump, especially downtown. With the aid of the Newark Economic Development Council, driven by Deputy Mayor Al Faiella, high-profile projects like the Gateway Complex gave Newark's skyline a new look.

"The idea was the trickle-out theory - that if you could get something going on downtown, it would trickle out to the neighborhoods," said Richard Cammarieri, a lifelong Newark resident who has spent his career in community development. "But it never happened, because there were no policies in place to make it happen. None of the things that were happening downtown were really benefiting the people who lived in the city."

They were, if anything, becoming more impoverished. By 1980, the median household income of people who lived in the area of Springfield and Bergen had dropped more than 30 percent in 20 years - calculated in today's dollars, from \$26,757 to \$18,831.

"That's why Springfield Avenue laid dormant so long," said Roger Smith, a Central Ward native who now works with at-risk youth in Newark and Elizabeth. "This is a capitalist country. People aren't going to open a business somewhere unless they can make money."

STUBBORN EYESORE

Even with the election of Sharpe James as mayor in 1986 and his immediate declaration that Newark would experience a renaissance, change was slow.

One of James' earliest campaign promises - to bring recovery, in the form of a movie theater, to the corner of Springfield and Bergen - proved just how difficult it was to make things happen in the neighborhood. Newark Screens took seven years to complete, cost \$5\$?million in public money, and was immediately beset with problems: a leaky roof, poor attendance, a lack of first-run movies.

Still, nothing continued to represent Newark's failures quite as vividly as the high-rise housing projects that cast their shadows across the city.

For Springfield and Bergen, that project was Hayes Homes, where as many as 6,000 residents were stacked on top of each other in six woefully neglected buildings.

By the end of their days, the buildings had become gaping, crime-infested eyesores, their hallways reeking of urine, their garbage chutes clogged with refuse, their apartments infested by bugs and rodents.

Former tenant president Cora Moody watched the decline from 1971, when she moved in, through 1997, when she was the last tenant to move out.

"They just never got the money they should have for rehabilitation and maintenance," Moody said. "There was nothing wrong with those buildings."

Even knocking them down proved difficult, as the Newark Housing Authority discovered on Dec. 13, 1997. With dozens of former residents, city officials and other dignitaries gathered to witness the implosion, a demolition expert misjudged the wind. Spectators were showered with smoke and dirt.

When the air cleared, three of the buildings were still standing.

A few days later, the Housing Authority hired a subcontractor to knock down the remains with a wrecking ball. But even that didn't go right. The subcontractor showed up with a crane containing too much cable, letting the ball drag on the ground. Finally, on the third try, the buildings fell.

The symbolism was lost on no one. The scourge of blight, drugs and

abandonment that plagued the area in the long decades after the riot had proven every bit as stubborn to wipe out as those buildings.

For long-suffering Springfield and Bergen, however, the demolition of Hayes Homes would prove to be a turning point.

"The projects served as constant reminders of this dark past," said Price, the Rutgers-Newark historian. "When they finally came down, it gave the city - and those who would dare to invest here - an opportunity to imagine a future."

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Crossroads Pt. 4: The hard-won grounds for hope

Updated Apr 02, 2019; Posted Jul 11, 2007



By [Brad Parks](#)

(This is the last of a four-part series. Click to read [Part 1](#), [Part 2](#) or [Part 3](#).)

There are bars guarding Fanny Hill's windows -- thick cast-iron rods buried in a sturdy bed of concrete. On the glass behind them, a yellowing certificate, "City of Newark Burglar Alarm Permit," provides its own kind of protection, as do a half dozen Slomin's Shield stickers attached on and around her door

The opportunity to own a home had lured Hill's family from an apartment on the Upper West Side of Manhattan to this townhouse at the corner of Springfield Avenue and Bergen Street in Newark in 2000.

Back then, the neighborhood was a tableau of urban despair -- trash-strewn lots and plywood-covered buildings. Springfield and Bergen was more than three decades removed from its five most infamous days, the civil disorders of July 1967, when rioting killed 26 people and inflicted \$10 million in damage, and the intervening years had not been kind.

"The place was a mess," Hill said. "If you were driving down Springfield Avenue anytime after 4:30, you better be speeding. You didn't want to risk slowing down."

Then, a few years back, Hill started seeing a transformation.

One block over, on land where blighted public housing once stood, handsome brick townhouses went up. Two doors down, a duplex overtaken by junkies and prostitutes was resold and rehabilitated. Across the street, the city began clearing land for redevelopment.

"The stealing stopped. The winos and the drug addicts moved on. You

started seeing cops every hour of every day," said Hill, 42, an immigrant from Sierra Leone who works as an account analyst at Coach Leather Goods in Carlstadt.

"It's like a military operation," she said, pointing toward Newark's skyline. "You secure the downtown first and then you spread out, one block at a time. It just took a long time to get out here."

For Springfield and Bergen, it has taken 40 years. And while problems still lurk nearby -- drug corners, gang activity, things that make Fanny Hill turn on her security system at night -- there is a story here that couldn't have been told even five years ago.

The Springfield and Bergen of today is unrecognizable as the one-time epicenter of a riot. Its four corners contain a sprawling new commercial center with an Applebee's, a Home Depot and a Wendy's; a six-screen movie theater; a recently constructed apartment building, and a bank.

It could be any crossroads, anywhere in America. And while such homogeneity is lamented in suburbia, that is not the case here. For Newark, looking like everywhere else is a triumph.

"Honestly, when I look across the street and I see something like the Applebee's, that's the kind of thing you usually see in malls or upscale neighborhoods," Hill said. "You go to a place like that and you feel like a human being."

CHANGING PERSPECTIVE

For people under the age of 45 -- which is 70 percent of Newark's population -- the events of July 12 to 17, 1967, are strictly history. Yet they remain firmly entrenched in the public discourse.

"You hear people talking about the riots all the time," said Rashid Salaam, 35, who owns Nubian Flavor, a down-home restaurant near the corner of Springfield and Bergen. "It's always 'the riots this, the riots that.' Even if you're not old enough to have been there, you know something major happened."

It's a major happening known by many names -- riot, rebellion, civil disturbance, uprising -- and four decades later it remains the city's defining moment. Yet it is far from a static piece of history. What it means to people near Springfield and Bergen has changed in recent years.

"At one point it looked like we would never get rid of the negativity associated with the riots," said Roberta Singletary, 52, who lives just off Springfield Avenue. "Now it's like the Holocaust -- it's something we

remember, it's something we don't want to forget, but it doesn't define us like it used to.

"When I look at Springfield Avenue now, I don't think about the riots. I think about going to the Home Depot."

If anything, the mile-long segment of Springfield Avenue within the former riot containment zone, eastward from South 10th Street,

has been refurbished in ways the parts outside the zone have not been.

It's partly because blighted areas are easier to clear for large-scale redevelopment. It's partly because of the subsidized housing that started being built by nonprofit community development companies after the riots and -- with help from government subsidies and outside philanthropy -- has finally gained traction after four decades.

"It is my opinion -- not based on any survey, but just by hanging around like I do -- that Newark has done more to rebuild itself than any other city," said Gus Heningburg, the founding president of the Greater Newark Urban Coalition and, at 77, one of Newark's elder statesmen. "I've been to Watts. I've been to Detroit. Those places still look exactly like they did 40 years ago. Newark does not.

"Much of the rebirth we've seen in Newark -- new housing, new businesses, the growth of the universities and so on -- would not have been possible had that dramatic event not taken place. Those riots generated so much energy in Newark that had not been there before and probably never would have materialized otherwise."

To Donald Malafronte, who was chief of staff to Hugh Addonizio, Newark's mayor for most of the 1960s, the idea the riots have done more long-term good than harm is "the dumbest thing I've ever heard."

"Those five days in July have murdered Newark for 40 years," said Malafronte, now a health-care consultant for several Newark hospitals. "Newark remains the model of urban decay to stay away from, in the minds of most New Jerseyans who don't live there. And it all flows from the reputation it acquired -- and the media imposed on it -- from the riots."

COMPETING FORCES

Rehabilitated or debilitated? Decaying or recovering? Perhaps it's both.

"What we have in Newark is a paradox of two competing dynamics that exist simultaneously," said Larry Hamm, a Newark native and head of the People's Organization for Progress, a citizen activist group. "One is a creative dynamic where you have new schools, new houses and new

businesses coming in. The other is a dynamic of decay and destruction where children are murdering each other. The question for Newark is whether the creative dynamic is going to outpace the destructive dynamic."

A glance at the four corners of Springfield and Bergen proves just how difficult it can be to figure out the answer.

On the southwest corner, the new Applebee's is a symbol of the city's resurgence. Owned by Doherty Enterprises of Allendale, it is Newark's first nationally franchised family-style restaurant.

Tim Doherty, the company's vice president of real estate, called locating in the city "a calculated risk" that has paid off so far. The restaurant is ahead of sales projections.

"The support we've received from the city and from the residents has been unbelievable," Doherty said.

Across from the Applebee's, on the northeast corner, is the place where Taheerah Sweat was shot and killed last Dec. 10, allegedly by a male friend with whom she had an argument. A 25-year-old mother of four young children, Sweat was the city's 101st murder victim of 2006.

It's the kind of thing that makes Feldman Middleton, a Newark restaurateur who helped lure the Applebee's here at the request of then-mayor Sharpe James, wonder whether he'll be able to persuade other national franchises to join it.

"I don't care if you're giving away gold, people ain't coming here if you can't get this fear factor under control," said Middleton, 67, a Newark native. "How many guys are out there willing to make that move into Newark and are taking off in another direction because of this stuff?"

On the northwest corner is another sign of rebirth, the Newark Screens. While the city-owned movie theater has had its own drama during the past 14 years -- a leaky roof, management changes, on-again, off-again attendance -- it has endured.

Then there's the southeast corner, the site of the apartment building that opened four years ago. The perhaps apocryphal story Mayor James told at the ribbon-cutting ceremony is that he had seen homeless people burning a fire on the property and decided something should be built there.

James used his power as mayor and state senator to make it happen, helping secure the land for a developer and lining up a grant from the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs. The appreciative developer named the building "The Mayor Sharpe James Apartments."

Still, it could turn into something of an ignominious landmark: James has been notified by federal prosecutors he is the target of a grand jury corruption investigation.

He could become the third straight Newark mayor to be charged with a crime relating to his time in office.

SIX MONTHS AND OUT

It's the kind of thing that keeps Newark's psychology fragile. In anticipation of the 40th anniversary of the riots, The Star-Ledger commissioned a poll of 500 randomly selected Newark residents. It found 48 percent of respondents want to leave Newark but don't have the money.

It's an improvement over a similar poll conducted at the 30th anniversary, when 58 percent wanted to leave. But residents were evenly split in the new poll as to whether the last 10 years had helped or hurt the city -- 39 percent said Newark is better, 38 percent said it is worse, the remainder don't know or aren't sure.

Residents were more decisive on the most important problem for the city: Sixty-one percent said crime.

In some ways, Newark's crime has actually improved since the riots. Newark had the nation's highest violent-crime rate in 1967. As of 2005, it ranked 29th.

Still, the homicide rate ranks fifth. And law enforcement assurances that most of the shootings are targeted at a small population of hard-core violent offenders, not civilians, provide only so much comfort.

"People say it's better around here," said Henry Jones, 82, who has lived in Newark since 1955. "But it ain't better when people are getting killed."

Many longtime Newark observers -- men like Heningburg or former civil rights leader and Ford Foundation executive Bob Curvin -- say the real source of Newark's crime is its other chronic problem, unemployment.

In the area surrounding Springfield and Bergen, unemployment was 24.2 percent as of the 2000 Census, the most recent data available on such a local level. For whatever changes have taken place in the last seven years, many Newark neighborhoods still have huge jobless populations, especially among young black males.

Economists define depression-level unemployment as 10 percent. By that standard, parts of Newark have been in a depression for 40 years or more.

What is different about today's unemployment is that, unlike 1967 -- when

the flight of manufacturing jobs from aging industrial cities like Newark left fewer options for blue-collar laborers -- there now is an abundance of employment opportunities.

Continental, Verizon and Public Service Electric & Gas have hundreds of open entry-level positions, said Al Koeppe, president of the Newark Alliance, a nonprofit group that has studied this issue. They just can't find qualified people.

"The jobs are there but the K-12 education in Newark is not," said Koeppe, the former chief executive at New Jersey Bell and former president of PSE&G. "We're seeing a work force coming out of high school that does not have the math and English skills to function in even some of the most basic blue-collar jobs."

Or there is the problem of people simply not wanting to work, as the general manager at the Springfield and Bergen Applebee's, Jermaine Johnson, discovered not long ago.

Johnson was encouraged when he received 1,000 applications for employment before the restaurant opened. He filled out his staff, which makes typical Applebee's wages: \$10 to \$15 an hour for wait staff, \$12 to \$17 an hour for bartenders, depending on tips.

About six months in, he had a rash of employees not showing up.

"That's when someone told me: Six months is the minimum it takes to collect unemployment," Johnson said. "They put their six months in and they were gone."

HIGH-POWERED SUPPORT

It remains to be seen whether the apparent progress of Springfield and Bergen will be just as fleeting.

The new townhouses that populate the area are seen as bellwethers. Are they the answer to Newark's century-old problem with substandard housing? Or are they simply the ghettos of the future?

It's too early to tell. The very first townhouses near Springfield and Bergen were built in 1988 by the University Heights Development Cooperative, a nonprofit group headed by Junius Williams, a former activist and Yale-educated lawyer. To him, the new townhouses couldn't help but improve the neighborhood.

"That area had so many vacant lots, it was like an urban prairie," said Williams, who today heads the Abbott Leadership Institute, a school-reform advocacy group, at Rutgers-Newark. "By putting those houses there, we

were really building the beginnings of a community."

Around the same time, New Community Corp. -- which was founded out of the Queen of Angels Church in the aftermath of the riots and grew into the nation's largest community development agency -- began surveying the southeast side of Springfield and Bergen, the site of the Hayes Homes public housing high-rises. Hayes Homes had become a dilapidated eyesore, and NCC's plan was to demolish it and build a townhouse development called Community Hills.

Ray Codey, then NCC's director of development, said they were searching for funding when, in 1990, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development rolled out the first of its Homeownership and Opportunity for People Everywhere (HOPE) grants for the construction of below-market-rate units.

NCC leapt at the opportunity, becoming the only applicant in the first year to meet the necessary requirements and lining itself up to score the entire \$25-million construction fund.

The problem was when HUD graded NCC's application, the score was 69.5. The minimum for acceptance was 70.

Monsignor William Linder, NCC's founder, prevailed on U.S. Sen. Bill Bradley to broker a meeting with HUD Secretary Henry Cisneros -- one that was attended by the entire New Jersey congressional delegation.

"Cisneros walks into this meeting, sees 14 congressmen, two U.S. senators and a monsignor in full uniform and immediately takes a white handkerchief out of his pocket and starts waving it around," Codey said.

NCC won the entire grant. Hayes Homes was demolished in 1997. In 2000, the first residents of the new townhouses moved in.

Community Hills has since become typical of Springfield and Bergen's revival, with progress and problems side by side.

The progress: The 206 units were sold at subsidized rates ranging from \$24,000 to \$57,000, with deed restrictions dictating that new owners could not resell their units at market rate until 10 years after taking occupancy. Owners also were given 30-year tax abatements. The community's design and its Early Learning Center for children have won national awards.

The problems: At least 30 of the units have gone into foreclosure in the past seven years, Codey said. Even with the subsidies, some owners couldn't make their mortgage payments.

"They're moving in on these tight budgets and the first thing you see is satellite dishes going in," Codey said. "They're spending money on frills and they're losing their houses."

TURNING TIDE

Nevertheless, if one of the factors that led to Newark's pre-1967 decline was the flight of the working class to suburbs where it could buy homes, Community Hills and other new townhouses have reversed that trend, drawing people back into the neighborhood with the lure of homeownership.

They're people like Herman Scott, a Central Ward native who left Newark for South Orange years ago.

"I had given up on Newark," said Scott, 56, who works in the dietary department at Saint Barnabas Medical Center.

"But when the chance to buy here came along, I said, 'I'm going to give it another shot.'"

As people like Scott returned, so did their money.

In the 2000 Census, Springfield and Bergen passed an important threshold: The inflation-adjusted median household income of the people living in the area exceeded pre-riot levels for the first time. Expressed in today's dollars, it went from \$26,757 in 1960, down to \$18,831 in 1980, then back up to \$26,895 in 2000.

The money has given rise to a new class of small-business entrepreneurs. In some ways, they are very much like the merchants who helped establish Springfield Avenue long ago.

In the early 1900s, the merchants were men like Sam Sheitelman, who got his start peddling appliances door to door until he saved up enough money to open Sheitelman's Furniture at 377 Springfield Ave., a fixture until a few years after the riots.

Today they are men like David Cunningham. Now 46, Cunningham spent five years in jail for robbery in his early 20s -- "I was young and dumb," he says - - and it gave him a criminal record that made traditional employment unavailable.

So he started his own business. About eight years ago, Cunningham began walking around the neighborhood hawking CDs. Then he graduated to a luggage cart with a radio on it, then a wagon towed by his bike. Now he has six employees and four retail locations. One of them is a small counter he rents in the front lobby of a check-cashing store at 384 Springfield Ave., just east from the corner of Bergen.

"I'm building up a good customer base," Cunningham said. "Springfield

Avenue just keeps getting better."

LESSONS LEARNEDThe success of small entrepreneurs has encouraged larger ones. The newest development planned for the area is the Springfield Avenue Marketplace, an 11-acre site at the corner of Irvine Turner Boulevard, the largest piece of empty land remaining along Springfield Avenue.

It originally was slated to be developed by New Community Corp. until Mayor James, enraged at NCC's support of candidate Cory Booker in the 2002 mayoral election, had NCC's development rights pulled

The project was handed to WKA Development, a Newark-based company headed by a longtime friend and ally of James, Wilbert Allen, and H.J. Russell of Atlanta. They bought the land from the city for a little more than \$5 a square

foot, roughly one-sixth the market rate, in a deal that was closed in the final days of the James administration in 2006.

Other land deals around that time are now under federal investigation, one of many headaches for Mayor Booker, who came into office a year ago with much promise -- but also with deals like Springfield Avenue Marketplace to sort out.

To some, the sorting has not gone fast enough.

"Cory's administration seems to be frozen right now," said Hamm, the People's Organization for Progress leader. "It took so long to get some momentum going in Newark, and I worry about what's going to happen to that if City Hall stays frozen much longer."

Still, at least as far as Springfield Avenue Marketplace is concerned, a thaw is coming. Rather than scuttle the project -- with its 324 housing units and 125,000 square feet of retail and office space -- the Booker administration renegotiated the development contract to include three provisions.

First, the city now has the right to review the design and landscaping to ensure it meets aesthetic standards. Second, the retail tenants must interview Newark residents first for all job openings -- known as a first-source provision. Third, the project must be completed within a three-year window.

They're the kind of concessions other cities routinely receive but long-desperate Newark never felt it could ask for, until now. Stefan Pryor, Newark's deputy mayor for economic development, said it reflects the Booker administration's sensitivity to one of the lessons of 1967: that development in Newark, especially in the former riot areas, benefit all residents in the city, not just a select few.

"This is a special place in our city," Pryor said. "Springfield Avenue is a key corridor on a practical basis because it's a major thoroughfare. But it's also important on a symbolic basis because of what happened there in 1967. It's important we not forget 1967 and the lessons thereof, and we certainly haven't."

MOVING ON

As 1967 grows more distant in Newark's past, fewer people who were part of that history are around to talk about it.

John W. Smith, the cab driver whose beating by police set the stage for the riot, left Newark shortly after the unrest -- "People got on his nerves and messed with him," said his sister, Jessie Vinson Chalk -- and moved back home to North Carolina. He spent the remainder of his days in a small wood-frame house, living on a disability check, seldom talking about what happened. He died in 2002.

Likewise, structures predating 1967 are rapidly disappearing as redevelopment alters the landscape.

For those with the memory of what once was there -- those who have lived through the various iterations of Newark's long struggle to better itself -- the question of what it all means still remains.

Ken Gibson, the city's mayor from 1970 to 1986, keeps casting an eye toward places like Springfield and Bergen, wondering what will become of the townhouses as they age, or what will happen to the entrepreneurs betting on Newark's renaissance. Has Newark truly recovered? Or is it just covering up old problems with new bricks?

After 70 years of seeing countless urban renewal initiatives come and go, Gibson doesn't even hazard a guess. But he knows this much: "Springfield Avenue," he said, "is always going to be a good test of where Newark really is."

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Essex

Monument remembers those who died in the Newark riots | Carter

Updated Jan 16, 2019; Posted Jul 09, 2017

[Monument Commemorates Newark Riots, Newark, NJ, 7/7/17](#)



Gallery: Monument Commemorates Newark Riots, Newark, NJ, 7/7/17



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By [Barry Carter | NJ Advance Media for NJ.com](#)

The triangle-shaped patch of grass at Springfield and 15th avenues is long overdue for some grooming.

A tree stump sticks out of the ground, its roots visible. Three nearby flower pots contain unrecognizable plants.

Between the two, is a 20-year-old monument that leans left from where the land slopes awkwardly underneath. On the front of the grey colored granite stone there is an inscription above the names of 26 people who were killed in the Newark riots, which occurred 50 years ago this Wednesday.

"We will forever remember the names of those whose lives were lost."

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Farrell Lee, a homeless man on crutches, doesn't forget, even though the city hasn't kept up its maintenance. He passes by the historical marker all the time, pausing briefly to reflect. About a week ago, Lee stopped when he saw two men standing there talking about how the monument came to be erected in the Central Ward.

One, the narrator, was Larry Hamm, president of the People's Organization For Progress (POP), a grassroots Newark civil rights group.

The other, his audience, was me.

The patch of land is known as Rebellion Park, a lasting memory to those who died. POP overtures for a monument began sometime after 1983, the year it was founded and started holding liberation marches on July 12 to observe the anniversary of what Hamm calls "the rebellion." Newark, rife with poverty and discrimination, erupted that hot summer night in 1967, with five days of rioting that left the city ravaged with \$10 million worth of property damage, and the loss of 26 lives.

In memory of that tumultuous period, the liberation march route was one big loop, starting from Fairmont and Springfield avenues, about five blocks from 15th Avenue and 7th Street. That's where John Smith, a black cab driver, was arrested by two white Newark police officers, John DeSimone and Vito Pontrelli, who claimed he had been tailgating them before passing by their patrol car improperly.

Marchers would walk down Springfield Avenue, turning right onto Irvine Turner Boulevard. They'd weave their way through Scudder Homes, Hayes Homes and Stella Wright, three behemoth public housing high-rise complexes that have since been demolished.

The march ended with a rally at the Fourth Precinct on 17th Avenue, which is where Smith had been taken by the arresting officers.

"That was ground zero," Hamm said. "That's where it all kicked off."

Rumors spread that Smith not only had been beaten, but that he had been killed by police. Only one part of that story was true as a large crowd gathered outside after witnesses had seen Smith dragged into the precinct. Smith would be transferred to the hospital for his injuries after community leaders Bob Curvin, Esta Williams and James Walker demanded to see him at the precinct. They found him bleeding and in pain.

Hamm has heard these accounts and relays them to whomever has attended the commemoration over the years.

Lee was still at the monument, looking at the backside of the stone marker, which is blank.

"This (riots) shouldn't have ever happened," Lee said. "They're not going to be forgotten."

He thinks something from the past should be affixed to monument. Maybe pictures of the Stella Wright and Hayes homes.

"How does that sound?" he asked.

"Sounds good," said Hamm.

Lee took off, expressing hope that the monument eventually will get some attention.

"We need to put it on a firm foundation," Hamm said. "It does need a little work."

By Wednesday's 50th anniversary commemoration, the city will have cut the grass and straightened up the monument. New flowers will be planted, a nice substitute to the unsightly flower pots. The park is supposed to be maintained by the city, but Newark Council President Mildred Crump said there hasn't been an active parks and grounds department over the years.

"There was no one to do the work," Crump said. "But since the mayor has been in (office), they're catching up."

She said she has been assured Rebellion Park will be taken care of.

Sandwiched between two heavily traveled streets, the monument looks out of place. Low income housing is on the 15th Avenue side. The social security office, a liquor store and bodega line a one-block section of Springfield Avenue. The surrounding grounds need to be cleared.

Despite the optics, the monument is right where it belongs. It's close to where Smith was arrested and jailed.

"We had been saying that there needed to be a monument, but the idea had been floating around in the community for quite some time." said Hamm

The late Central Ward Councilman George Branch never let go of that thought after the riots. Former Mayor Sharpe James said it became his "pet project," and his council colleagues and the administration were not against it.

"It was an idea whose time had come," James said.

Two years after the Million Man March, the monument was dedicated on July 11, 1997, which at the time was the 30th anniversary of the uprising.

Once installed, the demonstration through the neighborhood was scaled back to a short march from the monument to the police precinct for a rally. Marchers would come back to the new gathering place, and the observance was officially called a commemoration.

"This gave us a place to come to," Hamm said. Sometimes family members came. People showed up spontaneously, some out of curiosity.

When they do attend, folks gather in a circle to hear the names read aloud of those who died. Flowers are always placed at the foot of the monument. Motorists honk their horns.

This same ritual will happen again on Wednesday. And the story will be told again of what happened, and how it started.

Many of the deaths - including Newark Police Detective Fred Toto and Newark Fire Capt. Michael Moran - were at first blamed on snipers. But historians doubt that assertion made by former national guardsmen and police officers. It was never determined conclusively where the shots came from that killed Toto and Moran.

Eloise Spellman, 41 was cooking dinner, when she was mistaken for a sniper by a National guardsmen as she leaned out of her 10th floor apartment window at Hayes Homes. He fatally shot her in the neck.

Kimberly Spellman, the youngest of Spellman's 11 children, calls it murder to this day. She'll be at the observance on Wednesday.

"It was unnecessary for them to think there was snipers shooting down. They never ever found the sniper," said Spellman, who lives in Queens, N.Y.

Eddie Moss, 10, was a passenger in a car when he was shot behind the ear from a stray bullet at a National Guard checkpoint.

The point is this. A lot of shots were fired by police and guardsmen, who used reports of sniper fire to justify indiscriminate shooting of the civilians who died. Former Mayor Ken Gibson, the city's first black mayor, had said, "There were just a lot of cops and guardsmen with guns, firing at shadows."

The first two deaths of the riots, however, were the result of looting and burglary.

Each year the turnout at the observance varies, except for the 40th

anniversary. Hundreds came that day for the tribute in 2007. Maybe it will be the same for the 50th.

Hamm stops the history lesson when Dorreen Adams and Chris Cade sit on the concrete bench by the monument.

She lives in the neighborhood, and like Lee, the guy on crutches, Adams sees the monument every day.

It may look forgotten, but it's not. Adams said strangers get out of their cars to take pictures.

"People know it's there," she said.

Hamm listens and the conversations shifts. They begin to talk about long ago treasures in the neighborhood, pointing as if they can still see the bread factory on Irvine Turner.

"Who remembers the National Theater?" Hamm asked.

There was a Foodtown supermarket nearby, a pawn shop, an ice cream parlor. Vendors drove horse drawn carriages selling fruits and vegetables.

Cade jumped in, recalling the New Ark School, an alternative educational institution. The Black Panther Party, he said, would have kids in the area clean up the neighborhood.

MORE CARTER: [Newark kids head for the great outdoors](#)

Jimmy Jones heard them talking as he was walking by, and tossed his memories into the soup.

He grew up in the Stella Wright homes and was a member of the Boys and Girls club on the site. They competed in sports against the other clubs across the city. Life, they all said, was meaningful, less complicated back then.

"That's when Newark was its finest," Adams said.

There were lots of stores and good neighbors. You could leave your door open and nobody was going to take anything.

Until the riots.

But there's respect for the monument and its historical import.

No one bothers the stone.

No one should.

It's been that way for 20 years.

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Remembering the 26 people who died in the Newark riots

Updated May 15, 2019; Posted Jul 12, 2017

By [Karen Yi | NJ Advance Media for NJ.com](#)



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Capt. Mike Moran of the Newark Fire Department funeral at Sacred Heart Cathedral. 7/19/1967. (The Star-Ledger file photo)

There was the 10-year-old boy fatally shot in the back of his family's car. The mother of 11 children killed by a bullet that pierced her 10th-floor apartment window. And a beloved Newark Fire captain who died in the line of duty.

Over the five turbulent days that tore at the city of Newark in 1967, 26 people died -- most from the more than 12,000 bullets shot in the 26-square-mile city. NJ Advance Media sifted through testimony by family members and witnesses given to the Essex County Grand Jury that investigated the deaths to find who they were, how they died and who they left behind.

Witness accounts gathered by the Newark Legal Services Project [published by historian](#)

[Junius Williams](#) and interviews by late journalist Ron Porambo often offer conflicting accounts to the grand jury report. In the end, no one was indicted on charges related to the killings.

Rose Abraham suffered a fatal bullet wound of the right hip. The bullet recovered from the victim's body had insufficient characteristics for identification or comparison with any known weapon. She was out looking for one of her children when she was shot by someone whose identity could not be determined. According to all witnesses including her husband the shooting occurred at Springfield Avenue and Blum Street at which time police were attempting to clear this area of looters. After the shooting, a neighbor drove her to the hospital under escort by Newark patrolmen.

Due to insufficient evidence of any criminal misconduct, the Jury found no cause for indictment.

Courtesy: Newark Public Library
Grand Jury report

Rose Abraham

The 45-year-old woman was a wife and mother of six children. She died around 12:30 a.m. on July 14, 1967, records show. Abraham was looking for her children and walking toward Springfield Avenue when she was shot, according to testimony from Anna Mae Whichard.



Photos courtesy of Pam Spellman.

Eloise Spellman

A mother of 11 children, Spellman was fatally shot through the window of her 10th floor apartment at Hayes Homes by National Guardsmen and police, records show. Kimberly Spellman, her youngest daughter, [told The Star-Ledger](#) she still calls her mother's death murder. "It was unnecessary for them to think there was snipers shooting down. They never found the sniper," she said.

6. That as I was driving my automobile on Hawthorne Avenue and approaching Belmont Avenue, I observed before me a yellow-barricade. As I approached the barricade, I observed three or four National Guardsmen and began to brake my automobile. As the automobile slowed to a stop, the National Guardsmen began to shoot at the car without any prior warning and with absolutely no provocation.

10. That as soon as we arrived home, my son, Clarence, age nine, said, "Eddie's been shot." I removed Eddie from the car and laid him on the ground and asked that someone seek help.

Courtesy: RiseUp Newark

Eddie Moss

The 10-year-old boy was shot in the back of the car as he was riding with his family, according to the grand jury report. The family, including Moss' three other brothers, was coming back from eating dinner at White Castle around 8 p.m. on July 14, 1967 when he was killed, [according to RiseUp Newark](#), a website compiled by Newark historian Junius Williams.




Courtesy of Moran family.

Michael Moran

Newark Fire Capt. Michael Moran was killed around 10 p.m. on July 15, 1967 on 500 Central Avenue, records show. It's unknown who shot the bullet that killed him at 41 years old. He left behind six children.

"We've accepted the fact that he was doing his duty. He responded to that fire scene and he lost his life in the line of duty," his eldest son, Mike Moran told NJ Advance Media. "My father was a leader, he was a fire captain, he was studying to become a chief in the Newark Fire Department. I think he instilled that in us -- his leadership and his sense of trying to do well and to progress."



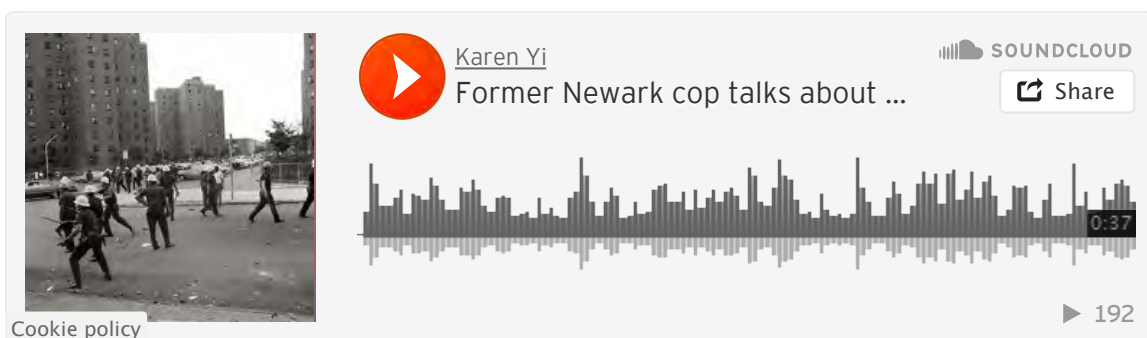
location in the sequence as set forth below. Isaac Harrison suffered fatal shotgun wounds in the left chest and abdomen as he was attempting to enter his son's car which was parked at the entrance of 62 Broome Street, commonly known as Scudder Homes Project. Robert Lee Martin died of a

Courtesy: Newark Public Library
Grand Jury report

Isaac Harrison

Originally from Jamaica, Harrison, 73, raised nine children in Newark and lived in Scudder Homes, according to RiseUp Newark. He died on July 14, 1967 around 5 p.m. He was the oldest victim of the riots.

Harrison, Robert Lee Martin and Detective Frederick Toto were all killed within minutes of each other. Police were responding in the area and began firing at Scudder Homes in response to sniper fire, according to the grand jury report.



Cookie policy

Frederick Toto

Det. Toto joined the police department in 1962 and was a father of three children. He died at 33 years old along Broome and Mercer Streets, likely due to sniper fire, according to the grand jury report.

Essex County Sheriff Armando Fontoura told NJ Advance Media he remembers responding to the scene. "You hear 'Cop down, cop shot,' you respond. You get there, you know, one of your brothers is gone... Those are the things that your emotions get the best of you, you try

not to cry but you turn your head and some tears flow a little bit. Not just for Fred Toto and the firefighter killed but for everything else. Most of them are innocent people that got caught in the crossfires somewhere," he said.

as Scudder Homes Project. Robert Lee Martin died of a fractured skull due to a fall caused or probably caused by bullet wounds in the right arm and back of the left shoulder, suffered while he was walking down Mercer Street between Broome and Howard Streets. Approximately 10 or 15 minutes

Courtesy: Newark Public Library
Grand Jury report

Robert Lee Martin

Martin was shot and killed near the Scudder Homes apartments, according to the grand jury report. He graduated high school in Mississippi and moved to Newark to live with his parents, according to RiseUp Newark. He worked as a janitor and died at 22 years old on his way back from the grocery store.





Ann Penn speaking in 2006 about her brother, Albert Mersier, who was killed during the riots. (Jerry McCrea for The Star-Ledger)

Albert Mersier, Jr.

An East Side High School graduate, Mersier was killed during the riots on July 14, 1967. His older sister, Ann Penn [told The Star-Ledger in a 2007 interview](#) that she's still pained by his death and hoped that telling her story would bring healing. "You can talk about it all the time, but when people don't remember, that's what hurts," she told a reporter.

5. I heard several shots which sounded as though they were coming from the car that had just driven up. Before this car came on the scene there had been no shooting at all on this corner where I had been standing with Rufus Council.

6. Suddenly Rufus shouted "Ow!" and he fell right in the doorway, backwards, with his whole body completely within the restaurant entrance. After he fell he never moved. Neither did he say another sound. A few seconds after Rufus fell, I heard the motor of the car roar up, they were gunning the motor, then the car drove away.

Sworn testimony by Rose Wright.

Rufus Council

Rose Wright said she was standing with Rufus Council when she saw a police car with three state troopers speeding their way, according to her testimony. Council was standing in the doorway of a restaurant while Wright moved to the back of the restaurant and said she heard several shots which "sounded as though they were coming from the car that had just driven up."

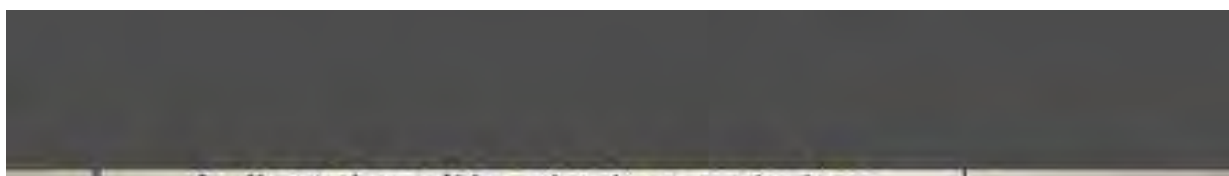
Wright said Council, 35, was "laying on his back and blood, a thick red clotting type of blood, had formed a big clot in the area of his left temple. Rufus was dead." Council left behind his wife and two teenage children, according to [Rutgers archival material](#).



Joyce Furr attends a memorial service in 1997 in Newark commemorating the city's riots. Furr's son, William Furr, died during the unrest. (Scott Lituchy NJNP Photo)

William Furr

The 25-year-old was shot by Newark police officers as he "fled from a burglarized liquor store," according to the grand jury report. A reporter for LIFE magazine witnessed the shooting after meeting Furr on Avon Avenue, according to RiseUp Newark. The reporter, Dale Wittner, said Furr had come to Newark to pick up an unemployment check and look for a job.



3. We sat there talking and as it was getting later, going on about 3:30 A.M. when Tedock and Robert Johnson, Edna and Fannie Mae decided to walk to Ben's Tavern, 18th Avenue and Bergen. I stayed on the porch.

4. I saw them walk to Hoffman's store, less than a block and a half from Ben's Tavern and a block and a half from where I was sitting.

5. During this time Tedock, Fannie Mae, and Robert just stood in front of Hoffman's, Edna having come back to the porch in the meantime.

6. I heard three shots, looked up and had a glance of Tedock going down Magnolia Street.

7. After this we sat on the porch and waited.

8. The next thing that I knew about Tedock was in the afternoon when we found out he was dead.

Courtesy: Newark Public Library
Grand Jury testimony

Sworn testimony of Minnie Gordon.

Tedock Bell

Bell worked at Ben's Tavern on Bergen Street as a bartender and was shot and killed as he walked with his family to see if anything had happened to the tavern. Bell, 28, left behind his wife and was a father of four children. He was fatally wounded by an unidentified Newark police officer after the officer yelled halt, according to the Grand Jury.

2. On Saturday, July 15, 1967 about 11:00 P.M., I was in my apartment with my mother.

3. I was bringing a chair out of the kitchen into the hallway when I heard a shot. This was the only shot I heard.

4. I heard my mother yell. She was yelling that Mickey (my twelve year old brother Michael Pugh) is shot.

Courtesy: Newark Public Library

Sworn testimony of Andrew James Pugh.

Michael Pugh

The 12-year-old boy lived with his mother and older brother in Newark. He was shot dead on July 15, 1967 around 11 p.m. near the front steps of his building, according to his brother, Andrew James Pugh, who testified before the Essex County Grand Jury.

Pugh was in sixth grade and was going to begin working in a summer jobs program the next day, according to Rutgers University records. He was killed while reportedly taking out the garbage.



(Courtesy of Al Lowe)

Jessie Mae Jones

Jones was shot in the abdomen while sitting on her porch, according to RiseUp Newark. She was shot by a man who was throwing rocks at passing cars and got into a confrontation with one of them. His shot struck Jones, 31, according to [RiseUp Newark](#).

5. I was somewhat very sick when I saw this body because I counted 30 shot holes in the man's chest and 4 shots in the skull. By this time I stopped counting because the sight was too much to view.

Courtesy: Newark Public Library
Grand Jury testimony

James Rutledge

Rutledge was 19 years old when he was shot 39 times, according to historian Junius Williams. Williams investigated the scene at Jo-Rae's shortly after Rutledge's death and wrote about his findings in [NJ Monthly](#) this month: "On Day 4 of the Rebellion, state police surprised 19-year-old James Rutledge in a vandalized liquor store. Cornered, Rutledge stood up to surrender. Police shot him 39 times." The grand jury report said Rutledge was shot multiple times.

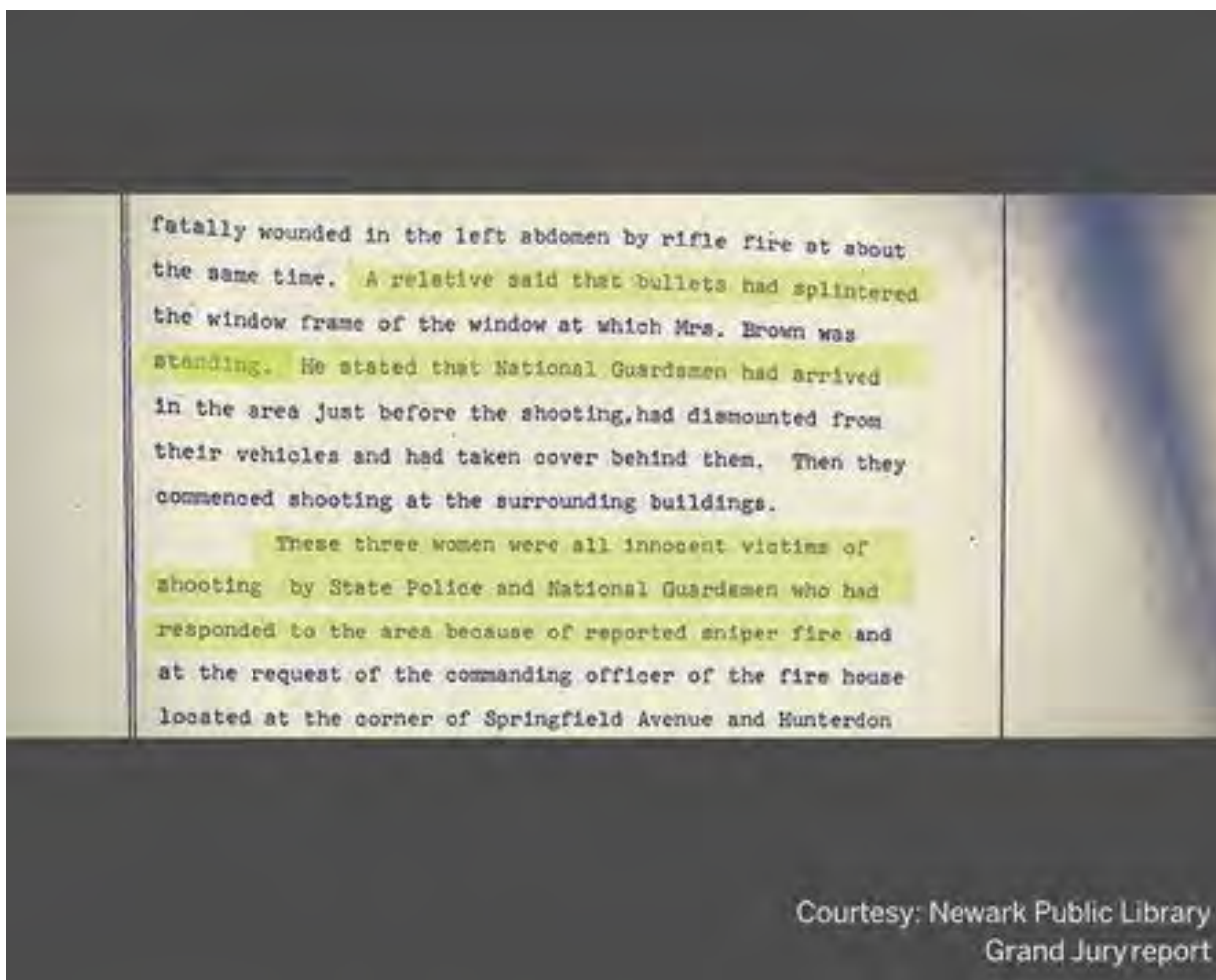




Newark police responding during the Newark summer disorders. (Dennis Bird for The Star-Ledger)

Leroy Boyd

At 34 years old, Boyd was killed July 14, 1967 when he was shot in his back when an officer's gun accidentally discharged, according to the grand jury report.



Rebecca Brown

Working as a nurse's aide at Orange Memorial Hospital, Brown lived in the Hayes Homes apartments with her husband and four children, according to [RiseUp Newark](#), a website by

historian Junius Williams. Brown was fatally shot when a bullet pierced her window, according to the grand jury. The report said state police and National Guardsmen responded to the area because of reported sniper fire and began shooting at the surrounding buildings.

Brown was shot around the same time as Eloise Spellman and Hattie Gainer.



New Jersey State Police use cars for protection from alleged sniper fire on Springfield Avenue on July 14, 1967. (Sarah Rice, AP Photo)

Hattie Gainer

The 53-year-old was a grandmother of three and was shot in her Hayes Homes apartment building while sitting by her second-floor window, according to a Washington Post story on her death published on [RiseUp Newark](#). One of Gainer's favorite pastimes, according to the story, was sitting by her window and talking to neighbors. She was one of three women killed in Hayes Homes that day when police and National Guardsmen responded to the area on a report of sniper shooting, the grand jury report said.

2. On March 27, 1965 I was married to Raymond Gilmer in Newark, New Jersey. Raymond Gilmer fathered all four of my children, the last born less than one month ago.

4. On Monday morning, July 17, 1967, while still at my mother's house, I woke up my husband and asked him if he had to go to work. He got up, washed, and dressed and left.

5. On Tuesday, July 18, 1967, at about 11 A.M., Raymond's grandmother called me on the telephone and told me that Raymond had been shot.

6. I called City Hospital and was told that Raymond had died that morning and asked me to identify the body. I identified Raymond's body the same day.

Courtesy, Newark Public Library
Grand Jury testimony

Sworn testimony according to Sharon Gilmer, 19.

Raymond Gilmer

The father of four was killed by a Newark detective, according to the grand jury report.

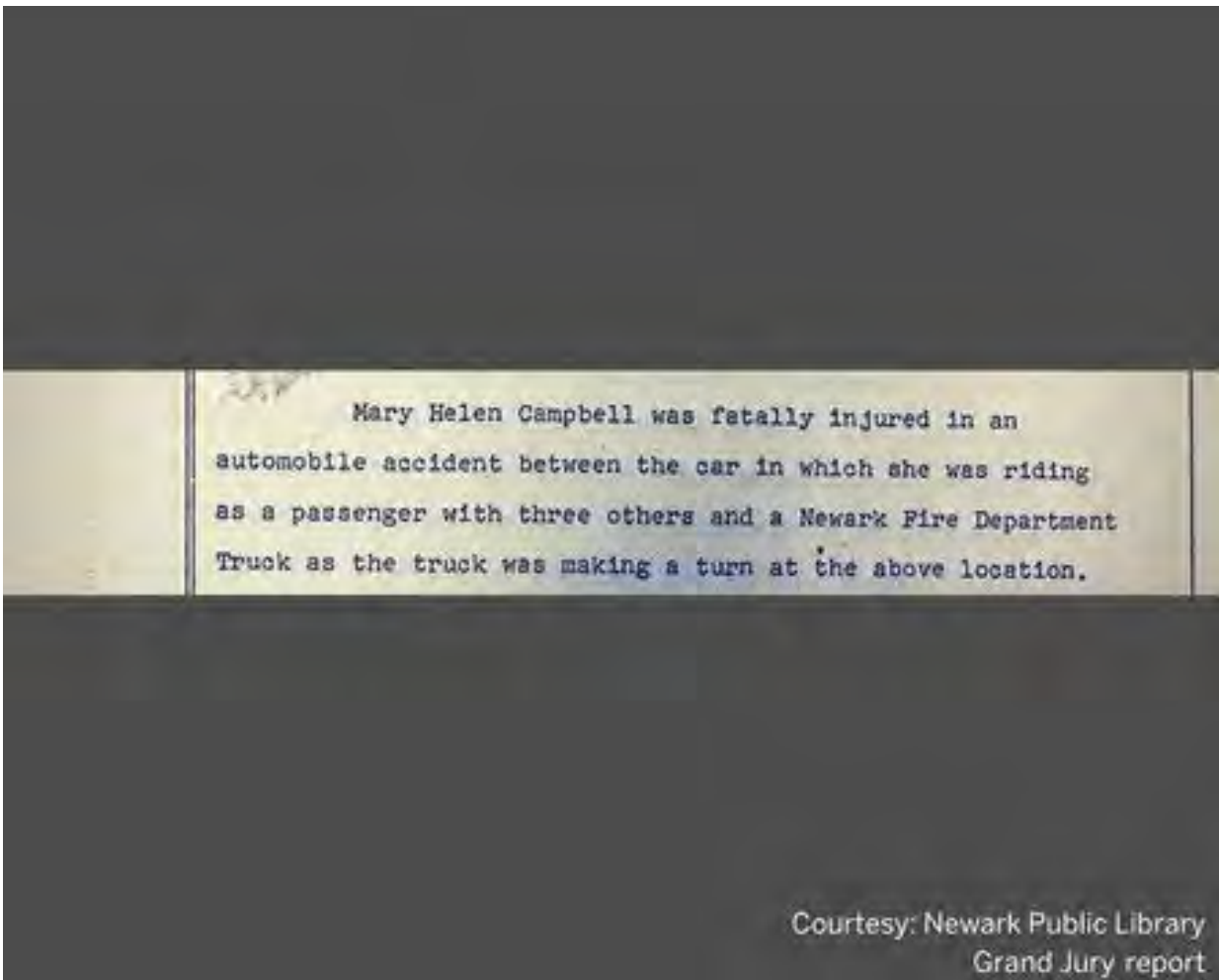




A Newark street on July 15, 1967. (William Clare for The Star-Ledger)

Raymond Hawk

Hawk, 24, was shot and killed by police on Frelinghuysen Avenue on the night of July 15, 1967. He lived in the South Ward and had a wife and a two-year-old son, according to [RiseUp Newark](#). The grand jury report said Hawk was shot when he ran toward police holding an object in his hand that looked like a pipe. An account offered by journalist Ron Porambo in his book, "[No Cause for Indictment](#)" offers a conflicting account and said Hawk was not aware of the burglary and was not in any way armed.



Mary Helen Campbell

Campbell, 31, lived in the Clinton Hill section of the city with her sister, according to [RiseUp Newark](#). She was on her way back from a party early morning on July 14, 1967 when the car she was riding in and a Newark fire truck collided, according to reports.





New Jersey Guardsmen. (New Jersey Picture Collection, Newark Library)

Cornelius Murray

Murray was shot at 29 years old while he was standing with a group of friends on Jones Street, according to the grand jury report. Witnesses told the grand jury they saw Newark police firing at the group; the incident occurred shortly after Det. Frederick Toto was killed, the report said.

Oscar Hill was fatally shot in the right chest. The autopsy revealed a lead bullet which was too distorted for identification purposes. There are no known witnesses to this shooting. He was employed at the Spring Manor Tavern, located on the east side of Jones Street near Springfield Avenue. During the day he had visited the tavern, talked with fellow employees and was scheduled to report to work at 5:00 P.M. which he failed to do. His body was brought to the hospital by persons unknown.

Oscar Hill

Hill, 50, who worked at the Spring Manor Tavern on Jones Street, was shot to death. The grand jury report did not say who shot him. A friend of Hill's told journalist Porambo that he saw police shoot Hill as he was walking to work.



People outside the 4th Police Precinct on July 13, 1967. (Dennis Bird for The Star-Ledger)

James Sanders

The 16-year-old boy was shot by Newark police while fleeing a looted liquor store on Springfield Avenue, the grand jury report said. He was one of 11 children.

Richard Taliaferro was fatally shot in the back by a police officer while fleeing from a burglarized liquor store. The officers ordered the victim to halt but instead Taliaferro and his companions fired hand weapons at them. One of the officers returned the fire with a shotgun. No weapon was found at the scene of the incident; however, a large crowd had gathered around the victim before the police had an opportunity to reach him.

Due to insufficient evidence of any criminal misconduct, the Jury found no cause for indictment.

Courtesy: Newark Public Library
Grand Jury report

Richard Taliaferro

Taliaferro, 25, the youngest of seven children, was shot to death, the grand jury report said. He worked at A&P Bakery on Frelinghuysen Avenue and was always working, according to [RiseUp Newark](#).





A lone National Guardsman patrols a Newark street in 1967. (Donna Gialanella for The Star-Ledger)

Victor Louis Smith

Smith died of a drug overdose and was found dead in a hallway on July 16, 1967 around 8:30 a.m., according to the grand jury report. His age was unknown.



National Guardsmen on Prince Street in 1967. (The Star-Ledger file photo)

Elizabeth Artis

The 65-year-old woman died of a heart attack at her home on Prince Street on July 16, 1967 around 4:30 a.m., the grand jury report said.

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