

DALLAS, POVERTY, AND RACE: COMMUNITY ACTION PROGRAMS

IN THE WAR ON POVERTY

Harriett DeAnn Rose, B.A.

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APPROVED:

Roberto Calderón, Major Professor

Harland Hagler, Committee Member

J. Todd Moye, Committee Member

Adrian R. Lewis, Chair of the Department of
History

Sandra L. Terrell, Dean of the Robert B.

Toulouse School of Graduate Studies

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Dallas is a unique city whose history has been overshadowed by its elite. The War on Poverty in Dallas, Texas, has been largely overlooked in the historical collective. This thesis examines the War on Poverty, more specifically, Community Action Programs (Dallas County Community Action Committee) and its origin and decline. It also exams race within the federal program and the push for federal funding among the African American and Mexican American communities. The thesis concludes with findings of the politicization of the Mexican American community and the struggle with African Americans for political equality.

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Historians have overlooked Dallas for the most part. I chose this topic to offer insight into the War on Poverty in Dallas and its Community Action Programs. I also chose to add race into the spectrum because of what Michael Phillips calls the “Origin Myth,” that Dallas had no social or race problems. One major factor in deciding to write about a social program was volunteering in neighborhoods in rural and urban Texas, and asking why was there not anything done to help the poor or if there was ever any federal legislation that tried to help the poor. The War on Poverty was clearly a major step toward helping the poor. Even though short lived, it brought the poor to the forefront of the nation and its influences and philosophies are seen to the present.

There are a few people I would like to thank. These people have helped me throughout my graduate career as well as my thesis. First, thank you to my Committee Chair Dr. Roberto R. Calderón for being my mentor as well as helping me through various revisions of this thesis. To Dr. J. Todd Moyer for teaching me oral history as well as sitting on my committee. Dr. Harland Hagler, the first time I ever sat in your lecture and saw students so engaged, I knew that I wanted to become a professor. Thank you for your valuable contribution to my thesis. Thanks to Dr. Eunice Pollack for giving me the skill that I need to have a positive impact on students. Finally to Dr. Jill Dupont for being a mentor as well as teaching me African American history conventional and unconventional. I would like to thank my family for being supportive and my husband Ben Hegi for debating with me, arguing with me, and editing my thesis. Your insight is invaluable.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AGIF	American G.I. Forum
CAA	Community Action Agency
CAP	Community Action Program
CCA	Citizens Charter Association
CORE	Congress of Racial Equality
CSO	Community Service Organization
CSA	Community Service Administration
DCCAC	Dallas County Community Action Committee
DCC	Dallas Citizens Council
DCCR	Dallas Coordinating Committee on Civil Rights
DNCC	Dallas Negro Chamber of Commerce
EEOC	Equal Employment Opportunity Commission
EOA	Economic Opportunity Act
GAP	Gray Areas Program
IMA	Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance
LBJ	Lyndon Baines Johnson
LIFT	Operation Literacy Instruction for Texas
LULAC	League of United Latin American Citizens
MACA	Mexican American for Civic Action

MAPA	Mexican America Political Association
MAYO	Mexican American Youth Association
MLK	Martin Luther King
NAACP	National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
OEO	Office of Economic Opportunity
PASSO	Political Association of Spanish Speaking Organizations
PVL	Progressive Voters League
SCLC	Southern Christian Leadership Conference
SMU	Southern Methodist University
SCORE	Service Corps of Retired Executives
SEOO	State Economic Opportunity Offices
SNCC	Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee
TOEO	Texas Office of Economic Opportunity
UFW	United Farm Workers
UT	University of Texas at Austin
WOP	War on Poverty

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The Poverty Parable

A tenement resident in Moscow is complimenting a neighbor on the accomplishments of his three sons. “You must be mighty proud of the them,” he remarks, “One a doctor, another a lawyer and the third an artist—and all of them good communists.” “Yes,” replies the father, “they are fine young men. But the one I am really proud of is my fourth boy, who is an American capitalist!” “What! exclaims the neighbor. “An American capitalist in your family?” “Certainly,” replies the father. “My fourth son is unemployed and on relief—and if it weren’t for the dollars he sends home to his brothers and me in Moscow, we’d all be starving.”¹

Poverty has been an invisible blemish within the United States since its creation. Even today, a social process known as “white flight” has driven the middle class into suburbia only to leave the poor in the urban downtown areas virtually unnoticed left to survive with little resources or help from the government. Urban areas are not the only communities touched by poverty, economically depressed rural areas are affected with this disease, as well. The rural poor share a harsh fate in that their geography and lack of economic resources puts them and their neighbors into a precarious position.

President Lyndon Baines Johnson “proposed a far-reaching, billion-dollar program to abolish it [poverty] in every corner of the land, from boom town to sharecropper shack.”² President Johnson’s War on Poverty Program introduced social projects and programs that directly helped the urban and rural poor. While, many sociologists, economists, and historians such as Robert Clark, Stephen M. Rose, Leila Rice, and Michael Gillette have managed to piece together the War on Poverty through

¹ “Poverty Parable,” *The Dallas Morning News* (Dallas, Texas), April 15, 1964.

² “Billion-Dollar Plan: Johnson Declares War on Poverty,” *The Dallas Morning News* (Dallas, Texas), January 1, 1964.

quantitative and qualitative research; much more research is needed to accurately examine the effects of this program on the nation and rural areas.

One city that has been thoroughly overlooked by scholars is Dallas, Texas. This thesis examines the War on Poverty, primarily the Community Action Programs in Dallas. This thesis also looks at the programs effects on race primarily African Americans and Mexican Americans in Dallas. The second chapter examines the origins and the beginnings of the Office of Economic Opportunity and its origins in Texas. The third chapter focuses on the establishment of the Dallas County Community Action Committee and the various grants it secured during its existence. The fourth chapter focuses on Community Action and the minority push for a share of federal funding which resulted in the politicization of the poor. The final chapter discusses the problems of mismanagement, which led to the fall of community action in Dallas.

Dallas: A History

Cities within the United States, from to Montgomery, Alabama, to Los Angeles, California, have been inundated in the twentieth century with civil turbulence in dealing with race relations. The world watched as fire hoses and tear gas created a terrifying atmosphere for African Americans and Mexican Americans in the United States. The nation's minorities pursued civil rights through civil disobedience and peaceful demonstrations, but the city of Dallas seemingly remained unmarked and outside the political limelight in situations dealing with minorities. The metropolis did not receive major notice from the world nor inclusion in history books until November 1963 when President John F. Kennedy was assassinated. Is Dallas this perfect city where racial

issues are a non-issue or is the city more progressive than the rest of the nation in terms of race or has it been “white washed”?

Bryan Woolley a reporter for the *Dallas Morning News* wrote, “Until 1963 and that fateful day in Dealey Plaza, the history of Dallas had been a quiet one. . .”³ Despite the city’s “silent” history, racial violence has always played a role, which reached back to the nineteenth century. Historian Michael Phillips argued in his work, *White Metropolis: Race, Ethnicity, and Religion in Dallas, 1841-2001*, that Dallas and its elite white citizens used the “Origin Myth” to paint a mythical illusion that Dallas rose from the ground without any type of political strife or racial aggression. As a result, the elite males have controlled the city for the good of all its citizens changing official memory of its origin. Any opposition that would illuminate racism in Dallas was whitewashed by city elites.⁴

Despite these myths, in reality, the city of Dallas has been beset with race troubles from its origin. Antebellum Dallas maintained a climate of fear among whites. White social order established harsh codes on slaves and free blacks because of isolated circumstances where slaves killed their masters. In 1860, Dallas County boasted a population of no free blacks, allegedly because they instigated conflicts and uprisings among slaves. The county slave population during this time was 1,074.⁵ Fires engulfed Dallas and other parts of North Texas in 1860, and resulted in white society’s paranoid claim that slaves and northern abolitionists were behind the events. Elites blamed two white preachers expelled from Texas the previous summer (1859),

³ Woolley quoted by Michael Phillips, *White Metropolis: Race, Ethnicity, and Religion in Dallas, 1841-2001* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2006), 3.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 3-4.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 25.

and tortured and brutalized slaves to receive confessions. The fear declined when three slaves were hanged and every slave in the county was flogged.⁶

Following the end of the Civil War, Unionist sympathizers, anti-slavery advocates, and the US military attempted to make sweeping social changes to Dallas's social fabric. Some city leaders were anti-slavery immigrants who had been living in Dallas well before Reconstruction, but Dallasites chose to believe the Carpetbagger myth and incorporate this myth into the city's history. The local office of the Freedmen's Bureau, established in Dallas in March 1865, accomplished little change. In 1868, William H. Horton, a Union army veteran and sub assistant commander of the Dallas Bureau "predicted that if Army occupation of Dallas ended, freed slaves 'would be slaughtered like dogs and robbed when the troops withdraw.'"⁷ Shortly thereafter Horton was effectively run out of Dallas by conservative elites. His successor George F. Eben was murdered en route to Dallas in neighboring Kaufman County before he even reached the city.⁸

Phillips wrote that although racial strife was a social issue in Dallas, whites were less concerned with it because of the vast financial growth and immigration that came with the railroads. Lynchings were praised in newspapers as a method to maintain traditional southern social order. Historian, Walter Buenger, argued in searching for a new identity, that northeast Texans used myths of Texas such as the triumph at San Jacinto, to create a new identity unique to Texas.⁹ Dallas, like northeast Texas, embraced and accepted its Lost Cause roots in the same manner. Phillips argued that

⁶Phillips, *White Metropolis*, 25-31.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 40.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 40-41.

⁹ Walter Buenger, *The Path to A Modern South: Northeast Texas between Reconstruction and the Great Depression* (Austin: University of Texas Austin Press, 2001), 253.

“Dallas hosted a Confederate veteran’s reunion in 1892 that drew between 20,000 and 30,000 people” and included union veterans as well.¹⁰ Minorities were still the destitute in the city as well as the nation.

After the turn of the century the Second Ku Klux Klan became very active in Dallas. They brought terror and absolute fear to minorities and certain whites in the city. Ku Klux Klan Dallas Chapter No. 66 was organized by Bertram G. Christie in 1920 and swelled in number to 1300, making it one of the largest in the nation. The Dallas Klan boasted high profile Dallasites such as bank president Robert L. Thornton, Police Commissioner Louis Turley, and Police Chief Elmo Straight. Other prominent Dallas citizens may not have belonged to the organization but were Klan sympathizers. Dr. C.C. Selecman, President of Southern Methodist University from 1923 to 1938 commented, “If the situation is such that a Ku Klux Klan is justified in Dallas, then it is a good thing.”¹¹

Darwin Payne’s *Big D: Triumphs and Troubles of an American Supercity in the 20th Century*, depicted the infamous beatings of minorities and whites by the Klan in Dallas. The Klan even brought along reporters to write about such incidents. Blindfolded and taken to an undisclosed location, a *Dallas Herald* reporter watched as the Klan flogged Adolphus Hotel elevator operator Alex Johnson and burned the letters KKK with acid onto his forehead. Johnson was rumored to have had associations with a white woman.¹² Frank H. Etheredge, the white manager of a lumber yard, was lectured on his morals and flogged. Phillip J. Rothblum also became a victim of the

¹⁰ Phillips, *White Metropolis*, 45.

¹¹ Darwin Payne, *Big D: Triumphs and Troubles of an American Supercity in the 20th Century* (Dallas: Three Forks Press, 1994), 78.

¹² *Ibid.*, 73-74.

Dallas Klan. A native Austrian and a Jew, Rothblum was gagged and flogged for marrying a Protestant woman. Rothblum and his family fled the city as a result of the Klan's actions. Rothblum identified one of his kidnappers but a jury found Dallas police officer, J.J. Crawford, not guilty.¹³ The Klan believed in Protestant morals for a pure white race; anyone who fell outside this code was vulnerable to their violence.

Klan violence became so horrific yet common that Texas Governor Pat Neff offered to send the Texas Rangers to Dallas after listening to Etheredge's first-hand account of being flogged. City officials denied it existed but an anti-Klan movement began to surface in Dallas in the 1920s complete with anti-Klan rallies and newspaper articles that openly criticized the Klan. The *News, Journal, and Dispatch*, all lost a significant number of subscribers due to Klan criticism. The *Times Herald* gained subscribers due to its Klan sympathizing. The State Fair of Texas hosted a Ku Klux Klan Day setting record attendance.¹⁴ Klan numbers in Dallas eventually dropped significantly due to internal political factions within the organization and national abuses that caused most of its members and supporters to abandon the group by the 1930s.

Despite racial intimidation in Dallas, a chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) was formed there in 1918. The NAACP was led by a school teacher, George F. Porter and attorney Ammon S. Wells. Reverend Alexander Stephens Jackson also participated in state and local politics within the Texas Republican Party. The Dallas Police Department was infiltrated with Klan members and had a representative sit in on all NAACP meetings, which caused the organization to quickly fizzle in the 1920s; however, the African American middle class

¹³ Payne, *Big D*, 81.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 94.

population of the city grew and gained strength in local businesses and the media in Dallas. The result of this black middle class surge led to the founding of the Dallas Negro Chamber of Commerce in 1926 to improve life for African Americans within the city, but the council struggled to make progress with the onset of the Great Depression in the 1930s.¹⁵ Besides African Americans beginning to establish themselves in Dallas, other minorities such as Mexican Americans began to create a niche within Dallas.

Little Mexico or “La Colonia,” as its residents called it, became its own self sufficient community in Dallas after the Mexican Revolution in 1910. The influence of the old country was very significant in the area. Payne commented by the 1920s that the Mexican American community generally kept to their area, “ a clearly defined area with Spanish-language signs above frame stores with long overhangs and with a small market reminiscent of those in Mexico where one could buy fruits, flower, clothing, and jewelry in small stalls.”¹⁶ Mexican Americans, like blacks, lived in slums with little or no plumbing in their homes. Despite the fact that the majority of Mexican American homes were deemed “Unfit for Occupancy” by the Works Progress Administration the community still boasted at least two Spanish-language magazines, *La Variedad* and *Cinemax*.¹⁷

White Dallasites stereotyped the Mexican/Mexican American as being “barbaric” or contaminated just like African Americans and poor whites. Phillips wrote that “Anglos saw Mexicans as outside of whiteness and their culture only worthy of extirpation.”¹⁸ By 1918, the Texas Legislature decreed that only English was to be taught and spoken in

¹⁵ W. Marvin Dulaney, *Essays on The American Civil Rights Movement* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1993), 69-70.

¹⁶ Payne, *Big D*, 203.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 204.

¹⁸ Phillips, *White Metropolis*, 69.

public schools, speaking any other language became a criminal offense. Public schools taught that Mexico and Mexicans were a dirty and savage people showing whites no mercy in instances such as the Alamo. Dallas School Superintendent Justin Kimball considered the area like a “canker or eating sore” upon Dallas. Mexicans and Mexican Americans were on the lowest social and pay scale in Dallas, cheap labor.¹⁹

The Great Depression increased tribulations for African Americans in Dallas. In influential essay, “Whatever Happened to the Civil Rights Movement” in Dallas, W. Marvin Dulaney argued “In addition to suffering the negative economic effects of the Depression, Dallas’s African American community was plagued by poor housing, unpaved streets, lackadaisical law enforcement, and a general neglect of living standards by the city government.”²⁰ The one African American high school in Dallas was severely overcrowded. The request for a free library within the community was denied by the city council. Claims were made that federal funding promised by the New Deal fell short within the African American community.²¹

Dulaney stressed that three events became pivotal in changing the face of African American political involvement in Dallas. These were the establishment of the Progressive Voters League (PVL), the revival of the NAACP, and the Dallas Negro Chamber of Commerce hiring of A. Maceo Smith in 1936. PVL pushed for African Americans to become involved in politics through voting. Smith, joined by Juanita Craft, revived the local NAACP presence. The Dallas chapter held its first meeting since the 1920s in 1936. A key concern for the chapter was making city and public jobs accessible to minorities. The Dallas chapter filed lawsuits petitioning for equal salaries

¹⁹ Phillips, *White Metropolis*, 67-70.

²⁰ Dulaney, *Essays on the American Civil Rights Movement*, 70.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 70.

for teachers and to overturn white primaries. The Dallas chapter was a hub for desegregation mandates. As a consequence of its activism, Texas State Attorney General John Ben Sheppard initiated a statewide campaign against the NAACP, that left local chapters, including Dallas's, in shambles. Thus, A. Maceo Smith was hired as executive secretary to revive the Dallas Negro Chamber of Commerce. Smith became a catalyst for African American participation in city politics and in securing funds for building the Hall of Negro Life at the Centennial State Fair in 1934. He was one of the founders of PVL. Later he became racial relations advisor with the United States Housing Authority and then the President of the Texas State Conference of Branches of the NAACP.

In the 1930s Dallas took a different approach to city government that continued until the mid-1970s. Led by former Klansman, R.L. Thornton, the Dallas Citizens Council or (DCC) rose to political power. DCC membership was for life and by invitation only. Executives, bankers, and other members of the Dallas elite were included within this completely white male council. "A Member of the Citizens Council sits on the board of every major hospital, every major church, the university, the symphony, the opera, the art museum, the civic theater, the two newspapers, the Industrial Council, the Chamber of Commerce,"²² commented historian Shirley Achor. The DCC had a hand in every aspect of Dallas life. The DCC worked aggressively to push for new business, which would stimulate the economy and create jobs during World War II. North American Aviation employed 30,000 workers alone in Dallas. The B-24 bomber plant

²² Shirley Achor, *Mexican Americans in the Dallas Barrio* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1978), 60.

was situated on the outskirts of the city. The boost in the economy also led to a growth spurt in the population from 260,475 in 1930 to 434,462 in 1950.²³

The DCC began to spotlight the minority underclass as negative social conditions were at a nadir in the city. Simultaneously the Mexican American population was growing exponentially. The Mexican immigrant population was increasing in Dallas. This influx was a direct result of South Texas becoming an “economically depressed region.” Migrants from South Texas usually commented, “We heard there was work here,” or “Times are bad in the Valley.”²⁴ Achor described health conditions in the Mexican American community in Dallas at the time as “deplorable.” Tuberculosis deaths, specifically, were high and the lack of proper sewage infrastructure resulted in higher death rates in the community in general. Minorities had no respectable housing in the city. The DCC acquired the necessary bonds to build housing units for minorities only after several bombings in neighborhoods. Middle-class African Americans who tried to move away from these conditions were terrorized. Growing numbers of African Americans were moving into South Dallas along Oakland Boulevard, which was a transitional area between white and black neighborhoods. Tensions became dire when eighteen African American homes were bombed in 1941 to push them out. As a result, the city tried to buy out African American homes in that area. Additional bombings occurred in 1950 and 1951.²⁵

Tensions between white elites and minorities in Dallas began to unravel, and the already clearly flawed Origin Myth ideology was fatally wounded in the 1950s and

²³ Patricia E. Hill, *Dallas: The Making of a Modern City* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996), 164.

²⁴ Achor, *Mexican Americans*, 65.

²⁵ Dulaney, *Essays on the American Civil Rights Movement*, 75-76.

1960s. The US Supreme Court's landmark 1954 decision in the case of *Brown v. Board of Education* resulted in the desegregation, at least on paper, of Dallas public schools. By 1961, Dallas had integrated an elementary school without any violence. The main reason they were able to achieve such peace is that the DCC had allied themselves with African American leaders within the community. Dulaney stated "Seven African Americans and seven whites formed the Committee of Fourteen to negotiate and manage desegregation in Dallas."²⁶ The NAACP, the Dallas Community Committee, and Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance (IMA) supported the Committee of Fourteen. The Committee set an agenda for desegregating Dallas public facilities and employment. The Dallas Community Committee organization splintered as some believed that direct action was more effective and they picketed downtown stores; while the other half supported the elite Committee of Fourteen in slow negotiations. Thus began the internal fracture between a newer generation of African Americans and an older generation who had deep negotiations with the Citizen's Council. In 1961 the Committee of Fourteen announced that the downtown area would be desegregated in order to appease direct action advocates who were planning to picket. Dulaney argued that these desegregation events led by the Committee of Fourteen, were, in reality, instances of "tokenism" and Dallas primarily remained overwhelmingly segregated in public facilities and businesses. In 1962, the school board began building another black high school instead of integrating the white schools.²⁷ At the time of the Kennedy assassination in 1963, Dallas was still a highly segregated city.

²⁶ Dulaney, *Essays on the American Civil Rights Movement*, 79.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 80-82.

In the 1960s Dallas-based Frito-Lay created the “Frito Bandito,” a character based on commonly held Mexican stereotypes. The Bandito was “Pancho Villa”-like, overweight, sported a big sombrero, a moustache, and talked in a heavy Mexican accent. This caricature depicted the image that the Mexican people were lazy and sneaky. Consequently, the Mexican American community in Dallas via the National Postal Union, Dallas Chapter, spoke out against the company for its blatant racism.²⁸

By 1964 direct action activists had formed the Dallas Coordinating Committee on Civil Rights (DCCR), including some members of the NAACP, Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), and Congress of Racial Equality (CORE). The DCCR began to picket the school board to speed up desegregation. In March 1965, around 3,000 marched for the slain Rev. James Reeb in Alabama.²⁹ These activists believed that “Dallas would never desegregate until African Americans used direct-action demonstrations and filed lawsuits to force change.”³⁰ Older city organizations such as IMA would not support direct action tactics. The Committee of Fourteen still worked with the Citizen’s Council for gradual change. SNCC would even try to buy out white businesses in African American neighborhoods and was accused of “bottle smashing raids” at stores. The older African American leadership did not support SNCC and two members were convicted and sentenced to ten years in prison while others were framed for crimes, which led to the downfall of the organization in Dallas. Because of the internal conflict within the African American community, change was limited. Dulaney commented, “The

²⁸ Phillips, *White Metropolis*, 163.

²⁹ James Reeb was a Unitarian minister who was a member of the SCLC and took part in the Selma to Montgomery protest. Reeb would be beaten to death with clubs by white segregationists. He was attacked on March 9, 1965, and died two days later.

³⁰ Dulaney, *Essays on the American Civil Rights Movement*, 84.

mass organizing in other cities not only broke down the barriers of racial segregation, but also mobilized African Americans at the grass-roots level to participate in the political process. The decision by African–American leadership to negotiate racial change prevented this phenomenon from occurring in Dallas.”³¹

Dallas whites inadvertently aided the civil rights movements in several incidents during the 1960s. The first incident occurred when vice president nominee Senator Lyndon Johnson and his wife Lady Bird were assaulted outside of the Adolphus Hotel. The demonstrators spat on the couple and threw Lady Bird’s white gloves in the gutter. The white, middle-class demonstrators were followers of State Representative Bruce Alger. United Nations Ambassador Adlai Stevenson was also spat upon by a white middle class mob after making a speech in 1963. Furthermore, the rioters shook the limousine before Stevenson could be taken to safety. November 22, 1963, will mark the most infamous day in Dallas history. President John F. Kennedy was assassinated at Dealey Plaza and a reactionary shadow colored Dallas. Historian Michael Phillips wrote that these events shattered the “Origin Myth” and secured Dallas’s position as a city of hate or the “hate capital of the nation.”³² White elites had no other choice but to try to bandage the city’s wounded image.

The War on Poverty and Dallas

Given Dallas’s racial history, it is not surprising that the War on Poverty in Dallas was should fail; however, there is some evidence leading to the contrary conclusion. Oral historian Michael Gillette interviewed Robert Sargent Shriver, Jr., Director of the

³¹ Dulaney, *Essays on the American Civil Rights Movement*, 89-90.

³² Phillips, *White Metropolis*, 159.

Office of Economic Opportunity, who commented, “To me the interesting thing was always some of the places which were most enthusiastically for community action were rock-ribbed Republican places, like Dallas.”³³ Shriver continued, “The mayor of Dallas [J. Erik Jonsson] was a big booster, and Dallas ran the program perfectly.”³⁴ Dallas as a whole benefited from the War on Poverty and its Community Action Programs. What made these programs so successful in a “city of hate” when Texas conservatives such as Governor John B. Connally were very critical of the program? I propose to answer this question by reconstructing Dallas Community Action programs in context of its emergence in city and its role if any on minorities in regards to civil rights. Chapter two will explain the origins of the War on Poverty from national to a local level and its goals for Dallas and the city’s poor. To understand the War on Poverty a little historiography about the movement is in order to rightfully capture the origins of the social welfare movement and the accompanying racial climate.

The 1960s witnessed a time of cultural transformation for the US. On February 16, 1960, four black students staged a lunch counter sit-in at the local Woolworth’s store in Greensboro, North Carolina. On May 4, 1961, Freedom Riders were bombed and hospitalized in Alabama. That same year Bobby Freeman’s song “Tossin’ and Turnin’” became a number one hit on the music charts. *The Rocky and Bullwinkle Show* premiered that September. By 1962, American noncombat troops in Vietnam were given the order to retaliate if attacked. On February 20, 1962, astronaut John Glenn orbited the earth. The death of Marilyn Monroe on August 5 stunned the nation as Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring* shocked it as well by exposing the dangers of pesticides.

³³ Michael Gillette, *Launching the War on Poverty: An Oral History* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1996), 201.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

It should come as no surprise, then, that during a time of such rapid change in the nation socialist author Michael Harrington would write a book focusing on *The Other America: Poverty in the United States*. Harrington's work refuted John Kenneth Galbraith's *The Affluent Society*, which claimed that the basic financial tribulations in the United States had been solved, and that mass consumption of private goods resulted in debt and a weak public infrastructure.³⁵ To build up the public sector a general taxation was important.

Harrington endeavored to show the reader the faces of the poor instead of numbers and statistics poverty is much more than figures, he maintained. The economic underbelly of America was invisible in the 1960s; to see a homeless man on the street was emotionally numbing to most of America. He explained that the poor had been separated into another microcosm within an abundant nation. The poor were in a circle of poverty. This circle not only encompassed them economically but also culturally, within family structures, affecting food and dress. They were politically invisible. The poor had different perceptions from those of the dominant society; a policeman in a poverty stricken area was considered the enemy and in white middle-class America a protector. Breaking this circle would involve participation by higher classes with the means and resources to effect positive change.³⁶

Harrington attempted to put a face on poverty using minorities and elderly as examples. As a society becomes more technologically advanced only the few with education and skills move up while the rest find themselves facing an even bigger

³⁵ Sean Savage, *JFK, LBJ and the Democratic Party* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004), 132.

³⁶ Michael Harrington, *The Other America: Poverty in the United States* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1962), 19-32.

challenge; for example, the poor farmer who falls behind because he cannot afford the equipment to turn a profit, or the plant worker who is replaced by a piece of machinery. As a result, poor whites, minorities, and the elderly became the “Other America.”³⁷

Ironically, Michael Harrington along with his friend and colleague Irving Howe did not expect much of his book; but the book exploded onto the nation’s consciousness. Only then did they realize that perceptions were changing. This little book would boast over one million copies sold, and both Kennedy’s and Johnson’s administrations were deeply impacted by it.³⁸

Michael Gillette’s *Launching the War on Poverty: An Oral History*, gave first hand accounts through elite interviews with the creators of the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO). This book is unique in that its vast oral histories fill in the spaces of a patchy quantitative history thus yielding a more complete picture. “In these oral history interviews, the participants recount the program’s genesis in the councils of government; its formulation in the task force organized by Sargent Shriver, and its implementation by OEO,”³⁹ Gillette writes. Gillette wanted to document how these organizers approached poverty, biases, and even regrets. The interviews were part of the oral history project at the LBJ Presidential Library, which began in 1969 and ended in 1991. These oral histories fill voids in the history of the War on Poverty’s administrative structure. Gillette does point out the limitations of the narrators, such as those who declined to be interviewed, erroneous details in and limitations on the transcriptions, and interviewers overlooking narrators. The book is arranged topically to

³⁷ Michael Harrington, *The Other America: Poverty in the United States* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1962), 33.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, ix.

³⁹ Gillette, *Launching the War on Poverty*, xv.

recreate the history of the program. Gillette's work compliments the War on Poverty in respect that these first hand accounts give insight to influences, such as Harrington, and reasons as to why the poverty programs functioned in a certain maneuver.

Gillette calls the Community Action Programs [CAPs] the very "heart" of the antipoverty movement. CAPs afforded local programs the resources and means to fight poverty. The federal government called for maximum feasible participation of the poor, which represented a very general construct whose interpretation caused power struggles within federal and local government. For instance, William Kelly, who became OEO assistant director of management and acting director of CAPs, recounted how a Catholic archbishop from San Antonio criticized the lack of participation of the poor. Kelly and Shriver were surprised at these allegations, since CAP agencies were increasing. It is incidents and accounts like these that gave the War on Poverty a face instead of just numbers and statistics.

Jill Quadagno's work *The Color of Welfare: How Racism Undermined the War on Poverty* is essential to understand the influence of race on the course of the War on Poverty. A true revisionist, Quadagno reconstructs social welfare history by showing the reader how race undermined these problems instead of making them into ground breaking initiatives. The author also focused on how white liberal in federal government really pushed to create social legislation similar to the New Deal, though Franklin Delano Roosevelt excluded African Americans from policies and Lyndon Johnson incorporated minorities to equal out the economic field. Quadagno argued, "The War on Poverty represented an effort to bypass the racially biased New Deal networks of

welfare agencies and to provide economic security to blacks.”⁴⁰ The War on Poverty programs created what Quadagno called an “Equal opportunity Welfare State” that mitigated previously existing racial issues. African Americans saw the welfare programs, especially CAPs, as a vehicle to advance civil rights issues.

Quadagno used examples like Newark, New Jersey, to support her thesis. Newark is a prime example of how white elite and civil rights organizations fought over Community Action funding, which morphed into civil rights protests and riots. She provides examples in states like Mississippi where Klansmen were elected to Community Action Boards resulting in the federal government denying funds to ameliorate poverty, which influenced equal rights for African Americans. In 1973 President Richard Nixon dismembered the OEO and, as a result, the urban poor were neglected. The argument that Community Action would have been administered more effectively if money had been filtered through local government instead of private organizations is false, Quadagno contended. The author argued that mismanagement of funds as well as misappropriation would have stopped the poor and minorities from receiving aid. Because the War on Poverty was a failure nationally, the neglect and racial backlash toward the urban poor is still a problem today.

LBJ & Mexican Americans by Julie Leininger Pycior examines the relationship between Mexican Americans and LBJ. Pycior’s book is a rare find in that she is one of the few historians who studies Johnson’s Great Society through the Mexican American viewpoint and she is referenced extensively by other War on Poverty historians. Pycior contends, “At every stage of their political formation Johnson and Mexican Americans

⁴⁰ Jill Quadagno, *The Color of Welfare: How Racism Undermined the War on Poverty* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 8.

affected each other: sometimes as allies, sometimes as adversaries, sometimes as both.”⁴¹ She also argues that the addition of Mexican Americans into politics helped to accelerate the integration process, which, in turn, led to the emergence of the Chicano Movement. The book is broken into two sections. The first chapter tells the story of Johnson’s early career as a local and state politician and, later on, his rise through national politics and ultimately to the presidency. The second section deals with Mexican Americans on a national level.

Pycior makes good use of oral histories of Johnson’s aides to support her arguments. Throughout *LBJ & Mexican Americans*, the author uses these oral histories to illuminate for the reader how Johnson was deeply influenced by President Franklin Roosevelt and the New Deal, which enabled him to create the Great Society. “Johnson wanted to bring the disenfranchised into the American system,” she writes.⁴² At the same time, before LBJ’s rise to the White House, Mexican Americans had begun to attend conferences with different ethnic groups to address issues ranging from inadequate federal hiring practices to issues on migratory labor. Johnson’s goal was realized when he formed an alliance with Mexican Americans in Texas at the height of his Great Society Program. Dr. Héctor P. García, American GI Forum President and longtime friend of Johnson, felt that Mexican Americans would be a great service to Johnson. The GI Forum shifted its private agenda concerning poverty in the Mexican American community to ally with Johnson’s War on Poverty plan nationwide.

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 was supported by many ethnic groups. Historians collectively focus on the African American influence and the Deep South, but Mexican

⁴¹ Julie Leininger Pycior, *LBJ & Mexican Americans: The Paradox of Power* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1997), xiii.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 142.

Americans strongly supported this legislation. Pycior argues that their focus was on Title VII. This section legally brought an end to racial discrimination through the Equal Employment Opportunities Commission (EEOC). Though Title VII also ended gender discrimination, the author contends that the EEOC and Mexican American leaders would ignore women's issues.

Mexican Americans turned out in large numbers to support Johnson in the election of 1964. His subsequent overwhelming victory gave the president the confidence that his supporters had given him a mandate to push through his civil rights programs. The Pycior states, "From job training to education to health to housing, new programs sprang up overnight."⁴³ Different Mexican American organizations such as MAPA (Mexican American Political Association), LULAC (League of United Latin American Citizens), and the GI Forum used federal funds to serve the Mexican American community.

Although some efforts were being made, Mexican American leaders were concerned with the lack of Mexican American appointments to important federal positions and involvement in the programs' decision making process. Pycior reveals that the OEO, which administered the War on Poverty, had less than ten Mexican Americans working within the agency among thousands of total employees. Mexican Americans were frustrated with the situation. Changes were made and within a year the Johnson Administration hired Mexican Americans such as Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzales and Ed Idar to the OEO. Gonzales was appointed as the director of Denver's War on Poverty and Idar was appointed as an OEO inspector evaluating poverty programs.

⁴³ Pycior, *LBJ & Mexican Americans*, 151.

Problems, arose however, over the EEOC. Mexican American leaders were extremely upset that the agency had hired only three Mexican Americans. Mexican American leaders were upset with being virtually ignored in contrast to the African American community. Pycior contends that these issues finally came to a head at an Albuquerque conference where most of the Mexican American leaders walked out on EEOC administration as a show of frustration. The leaders filed an employment lawsuit with the US Civil Rights Commission.

Organizations were also upset with money issues of the OEO. Most of the money went to political officials or within the bureaucracy and never trickled down to the people. As these issues were at their apex, Johnson called for a meeting in May 1966. For the first time, notes the author, the Johnson Administration sat down to discuss issues within the Mexican American community. Mexican American leaders expressed their concerns, and Johnson seemed very accommodating. As flexible as Johnson seemed to be, however, local officials were resistant to the new programs, not to mention the OEO bringing strangers into tight knit communities trying to push people to strike without merit. Furthermore, the lack of bilingual education was a pressing issue for the Mexican American community. Another conference was on the horizon, but the Johnson Administration decided to cancel it and lay low due to political opposition.

The OEO and the EEOC became side notes by the late 1960s. The Johnson Administration was putting most of its efforts into managing the Vietnam War. The Mexican American community openly protested the war because of the major budget cuts that had an effect on poverty programs, and the Vietnam War had extremely high casualties among Mexican American men disproportionate to their number in the

general population. Pycior shows that Chicano groups, such as MAPA and Community Service Organization, called for more funding for the War on Poverty and a peaceful end to Vietnam. Mexican American leaders who once were pro-Johnson began to speak out against the war. By the time the Johnson Administration had planned a conference in El Paso, Pycior notes, farm workers were striking along with the barrio communities. The Chicano Movement was taking shape.

All these books are important to the historiography of the War on Poverty in different but related traditions. In the 1950s and 1960s Galbraith and Harrington brought increased awareness of the reality of poverty to mainstream America, resulting in a catalyst of social reform throughout the nation. Gillette's compilation of oral histories is one of the most important books about the War on Poverty because the actual creators get to tell the history. Quadagno and Pycior offer valuable insight into this history through the minority perspective which is rare in the existing historiography. This text seeks to build on these works by examining the origins of Community Action Programs in Dallas, Texas. I also seek to look at African American and Mexican American issues within community action.

CHAPTER 2

THE NATIONAL AND LOCAL FRONT

The existence of poverty in the midst of plenty has been an issue since the founding of America. Lyndon Baines Johnson's Vice President, Hubert H. Humphrey, argued that the origins of poverty and helping the poor go as far back as the Bible. "And if thy brother be waxen poor and fallen in decay with thee, then thou shalt relieve him. Yea, though he be a stranger or a sojourner, that he may live with thee" (Leviticus 25:5).¹ Poverty among the American Puritans was a sign of moral bankruptcy and sin. Humphrey stressed four approaches to combat poverty: "Job creation, job preparation, transfer payments, and equal opportunity."² The Economic Opportunity Act did just this. In addition, the Civil Rights Act tried to create equal opportunities for minorities and the poor. The new legislation brought a new light to an old subject in the 1960s. Articles in *Ebony*, *The Crisis*, and various pamphlets were distributed for the masses to learn about the national poverty crisis. "Yet in the midst of unprecedented American prosperity there existed--although often invisible to visitors from foreign lands--the paradox of poverty. It is estimated that 35 million persons, or one-fifth of the population, existed in conditions of want, or near want."³

Sargent Shriver discussed three kinds of poverty in a pamphlet titled, "Poverty." He argued that economists recognized these as cyclical poverty, collective poverty, and individual poverty. Cyclical poverty he defined as periodic poverty in an industrial

¹ Hubert H. Humphrey, "Law and Contemporary Problems," *Antipoverty Programs* 31, no. 1 (Winter 1966): 7.

² *Ibid.*, 8.

³ Sargent Shriver, "Poverty," p. 1, Box 21, Juanita Craft Collection, Dallas Public Library Texas/Dallas History and Archives Division. Here after the Juanita Craft Collection will be referred to as JCC.

nation, for example the Great Depression in the United States or crop failure in an agrarian society. Collective poverty occurs when resources cannot meet the needs of the population, such as in India. Individual poverty, the hardest of the three to define, is poverty that “is not caused by general economic trends.”⁴ By defining poverty, the Johnson Administration was able to devise better strategies to combat the issue through legislation and tools that helped the invisible have a voice in society.

War on Poverty and Its Legislation

President John F. Kennedy centered the attention to poverty initiatives during his administration. Campaigning in the West Virginia primary exposed Kennedy to a heavily unemployed, poverty stricken region. This depressed area served as a catalyst for the president to establish committees and legislation fixes, such as the Manpower Development and Training Act of 1962 to combat poverty conditions and provide educational assistance to workers. During the summer of 1963 Kennedy’s domestic policy focused on making the elimination of poverty a national priority, and specifically focusing on the unemployment of minorities. Walter Heller, the chief economic advisor and Chairman of the Council of Economic Advisors, was instrumental to both Presidents Kennedy and Johnson in the antipoverty measure. By November of the same year Kennedy was assassinated, and his domestic program had met opposition in Congress. “President Johnson seized this period of national crisis to reinvigorate the Kennedy agenda and give it his personal stamp.”⁵

⁴ Shriver, “Poverty,” p. 3, Box 21, JCC.

⁵ Robert F. Clark, *The War on Poverty: History, Selected Programs and Ongoing Impact* (Oxford: University Press of America, 2002), 26.

On January 8, 1964, Johnson publicly announced in his State of the Union address that “This administration, here and now, declares unconditional war on poverty.”⁶ In *President Johnson’s War on Poverty* David Zarefsky argued that this choice of military rhetoric was a strategy derived by Johnson and his administration during Christmas 1963. In a mourning nation “Americans longed for redemption through sacrifice.”⁷ Zarefsky stated that Johnson calling the social program a “war” had striking societal effects. These words gave the populace power to prevail over such a war. It gave citizens who were in an “intergenerational cycle of poverty” the ability to focus on the nation’s poverty tribulations holistically instead of one’s own insufficiencies. The administration’s choice of words such as “community action” and “manpower” programs were helpful in passing the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964. But these powerful words helped lead to the program’s demise as well, because words and symbols took on new definitions and interpretations within the program and among its participants.⁸ The expression “War on Poverty” was straightforward and encouraged the general public to sign up and fight on the domestic front.

The new declaration of war on the home front was directed by R. Sargent Shriver a brother-in-law of President John Kennedy. Shriver received his law degree from Yale University and had successfully launched the Peace Corps Program as its founding director. Shriver recruited a diverse group of people from business and government agencies to join the president’s task force for creating the basic principles of the poverty war. Adam Yarmolinsky, Special Assistant to the Secretary of Defense (and Shriver’s

⁶ David Zarefsky, *President Johnson’s War on Poverty* (Alabama: The University of Alabama Press, 1986), 21.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 21-22.

⁸ *Ibid.*, xi-xii.

staff director); Daniel Patrick Moynihan, Assistant Secretary of Labor for Policy and Planning Research; and James Sundquist, the Deputy Undersecretary of Agriculture, all joined Shriver to round out the task force to draft antipoverty legislation for the next Congress.

The poverty legislation was named the Economic Opportunity Act. The legislation contained seven titles to combat poverty in the United States. Title II, the most important of the seven, established the “‘Urban and Rural Community Action Programs’ [which] authorized not only the Community Action Program, but also Adult Basic Education and a Voluntary Assistance Program for Needy Children that were not connected directly with the Community Action Program.”⁹ Gillette and Robert Clark both contend that the Community Action Programs were the heart of the War on Poverty.

The Economic Opportunity Act legislation was introduced in the House on March 16, 1964. The legislation was sponsored by Phil M. Landrum, a Democrat from Georgia. The bill was then referred to the Education and Labor Committee whose chairman was Adam Clayton Powell Jr. Patrick V. McNamara sponsored the bill in the

⁹ Robert F. Clark, *The War on Poverty: History, Selected Programs and Ongoing Impact* (Oxford: University Press of America, 2002), 29. The other titles of the act include: Title I “Youth Programs,” which include Job Corps, Work and Training programs, Neighborhood Youth Corps, and Work-study Programs. Title III- “Special Programs to Combat Poverty in Rural Area” authorized grants and loans plus other assistance to migrant and other seasonally employed agricultural employees and their families, and –for some reason- indemnity payments to dairy farmers. Title IV “Employment and Investment Incentives” promoted the establishment and strengthening of small businesses through a revolving loan fund administered by the U.S. Small Business Administration. Title V “Work Experience Programs” designed to help unemployed fathers and “other needy persons” to obtain employment, were transferred to the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, which administered the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) public assistance program. Title VI “Administration and Coordination” established the U.S. Office of Economic Opportunity, the Volunteers in Service to America (Vista) program as well as a federal Economic Opportunity Council and a National Advisory Council on Economic Opportunity made up of members from the public. Title VII “Treatment of Income for Certain Public Assistance Purpose” modified the Social Security Act by changing the method for counting income used to establish the eligibility of applicants for public assistance. See Clark, *The War on Poverty*, 30-35.

Senate. By August 8, 1964, Congress had passed the Economic Opportunity Act but not without a few changes.¹⁰ The first crucial sacrifice that Johnson and Shriver surrendered was the dismissing of Adam Yarmolinsky from the War on Poverty Program. Yarmolinsky was a key player in declaring segregated facilities to military personnel off-limits in reaction to southern resistance to desegregation coming out of the civil rights movement. Yarmolinsky was Jewish and his mother Babette Deutsch was a professed communist. As a result, some southern members of Congress would not support the poverty programs unless Yarmolinsky was excluded.¹¹ Republican Senator Barry Goldwater representing Arizona would call War on Poverty legislation a “Hodgepodge of handouts.”¹² From the beginning of the legislative process Goldwater and Texas Republican Senator John G. Tower were highly opposed to programs believing that they were more about political maneuvering than about helping fight poverty.

Another concession that was issued so Congress would proceed with enacting the legislation was granting governors veto power over the Community Action Programs. Because CAPs skipped state government and funneled directly to public and private organizations, some southern politicians, such as Senator Herman Talmadge, a Democrat from Georgia, would not agree to CAPs without some sort of states’ rights power. This power came in the form of a governor’s veto of any programs that could hinder or were determined to not be in the state’s best interest. In 1965, an amendment was added to this provision due to Alabama’s Governor George Wallace

¹⁰ Clark, *The War on Poverty*, 31.

¹¹ Michael Gillette, *Launching the War on Poverty: An Oral History* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1996), 132-133.

¹² Louise Lander, *War on Poverty* (New York: Facts on File, 1967), 17.

vetoing any programs in which interracial mixing was involved. The OEO director had the power to override any veto within thirty days that followed and was consistent with CAPs.¹³

CAPs came under fire in 1967. OEO was charged with giving CAPs vague guidelines that allowed them to spend money in any way to combat poverty. The federal government gave Community Action Agencies (CAA) overriding authority to spend money without state or local government control. Democratic Representative Edith Green from Oregon introduced an amendment that would give more control of CAAs to local and state governments:

This amendment gives elected state, local, and tribal officials the choice as to which agency should be designated as the Community Action Agency for their community. The Office of Economic Opportunity must also approve the designation by recognizing a Community Action Agency (CAA). Decisions on designation will ordinarily involve the Mayor and Council, the County Commissioners and the Governor and Legislature. The law permits political jurisdictions to join together designating a single CAA when this will contribute to more effective programs. The law also permits the elected officials of a community which is a part of a larger community (for example, a town within a county) to decide that they will not participate in (rather will “opt out” of) the CAA designated by the larger community.¹⁴

Consequently, this made CAAs more appealing to southern state governments. State and local government could also opt out of the process completely and the OEO would determine if the organization qualified for federal funding. CAA boards were to be composed of one-third elected officials and another one-third of CAA board members would be from the nonprofit sector or below-income individuals within the community. The remaining members came from private businesses and nonprofit organizations.

¹³ Robert F. Clark, *The War on Poverty: History*, 51.

¹⁴ J. Erik Jonsson Collection, “Designating Community Action Agencies,” Folder 5, Box 64, Community Action Committee 1966-1968, Southern Methodist University, Dallas, Texas. Here after the J. Erik Jonsson Collection will be referred to as JEJC.

After fierce debate, Congress reauthorized the Economic Opportunity Act with the Green Amendment on December 23, 1967, for two more years. Bertrand Harding “believed that the Green Amendment was a real-world political compromise that saved both the Office of Economic Opportunity and the Community Action Program.”¹⁵

Dallas designated the Dallas County Community Action Committee, Inc. (DCCAC) as its primary agency. The DCCAC would receive the primary grants and funnel these funds to delegate agencies. In a memo to Mayor Erik Jonsson, the county and the city designated DCCAC as the primary agency serving the Dallas County area. The DCCAC listened to comments and remarks by citizens at a public meeting.¹⁶

The Office of Economic Opportunity

The Economic Opportunity Act established the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO), which was the main organization leading the War on Poverty. Sargent Shriver was the director of OEO, which it was situated within the Executive Office of the President. Since Yarmolinsky had been sacrificed, Shriver, uncomfortable with delegating, tried to fulfill both roles of director and assistant director until Jack Conway took the assistant director position from February to October 1965.¹⁷

OEO would serve as an umbrella for many different agencies such as the Office of Civil Rights, Office of Congressional Relations, and Office of Public Affairs. Assistant directors for Community Action Programs, Job Corps, and Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA), were established to help oversee regional offices. Seven regional

¹⁵ Clark, *The War on Poverty*, 57-58.

¹⁶ JEJC, “City of Dallas Office Memorandum,” June 3, 1968, Folder 5, Box 64, Community Action Committee 1966-1968, Southern Methodist University, Dallas, Texas.

¹⁷ The next deputy director was Bernard Boutin who lasted from November to May, then Bertrand Harding took his place. See Gillette, *Launching the War on Poverty*, 382.

offices were established in the United States. They were the Western based in San Francisco, California; the North Central based in Kansas City, Missouri; the Southwest based in Austin, Texas; the Great Lakes based in Chicago, Illinois; the Southeast based in Atlanta, Georgia; the Mid-Atlantic based in Washington, D.C.; and the Northeast based in New York City, New York. As complicated as this bureaucracy seems, C. Robert Perrin who joined the program in 1966 as a liaison for the OEO commented, in 1969 in an oral history, "Our management procedures were quite good, really. We've established a lot of procedures that I don't think many federal agencies even today have."¹⁸

Shriver and the OEO the definition of poverty in the guidelines set forth by the Social Security Administration's Division of Research and Statistics--"The Poverty yardstick was based on family size, location (urban or rural) and the Agriculture Department's 'economy level food plan' (based on a cost of 23¢ per person per meal per day)."¹⁹ Funding for War on Poverty programs was included in the 1965 fiscal budget, and would go into affect in July of the same year. An estimated \$960 million were requested by Johnson to implement these programs.²⁰ The task force in OEO felt that having states become involved would help the antipoverty programs. Therefore OEO established State Economic Opportunity Offices (SEOO). Robert Clark argued that for the most part these offices were restricted, and helped governors with poverty conditions and advocating expansion of the CAPs to areas that were without.²¹

¹⁸ Gillette, *Launching the War on Poverty*, 155.

¹⁹ Louise Lander, *War on Poverty* (New York: Facts on file, 1967), 2.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 11.

²¹ Clark, *The War on Poverty*, 55.

The Heart of the War on Poverty

The idea of community action came from an unlikely source. The Public Affairs Department of the Ford Foundation looked for ways to help revitalize inner-city slums in the 1950s. The Gray Areas Program (GAP) was the result. GAP sponsored community projects and empowered citizens to improve their own neighborhoods. Paul N. Ylvisaker, the director of the GAP Public Affairs, strongly emphasized giving inner city citizens the independence to make their communities better instead of handing out aid and creating dependence. The program identified local organizations that could apply for funds for the community. A given local organizations had to include a strong citizens' base to keep the revitalization going when the funding ended. These programs mainly focused on juvenile delinquency, which was plaguing many urban areas.²²

Another influential program that shaped the ideology of the Community Action Programs was the President's Committee on Juvenile Delinquency and Youth Crime. This committee, chaired by Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy, organized to employ juveniles in urban areas. Like the Gray Area Programs, the committee had little money to fund the programs, so it set up grants for planning programs. Local agencies and governments were responsible for the funding. The programs were highly successful and illustrated how citizens with the proper approach could attack poverty and other issues within their communities.²³

Community Action Programs offered a wide range of options when helping the poor at a local level. Economics professor Sar Levitan labeled CAPs as "a catch-all for

²² Sar A. Levitan, *The Great Society's Poor Law: a New Approach to Poverty* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins Press), 19.

²³ *Ibid.*, 20.

projects to aid the poor.”²⁴ These policies bypassed all normal bureaucratic channels and put federal funding directly into the hands of the poor. The legislation of CAPs was so general, Levitan noted, that it was not as much of a program as a “strategy” to fight poverty.²⁵ Congress passed the CAPs legislation which did the following:

(1) . . . Mobilizes and utilizes resources, public or private, or any . . . geographical area. . . in an attack on poverty; (2) which provides services, assistance, and other activities. . . to give promise of progress toward elimination of poverty or a cause or causes of poverty. . . ; (3) which is developed, conducted, and administered with the maximum feasible participation of residents of the areas and members of the groups served; and (4) which is conducted, administered, or coordinated by a public or private nonprofit agency (other than a political party), or a combination thereof.”²⁶

Such innovative and groundbreaking legislation would not go without scrutiny. One of the main expressions scrutinized in CAPs was the term maximum feasible participation of the poor.

In *Maximum Feasible Misunderstanding*, Daniel P. Moynihan wrote that the phrase was a statement to ensure that all people could benefit from this legislation, such as African Americans in the South who were excluded in traditional political measures. Moynihan, who was on the original task force that drafted the legislation, commented that this phrase was not intended for radical mobilization of the poor, but an avenue for helping them. A major aspiration for the original Task Force was to prevent “radicalization” of the legislation. He blamed Jack Conway for this, a former United Automobile Workers official, who became co-chairman of the Urban Areas Task Force to draw up guidelines for CAPs. At this point the original members went back to their old departments, and the new group took the term and, according to Moynihan, used it

²⁴ Levitan, *The Great Society's Poor Law*, 109.

²⁵ Levitan, *The Great Society's Poor Law*, 109.

²⁶ Ibid.

to arouse the poor instead of help them. In an oral history Yarmolinsky, an original member of the task force commented, "My concept of what [maximum feasible participation] meant was that you involved poor people in the process, not that you put them in charge."²⁷ Nevertheless, CAPs took on a very pro active involvement of the poor.

The mayors of many cities were concerned about the ideology behind maximum feasible participation. Mayors such as Theodore McKeldin, mayor of Baltimore, complained that the federal government was ignorant of local government needs. They argued that this maximum participation would or could turn poor black neighborhoods into "militant political active groups." Mayors used Newark, New Jersey, as the classic example of a Community Action Agency "supposedly" inciting a race riot. Robert Clark argued that "In the mind of the majority white public, the Great Society programs became associated, most often unfairly, with violence and disorder in the inner cities."²⁸

In a document titled, "Summary of CAP Mission and Major Policies Draft, August 14, 1967," the major objective of CAP was to:

. . . Develop in urban and rural communities that face substantial problems of poverty, (a) an understanding of the nature and causes of poverty; (b) the will to attack, reduce, and ultimately eliminate the basic causes and conditions of poverty; and (c) the capacity to plan and carry out effective local anti-poverty programs with broad participation of all elements in the community, including the poor, and with full and coordinated use of federal, state, local, and private resources. The resources to be thus mobilized are not only financial and material, but include knowledge, talent, energy and commitment to the elimination of poverty. The mobilization and use of these resources for the purposes indicated above constitute community action.²⁹

²⁷ Gillette, *Launching the War on Poverty*, 77.

²⁸ Robert F. Clark, *the War on Poverty*, 53.

²⁹ Office of Economic Opportunity, "Summary of CAP Missions and Major Policies Draft," p. 1, Box 2, Record Group 381, National Archives Southwest Region, Fort Worth, Texas. Here after the Office of Economic Opportunity will be referred to as the OEO and the National Archives Southwest Region, Fort Worth, Texas will be referred to as NARASW.

CAPs had many different approaches to becoming a Community Action Agency (CAA). One approach could be a public nonprofit organization, such as United Way or a private nonprofit, like a church becoming a CAA and applying for funding to set up different programs throughout the community. Another approach could be becoming an independent or limited purpose agency which was very limited in its approach to poverty with one specific focus. The independent agency could also be established if it could not work with its established CAA due to its limited functions. Most CAA's were required to set up governing or advisory bodies. The exception would be the single body agency, but they were required to meet the other requirements about the poor. These governing or advisory bodies followed the Green Amendment. They also had to "Provide a fair hearing for any representative group of the poor, such as minority racial or ethnic groups, the elderly, rural and migrant families, etc. , which may feel itself inadequately represented in the CAA's governing body, to petition for such representation."³⁰ The petition would then be sent to the OEO regional office for further investigation.³¹

CAAs could use different avenues to apply for funding from the OEO. They could devise their own local program to fit community needs or they could apply using the "national emphasis" funds, which would include national programs such as Head Start.³² This method would be called the building block-approach. "Eighteen months after the Community Action Program was inaugurated over 1,000 CAA's had been

³⁰ OEO, "Summary of CAP Missions and Major Policies Draft," p. 22, Box 2, Record Group 381, NARASW.

³¹ OEO, "Summary of CAP Missions and Major Policies Draft," p. 12-24, Box 2, Record Group 381, NARASW.

³² Clark, *the War on Poverty*, 37.

funded.”³³ Donald M. Baker, who joined OEO in 1964 as general counsel, characterized the system as being “wild” in the sense that many communities had already put together grant applications in hopes that EOA would pass. As a result, OEO was ill prepared for its first batch of grants. Eventually the process was smoothed out with guidelines.³⁴

Texas Joins the Fight

The OEO had very complex beginnings in Texas. William Clayson argued that many key elements affected the front in Texas. First, many War on Poverty programs were more beneficial to urban areas and Texas had a significant rural population that would not benefit as much. The second aspect was the concern of bypassing state government. Governor John Connally felt bypassing state government was unnecessary and bureaucratic. Clayson stated that Republicans exploited the War on Poverty by making the programs seem fiscally unaccountable and a starting point for African American Civil Rights.³⁵ Republicans saw the War on Poverty as an expansion of the Civil Rights movement. Nevertheless, “Once the regional office approved CAP grants, local CAAs handled some \$45 million of the \$60 million granted in Texas in the first full year of the War on Poverty.”³⁶

The Texas OEO functioned under the Southwestern Regional Office of OEO established in Austin. This office also was responsible for OEO functions in Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, and New Mexico. Dr. William Crook was the Regional Director

³³ Levitan, “Community Action Program: A Strategy to Fight Poverty,” 70.

³⁴ Gillette, *Launching the War on Poverty*, 193-194.

³⁵ William Clayson, “Texas Poverty and Liberal Politics: The Office of Economic Opportunity and the War on Poverty in the Lone Star State” (Dissertation, Texas Tech University, 2001), 80-81.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 83-84.

and when he left in 1967 Walter Richter took over. The regional OEO offices were accountable for approving CAP grants which Clayson argued was a perplexing process due to the fact that communities did not know where to send proposals.³⁷ The regional office scrutinized proposals, turning them away for the smallest details.

In *The Texas Front*, the 1966 annual report of Texas OEO, Walter Richter commented that the first nine months of the program “have been the most challenging, exciting, and rewarding of my life.” He also stated that although steps had been taken toward the anti-poverty effort, little could be seen because it was “Too new and its limitations too many for us to be able to point to a massive reduction in poverty in Texas after these few months.”³⁸ The report stated that the Texas OEO had made significant progress in such areas as the “Migrant Division,” “servicing grant applications,” and establishing public awareness toward the War on Poverty. By 1966, the regional office was running at full budget and capacity.³⁹

Texas OEO in the fiscal year 1966 heavily centered itself on the Community Action Program Division. It amassed more consultants to service Texas OEO needs. Texas was divided into eight different regions and these consultants were responsible for their specific region. Texas boasted a lowly ten CAAs covering twelve counties by September 1, 1965. But, by August 31, 1966, Texas had fifty-five established CAAs, covering eighty-eight counties and affecting 70.1 percent of the population, a significant increase from the previous year. The report affirmed on the evidence that at least

³⁷ Clayson, “Texas Poverty and Liberal Politics,” 85-86.

³⁸ Records of OEO, “The Texas Front. . . in the nation’s War on Poverty,” p. 5, Folder Texas OEO Annual Reports 1966,1967, Box 20, Records of the OEO Texas OEO Publications, Lyndon Baines Johnson Library and Museum National Archives and Records Administration, Austin, Texas. Here after the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library and Museum, National Archives and Records Administration will be referred to as LBJ Library.

³⁹ Records of OEO, “The Texas Front. . . in the nation’s War on Poverty” p. 9, Folder Texas OEO Annual Reports 1966,1967, Box 20, Records of the OEO Texas OEO Publications, LBJ Library.

twenty-four communities were either in the planning stages or forming committees to establish CAAs.⁴⁰ “Community Action Agencies in Texas during the 1967 state fiscal year shared in the administration of \$45,654,146 in federal grants.”⁴¹ Acting director Bob Allen commented in the report that no new CAAs could be established in 1967 due to federal budget cuts.

Governor John Connally was the first governor to exercise his veto power under EOA. Connally was always recognized as “Lyndon’s boy,” but the two had a major disagreement over the Civil Rights Act of 1964. To add fuel to the fire, Connally felt that the War on Poverty should be handled by the governor’s office. He felt that the state, in particular the governor, should oversee the distribution of federal funds to action agencies. Upset by his limited power, Connally vetoed a proposal that would have given jobs to migrant farm worker youth. He claimed that the director’s salary seemed elevated. He then vetoed the \$1.25 minimum hourly wage that the enrollees were to receive.

Supporters of the War on Poverty were outraged. Senator Ralph Yarborough, one of Johnson’s closest liberal allies in Texas, pushed for repeal. Yarborough responded to Johnson, stating that TOEO success was due to the state and federal government working together. But Connally would fall short in his attacks due to the 1965 amendment that the OEO director could override the governor’s veto.⁴² After an unsuccessful meeting with Shriver, Connally went to LBJ arguing that education was the

⁴⁰ Records of OEO, “The Texas Front. . . in the nation’s War on Poverty,” p. 11, Folder Texas OEO Annual Reports 1966,1967, Box 20, Records of the OEO Texas OEO Publications, LBJ Library.

⁴¹ Records of OEO, “The Texas Front-1967. . . in the nation’s War on Poverty: 1967 Annual Report of the Texas Office of Economic Opportunity Executive Department,” p. 21 , Folder Texas OEO Annual Reports 1966,1967, Box 20, Records of the OEO Texas OEO Publications, LBJ Library.

⁴² Clayson, “Texas Poverty and Liberal Politics,” 99-102.

key to fighting poverty. "Once they get that, they're going to be in a position to become productive taxpaying citizens of the state."⁴³ Clayson contended that once Connally's veto power was gone, the Texas OEO acted more in assistance to local CAAs, and Connally lost interest.⁴⁴ Ironically, Connally became heavily involved in the Peace Corps in Texas and deserved some credit for its success.⁴⁵

Conclusion

As conservative as the state of Texas was the War on Poverty went full throttle in the state and had success in many urban and rural areas. Remnants of the War on Poverty Programs, such as Head Start and neighborhood centers can still be seen in the present. Critics of the War on Poverty can not argue the success and extended influence of these programs. The next chapter will take a more local approach to the War on Poverty and examine how it originated in Dallas, Texas. It will explain who led the local front and the origins of the Dallas County Community Action Committee (DCCAC). The chapter also examines grants that were put into place by the DCCAC and delegate agencies.

⁴³ Clayson, "Texas Poverty and Liberal Politics," 103.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 104.

⁴⁵ Gillette, *Launching The War on Poverty*, 179.

CHAPTER 3

DALLAS JOINS THE WAR

Evolution Out of the Pieces

Dallas's image was at its nadir after the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. A change in Dallas's political structure was inevitable. Bruce Alger, a strong Dixiecrat and segregationist, had represented the city in the US Congress since 1954. He was very firm in his stance on state's rights and celebrated Robert E. Lee's birthday in true Dixiecrat fashion. He assertively believed that blacks were inferior and was praised when he backed Mississippi for not allowing James Meredith to register at the University of Mississippi in 1962.¹

After the Kennedy assassination, the Dallas elite knew that Alger and his far right approach to politics needed to be replaced by a moderate in order to revive the city's tarnished image. Thus Alger lost the support of R. L. Thornton and other prominent Dallas elites' support. Historian Darwin Payne remarked, "No piece of Alger's legislation, it was pointed out, ever had been passed by Congress."² His opposition to federal support for vital Dallas area projects, such as the Trinity River canalization, convinced former supporters to abandon his cause, and consequently, the Dallas elite decided that Dallas Mayor Earle Cabell (1961-1964) would be the best candidate to unseat Alger, the ten-year incumbent. On February 3, 1964, Cabell resigned as mayor per the city charter so he could run for congress. Cabell

¹ Michael Phillips, *White Metropolis: Race, Ethnicity, and Religion in Dallas, 1841-2001* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2006), 154.

² Darwin Payne, *Big D: Triumphs and Troubles of an American Supercity in the 20th Century* (Dallas: Three Forks Press, 1994), 323.

overwhelmingly beat Alger in the November election and Dallas elites had found a new mayor, Erik Jonsson.³

Erik Jonsson was known for pushing Dallas into a more progressive age as well as changing Dallas's negative public image into a more positive one, which proved difficult in a city awake with embarrassment and tragedy. Jonsson moved to Dallas from New Jersey in 1934 and served as president of Texas Instruments from 1951-1958, during which time he transformed the company into a highly successful national multi-million dollar business. Jonsson is credited with pushing through a \$175 million bond issue, a new city hall, and the Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport.⁴

Historian Robert Fairbanks credited Jonsson with uniting the city under his *Goals for Dallas* plan in 1964. The plan was modeled after President Dwight D. Eisenhower's *Goals for America* and was designed by Dallasites and city experts. It called, "for maximum feasible participation of the city's residents and from the start relied on laymen rather than professional planners."⁵ In June 1966 the mayor held a three-day conference of Dallas citizens and other professionals to create these goals. Some of the usual Dallas elite, such as R. L. Thornton and Stanley Marcus attended. Goals were established by the end of the third day, and a total of ninety-eight goals established. The goals were then proposed and compiled in a book and discussed among different neighborhoods and another sixteen were added to the final count. Many dealt with issues such as transportation or cultural activities.⁶ The goals were set out in phases,

³ Payne, *Big D*, 322-324.

⁴ TI Internal Communications in partnership with Corporate Archives and the TI Strategic Communications Team, *A Tribute To Erik Jonsson: Founder of Texas Instruments, 1901-1995*, (Dallas: Millet the Printer, 1996).

⁵ Robert Fairbanks, *For the City as a Whole: Planning, Politics, and the Public Interest in Dallas* (Columbus: Ohio State University, 1998), 243.

⁶ Gregory Curtis, "Behind the Lines," *Texas Monthly* (August, 1982): 5.

and a diverse group of Dallasites would come together to accomplish them. For example, some of the second-phase, four-point plan included:

Appointment of a task force for each of the 12 sets of goals to develop timetables of action, estimate costs and identify organizations that can help to achieve these goals. An Economic Potentials Study to include a 10-year projection of annual value of goods and services produced in the Dallas area and other economic data. A Community Characteristics Study of the factors that have influenced the growth of Dallas and their probable effect in the future. A citizen information-response program to develop widespread participation in the Goals project beginning with formation of neighborhood committees next month in early 1968.⁷

Jonsson's *Goals for Dallas* were in place during the same period the War on Poverty (WOP) was gearing up in Dallas. Both programs were focused on improving Dallas in every aspect taking into account all of its social classes.

Mayor Jonsson was instrumental in the implementation of the WOP in Dallas. Both Clark and Gillette noted that the program's success in Dallas was partly due to Jonsson's administration. Executive Director of the Dallas County Community Action Committee (DCCAC) Allan L. Maley Jr., coordinator of the Dallas War on Poverty corresponded with Erik Jonsson routinely. For example, on October 17, 1967, he thanked the mayor for his support on the poverty legislation that was in congress. "We are proud to be a part of the team effort to make Dallas an even finer city for all of its citizens."⁸

White flight hit Dallas hard during Mayor Jonsson's term in office. Historian Shirley Achor asserted that by 1973, 100,000 Dallas residents had relocated to the suburbs. "By 1970," noted Achor, "Dallas County suburbs were described as ninety

⁷ Dorothe Erwin, "Second Stage of Goals for Dallas has Begun," *Dallas Morning News*, December 7, 1967.

⁸ J. Erik Jonsson Collection, Letter from Allan Maley to Erik Jonsson, Folder 5, Box 64, Community Action Committee 1966-1968, Southern Methodist University, Dallas, Texas. Here after the J. Erik Jonsson Collection will be referred to as the JEJC; Southern Methodist University will be referred to as SMU.

percent White.”⁹ Cities like Richardson, Farmers Branch, Irving, and Plano began to swell with new citizens, which left a large concentration of minorities and lower-class whites in Dallas proper. This is why Goals for Dallas and the War on Poverty were inviting for the city that had an eroding tax base.¹⁰

Origins in Dallas

Dallas, like many other major metropolitan cities, was run by its elite. The membership of Dallas Citizens Council (DCC) overlapped within the Citizens Charter Association (CCA). During the 1930s, these elites amended the city charter and changed the city from a commission form of government to a council-manager form. “The new city charter, which provided for a nine-member council including three at-large seats, was approved by a two-to-one margin citywide, but only 26 percent of Dallas’ alienated voters bothered to cast ballots.”¹¹ Journalist Philip Seib argued that Dallas was the largest city in the nation to use this form of government. The council-manager form of government is a heavily reliant codependency between elected city council members, including the mayor, and the city manager who is hired afterward by a majority vote of council members. The city manager is responsible for implementing policies and day to day functions that are designed by council members.¹² These elites dominated city government until the late 1960s.¹³ As a result of this form of government, moved slower instead of having a mayor making quick decisions resulting

⁹ Shirley Achor, *Mexican Americans in a Dallas Barrio* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1978), 50.

¹⁰ Payne, *Big D*, 326.

¹¹ Phillips, *White Metropolis*, 136.

¹² Philip Seib, *Dallas: Chasing the Urban Dream* (Dallas: Pressworks Publishing, 1986), 18-19.

¹³ Phillips, *White Metropolis*, 135.

in action.

Major cities within the nation, such as Chicago, immediately sprang into action to deal with the urban poor. Chicago's Mayor Richard Daley had set up an action committee five months prior to LBJ signing the act into law. Daley wanted to be sure that his city would receive its fair share of federal funding.¹⁴ In comparison Dallas leaders, were slow to request help and implement change. "Although Dallas had nearly as many poor citizens as Houston (an estimated 356,000 to 357,000, respectively)," noted historian William Clayson, "Dallas received only \$3.6 million for the fiscal year 1968 compared to the \$13.5 million for Houston."¹⁵ The city proceeded so conservatively that when other programs were expanding, Dallas was becoming established in 1967. Clayson noted that most urban Community Action Agencies (CAAs) were forced to cut their budgets due to funding limitations just as Dallas's programs were becoming established. The poor did not necessarily need convincing on the poverty programs. Affluent Dallasites needed to be persuaded that these programs were necessary for the metropolis.¹⁶

In 1964, the *Dallas Times Herald* ran a series of seven articles that discussed poverty in Dallas. Staff writer Stewart M. Doss decided to give the poor of Dallas County a face just as Harrington had done. Doss and Dallas County Welfare Department workers spoke to the poor about their plight. Doss provided insight through many individual examples such as a forty-year-old mother could not pay a \$2.95 water bill whose landlord was threatening eviction. Or the Dallas man who recycled soft drink

¹⁴ Leila Meier Rice, "In the Trenches of the War on Poverty: The Local Implementation of the Community Action Programs, 1964-1969" (PhD diss., Vanderbilt University, 1997), 143.

¹⁵ William Clayson, "Texas Poverty and Liberal Politics: The Office of Economic Opportunity and the War on Poverty in the Lone Star State" (Dissertation, Texas Tech University, 2001), 89.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 89-90.

bottles for basic toiletries. Even more heart wrenching was the child that lived in a dirty apartment and had to wear oversized clothing.

Go off the beaten path a bit and you can find the real meaning of poverty. Follow one of the expressways. Take almost any turn a quarter-mile or so from downtown and drive a block or two. You're suddenly in the world of the very poor in the shadows of the city.hovels, shacks, lean-tos, whatever you wish to call them. Sometimes rows of them. It is Dallas, make no mistake. Only a few blocks away the familiar skyscrapers of the big, bustling city pierce the sky. And these shacks. People really live in them. Old folks and young, too, appearing just as weary as the dwellings, stare out silently.¹⁷

In his final article about poverty, Doss posed the question, "Does Dallas really care about its thousands of poor and unfortunate?"¹⁸ He concluded that Dallas was somewhat unaware of the poverty problem and preferred to help the poor through the private sector, e.g. church donations, rather than through government aid. For instance, Dallas voted down public housing. Doss's articles, which were transformed into a pamphlet by the Greater Dallas Planning Council, clearly called for action against poverty within the city.¹⁹

Notably, the conservative *Dallas Morning News* recognized the Economic Opportunity Act (EOA) as a measure that could rescue poor Dallasites in 1964, "A community action plan for Dallas would embrace numerous programs in the fields of education welfare[,] and health."²⁰ The newspaper endorsed education as Dallas's weapon of choice in the WOP, which would be utilized through an increase in the city's social worker force, tutorial programs for students, establishment of nursery schools, and providing poor children with field trips. Their modus operandi, however, indicated a

¹⁷ Stewart M .Doss, "Poverty and Dallas," poverty series phamplet, *Dallas Times Herald*, 1964.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Dennis Hoover, "Act Could Fill Gap in Dallas Programs to Rescue Poor," *Dallas Morning News*, November 13, 1964.

slow, conservative approach to a widespread set of social problems.²¹

Fortunately, Dallas was also taking steps toward helping the elderly and the poor with housing standards. Dallas wanted to work on more vocational training and the hiring of minorities. Also, in 1964, the city had formed a commission called the Greater Dallas Coordination Commission for Community Improvement. The commission had twenty-five members and served as an “Out-growth of slum studies by the City Council-sponsored Potter Committee.”²² The head of the commission was Dr. Willis M. Tate, president of Southern Methodist University, and included prominent members of society such as the mayor, the county judge, and leaders of various social agencies.²³ This commission originated at the request of a civil panel headed by Les T. Potter, a utility executive. Potter had studied Dallas slums and the new commission headed by Tate would be formed to “Coordinate Dallas’ improvement efforts.”²⁴ Potter strongly believed that the commission would successfully utilize the EOA to find possibilities for ending poverty in Dallas. Other cities in Texas such as San Antonio and Houston were ahead of Dallas in the WOP. These cities had already drafted and were applying for community action grants.²⁵

By April 5, 1965, county leaders met to organize the War on Poverty Administration. Terrell Blodgett, director of the Texas Office of Economic Opportunity, (TOEO) and Dr. Fred Baldwin from the Community Action Programs (CAP) national

²¹ Hoover, “Act Could Fill Gap.”

²² Ibid

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

office addressed the group about community action and service to the community.²⁶

The leaders were to organize the newly formed DCCAC. The meeting was designed to:

1. select an executive committee of about nine members.
2. nominate a permanent chairman for the Community Action Committee (CAC) to coordinate projects under the Economic Opportunity Act.
3. nominate additional persons for membership on the CAC who may be specially helpful in the antipoverty projects.
4. Select a legal committee to draw up a corporate charter.²⁷

CAC met again on May 18 to ratify nominations. The committee of seven consisted of prominent members of society such as Robert Folsom, the president of the Dallas Independent School District and Allan L. Maley, Jr., secretary of the Dallas AFL-CIO Council. Even though the poverty programs had barely moved beyond their genesis in Dallas, progress emerging.²⁸

The DCCAC was fully established by August 1965, with Allan L. Maley, Jr. elected Executive Director. Maley had been secretary of the Dallas AFL-CIO since 1958. Prior to that, he was a labor representative for the Texas Employment Commission in Austin.²⁹ Russ Delatour was Assistant Director. Delatour was a former Dallas County juvenile worker with degrees in social science and psychology. Bob McCulloch became the Program Development Coordinator; he had a master's degree in social work from the University of Texas at Austin (UT) and was a state parole officer. Randolph H. Ratliff, who held a bachelor's degree from Prairie View A&M and a master's degree from UT, became the neighborhood development coordinator. Ratliff also He was a former school teacher and probation officer. Spencer Michlin found a

²⁶ Note: Terrell Boldgett was the Administrative Assistant to John B. Connally from December 1964-January 1969. He was initially the first director of TOEO. For more information see <<http://www.utexas.edu/lbj/faculty/terrell-blodgett/>> (April 23, 2008).

²⁷ Gene Ormsby, "County Set to Pull Anti-Poverty Oar," *Dallas Morning News*, April 5, 1965.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ "Unionist to Head Poverty War Here," Vertical Files: War on Poverty, Dallas Public Library.

job with DCCAC as the public education and information coordinator. Michlin graduated from the University of New Hampshire. The Dallas native was also a teacher in an adult literacy program, Operation LIFT (Literacy Instruction for Texas). These men made up a critical part of the thirteen-person professional staff of the DCCAC. This core group held multiple degrees in public service as well as experience working in the public and private sectors of public administration. In the *Dallas Times Herald*, Maley boasted that his organization “moved slowly and carefully.”³⁰

The DCCAC prided itself on having a local focus; therefore, the board of DCCAC included 150 members of the community. These members represented different social classes from social workers to housewives. Some of these citizens were elected by community members to represent their area, while others were appointed by the DCCAC. For instance, Maley proudly reported to the *Times Herald* that over 300 people showed up to the mass meeting at Elmer Scott Place, a housing project in West Dallas, to elect a member to the DCCAC board. Martin Ríos, an auto painter, was elected to the board.

Public elections were a means for all Dallasites to participate in community action programs. The board president was Dallas attorney William Collins and Maley served as the board’s facilitator.³¹ In meeting minutes of the DCCAC indicated that the organization was making headway in the organizational phase to mobilize community action. The meeting held on April 14, 1966, included business such as re-electing corporate officers, adding more representatives from target areas, and creating subcommittees such as the Employment Opportunities and Training Resources

³⁰ Jim Lehrer, “War on Poverty: No Miracles, but Progress,” *The Dallas Times Herald*, July 24, 1966.

³¹ Ibid.

Subcommittee. The board discussed new grant applications that were approved, such as the Supplementary Health Services for the Adult Basic Education classes that would be conducted by the Dallas Independent School District. This program received funding in the amount of \$14,166 to provide citizens who attended classes with dental work, hearing aids, and glasses. Another application that was approved was a Day Care Center for Grand Prairie run by St. John Baptist Church. It provided assistance to fifty-five children who were from low income families. "It will allow their mothers to work while trained teachers provide the children with cultural enrichment."³²

The DCCAC discussed pending grant applications such as the legal services application. This proposed program would function through Southern Methodist University Law School, and would supply the poor with free criminal and civil legal assistance. The DCCAC requested a federal grant for \$429,622, which would keep the program functional for one year. Further expenses were supplemented through donations made by attorneys, rental space, and so forth, the total of which was estimated at \$47,735. This program also helped establish legal-aid clinics in target areas. Another pending application was the Bishop College programs that would provide a Remedial Enhancement Program for 300 high school graduates to be better prepared for entering college. An additional pending grant at the college would provide a remedial program for the teachers that would help them better prepare students.³³

On July 22, 1966, OEO granted federal funding to Bishop College to fund their summer programs. The federal grant was issued in the amount of \$166,265 for 300 disadvantaged high school students. "The students were selected from twelve high

³² "From the Front Line of The War on Poverty," JEJC, April 25, 1966, Folder 5, Box 64, Community Action Committee 1966-1968, SMU, Dallas, Texas.

³³ Ibid.

schools which serve 31 Dallas County census tracts, which include the most impoverished areas of the city.”³⁴ This program was designed to help students increase scores on college entrance exams and to increase academic performance for their first year of college. Forty-nine college employees were to conduct the program. The funds were administered through DCCAC.³⁵

The DCCAC had information sheets that described community action for Dallas and its citizens. DCCAC was considered a private nonprofit organization. Dallas defined community action as citizens working together to elevate the lives of the city as a whole. “It is neither an extension of Welfare, nor a training ground for revolt. But it is like a box of tools made available to communities to use where they will do the most good.”³⁶ DCCAC wanted to “build bridges” between the classes, public and private sectors, so its citizens could become “self-sufficient and productive.”³⁷ Dallasites that were on the battle grounds of poverty were going to be the pivotal factors in the success of community action.³⁸ DCCAC encouraged community action through different avenues like helping children through Head Start or using the Neighborhood Service Center to provide a focal point to rally the community for poverty efforts. The New Careers program provided citizens the opportunity to enter a field at an entry level such as a nurse’s aide or teacher’s aide.³⁹

Dallas used a “broad base” to reach out to the community. In 1966 the *Times Herald* commented that it was too early to see any type of progress implemented by the

³⁴ OEO Johnson Library, Program Development-TENN. 2/26/68 –Program Development Wyoming, Roll number, Dup. 30, microfilm.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ “Dallas County Community Action Committee, INC. Information Sheet,” Vertical Files: War on Poverty, Dallas Public Library.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

DCCAC but still the newspaper remained hopeful. The DCCAC only operated one major poverty program out of its office, the new neighborhood development project. This project was headed by Ratliff and was still in the developmental stages. Maley strongly believed that the neighborhood development project would be the “heart” of the poverty programs in Dallas. Other programs such as the Neighborhood Youth Corps programs operated by private nonprofits in Dallas served as delegate agencies to the DCCAC. Other delegate programs in Dallas included the work-study programs implemented by Southern Methodist University and Bishop College. Both of these programs were established and operational before DCCAC. Some citizens in the area wanted instant results within their neighborhoods. “People are impatient. They want to know why they haven’t got this or that in their neighborhood. Others in the—let’s call it the affluent community—who are supporting us want to know why we aren’t eliminating poverty any faster.”⁴⁰ Maley and Collins both agreed moving slowly and creating sound programs would lead to greater key successes in Dallas.⁴¹ In July 1966, Maley was nominated to serve as the President of the Texas Association of CAP Directors. This association was completely independent of the TOEO and would set up workshops and different events to help other programs run effectively.⁴²

The Texas Office of Economic Opportunity (TOEO) published a newsletter called *The Texas Front* about the War on Poverty in Texas. The section entitled “Trench Talk” was written by Regional Director Walter Richter. Richter praised the acceptance of

⁴⁰ Jim Lehrer, “War on Poverty: No Miracles, but Progress,” *The Dallas Times Herald*, July 24, 1966.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² Records of OEO, “The Texas Front . . . in the nation’s War on Poverty” No. 3, Vol. 1, Folder Texas OEO-The Texas Front, Box 20 Records of the OEO Texas OEO Publications, Lyndon Baines Johnson Library and Museum National Archives and Records Administration, Austin, Texas. Here after the Lyndon Baines Library will be referred to as the LBJ Library and the National Archives and Records Administration will be referred to as NARA.

EOA among conservative Dallasites. He felt that the DCCAC understood the concept of training and education that would help the poor out of their unfortunate circumstances. Richter supported Maley's efforts as well as using a broad-based board of individuals to really spotlight target areas. Dallas was praised for its deliberate community advances by not creating hostile feelings among the poor.⁴³

OEO approved many of the Dallas areas federal grant in fiscal year 1966. For instance, on June 23, 1966, OEO released a statement that DCCAC was approved for a grant in the amount of \$222,947 that would organize twenty-five self-help programs in target areas in Dallas. This grant funded small neighborhood meetings that elected representatives to serve on the DCCAC board. Five professionals directed the project and twenty-five neighborhood aides were employed to service low-income areas. Another grant that was released on the same day was the \$70,532 grant to fund a special library and nurseries for the poor families enrolled in the Adult Basic Education courses. Two thousand parents and around 400 children were affected by this grant. One of its goals was to bring books to the unfortunate by providing bookmobile services as well as reading material suitable to the needs of the citizens. The nursery was implemented to care for children while their parents were at the basic education courses. The children were expected to receive basic experiences through song and picture books. Teacher aides from poverty neighborhoods operated the program.⁴⁴

The May 21, 1966, DCCAC meeting summary expressed concern about the fiscal year 1967 provisions that would put restrictions on where money could be

⁴³ Records of OEO, "The Texas Front. . . in the nation's War on Poverty" No. 3, Vol. 1, Folder Texas OEO-The Texas Front, Box 20, Records of the OEO Texas OEO Publications, LBJ Library and NARA, Austin, Texas.

⁴⁴ OEO Johnson Library, Program Development-TENN. 2/26/68 –Program Development Wyoming, Roll number, Dup. 30, microfilm.

allocated throughout the community. EOA was reauthorized but OEO received smaller appropriations than requested, it therefore had to reduce community action funding. “An annual appropriation of approximately \$300 million could not accomplish miracles, especially when it was distributed to nearly two thousand grantee organizations around the country.”⁴⁵ President Johnson had shifted his focus from the war on the home front to the Vietnam War. The bulk of federal funding was devoted to national CAPs such as Operation Head Start, legal services, and job training and public job employment. Before the budget passed DCACC President William Collins commented that the DCACC would be hindered by this. He strongly felt that “maximum feasible participation” of the poor would suffer in Dallas. Nevertheless, the DCCAC continued with its programs and service to the poor.⁴⁶

On May 6, 1966, the DCCAC opened a Small Business Development Center. The goals of the center included screening applicants for the small Business Administration economic opportunity loans.⁴⁷ Low income citizens are allowed to apply for the loans at a low interest.⁴⁸ The center gave small business owners management advice. The center worked with the group Service Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE). SCORE was a group of local retired businessmen who were able to advise applicants who had financial problems. The center received federal funding of \$49,905 from OEO. Helping these small business owners gave them the tools needed to boost the economy in their target areas. U.S. Representative Earle Cabell, former Dallas

⁴⁵ Robert F. Clark, *The War on Poverty: History, Selected Programs and Ongoing Impact* (Oxford: University Press of America, 2002), 59.

⁴⁶ “From the Front Line of The War on Poverty,” March 21, 1966, pp. 1-2, JEJC, Folder 5, Box 64, Community Action Committee 1966-1968, SMU, Dallas, Texas.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 4-5.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

mayor, was the honored guest at this opening. He praised the DCCAC during the ceremonies. "If every Community Action Agency operated with the thoroughness, competence and honesty of the Dallas County Community Action Committee, there would not exist the unfortunate criticism that now jeopardizes the entire CAP program."⁴⁹ The DCCAC would earn constant accolades by Cabell. Cabell wrote a letter to Congress praising the DCCAC while criticizing other programs that were directly sponsored by OEO or the Labor Department. He strongly emphasized that CAP supervision should be handled locally through citizens instead of federal supervision. Cabell commented on Dallas being extremely thorough with expenses. At the same time, he accused federally funded programs of being unmonitored which could lead to "payroll padding" and bad recordkeeping.⁵⁰

The DCCAC met with the acting chief of the Community Services Division of OEO, Miles Hollister. Hollister spoke to the board about setting up neighborhood centers. These centers had two main functions: "It enables you to deliver services where the people are, and it provides a place where the people can help themselves."⁵¹ Neighborhood centers functioned under a neighborhood board with operating committees of citizens from the neighborhood. Professionals and neighborhood residents would administer the centers and could offer services that would be beneficial to the neighborhood.⁵² Dallas along with fourteen other cities submitted proposals for multi-purpose neighborhood centers in low-income areas. The agencies involved in the

⁴⁹ "From the Front Line of The War on Poverty," March 21, 1966, pp. 4-5, JEJC, Folder 5, Box 64, Community Action Committee 1966-1968, SMU, Dallas, Texas.

⁵⁰ Karen Klinefelter, "Dallas Community Programs Draw Praise from Cabell," *Dallas Morning News*, July 24, 1966.

⁵¹ "From the Front Line of The War on Poverty," March 21, 1966, p. 6, JEJC, Folder 5, Box 64, Community Action Committee 1966-1968, SMU, Dallas, Texas.

⁵² Ibid.

pilot program included: Department of Labor, Department of Health, Education and Welfare (HEW), Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and the OEO. These departments worked together to develop a program to benefit neighborhoods in need. The purpose for these centers was to:

Develop better methods for linking existing and new programs into a comprehensive and integrated neighborhood system for delivery of health, social, manpower, educational, recreational, legal, and other community services to families and individuals; initiate a cooperative intergovernmental effort to pool the resources and knowledge of city, State, and Federal agencies in assisting neighborhoods; develop procedures for combining the efforts of four Federal operating agencies into an integrated team to work with neighborhood, city and State agencies.⁵³

Dallas joined the ranks with other major cities like New York and Washington, DC to develop neighborhood programs suited to the community's needs. Each federal department provided monetary support to the centers and OEO's grant to Dallas would not exceed \$150,000. Dallas received federal funding for the neighborhood center buildings with a HUD grant reservation of \$1,182,932. This money was to start a center to help parents and children. Dallas received another grant from OEO of the maximum \$10,000. HUD gave Dallas an open space land grant in the amount of \$103,283. Dallas also received a \$27,000 vocational rehabilitation grant from HEW.⁵⁴

Dallas established five neighborhood centers across the city, each of which catered to the need of individual neighborhoods. South Dallas Neighborhood Center was located on 6204 Bexar Street. This neighborhood center offered services such as ballet and modeling for girls, food transportation for the elderly, and community organization meetings. The East Dallas Neighborhood Center at 1526 Haskell Avenue

⁵³ OEO Johnson Library, Program Development-TENN. 2/26/68 –Program Development Wyoming, Roll number, Dup. 30, microfilm.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

had a girls club, manpower skills and training, and storytelling for tots. The North Dallas Neighborhood Center located on 3212 Cochran Street offered athletic programs, a library recreation room, and a Senior Citizens' Club. The Oak Cliff Neighborhood Center at 1610 Eighth Street at Corinth offered arts and crafts, employment interview training, and film programs. The West Dallas Neighborhood Center offered language classes in English, tutoring, and sewing. All of these centers offered services in finding a job and job training, Head Start, and legal services.⁵⁵

In the September 1966 newsletter *From the Front Line of the War on Poverty*, the DCCAC board of directors approved a budget for the coming fiscal year of \$380,701. Of this total, \$43,800 derived from contributions made by Dallasites. The rest of the approved budget included items such as travel expenses of \$20,744, and space costs of \$59,000. The executive committee also approved a raise for Maley from \$17,500 to \$20,000. Maley declined the raise on the basis that Congress and Dallasites were questioning whether poverty and the War in Vietnam could be fought. Maley believed that both wars were necessary and all DCCAC staff had to make sacrifices. Although Maley seemed heartfelt in his letter to William Collins, he also added that the three per cent raise would not even cover the rising cost of living.⁵⁶

Maley also focused DCCAC on rural poverty. He attended a conference in DC about how to fight rural poverty in February 1967. Maley strongly believed that the urban and rural poor were linked in "many cities, including Dallas, the growing number

⁵⁵ Community Action Neighborhood Centers, Vertical Files: War on Poverty, Dallas Public Library.

⁵⁶ "From the Front Line of The War on Poverty," March 21, 1966, pp. 1-3, JEJC, Folder 5, Box 64, Community Action Committee 1966-1968, SMU, Dallas, Texas.

of poor has been enlarged by a steady influx of people from nearby rural areas.”⁵⁷

Maley argued that the rural migrants in the city lacked training and education and they might be worse off than in the city. He believed that these new residents needed training and education to be successful citizens.

Dallas was making strong headway in fighting the War on Poverty in 1966. CAPs in Dallas started off very cautiously but proceeded to create programs that were beneficial to the poor in Dallas. DCCAC was receiving high praise from leaders across the nation. As the 1960s progressed, and the struggle for civil rights for minorities seemed to be the focal point on the homefront, what happened to Dallas after 1967 in regards to its poverty programs and minorities? Did members of the community feel that they were receiving a fair share of the poverty federal funding? The next chapter will explore how African Americans and Mexican Americans perceived the DCCAC and its implementation of federal funding. This chapter will also explore how the DCCAC began to unravel and eventually met its demise.

⁵⁷ “From the Front Line of The War on Poverty,” February 1967, p. 1, JEJC, Folder 5, Box 64, Community Action Committee 1966-1968, SMU, Dallas, Texas.

CHAPTER 4
COMMUNITY ACTION AND RACE IN DALLAS

A Changing Nation

By 1968 Lyndon Baines Johnson had pushed through more legislation dealing with civil rights than any other president before him. In addition to the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Voting Rights Act of 1965, his administration had created social welfare programs such as Medicaid, Head Start, and federal aid for college students. The administration's success, however, would soon be overshadowed by criticism from both poor people and minorities on the one hand, and conservatives on the other, all of whom criticized so-called erratic poverty spending. John McWilliams argued that the "Great Society gains were soon offset by conservatives who opposed high expenditures for poverty programs and many unemployed and economically depressed black Americans who became frustrated with the uneven application of Johnson's civil rights initiatives."¹ The late 1960s reflected resentment among minorities that would further test the nation's social boundaries.²

To add to the rising hostilities, the Johnson Administration had steadily increased American involvement in Vietnam since 1964. By the end of 1967, approximately 500,000 American troops were stationed there and total war expenses were rising above \$30 billion.³ That summer, riots broke out in black urban areas of cities such as Cleveland and Detroit, and that winter the controversial movie *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner?* made its debut. By 1968 students across college campuses were chanting

¹ John McWilliams, *The 1960s Cultural Revolution* (London: Greenwood Press, 2000), 5.

² *Ibid.*, 5

³ *Ibid.*, 7.

“Hey, hey, LBJ., how many kids did you kill today?”⁴ College student free speech movements spread like wildfire from California to New York. On April 4, 1968, Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated in Memphis, Tennessee, while supporting a garbage worker’s strike. One hundred cities such as New York and Chicago rioted as a result of King’s assassination. A few months later, campaigning for the Democratic primary in California, Robert F. Kennedy was assassinated. In 1969 California Governor Ronald Reagan suppressed an antiwar protest at the University California-Berkeley by using a powder agent that the US used against the Vietcong in Vietnam. Reagan’s actions became a catalyst for his presidential bid in the 1980 election.⁵

The 1950s and 1960s also saw increasing mobilization among Mexican Americans in the United States. Mexican American organizations such as the American GI Forum and LULAC (League of United Latin American Citizens) were changing their focus from “Americanization” to maintenance of their cultural heritage. By the late 1950s, argued historian David Gutiérrez, political ideology was changing among Mexican American groups. The Political Association of Spanish Speaking Organizations, established in Texas in 1960, was one of the first to discard “Americanization” in favor of their native culture and language.⁶ As Operation Wetback⁷ (1954-1958) deported millions of Mexican nationals in the Southwest-- disrupting Mexican American families, businesses, and neighborhoods--a landmark case for Mexican Americans, *Hernández v. Texas* (1954), “gave activists ammunition

⁴ McWilliams, *The 1960s Cultural Revolution*, 41.

⁵ *Ibid.*, xxix-xxxv.

⁶ David Gutiérrez, *Walls and Mirrors: Mexican Americans, Mexican Immigrants and the Politics of Ethnicity* (Los Angeles: University of California Press), 181.

⁷ The author does not accept this derogatory term in any instance. The term is used strictly on the basis of the term that was used in 1954.

for their contention that Mexican Americans, as a group suffered unconstitutional discrimination.”⁸ This view was also endorsed by the US Supreme Court, which gave Mexican American males the right to serve on juries as a result of the case.

By the mid-1960s Mexican Americans had decided to act upon their age-old frustration with their lack of education, widespread discrimination, and limited economic resources. Inspired by the United Farm Workers Union (UFW) leader César Chávez, Mexican American students grew impatient waiting for social change. In 1967 and 1968 Mexican American students had walked out of schools in the Southwest including Texas. A new identity called the Chicano⁹ Movement was in motion.¹⁰ The same year, Mexican American Youth Organization (MAYO) was formed on several Texas college campuses. Rodolfo “Corky” Gonzales was appointed Director of the War on Poverty in Denver, Colorado. The next year Gonzales was fired and he formed the Crusade for Justice in Denver to mobilize Mexican American youth.

Jacob Rodríguez, the executive secretary-manager of the San Antonio Mexican Chamber of Commerce, Inc., wrote US Senator Ralph Yarborough about the constant exclusion of Mexican Americans at civil rights conferences. Yarborough spoke on the floor of the US Senate about the exclusion of Mexican Americans and American Indians during these conferences. Yarborough recommended a conference to protect all minority civil rights. The senator corresponded on June 22, 1966, with Rodríguez about

⁸ Julie Pycior, *LBJ & Mexican Americans: The Paradox of Power* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1997), 94

⁹ The term Chicano is in no way derogatory of Mexican Americans. Gutiérrez argued that the term was used to mean “Pride and Cultural heritage” such as the shift from Negro to black. See David Gutiérrez, *Walls and Mirrors*, 184

¹⁰ Gutiérrez, *Walls and Mirrors*, 183-184.

the problem of discrimination within the War on Poverty, and requested that a forum take place to address these issues.¹¹

Another organization emerged in 1967. Founder David Sánchez called it the Brown Berets. It was a “militant youth group that protested educational neglect and police brutality; it had strong links to the community and local East Los Angeles high-school students.”¹² The Chicano Movement was in full force by 1970 with the Chicano Moratorium convened peacefully at Laguna Park, California, attended by over 20,000 people. The rally ended with police brutality against protesters and the death of reporter Rubén Salazar who was shot in the head by a tear-gas projectile at the Silver Dollar Bar in Los Angeles.¹³

By 1970 Texas had conducted an investigation on civil rights and minorities and, as a result, brought together a committee of Texas citizens to become the Texas State Advisory Committee to the United States Commission of Civil Rights. Committee members served without compensation and were versed in civil rights matters within the state. The methodology used for research included open and closed forums across Texas, interviews, reports from studies from the University of Texas and the US Economic Opportunity Community Profiles. The advisory committee reported directly to the United States Commission on Civil Rights.¹⁴ Within the report the committee concluded that:

¹¹ Jacob Rodríguez correspondence with Ralph Yarborough, Jacob I. Rodríguez Collection, Folder 3, General Correspondence, Box 1, Benson Latin American Collection, University of Texas at Austin, Texas.

¹² F. Arturo Rosales, *Chicano! The History of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement* (Houston: Arte Público Press, 1991), 175.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 282.

¹⁴ “Civil Rights in Texas: A Report of the Texas Advisory Committee To the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights,” February 1970, Juanita Craft Collection, Folder 4, Box 20, Dallas Public Library.

Definitive evidence exists that black and Mexican American citizens of Texas suffer discrimination in the administration of the law. This is particularly so in rural areas of the State. Even clearer, and perhaps even more important in its possible consequences, is the evidence that minority citizens tend to regard those who administrate the law – including police officers, the courts, and correctional officials – as agents of discrimination and oppression.¹⁵

The committee also suggested that law enforcement was making significant efforts to curtail such abuses but brutal practices remained. Both the Texas Department of Public Safety and the Texas Rangers were specifically mentioned as organizations that both employed few Mexican Americans and practiced brutality against Mexican American suspects. To curtail such discrimination, the committee advised that state and local law enforcement personnel receive training in human relations and the state more aggressively recruit minorities for law enforcement positions.¹⁶ They also advised that the Texas Rangers as a law enforcement agency be abolished.

From a national perspective the nation was changing and open racial discrimination would no longer be tolerated. The assassination of prominent public figures only added to the turmoil. Consequently, minorities called for equal civil and economic rights, for which a national consensus was slower to develop. Were Community Action Programs (CAP) making a difference in minorities' lives in Dallas? Were they getting their piece of the pie? This next chapter will examine race relations and CAP in Dallas. The chapter also includes the CAP conflicts and civil action suit that minorities filed against the organization.

Texas/Dallas History and Archives, Dallas, Texas. Here after the Juanita Craft Collection will be referred to as JCC and the Dallas Public Library Texas/Dallas History and Archives will be referred to as DPL.

¹⁵ JCC, "Civil Rights in Texas: A Report of the Texas Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights," February 1970, Folder 4, Box 20, DPL, Dallas, Texas.

¹⁶ JCC, "Civil Rights in Texas: A Report of the Texas Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights," February 1970, pp. 46-48, Folder 4, Box 20, DPL, Dallas, Texas.

Race and Community Action

The War on Poverty and CAP was enjoying great success in Dallas, but it operated in a climate of fear. The poor were rioting, in urban areas throughout the country, upset with economic inequalities and mistreatment. Rioting in the cities of Newark and Detroit caused a great deal of property loss, looting, and fire damage. Although other stimuli played a part in the mobilization of the urban poor, such as police brutality, the blame was placed heavily on the War on Poverty programs. The fear of riots caused conservative cities like Dallas to take measures toward preventing such events. Dallas County Community Action Program (DCCAC) Executive Director Allan Maley sent out a memo to the city council stating that a riot prevention plan needed to be drawn up and city police would be further trained in negotiation. Maley commented, "I am not a 'calamity howler' and I am not looking for any ghosts but I do feel that the situation is such that if we do nothing, we may have trouble."¹⁷ Dallas would not see a riot until 1973 when the African American and Mexican American communities protested police brutality in the city.

DCCAC Executive Director Allan Maley came under fire in 1968. A teacher, Doris Ingram, who worked in the New Careers Program, spoke to the city council about how Maley had mismanaged the program and wanted it to be transferred to a different agency in Dallas. It soon became clear that some members of the DCCAC were trying to get rid of Maley as executive director. Ingram had strong words for Maley stating that "Of the War on Poverty as a whole, we can only say that we know it stopped being a

¹⁷Memo to City Council from Allan Maley, July 27, 1967, Folder 5, Box 64, Community Action Committee, 1966-1968, J. Erik Jonsson Collection, Southern Methodist University, Dallas, Texas. Here after the J. Erik Jonsson Collection will be referred to as JEJC and Southern Methodist University will be referred to as SMU.

community action project a long time ago – if it ever was. It has become the rigidly controlled private empire of Allan Maley.”¹⁸ Maley was under heavy fire. Several members of the DCCAC called for Maley’s resignation, which Maley refused to do. Macario Martínez and other members complained about Maley’s broken promises, specifically concerning the issue of the use of Ledbetter School in the Irving Independent School District as a neighborhood center. They said Maley had never contacted the district to inform them of the school’s use in that capacity and argued that Maley had given them misinformation for three consecutive years and mismanaged funds.¹⁹ The group threatened to picket Maley’s office and by May had done so, calling for his resignation.²⁰ Maley was accused of inflating salaries including his and that of his administration, which were subsequently decreased, and the original DCCAC board composed of 150 members was reduced to fifty-one members. After all these changes, Maley handed in his resignation and took a vice-presidential position at VanCronkhite and Maloy, Inc., a public relations firm.²¹ The next director of the DCCAC was the first African American to head the agency, Earnest L. Wallace. Wallace was already employed with OEO in Washington D.C., held a master’s degree from North Texas State University, and was a former school teacher and principal.²²

The African American elite in Dallas and white Dallasites had a significant effect on race relations within the city. As a result of working very conservatively and slowly Dallas did not experience the impact of direct action, which was a factor in the

¹⁸ “Poverty War Staffer Raps Maley, DCCAC,” JEJC, Folder 5, Box 64, Community Action Committee 1966-1968, SMU, Dallas, Texas.

¹⁹ Robert Finka, “Maley’s Ouster Demanded,” *Dallas Morning News*, May 3, 1968.

²⁰ “Impatient Pickets,” *Dallas Morning News*, May 4, 1968.

²¹ David Morgan, “Maley Quits Poverty War Unit,” *Dallas Morning News*, June 21, 1968.

²² David Morgan, “Selection Made for Poverty Job,” *Dallas Morning News*, September 6, 1968.

escalation of discontent among minorities in the 1970s. The DCCAC was comprised of a diverse executive board, all of whom were rich and/or powerful Dallasites; black, white, and brown.

The DCCAC newsletter, *From the Front Line of the War on Poverty*, had a spotlight section where different members would be highlighted. In May 21, 1966, issue Dr. Milton K. Curry was highlighted. Dr. Curry was the President of Bishop College, served as the Vice President of the DCCAC, and received multiple degrees including a law and divinity degree. Mrs. Charles Marcus was highlighted in the same issue. Marcus was the former President of the Dallas section of the National Council of Jewish Women. She held a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of California at Berkeley. She was also involved in Operation LIFT (Literacy Instruction for Texas).²³ Another prominent citizen was highlighted in the September 1966 issue named Mrs. Juanita Craft. Craft had been a grass-roots activist in Dallas for twenty-five years. She was actively involved in the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), and also participated in the White House Conferences on Civil Rights three times. Although Craft did not have the elite education of many of the directors, she was considered an elite activist of the African American community in Dallas.²⁴ With such an elite staff, the War on Poverty in Dallas should have been successful in helping the poor and minorities within the city. But were these elite Dallasites too focused in the bureaucracy to help the poor?

The War on Poverty drew a critical response among the poor as well as

²³ "From the Front Line of The War on Poverty," May 21, 1966, JEJC, Folder 5, Box 64, Community Action Committee 1966-1968, SMU, Dallas, Texas.

²⁴ "From the Front Line of The War on Poverty," September 1966, JEJC, Folder 5, Box 64, Community Action Committee 1966-1968, SMU, Dallas, Texas.

minorities. Willis V. Johnson, an African American, was the Director of the Neighborhood Service Center on Bexar Street in South Dallas. Johnson, who earned a Bachelor of Science from Wiley College, stressed that the poverty program was not a “hand-out” but a “hand up” program. Citizens, argued Johnson, needed to be encouraged to come to neighborhood meetings in order to benefit fully from the programs and provide discussion that was so essential for their success. He specifically cited a female citizen who had seven children living in a two-bedroom apartment, and believed that poverty programs would not help her and her family. Johnson’s position was that they could give her the necessary tools to help herself and help her find better housing.²⁵ African Americans were drawing a critical response in the DCCAC. Some citizens were upset with the hiring of controversial African Americans causing these DCCAC employees to resign from their positions or face heavy scrutiny from many Dallasites.

African American, Charles Paul Henderson, resigned from his community organizer post because of his previous association with African American militant groups. Henderson was linked to such groups as the Students for a Non-Violent Society and the Black Panthers. Henderson voluntarily resigned from his position pending a “satisfactory” review from the proper authorities. Executive Director Ernest Wallace explained that only personal references were checked during the hiring process.²⁶

To add to hostile community sentiment in 1969, a storm of controversy surrounded the hiring of, Ruth Jefferson, as a community organizer at the West Dallas

²⁵ Julia Scott Reed, “The Open Line: Poverty War No Handout,” *Dallas Morning News*, July 18, 1968, 5-AA.

²⁶ “Step Aside: Poverty Worker Asks for Probe,” *Dallas Times Herald*, November 27, 1969.

center. The claim was that Jefferson was not qualified for the position. The *Dallas Morning News* reported, “A desire for self-destruction, along with a chronic disregard for public opinion, seems to have overtaken the Dallas Community Action board in the wake of the Ruth Jefferson incident, which has angered and disgusted a majority of county residents.”²⁷ Jefferson had been convicted of shoplifting in California, a misdemeanor. Her record was eventually cleared and she was employed at the center under a ninety-day probation period, which was supported by the DCCAC.²⁸ Two county representatives took their concerns to the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) in Washington, D.C. After investigation, OEO supported the DCCAC in hiring Jefferson.²⁹ As a result, Dallas County Commissioner Mel Price resigned from the DCCAC board, stating that this was the final issue to cause him to quit. Price believed that the DCCAC was committing other atrocities such as buying “expensive video equipment, expensive carpets, and drapes.”³⁰

Journalist Julia Scott Reed covered the Jefferson incident in the *Dallas Morning News*. Reed stated that the situation set a “wedge” between the two races. She commented that the African American community had not been as “polarized” since the community bombings. Dominant society felt that Jefferson was unqualified and intervened to have her removed from her positions. On the other hand, blacks felt that “They’ll take ‘Whitey’ to task for interfering and shower Mrs. Jefferson with their

²⁷ “The Future of DCA,” *Dallas Morning News*, December 3, 1969.

²⁸ Anita Martínez Collection, “Statement Concerning the Dallas County Community Action Committee, Inc.,” November 24, 1969, Folder 5, Box 19, City Council 1969-1970, Texas/Dallas History and Archives Division Dallas Public Library, Dallas, Texas. Here after the Anita Martinez Collection will be referred to as AMC.

²⁹ Henry Tatum, “Despite Controversy Poverty Agency Still at Work,” *Dallas Morning News*, November 30, 1969.

³⁰ “Mel Price Quits Poverty Board,” *Dallas Times Herald*, November 25, 1969.

blessings.”³¹ Racial tensions were rising since this incident and more Dallasites were critical of the program. Dallasites discussed issues in their neighborhood at DCCAC meetings,. Juanita Craft commented that the money was not reaching her community. Another citizen, Walter Brown, called the poverty money a “drip” by the time it reached the poor. Don Johnson commented that the programs used to uplift did not work and the poverty programs dismissed the “black man’s pride.”³²

The West community center received negative publicity for an incident that involved. Mexican and African American youths in a bottle-throwing attack at the center. Allegations about a football game gone bad were suspected, but Assistant Director René Martínez insisted that the game had nothing to do with the incident. Martínez stated, “There are a lot of frustrations in that area.”³³ The poverty center was shared by both racial communities. The Black Panther Party participated in the free breakfast program for children at the center. The Panther Party was allowed to participate as long as they did not distribute any pamphlets or talk about Panther ideology.³⁴ Besides negative publicity from militant organizations the War on Poverty was under attack by congressmen.

US Representative Jim Collins of Dallas strongly urged Congress to dismantle OEO and divide the programs amongst other agencies. He stated, “Congress had now had a sufficient period of time to evaluate OEO and its record of failure, the country needs to provide permanent jobs, but instead we are developing a program to provide

³¹ Julia Scott Reed, “Dallas Race Relations,” *Dallas Morning News*, December 9, 1969.

³² “Complaints Aired At DCCAC Meet,” *Dallas Morning News*, June 6, 1968.

³³ “Personalities Blamed in Clash,” *Dallas Morning News*, November 1, 1970.

³⁴ “Panthers Take Part at Center,” *Dallas Morning News*, November 16, 1970.

permanent poverty.”³⁵ Collins argued that the administration costs heavily outweighed any type of funding poor communities were receiving. He stressed the issue of education as the key to improving life among the poor.³⁶

Mexican Americans Join the Fight

Frustrations grew in the Southwest and Dallas among Mexican American citizens. Mexican Americans in the Southwest were considered the “invisible minority” in the region.³⁷ In Dallas, growing frustrations of neglect and poverty were politicizing the community to mobilize and push for equality. Mexican Americans were upset with the lack of cooperation with the DCCAC. A group of Mexican Americans began to protest War on Poverty activities. Their claim was that the “War on Poverty activities have been ineffective for their people.”³⁸ The group of thirty met with Executive Director Wallace about what they perceived as the DCCAC’s ineffectiveness in reaching their community and presented a report prepared by LULAC citing that the local War on Poverty only offered Mexican Americans low-paying, unskilled positions. Richard Menchaca, President of the LULAC Dallas Chapter (which had recently been reactivated), urged for equality among Mexican Americans, and the LULAC Study Committee met with Representative Jim Collins to discuss grievances.³⁹ Many in the Mexican American community had tried, unsuccessfully, to speak with their community center director and consequently were reprimanded when they tried to contact a

³⁵ AMC, “Collins Criticizes U.S. Poverty War,” Folder 33, Box 32 City Issues, DPL, Dallas, Texas.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ruth Ann Ragland, “He’s Threading Way Toward Equality,” *Dallas Times Herald*, November 24, 1969.

³⁸ Henry Tatum, “Poverty War Critics Talk of Going Higher,” *Dallas Morning News*, August 14, 1969.

³⁹ Henry Tatum, “Mexicans Americans Wanting Equal Opportunity,” *Dallas Morning News*, August 20, 1969.

different director. Spokesman for the group Dionicio Quintanilla, Jr. stated that although Wallace listened to their concerns, he did nothing on a practical level to address the situation. Consequently, the group went above Wallace in order to get the situation addressed.⁴⁰

By September 1969 progress had been made between Mexican Americans and the DCCAC. Dionicio Quintanilla, went as far as to renounce, his former protest concerning Mexican Americans and Dallas WOP programs. Community houses were presented as one solution to the lack of poverty programs. These houses functioned as small neighborhood centers offering training programs with a small staff. Little Mexico had one of the biggest community houses in the city called Harwood. Wallace gave Alberto Orozco, DCCAC's Community Organization Technical Assistant, credit for working out problems expeditiously with the community.⁴¹

John Colunga, a Mexican American activist and 21-year-old University of Texas Arlington student, spoke before the city council in 1969. He was upset that the Mexican American community had not been offered a seat on the city council as had the African American community. He further remarked that, in general the Mexican American community was "disgracefully neglected in Dallas."⁴² Colunga spoke on behalf of the Mexican Americans for Civic Action (MACA), a dynamic new political organization. He commented that if demands were neglected, they would take another approach such as "peaceful militancy." Colunga charged the Mexican American community with being

⁴⁰ Henry Tatum, "Poverty War Critics Talk of Going Higher," *Dallas Morning News*, August 14, 1969.

⁴¹ Henry Tatum, "Mexican Americans Quash Charges," *Dallas Morning News*, September 6, 1969.

⁴² George Kuempel, "Latins Demanding 'Voice,'" *Dallas Times Herald*, September 11, 1969.

complacent and submissive to government issues.⁴³ Mayor Erik Jonsson grew very impatient with Colunga's threats, commenting on his unprofessionalism and un-American approach to the situation.⁴⁴

The DCCAC seemed to be unraveling as the dawn of the 1970s emerged upon Dallas. The DCCAC attempted to accommodate minorities but federal funds were diminishing and internal problems within the community led to a stagnant organization. The next section focuses on a civil action lawsuits that minorities brought against the DCCAC. Mexican Americans claim that the DCCAC discriminated against them because of their race.

Mexican Americans Take Action

A group of Mexican Americans filed a civil action suit against the DCCAC claiming that the DCCAC was being discriminatory against them in their termination. Santos Badillo, Robert Medrano, Andrea F. Cervantes, Luis Sepúlvida and Robert Arredondo petitioned the court under the Civil Rights Acts of 1866 and 1964, "claiming that the defendant Dallas County Community Action Committee discriminated against them because of their Mexican-American national origin."⁴⁵ They were seeking damages in back pay, reinstatement, original job positions, and the proper promotions that were denied to them. The five also alleged claims that African Americans in higher or middle management positions have either "Intentionally or inadvertently" created

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Gene Ormsby, "Latins Demand Representation; In City Council," *Dallas Morning News*, September 10, 1968.

⁴⁵ *Santos Badillo, Robert Medrano, Andrea F. Cervantes, Luis Sepúlvida, Robert Arredondo v. Dallas County Community Action Committee, Inc.*, 394 F. Supp 694, (US District Court for the Northern District of Texas Dallas Division Civil Case files, 1975), CA 3-5932-C, National Archives Southwest Region, Fort Worth, Texas.

employment decisions that discriminated against Mexican American employees and potential employees. In this case one minority group sued the other for its actions.⁴⁶

The main plaintiff Santo Badillo began working for the DCCAC as a job development specialist for the Manpower program. Badillo worked under the supervision of Mrs. Edna Morrison. Badillo began working on discriminatory claims brought forth by Mexican Americans. He was in the office of the Field Director of Manpower Teams looking for documents to support these claims and upon Morrison finding out about the issue she reprimanded Badillo on June 11, 1970. Despite this, Badillo continued to investigate and Morrison found his daily duties below satisfactory. Because of his probationary employment status during this period he was fired on July 17, 1970.

The second plaintiff Robert Medrano filed suit against the DCCAC because the organization refused to promote him despite his exemplary work record. Medrano was the Director of Neighborhood Service System and sought the position of deputy director. The DCCAC used OEO guidelines to choose this position, which ranked the potential candidates. Medrano ranked third among the final candidates.⁴⁷

The next plaintiff, Mrs. Andrea F. Cervantes, was a community house aide with the DCCAC and was terminated around May 19, 1972. Cervantes claimed that her job position was terminated on the grounds that she was Mexican American. The DCCAC refused to hire her as the assistant director to a summer program during the same year.

⁴⁶ *Badillo v. Dallas County Community Action Committee, Inc*, 394 F. Supp 694, (US District Court for the Northern District of Texas Dallas Division Civil Case files, 1975), CA 3-5932-C, National Archives Southwest Region, Fort Worth, Texas.

⁴⁷ *Badillo v. Dallas County Community Action Committee, Inc*, 394 F. Supp 694, (US District Court for the Northern District of Texas Dallas Division Civil Case files, 1975), CA 3-5932-C, National Archives Southwest Region, Fort Worth, Texas.

Luis Sepúlveda was hired as the Youth Developer in the Youth Development Program. Sepúlveda claimed that he was passed over for jobs because of his national origin as well. The final plaintiff, E. Robert Arredondo claimed that he was not hired for the position of Neighborhood Organizer in January 1968 based on his origin also. Arredondo filed charges with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission the next month and joined the lawsuit a few months later.⁴⁸

The Court recognized the tensions between the racial groups in this case because of limited resources with poverty programs. The Court stated that

Naturally, the manner of distributing the scarce resources through programs administered by DAC (DCCAC) officials is open to criticism. One apparent criticism has been the lack of exactness used by the DAC in its efforts of distribution. Minority group's jealousies of their position relative to other minority recipients and their suspicions of the motivations of other needy groups give rise to much of the aforementioned criticism. In addition, those jealousies and suspicions cast political overtones to everything that DAC does. No doubt, many Mexican-Americans held these feelings toward Dallas' Black population since the Black population's larger absolute size and larger amount of impoverishment members gave it an inherent claim to more services and jobs offered by the Economic Opportunity Act in general and DAC, in particular. The Court believes that the Mexican-Americans' Concern over the amount of Control the Dallas Black population had over DAC operations compounded the alleged legal reasons for this suit.⁴⁹

Because of such concern over their interest in the poverty programs, the plaintiffs decided to expand their suit to include the class-wide treatment of Mexican Americans. Federal agencies conducted two investigations into Badillo's termination. The first investigation was performed by Gene Renslow of the EEOC, who concluded Badillo had no merit to his claim. Badillo, not satisfied with the findings, petitioned the Office of

⁴⁸ *Badillo v. Dallas County Community Action Committee, Inc.*, 394 F. Supp 694, (US District Court for the Northern District of Texas Dallas Division Civil Case files, 1975), CA 3-5932-C, National Archives Southwest Region, Fort Worth, Texas.

⁴⁹ *Badillo v. Dallas County Community Action Committee, Inc.*, 394 F. Supp 694, (US District Court for the Northern District of Texas Dallas Division Civil Case files, 1975), pg 5, CA 3-5932-C, National Archives Southwest Region, Fort Worth, Texas.

Human Rights, OEO Washington, D.C. to review Renslow's report. The second investigation was conducted by Samuel Martínez, Director of Region VI, OEO. Martínez concluded that there was probable cause to Badillo's complaint. The court agreed with Renslow's findings based on Badillo's testimony. The Court upheld the DCCAC's decision to terminate Badillo.⁵⁰

In the matter regarding Robert Medrano, when he applied for the position of Deputy Directorship he was competing with thirty other candidates. Medrano had climbed the ranks of the DCCAC due to his great work skills but felt that Mr. Willis Johnson discriminated against him in passing him over for the job. Johnson claimed that he took all the necessary steps to find the most qualified applicants. He placed job postings in all the newspapers including the Spanish-language papers and posted the job around DCCAC facilities. He notified other community action agencies throughout the nation and contacted the Texas Employment Commission for possible candidates. The DCCAC committee then used the "Guide to Selecting the CAA Executive Director" for procedures to fill the position, and after interviewing proper candidates, their list of thirty went down to ten finalists. Out of the ten finalists four were Mexican American. The finalist who ranked first was Lloyd Conley from Missouri, with Henry Castillo ranking second. The Court ruled that the DCCAC did not discriminate against Medrano.⁵¹

The Court concluded that Andrea Cervantes lost her job due to budget cuts in April 1972. The DCCAC eliminated many Community House components involving the

⁵⁰ *Badillo v. Dallas County Community Action Committee, Inc.*, 394 F. Supp 694, (US District Court for the Northern District of Texas Dallas Division Civil Case files, 1975), pg 7, CA 3-5932-C, National Archives Southwest Region, Fort Worth, Texas.

⁵¹ *Badillo v. Dallas County Community Action Committee, Inc.*, 394 F. Supp 694, (US District Court for the Northern District of Texas Dallas Division Civil Case files, 1975),pg 9-10, CA 3-5932-C, National Archives Southwest Region, Fort Worth, Texas.

Neighborhood Services Program. Cervantes' coworkers Willie Mae Butler, Allene Hardy and Ruthie Ross, all African Americans were terminated during the same time. Cervantes also claimed that she was discriminated against when she did not receive a position as Assistant Director for the 1972 Summer Program. The DCCAC hired Víctor Bonillo for the position. The court upheld the DCCAC's decision to terminate Cervantes. In the case of Luis Sepúlveda, the Court found that the other candidates for the position were Beverly Williams, an African American, and Mary Baines were more qualified. Williams held two degrees and was more qualified to the position of Senior Program Developer. Mary Baines was more qualified for her position of Technical Assistant/Training Specialist due to her previous experience on the job. The court ruled in favor of the defendant and that no discrimination took place.⁵²

Robert Arredondo claimed that he was fired as Neighborhood Organizer in 1968 based on his origin. Arredondo filed a complaint with the EEOC in February 9, 1968. He received a notice of the right to sue by the EEOC on December 4, 1972, but waited until eight months before suing. Arredondo's statute of limitation, ninety days, had expired and the court found no claim that Executive Director Maley discriminated against him in any way. Maley did not hire the defendant on the basis that he had been a member of the Brown Berets and this could lead to problems as a Neighborhood Organizer.⁵³

US District Judge W. M. Taylor wrote his opinion on April 28, 1975, upholding the

⁵² *Badillo v. Dallas County Community Action Committee, Inc*, 394 F. Supp 694, (US District Court for the Northern District of Texas Dallas Division Civil Case files, 1975), pg 12-13, CA 3-5932-C, National Archives Southwest Region, Fort Worth, Texas.

⁵³ *Badillo v. Dallas County Community Action Committee, Inc*, 394 F. Supp 694, (US District Court for the Northern District of Texas Dallas Division Civil Case files, 1975), pg 14 CA 3-5932-C, National Archives Southwest Region, Fort Worth, Texas.

DCCAC in every situation. Even though Mexican Americans lost their civil action suit, it was blatantly clear that they were mobilized and felt that they were not receiving adequate funds for the poverty programs. It's also clear that Mexican Americans were growing in number and were becoming more active politically, which presented them as a stronger rival to the African American community than they had ever been before. The Dallas elite had lost interest and lost confidence in the DCCAC by this time because of scandal and inner turmoil that spilled over into the pages of the newspapers. The final chapter will examine the fate of the DCCAC and the WOP programs. It will also examine the struggle of race relations in Dallas from the 1970s and beyond.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Could This Be The End?

On March 31, 1968, Lyndon Johnson shocked the nation by announcing his withdrawal from consideration as the Democratic candidate for the presidential election that would take place in the fall. Despite--and in reaction to--the progress he had made on the domestic front, disaffected southern whites and other Democrats looked for a new candidate to fill his shoes, and by the spring Johnson faced at least three competitors for the party's nomination. In the end, Hubert Humphrey won the party's nomination but lost the overall contest to Republican Richard Nixon. Nixon was a conservative who campaigned against War on Poverty programs like Job Corps during the presidential race. During his first term in office Nixon, despite his campaign rhetoric, did not dismantle the programs but he did reorganize them. For instance, Head Start was moved into the Department of Health, Education and Welfare's new division, the Office of Child Development. Robert Clark argued, "One consequence of this approach was to diminish the sense of a coordinated federal assault on poverty."¹ Nixon continued to consolidate poverty programs during his second term, though with a heavier hand.²

Republican President Gerald Ford signed the law establishing the US Community Services Administration (CSA) in 1975, which succeeded the US Office of Economic Opportunity that had been dismantled by Nixon in 1973. Ultimately CSA sat stagnant due to Ford's focus on other domestic issues. For the most part, however,

¹ Robert F. Clark, *The War on Poverty: History, Selected Programs and Ongoing Impact* (Oxford: University Press of America, 2002), 13.

² Ibid.

antipoverty programs were relatively stable during the Ford and Nixon administration.³ Clark described Democratic President Jimmy Carter's relationship with antipoverty advocates as "love-hate." Carter did increase the budget for programs such as Head Start but he also moved the program, along with several others, from CSA to the newly created Department of Education, angering antipoverty supporters.

Republican President Ronald Reagan brought an extremely conservative administration to the White House. During Regan's first term in office he abolished CSA and established a comparatively small Office of Community Service under the US Department of Health and Human Services. Many Community Action Programs were saved by Congress, which established the Community Service Block Grant giving funding preference to action agencies. President George H.W. Bush, established the White House Office of National Service focusing on youth and volunteerism but his administration was dominated by foreign policy issues overall. Democratic President Bill Clinton signed the National and Community Service Trust Act in 1993. This act was a gesture of renewed federal faith in volunteering including such national programs as AmeriCorps and Volunteer in Service to America (VISTA). Although the poverty programs were within different agencies they still existed and were not strained under the Clinton Administration.⁴

Dallas Is Struggling

Dallas's strong political arm that had controlled the city since the 1930s--the Citizen's Charter Association--had lost its political hold within the city council, thus

³ Clark, *The War on Poverty: History*, 14.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 14-15.

ending in its demise in the mid-1970s. As ordered by Federal Judge Eldon Mahon, the city of Dallas was required to design a new plan that would render greater political equity on the city council. “The council quickly devised an 8-3 scheme, approved by the judge, in which eight council members would be elected from specific ‘single-member’ districts rather than by city-wide vote. The remaining three, including the mayor, would be elected ‘at-large.’”⁵ As a result, minorities would receive more representation on the city council. Mayor Erik Jonsson’s term was also coming to an end in 1971. Dallas’s political structure was changing to represent the city as a whole.⁶

The War on Poverty in Dallas was evolving as well. Key players such as Allan Maley had left the initiative and a heated racial climate added to the struggles of the program, not to mention the internal conflicts within it as well. In 1975, a Labor Department audit of the Dallas County Community Action Committee revealed stolen checks and missing records. In 1979, a federal grand jury found fraudulent records resulting in a school teacher’s conviction for stealing federal funds. Two former employees pled guilty to embezzling more than \$2,500 from the agency in 1983. Two neighborhood centers closed in 1985 and two years later two other employees were suspended with pay for issuing out checks to the poor for rent. The problem was that the addresses of these individuals were occupied by vacant lots. By 1988 a state audit revealed the agency was in debt up to \$1.2 million. A new board of directors took over the DCCAC in 1989, but a court-appointed attorney advised the termination of the organization. As a result, Dallas County commissioners requested that a state judge dissolve the DCCAC. The DCCAC did not dissolve, but the 1990s were no better for

⁵ Darwin Payne, *Big D: Triumphs and Troubles of an American Supercity in the 20th Century* (Dallas: Three Forks Press, 1994), 359.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 358.

the agency, as financial mismanagement and nepotism were discovered. Finally, a judge agreed with the state's request to terminate funding of the DCCAC in 1999, though the organization made one last appeal in 2001 to the US Department of Health and Human Services.⁷ Representatives of the DCCAC announced that the organization would continue operating despite its loss of both federal and state funding, thus relying exclusively on private donations.⁸ The DCCAC lost the trust of Dallas elites and of minorities, which eventually led to a loss of its constituents, and the people they were trying to help the most--the poor.

The War on Poverty in Dallas did succeed, if only for a short period of time. The major problem that plagued the campaign was the conservative approach adopted by its leaders, which left Dallas behind other major urban areas in programs and funding at the outset. As a result, the poor, mostly minorities, reaped few of the anticipated benefits. In addition, the funds that were allocated pitted the city's African American and Mexican American communities against each other to get their share of the pie. The final problem that the DCCAC faced was its mismanagement of funds and inner conflict, leaving conservatives who were against the programs satisfied by its failure. Jill Quadagno argued that poverty legislation was absorbed into the Civil Rights Movement in such places as New Jersey and Mississippi.⁹ Looking at the community in Dallas, the African American community was organized and mobilized prior to the War on Poverty's beginnings in the city. What should be noted is that the War on Poverty

⁷ Lori Stahl "Anti-poverty Agency Files Last-ditch Appeal," *Dallas Morning News*, March 3, 1999.

⁸ Kendall Anderson "Contract Termination ends fight over aid group's finances," *Dallas Morning News*, March 7, 2001.

⁹ Jill Quadagno, *The Color of Welfare: How Racism Undermined The War on Poverty* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 11.

gave Mexican Americans a political voice and means to mobilization of rival the African American Community.

Race in Dallas

Darwin Payne argues that tensions between the Mexican American and African American communities that were “brewing” for years finally boiled over by the 1990s.¹⁰ In addition, advocates such as John Wiley Price emerged and protested the mistreatment of African Americans. Other cities experienced race riots and protests early on in the civil rights movement, but the nation would see Dallas’s racial problems explode in the 1990s. I contend that race relations had clearly reached a serious stage by the end of the 1960s. This is apparent within Community Action Programs and their involvement within Dallas neighborhoods. Even in the 1960s the political rivalry between black and brown and white was evident. In an unusual twist of fate, the Mexican American and African American communities joined together to protest police brutality in Dallas in 1973, this ended in a riot downtown. Both communities shared the longstanding experience of police brutality which was the question of justice that brought them to act together.

Unlike Payne, I consider the events of the 1990s as a continuation of minorities’ fight for fair representation in Dallas politics. I also contend that minorities in Dallas were not passive and submissive but fielded activists among both groups who pushed for equality. The reason the 1990s was perceived to be “coming apart” with protests is because both communities had stronger political foundations within Dallas, which in turn brought race issues to the forefront. Dallasites chose to continue their myth and

¹⁰ Payne, *Big D*, 411.

boasted that their city had never had a riot, which in reality was never the case. What Dallas did accomplish was the appeasement of elite minority groups, which in effect prolonged such issues as desegregation. Michael Phillips said it best when he wrote, "Under the influences of whiteness, Dallas learned to forget the past, regret the present, and dread the future."¹¹

I am also in agreement with Quadagno's argument based on the economic theories of Swedish economist Gunnar Myrdal that the key governing force in the US past and present is the politics of racial injustice. She argued, "The upheavals that periodically alter the nation's institutional arrangements stem from the contradictions between an egalitarian ethos and anti-democratic practices that reproduce racial inequality."¹² Examples of this can be seen from slavery, the Civil War, post Civil War, the New Deal, and the War on Poverty. Such events throughout this nation's history have become catalysts for legislative changes.¹³

The Effects are Everlasting

David Zarefsky wrote that the legacy of citizen participation as a focal point for social change is important. "The gap in status between rich and poor could be narrowed once the poor were regarded as active participants in a program rather than social wards."¹⁴ As a result of new ideology that was absorbed into the social welfare network, the War on Poverty made programs and services known and available to the

¹¹ Michael Phillips, *White Metropolis: Race, Ethnicity, and Religion in Dallas, 1841-2001* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2006), 178.

¹² Jill Quadagno, *The Color of Welfare*, 188.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 188.

¹⁴ David Zarefsky, *President Johnson's War on Poverty* (Alabama: The University of Alabama Press, 1986), 192.

poor such as neighborhood centers. Zarefsky noted that programs instituted within the neighborhood allowed the poor to become more involved, unlike the past where the poor were drawn out of their communities and into an institutional setting. The War on Poverty raised political consciousness among the poor and allowed them to have a voice. Zarefsky credits the Vietnam War as the main force in boosting the economy in the US, resulting in a reduction of poverty.¹⁵

Although the War on Poverty had minimal economical success, the poverty programs did reach people. Even in 2008, programs like Head Start continue to make a difference in the lives of the urban and rural poor. Free lunch programs for children in schools still exist. Financial aid for college students is still in effect, as are various volunteer programs. The War on Poverty helped the poor to realize that they were no longer an invisible entity within the nation but could make a difference in the politics of the city and the lives of their families, a legacy that lives on today.

¹⁵ Zarefsky, *President Johnson's War on Poverty*, 197.

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