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Militants in the Model City:

Richard Lee, the Hill Parents Association, and the Limits of Citizen Participation in New
Haven's Urban Renewal Anti-Poverty Programs

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Richard Lee, Urban Renewal, and the Hill

When Richard Lee was elected Mayor of New Haven in 1953, the city desperately needed change. It had suffered from decades of decline as, in political scientist Douglas Rae's assessment, "what had been a convergence of accidents favoring urbanism had turned into a convergence of accidents working against it": steam-driven manufacturing and freight rail became obsolete, the development of cars drove suburbanization, restrictions on immigration stopped the flow of cheap labor, and local manufacturers were bought out by big corporations or closed down altogether.¹ At the same time, Black Southerners migrated to northern cities like New Haven in large numbers "just in time to experience the end of urbanism full blast."² Between 1950 and 1970, New Haven's Black population quadrupled as the city's overall population shrank.³

New Haven's Hill neighborhood had been a dense, working-class neighborhood since the 1850s, but in the earlier decades of the 20th century, residents could support themselves with good-paying factory jobs.⁴ Over the first half of the 20th century, this changed as wealthy New Haveners moved to the suburbs and the housing stock and job prospects in working-class neighborhoods deteriorated.⁵ In the 1950s, after the first major urban renewal project – the demolition of the Oak Street neighborhood to make way for an extension of Route 34 – many displaced Black and Puerto Rican New Haveners moved to the Hill along with Black transplants from the South.⁶

¹ Douglas Rae, *City: Urbanism and Its End* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 313-314.

² *Ibid.*, 258.

³ Norman I. Fainstein and Susan S. Fainstein, "New Haven: The Limits of the Local State," in *Restructuring the City: The Political Economy of Urban Redevelopment*, ed. Susan S. Fainstein, Norman I. Fainstein, Richard Child Hill, Dennis Judd, and Michael Peter Smith (New York: Longman, 1983), 30.

⁴ "Residential Districts, Community Renewal Program," Box 4, Folder J, Mermin Collection, 1941-1975 (MSS 79), Whitney Library, New Haven Museum, New Haven, Connecticut, 18; Rae, *City: Urbanism and Its End*, 126.

⁵ In 1929, the Candee Rubber Company factory, a crucial employer for Hill residents, closed, leaving almost 800 workers out of work. The factory had been bought by the U.S. Rubber Corporation, which decided that its more modernized plants were more profitable. By 1975, Winchester Repeating Arms was the only mass manufacturer left in New Haven. Rae, *City: Urbanism and Its End*, 220, 363-366.

⁶ Mandi Isaacs Jackson, *Model City Blues: Urban Space and Organized Resistance in New Haven* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2010), 84-85.

Richard Lee was elected on a platform that centered his vision of the nation's first "slumless city."⁷ *Harper's Magazine* would later call him "the first city Mayor...to make urban renewal the cornerstone of his political career."⁸ Over his sixteen-year term, Lee's massive redevelopment programs earned New Haven recognition as a "model city" across the nation. Lee himself became a fascination for the press. The *New York Times* reported in 1967 that Lee exemplified "the triumphs and agonies, the roughhousing and delicacy, the complexities and minutiae that blend into the skills of modern mayoring....Lee has the hard-boned, neatly maned, massive head of one born to tower politically over the plain people."⁹ The *Times* also congratulated Lee for having successfully "revitalized a community rotting from its inner core."¹⁰ In 1965, Robert Kennedy said, "What my brother hoped to do with the New Frontier, Dick Lee is doing in New Haven."¹¹

The central apparatus behind Lee's redevelopment programs was a sprawling, powerful, well-funded bureaucracy that brought in "the smartest and most arrogant people who had ever served in the management of so modest an American city as New Haven," mostly white, educated men in their 20s and 30s who could write compelling and strategic grant proposals that brought in unprecedented amounts of federal funding.¹² A key part of the city's urban renewal strategy, and its public image, were "human renewal" programs that sought to complement the renewal of the built city by directly targeting social issues faced by the city. In the Hill and the city's other

⁷ Rae, *City: Urbanism and Its End*, 304.

⁸ Harper's Magazine, "Lee of New Haven and his political jackpot," September 26, 1957, Box 110, Folder 1969, Richard C. Lee Papers (MS 318), Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library, New Haven, Connecticut.

⁹ Bernard Asbell, "They Said It Wouldn't Happen in New Haven: Dick Lee Discovers How Much Is Not Enough," *The New York Times*, September 3, 1967, accessed March 28, 2023, <https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1967/09/03/90592399.html?pageNumber=151>

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Yohuru Williams, *Black Politics/White Power: Civil Rights, Black Power, and the Black Panthers in New Haven* (St. James: Brandywine Press, 2000), 12.

¹² Rae, *City: Urbanism and Its End*, 316-318.

“blighted” neighborhoods, the massive redevelopment bureaucracy acted upon and for, not with, residents. These “human renewal” programs, run by bureaucrats, operated from an understanding of urban poverty that centered social pathology rather than structural and institutional factors.

But Hill residents were not simply the passive recipients of Lee’s urban renewal plans. These “human renewal” programs were contested by residents who played an active role in shaping the process of urban renewal. In the Hill, community groups like the Hill Parents Association fought the city’s urban renewal bureaucracy by advocating for an alternative vision of anti-poverty programs and by directly disrupting city projects. Beyond the bulldozers and highways, urban renewal in New Haven was a struggle over how American cities should address urban poverty and the extent to which that decision should lie with the urban poor.

The Rise of New Haven’s Urban Renewal Elite

Historian Fred Powledge has described urbanology as “a field in which educated, articulate men...were able to accumulate and to use power in rebuilding cities.”¹³ In his classic 1961 work, *Who Governs?*, Robert Dahl argued that Richard Lee created an “executive-centered coalition” that brought together business and government and that allowed Lee to use federal resources and technical expertise to transform the city while strengthening his own office.¹⁴ This coalition required bringing in educated professionals to run the urban renewal administration and its quest for federal funding.

Lee’s administration secured massive amounts of federal money. New Haven attracted more redevelopment funds per capita than any other American city: around \$800 per resident by

¹³ Fred Powledge, *Model City: A Test of American Liberalism: One Town’s Efforts to Rebuild Itself* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1971), 22.

¹⁴ Fainstein and Fainstein, “New Haven: The Limits of the Local State,” 35; Robert Dahl, *Who Governs?: Democracy and Power in an American City* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961).

1967.¹⁵ Newark was a distant second with only \$286 per person.¹⁶ The redevelopment budget specific to the Hill snowballed from \$1 million in 1964 to \$1.6 million in under a year. The 1964 budget for the Hill project called for \$7,400 (over \$63,000 in 2023 dollars) for office furniture alone.¹⁷ Douglas Rae calls the urban renewal administration an unaccountable “alternative government” whose massive budget allowed it to operate without approval from the Board of Aldermen or, to an extent, the public.¹⁸

Part of this federally-funded alternative government was Community Progress, Inc. (CPI), which was founded in 1962 by a \$2.5 million grant from the Ford Foundation for “human renewal.”¹⁹ CPI was originally funded for a three-year period, until September of 1965, but after a year of existence, CPI already had additional funding and was predicting that it would last at least 5-6 years.²⁰ CPI would later receive significant federal funding through the 1964 Economic Opportunity Act and the 1966 Model Cities Act.²¹ CPI portrayed itself in its early years as a program so smart and innovative that it would succeed itself out of existence: “Unlike the traditional agency,” it bragged, “our success will come from helping accomplish community changes and disappearing after five years without being missed.”²² Instead, it continued to balloon

¹⁵ Cohen, *Saving America's Cities*, 11.

¹⁶ Jackson, *Model City Blues*, 129.

¹⁷ By 1969, the budget for the Hill had increased to \$2.2 million and by May 1971 \$3.2 million. \$2.9 million of that final total was earmarked for “administration” costs. New Haven Redevelopment Agency Records (MS 1814). Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library, New Haven, Connecticut.

¹⁸ Rae, *City: Urbanism and Its End*, 316.

¹⁹ Powledge, *Model City*, 21.

²⁰ This additional funding came from the President’s Committee on the Prevention and Control of Delinquency and the Department of Labor’s Office of Manpower. Community Progress, Inc., “A ‘Human Conservation’ Attempt,” 1963, Box 1, Folder A, Community Progress, Inc. New Haven Youth Development Program Records, 1962-1982 (MSS B-61). Whitney Library, New Haven Museum, New Haven, Connecticut, 3.

²¹ Community Progress, Inc., “Human Story: 1967, Annual Report,” Local History Room, New Haven Free Public Library, New Haven, Connecticut, 41-43.

²² Community Progress, Inc., “A ‘Human Conservation’ Attempt,” 1963, Box 1, Folder A, Community Progress, Inc. New Haven Youth Development Program Records, 1962-1982 (MSS B-61). Whitney Library, New Haven Museum, New Haven, Connecticut, 6-7.

until it peaked at 300 full-time employees and a budget of \$7,700 for each low-income family it served.²³ In 1968, CPI's top eighteen administrators made a combined \$269,219 (\$2.3 million in 2023 dollars). The executive director made today's equivalent of \$258,000 and the top eight best-paid administrators all made over \$120,000 in 2023 dollars.²⁴

Memos from Mayor Lee to CPI officials suggest that the work ethic of these high-paid, Ivy-educated officials left something to be desired. Lee complained that offices were not open on time, staff members were absent, and clients were waiting outside.²⁵ Congressman Robert Giamo was also a critic of CPI's effectiveness: "I did expect that the infusion of \$18 million into a city of only 140,000 would have made substantial impact.... Instead I found a great deal of waste: high administrative costs, exorbitant salaries, and fringe benefits, and questionable funding practices...CPI has made very little impact."²⁶ CPI strategically concealed financial information from the public, such as the size of the budget and the appropriation of funds.²⁷

CPI's founding document, *Opening Opportunities*, promised a focus on educational, employment, housing, and recreational opportunities and proclaimed that "CITIES are

²³ Rae, *City: Urbanism and Its End*, 348. By June 1964, CPI had an \$8 million budget from a wide range of private and public funders. For more, see U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Manpower, Automation & Training, "Aspects of the Demonstration Manpower Program of Community Progress, Inc. In New Haven, Conn.," June 29, 1964, Appendix A, Box 1, Folder D, Community Progress, Inc. New Haven Youth Development Program Records, 1962-1982 (MSS B-61). Whitney Library, New Haven Museum, New Haven, Connecticut.

²⁴ "CPI Hierarchy: Background of 18 Administrators At Top of Payroll," *New Haven Register*, January 11, 1968, Box 1, Folder Q, Community Progress, Inc. New Haven Youth Development Program Records, 1962-1982 (MSS B-61). Whitney Library, New Haven Museum, New Haven, Connecticut.

²⁵ In summer 1966, Lee wrote to one official, "when I went looking this week for some help from your office in some of the neighborhood problems, I found Milton Brown was away on vacation, Dave Altschuler was away on vacation, and Tom Seessel was unavailable....Somebody ought to be running that shop." To another, Lee wrote, "I drove past the CPI Neighborhood Office at 9:10 this morning....The offices were closed, and there was a man standing outside waiting – obviously a client in need of help or assistance or looking for a job." Lee to Mitchell Sviridoff, August 18, 1966 and Lee to Larry Spitz, November 14, 1966, Box 78, Folder 1452, Richard Charles Lee Papers (MS 318), Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library, New Haven, Connecticut.

²⁶ Powledge, *Model City*, 134-135.

²⁷ Russel Murphy, *Political Entrepreneurs and Urban Poverty: The Strategies of Policy Innovation in New Haven's Model Anti-Poverty Project* (Lexington: Lexington Books, 1971), 47.

PEOPLE.”²⁸ It also announced that “CPI stands for Community Progress and for People...the many people who are engaged in this exciting undertaking, and all the people it will affect and benefit.”²⁹ This progressive rhetoric reveals CPI’s underlying assumptions: that those at the helm of CPI’s work and those it sought to benefit – New Haven’s poor – were distinct groups.

CPI and Community Participation

In many ways, CPI and the Redevelopment Agency operated like big, bureaucratic, top-down corporations.³⁰ In 1965, Lee wrote in his notes that he intended to “apply modern business methods to government...in the next two years.”³¹ In his February 1966 State of the City address, he announced a task force to modernize the city government.³²

Participation in decision-making in Lee’s modern government was largely restricted to New Haven’s professional elites, whom Robert Dahl called “social and economic notables.”³³ Lee described the Citizens Action Commission (CAC) as made up of “the biggest set of muscles in New Haven...They’re muscular because they control the wealth, they’re muscular because they control the industries, represent the banks.”³⁴ The CAC was strategically constructed so that “If anyone throws a rock at the program, they’re bound to hit one of their own,” according to chairman

²⁸ Community Progress, Inc., “Opening Opportunities,” 1962, Box 1, Folder A, Community Progress, Inc. New Haven Youth Development Program Records, 1962-1982 (MSS B-61). Whitney Library, New Haven Museum, New Haven, Connecticut.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ For more, see Fainstein and Fainstein, “New Haven: The Limits of the Local State,” 51 and Murphy, *Political Entrepreneurs and Urban Poverty*.

³¹ Mandi Isaacs Jackson, *Model City Blues: Urban Space and Organized Resistance in New Haven* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2010), 117.

³² Ibid, 117-118.

³³ Dahl, *Who Governs?*, 125.

³⁴ Talbot, *The Mayor’s Game*, 64.

Carl Freese, a bank president who lived in the suburbs.³⁵ Another CAC board member remembered the commission as a sounding board for Lee's predetermined plans: "The CAC was the Mayor's creation.... He [and other top officials] would speak; we listened, and then reacted."³⁶ Even for the powerful businessmen it included, the CAC was more of a nod to community involvement than a real mechanism for influence. Similarly, the board of CPI included representatives from New Haven's business and educational elite.³⁷ One early critic in 1964 noted that CPI's board included "Everybody...except the people being planned for."³⁸ In addition to the board, CPI's staff were not representative of New Haven. All but three of the agency's highest-ranking officials came from outside the city, as did most of those in middle-range positions.³⁹

For everyone else, the city had minimal interest in public input. Ironically, Lee's first Redevelopment Director's slogan was "planning with people," but he told the National Commission on Urban Problems that citizen participation was important "not so much as a matter of doctrine but as a matter of simple expediency" because programs' "success...depends upon elected local officials who must believe that it's not only good for the city but that it won't cost them their survival."⁴⁰ Public hearings were required by federal law, but were often held *after* the

³⁵ Harper's Magazine, "Lee of New Haven and his political jackpot," September 26, 1957, Box 110, Folder 1969, Richard C. Lee Papers (MS 318), Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library, New Haven, Connecticut, 39.

³⁶ Talbot, *The Mayor's Game*, 65.

³⁷ Specifically, the board of CPI included a representative from each of: the United Fund, the Community Council, the New Haven Board of Education, the Redevelopment Agency, the Citizens Action Commission, Yale, the New Haven Foundation, and three members appointed by Mayor Lee himself. Talbot, *The Mayor's Game*, 177. For more on Yale's role in urban renewal in New Haven, see Brian Goldstein, "Planning's End? Urban Renewal in New Haven, the Yale School of Art and Architecture, and the Fall of the New Deal Spatial Order," *Journal of Urban History* 37(3): 400-422 and Talbot, *The Mayor's Game*. Russel Murphy argues that the members of CPI's board were chosen "to lend an element of respectability to what the planners feared might be an unpopular, and politically suspect and vulnerable, undertaking." Murphy, *Political Entrepreneurs and Urban Poverty*, 41.

³⁸ Charles E. Silberman, *Crisis in Black and White* (New York: Random House, 1964), 352.

³⁹ Murphy, *Political Entrepreneurs*, 43.

⁴⁰ Lizabeth Cohen, *Saving America's Cities: Ed Logue and the Struggle to Renew Urban America in the Suburban Age* (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 2019), 16. Jane Jacobs once said of Ed Logue, Lee's first Redevelopment Director, "I thought he was a very destructive man....he thought that all should be wiped out and built new. Boy, in my books, he went down as a maniac." Cohen, *Saving America's Cities*, 20; National

enabling legislation had gone through, federal funding had been appropriated, and buildings had been designed.⁴¹ A Redevelopment Agency employee told a Hill resident that “people living in neighborhoods like this, rundown neighborhoods, don’t ordinarily have much to say” about the demolition of their homes.⁴² In an application for federal funding, the city wrote that low-income communities like the Hill “have developed a long heritage of apathy and indifference,” but boasted that CPI had “made progress in encouraging and involving neighborhood residents.”⁴³ One high-ranking CPI official wrote, “For the vast majority of the poor, poverty is a disability that precludes meaningful participation in planning.”⁴⁴ A CPI employee in the Hill described his superiors’ orientation toward community participation: “It was a question of How do you get *them* interested in what *you* are trying to do? *They* would call meetings, at which *their* programs were discussed. There was never, at least at any meeting I ever attended, any opening where the citizen’s word would have any kind of direct and obvious impact.”⁴⁵ A 1968 Ford Foundation report criticized CPI, which by that point had received \$5,125,000 from the Foundation, for failing to adequately involve residents, noting that CPI “seems to have avoided the promotion of public discussion on these critical social issues” and concluding that “CPI seems to be cast in the mode of doing FOR rather than WITH people, and is having a difficult time breaking out of this mode.” Notably, the

Commission on Urban Problems, “Hearings Before the National Commission on Urban Problems,” Volume I (May-June 1967), January 1968, 190.

⁴¹ Peter M. Green and Ruth H. Cheney, “Urban Planning and Urban Revolt: A Case Study,” *Progressive Architecture Observer*, January 1968, accessed March 28, 2023, <https://usmodernist.org/PA/PA-1968-01.pdf>.

⁴² “Public Hearing, New Haven Redevelopment Agency: Hill Renewal and Redevelopment Area Early Land Acquisition Loan Contract,” April 28, 1966, New Haven Redevelopment Agency Records (MS 1814), Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library, New Haven, Connecticut.

⁴³ City of New Haven. “Model Cities Application,” Part III, Section N, April 13, 1967, Redevelopment Agency Files, Local History Room, New Haven Free Public Library, New Haven, Connecticut.

⁴⁴ Murphy, *Political Entrepreneurs*, 51.

⁴⁵ Quoted in Powledge, *Model City*, 159.

Ford Foundation recognized the “Prince School incident,” which was the first action of the Hill Parents Association, as a model for actively involved residents.⁴⁶

This top-down model of city government shaped CPI’s orientation towards those it served. One critic called CPI “a grandiose fusion of paternalism and bureaucracy.”⁴⁷ An HPA Leader described this fusion this way: “CPI is here to give a few political friends good pay for work, which amounts to helping the people a very little so as to prevent them from demanding a great deal more.”⁴⁸ Former employee Janette Parker released a report in 1968, criticizing CPI’s failure to involve Black people, a failure that “serves to perpetuate white paternalism – no matter how well-intended – and delays black community self-development....The CPI program is often used as a way of controlling the black people’s expression of discontent, but fails to provide any approach to root causes of problems in the black community.”⁴⁹ Parker was among a group of Black CPI employees who had organized two years earlier to advocate that an open leadership position be filled by a Black employee. The employees wrote that “The best way to understand these problems is to live them” and documented the lack of upward mobility for Black employees as well as the lack of Black employees in policy-making positions.”⁵⁰

The white paternalism that Parker acknowledged manifested in “human renewal” programs that focused more on individual uplift than on changing structural factors at the root of social

⁴⁶ “The Ford Report on CPI Urges: Stronger Anti-Poverty Fight, Greater Resident Involvement,” *New Haven Register*, March 24, 1968, Box 1, Folder Q, Community Progress, Inc. New Haven Youth Development Program Records, 1962-1982 (MSS B-61), Whitney Library, New Haven Museum, New Haven, Connecticut.

⁴⁷ Silberman, *Crisis in Black and White*, 352.

⁴⁸ “AIM: The Bulletin of the American Independent Movement,” Volume 1, Issue 2, May 10, 1966, Gale Primary Sources, *Indigenous Peoples of North America*, <https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/DOWQQH481014767/INDP?u=29002&sid=bookmark-INDP&xid=83c238f0>.

⁴⁹ Robert A. Jordan, “CPI Tagged ‘Inevitable Failure’,” *New Haven Register*, January 22, 1968, Community Progress, Inc. New Haven Youth Development Program Records, 1962-1982 (MSS B-61), Whitney Library, New Haven Museum, New Haven, Connecticut.

⁵⁰ Negro CPI Staff Concerns & Action Committee, “Concerns of Negro CPI Staff Members,” March 18, 1966, Box 78, Folder 1452, Richard C. Lee Papers (MS 318), Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library, New Haven, Connecticut.

problems. This was no secret: Mayor Lee boasted that CPI’s “great strength is its focus on self-improvement.”⁵¹ In its first four years, CPI spent more than 70 percent of its funds on employment training and education programs.⁵² Historian Elizabeth Hinton has argued that “the War on Poverty is best understood not as an effort to broadly uplift communities or as a moral crusade to transform society by combating inequality or want, but as a manifestation of fear about urban disorder and about the behavior of young people, particularly young African Americans.” The federal antipoverty legislation of the 1960s, which provided funding to New Haven’s social programs, “aimed to change the psychological impact of racism within individuals rather than the impact of the long history of racism within American institutions.”⁵³

This nationwide focus on “black cultural pathology” as a result of the psychological impact of racism was particularly focused on concerns about the Black family and about Black motherhood. The idea that female-headed families and “family disorder” are responsible for Black poverty is evident in CPI’s antipoverty programming.⁵⁴ In her notes, the director of CPI’s Youth Employment Program wrote, “We are particularly concerned with youth who have been labelled ‘culturally deprived.’...Especially: those who do not have a background of education & learning at home, Negro youth who have little motivation to use their abilities.”⁵⁵ CPI’s youth programming focused on sociocultural rather than economic deficits in families. A document titled “Problems of inner-city youth” listed, among other concerns, “Lack of education of parents, parental lack of

⁵¹ Community Progress, Inc., “Opening Opportunities,” 1962, Box 1, Folder A, Community Progress, Inc. New Haven Youth Development Program Records, 1962-1982 (MSS B-61). Whitney Library, New Haven Museum, New Haven, Connecticut.

⁵² Fainstein and Fainstein, “New Haven: The Limits of the Local State,” 51.

⁵³ Elizabeth Hinton, *From The War on Poverty to the War on Crime: The Making of Mass Incarceration in America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2016), 31-32.

⁵⁴ Daniel Geary, “The Moynihan Report: An Annotated Edition,” *The Atlantic*, September 14, 2015, accessed March 28, 2023.

⁵⁵ Anita Vogel, Box 1, Folder A, Community Progress, Inc. New Haven Youth Development Program Records, 1962-1982 (MSS B-61), Whitney Library, New Haven Museum, New Haven, Connecticut.

understanding of meaning of educational program, Lack of motivation to learn because of lack of occupational opportunities, caused largely by: reading disability, curriculum that fails to relate to functional goals, home problems – no quiet place to study,” and “a variety of social ills – poverty, female based households.”⁵⁶ This focus on individual uplift and the overall business model of CPI also shaped the organization’s priorities in terms of *who* they sought to help. Founding director Mitchell Sviridoff wrote that “[Our] strategy is to deliberately and unashamedly court success in the early stages of the program. This means we did not attempt the impossible first. In the first round we deliberately concentrated on the majorities who have the best chance, once helped, of helping themselves.”⁵⁷ Sviridoff’s description of the “success” courted by CPI implies that CPI was quite comfortable postponing or abandoning altogether services for what they called the “hard core” segments of the population. There was also an explicitly carceral element to these behavior-focused youth programs: CPI contributed part of its budget towards expanding the Police Department’s Youth Bureau and creating a closer relationship between the juvenile court and other agencies in the city.⁵⁸

A key arm of CPI’s youth programming was work crews: groups of young people who were paid less than minimum wage (\$1 an hour for 20 hours a week) to work for the city.⁵⁹ A CPI neighborhood worker at the Prince School in the Hill reported that one seventeen-year-old work crew member, Johnny, who was “a good-looking, dark-complexioned boy with somewhat effeminate mannerisms” from a “pathological family,” had been helped significantly by his work

⁵⁶ “Problems of inner-city youth,” Box 1, Folder B, Community Progress, Inc. New Haven Youth Development Program Records, 1962-1982 (MSS B-61), Whitney Library, New Haven Museum, New Haven, Connecticut.

⁵⁷ Talbot, *The Mayor’s Game*, 217.

⁵⁸ Talbot, *The Mayor’s Game*, 213.

⁵⁹ U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Manpower, Automation & Training, “Aspects of the Demonstration Manpower Program of Community Progress, Inc. In New Haven, Conn.,” June 29, 1964, Box 1, Folder D, Community Progress, Inc. New Haven Youth Development Program Records, 1962-1982 (MSS B-61). Whitney Library, New Haven Museum, New Haven, Connecticut.

crew. The CPI worker wrote that “Johnny is in a ‘homosexual panic’ as reaction to his home environment and that little improvement could be expected as long as he remains at home” and “advised that Johnny find a job as quickly as possible.”⁶⁰ Johnny’s profile reveals the idea behind CPI’s work crews: reforming young Black people to conform along gender and racial lines by addressing issues of individual psychology caused by unfit households. In some ways, the work crews were genius: the city could claim to be rehabilitating unemployable dropouts while also getting cheap labor.⁶¹

Ultimately, these antipoverty programs were designed by technocrats, rubber-stamped by professional elites, and implemented on the urban poor without their input. Their focus was on social control and reforming the individual. These programs of individual uplift and the city’s “big business” approach to urban policy also allowed for a carceral turn in urban management. Seeking funding from the 1966 Demonstration Cities and Metropolitan Development Act, the city proposed a computerized Urban Management Information System (UMIS) in partnership with IBM that would track the residents of the Hill.⁶² The system would contain comprehensive data on the city’s population: health information, welfare information, and criminal records.⁶³ Each “population file” would include the person’s name, social security number, address, date of birth, sex, race, national origin, family relationship, occupation, employment status, industry, place of employment, method

⁶⁰ U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Manpower, Automation & Training, “Aspects of the Demonstration Manpower Program of Community Progress, Inc. In New Haven, Conn.,” June 29, 1964, Appendix B, Box 1, Folder D, Community Progress, Inc. New Haven Youth Development Program Records, 1962-1982 (MSS B-61), Whitney Library, New Haven Museum, New Haven, Connecticut.

⁶¹ The underpayment of work crew laborers suggests a major flaw: if the program claimed to be helping Johnny by getting him a job to get him out of his “pathological” home environment, then why was he paid \$20 a week despite reportedly being “quite eager to be placed in a situation where he could earn more”? Ibid, Appendix B.

⁶² Ibid, 10-11. They chose the Hill because “it has greater need than any other neighborhood in the City for the improvements this program can provide.” City of New Haven. “Model Cities Application,” April 13, 1967, Redevelopment Agency Files, Local History Room, New Haven Free Public Library, New Haven, Connecticut, 11.

⁶³ Advanced Systems Development Division, International Business Machines Corporation, “Concepts of an Urban Management Information System: A Report to the City of New Haven, Connecticut,” Mayor’s Office Files, Local History Room, New Haven Free Public Library, New Haven, Connecticut, 19.

of travel to work, educational achievement, area moved from, years in present residence, type of occupancy, number of cars, income class, shopping preferences, and recreation preferences.⁶⁴ The UMIS could “be used by the Police Department to project crime trends, by the Health and Welfare Departments to project case loads,” and more specifically for the Police Department to be able to obtain a list of all suspects in an area at the time of a crime along with key information about them.⁶⁵ As historian Mandi Isaacs Jackson notes, “Less explicit were the advantages promised in...thwarting organized dissent.”⁶⁶

Organized Dissent: Fred and Rose Marie Harris and the Hill Parents Association

In 1965, Rose Marie Harris, a resident of the Hill, was horrified to learn that her children’s school had rough paper towels instead of toilet paper. This was only the latest in a long list of failures from the 80% Black Prince Street School, ranging from the lack of a library or a full time nurse to filthy floors to no toilet paper to an incompetent, often drunk white principal.⁶⁷ In response, she and her husband, Fred Harris, organized fellow parents to form a group they called the Hill Parents Association (HPA). The parents mailed eighty complaints to the Board of Education and received no response. In April 1965, the HPA publicly presented a list of twenty-five major grievances and picketed the school. Their protest was effective: the principal was

⁶⁴ Ibid, 30.

⁶⁵ Ibid, 43; City of New Haven, “Model Cities Application,” Part III, Section O, April 13, 1967, Redevelopment Agency Files, Local History Room, New Haven Free Public Library, New Haven, Connecticut; Francis J. Whalen, “City Urged to Create Office On Computer Application,” *New Haven Register*, Box 101, Folder 1816, Richard C. Lee Papers (MS 318), Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library, New Haven, Connecticut.

⁶⁶ Jackson, *Model City Blues*, 120.

⁶⁷The full list of complaints included: “No library, No full time nurse, Non-integrated textbooks, outdated, not enough; No psychological assistance, No Spanish teacher for the growing number of Spanish-speaking children, PE every 2 weeks at the most, No permanent playground equipment, Glass and holes on playground pavement, Filthy floors and windows, broken windows and doors, Uncovered radiators, No kitchen or hot water.”

“AIM: The Bulletin of the American Independent Movement,” Volume 1, Issue 2, May 10, 1966, Gale Primary Sources, *Indigenous Peoples of North America*, <https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/DOWQQH481014767/INDP?u=29002&sid=bookmark-INDP&xid=83c238f0>.

replaced by a Black principal, the school was painted, new books were ordered, and toilet paper was stocked in the bathrooms.⁶⁸

After this success, the HPA continued to operate and grow. It merged with an existing group called the Hill Neighborhood Union. The HNU had been formed by a group of Yale students living in the Hill, at least five of whom were white and two of whom were Black.⁶⁹ The HNU sought to organize the residents of the Hill by establishing a preschool, organizing rent strikes, holding walk-ins and sit-ins, and going door-to-door talking to people about what they needed. Within a month, they had won repairs and had gotten a few landlords fined or jailed. They also formed a Freedom School, influenced by civil rights organizing in the South, to teach activism and an alternative curriculum.⁷⁰ The HNU's operations attracted the attention of city officials, who expressed concern that the HNU members "will not align themselves with the Hill Community Council, Hill Recreation Committee or other established neighborhood civic groups because they are city or CPI dominated."⁷¹ This resistance to being absorbed by the established system of antipoverty programs put the HNU at odds with the city. The city also had qualms about the HNU's programs themselves, specifically the child-led philosophy of the Freedom School.⁷² Mayor Lee forwarded a memo about the HNU to the FBI, saying, "I wonder if it would be possible to receive further background material regarding these two organizations if it is available. Are they perhaps

⁶⁸ Ibid; Richard Balzer and Fred Harris, *Street Time* (New York: Grossman Publishers, 1972), 12. One of the original HNU members had worked with the SNCC. Jackson, *Model City Blues*, 85-86, 88.

⁶⁹ James E. Coogan to Dennis Resendes, July 8, 1965, "Meeting of Park Supervisors With 'Hill Neighborhood Union,'" Box 110, Folder 1972, Richard C. Lee Papers (MS 318), Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library, New Haven, Connecticut.

⁷⁰ Jackson, *Model City Blues*, 85-86, 88.

⁷¹ James E. Coogan to Dennis Resendes, July 8, 1965, "Meeting of Park Supervisors With 'Hill Neighborhood Union,'" Box 110, Folder 1972, Richard C. Lee Papers (MS 318), Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library, New Haven, Connecticut.

⁷² The official worried, "I also wonder how youngsters under a program of this group can ever learn the importance of self-discipline when they are encouraged to do as they please while in these young, formative years." Ibid.

on the Attorney General's list of subversive organizations?"⁷³ Lee also wrote to Yale President Kingman Brewster that "A particularly unfortunate occurrence is the group of Sophomores from Trumbull College who are living over in the Hill...these little irritants have a way of becoming major irritants, and I really think your attention is called for in this sphere" and wrote to the Ford Foundation to ask for information on the HNU's funding sources.⁷⁴ This early organizing by the HNU and the city's response to it highlight the threat it posed to the city's well-established and financially fruitful model of human renewal. City officials' concern about the lack of discipline of children in the Freedom School reflects the function of CPI's youth programming as a form of social control, particularly for young people of color.

In spring 1965, the students of the HNU were concerned that their organization "depended too much on white student manpower and ideas" and wanted an organic, widespread movement in the Hill, so they merged with the newly formed HPA, which had shown its power to disrupt the status quo of city government through its success at the Prince Street School.⁷⁵ Both organizations were part of what Allan Talbot identified in the mid-1960s as "a new political force emerging in New Haven" of "direct citizen action which deals with specific needs, is program-oriented and highly sophisticated, and produces results...from low-income neighborhoods."⁷⁶

The HPA became a major critic of CPI and Richard Lee and fought the city's urban renewal programs both by providing an alternative vision of solutions to urban social problems and by

⁷³ Richard Lee to Charles E. Weeks, July 26, 1965, Box 110, Folder 1972, Richard C. Lee Papers (MS 318), Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library, New Haven, Connecticut.

⁷⁴ Richard Lee to Kingman Brewster, May 14, 1965, Box 107, Folder 1921, Richard C. Lee Papers (MS 318), Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library, New Haven, Connecticut; Richard Lee to the Ford Foundation, Box 110, Folder 1972, Richard C. Lee Papers (MS 318), Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library, New Haven, Connecticut

⁷⁵ "AIM: The Bulletin of the American Independent Movement," Volume 1, Issue 14, November 22, 1966, Box 1, Folder 1, Paul Joseph Bass Papers (MS 1826), Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library, New Haven, Connecticut.

⁷⁶ Talbot, *The Mayor's Game*, 211.

directly attacking city projects. New Haven had other Black-led community organizations, including local branches of CORE and the NAACP, but many felt that the established Black leadership had been bought out by the city. As HPA president Fred Harris said, “HPA is the ones who are really making the black people move.”⁷⁷ The *New York Times* called the HPA “a new, militant voice from the ghetto,...a harsh voice, impolite, unpredictable, certainly not always controllable...[that] would demand a rebalancing of the delicate weights of power.”⁷⁸

As the HPA evolved, it addressed many of the same issues as the city’s renewal programs, like deteriorating housing supply, neglectful slumlords, and lack of jobs. They helped people deal with complaints about relocation, welfare agencies, or exploitative employers.⁷⁹ In one instance, the HPA brought eighteen people for a sit-in at the state welfare office and successfully secured emergency welfare payments for a mother of seven who had already applied twice.⁸⁰ At a protest against inadequate welfare benefits in June 1966, the HPA released a statement demanding that welfare benefits be more comprehensive and that poor people be treated with dignity by welfare workers.⁸¹ During the summer of 1967, they ran summer programs, including a free summer camp, the creation of a park in a vacant lot, employment programs, and adult education classes.⁸²

⁷⁷ Quoted in Powledge, *Model City*, 156. See also Bernard Asbell, “They Said It Wouldn’t Happen in New Haven: Dick Lee Discovers How Much Is Not Enough,” *The New York Times*, September 3, 1967, 41. <https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1967/09/03/90592399.html?pageNumber=151>

⁷⁸ The *Times* also emphasized the figure of Fred Harris as the HPA’s “gentle-mannered leader” but noted that he “goes out of his way to tell white inquirers that ‘this is not a nonviolent organization.’” Bernard Asbell, “They Said It Wouldn’t Happen in New Haven: Dick Lee Discovers How Much Is Not Enough,” *The New York Times*, September 3, 1967, accessed March 28, 2023, <https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1967/09/03/90592399.html?pageNumber=151>

⁷⁹ Powledge, *Model City*, 23-24.

⁸⁰ “AIM: The Bulletin of the American Independent Movement,” Volume 1, Issue 5, June 21, 1966, Gale Primary Sources, *Indigenous Peoples of North America*, <https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/DOWQQH481014767/INDP?u=29002&sid=bookmark-INDP&xid=83c238f0>.

⁸¹ “Statement of the Hill Parents Association, CORE, and the American Independent Movement,” June 1966, Box 1, Folder 1, Paul Joseph Bass Papers (MS 1826), Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library, New Haven, Connecticut.

⁸² Charles Louis, “Hill Parents’ Association Summer Project,” July 10, 1967, Box 114, Folder 2031, Richard C. Lee Papers (MS 318), Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library, New Haven, Connecticut.

The HPA's attitude toward its programming emphasized the importance of community participation and self-determination for the poor. HPA President Fred Harris said later, "It bugged us that they [CPI] should get all the money and then administer it....we weren't children and they didn't have to take care of money for us. We wanted neighborhoods to receive direct funding. People in the Hill certainly weren't getting the money and an awful lot of it never seemed to leave downtown."⁸³ The HPA's decision-making process reflected the importance of community participation. As they put a proposal for direct funding together in the HPA office, the HPA welcomed input from anyone walking by on the street. Fred Harris insisted to contributors who found this inefficient that "all the people around here were members of the organization and when they had something to say, we listened."⁸⁴ Harris claimed that the idea of membership in organizations was "a way for insensitive white people to deal with a neighborhood," noting that poor people did not always have time to attend a meeting.⁸⁵ Harris preferred other measures of community support for the HPA: conversations on the street and interactions between community members and HPA projects. The HPA's final proposal for city funding noted that "the park [being built in a vacant lot across from the HPA office] is so thoroughly a community project that so far no one has even taken the precaution to lock up the lumber and tools at night...no one in the neighborhood would dare remove one sliver' because the people know that this is their project."⁸⁶ The proposal concluded that evaluating the success of these programs required "[looking] beyond the programs themselves to the significance of the total involvement of the people," citing the administrative and problem-solving skills that Hill residents acquired through their involvement.⁸⁷

⁸³ Balzer and Harris, *Street Time*, 24.

⁸⁴ *Ibid*, 25.

⁸⁵ *Ibid*, 21.

⁸⁶ Charles Louis, "Hill Parents' Association Summer Project," July 10, 1967, Box 114, Folder 2031, Richard C. Lee Papers (MS 318), Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library, New Haven, Connecticut, 2-3.

⁸⁷ *Ibid*, 6.

The HPA's community-directed summer programs received positive feedback inside and outside of the neighborhood. So many children showed up for the day camp that the staff had trouble fitting all of them onto their limited number of buses.⁸⁸ The park was "full of people playing horseshoes, men playing checkers, and kids waiting for the swings" in late afternoons and evenings.⁸⁹ In August, the organization received a "Citizen of the Month" award from the *New Haven Register*.⁹⁰ Lee's executive assistant reportedly acknowledged that "Everyone honestly admits that HPA ran a great summer program. There was never any criticism."⁹¹

The HPA had an expansive vision of what their community could look like, including a low-cost housing project of their own, a community-owned and operated grocery store, HPA trash cans on the street, a preschool and an alternative police force.⁹² Fred Harris called for popular control over funding, an end to repression by CPI of community groups like the HPA, rent control, and police and welfare reform.⁹³ At the center of this vision lay an idea of community power – and Black power – that was antithetical to the idea of social change and social support endorsed by

⁸⁸ Balzer and Harris, *Street Time*, 26.

⁸⁹ *Ibid*, 29.

⁹⁰ Jackson, *Model City Blues*, 148. In a clear comparison to the city's programs, the *Register* commended the HPA for "[seeing] a void in the recreational needs of the area and [filling] it without fanfare and with very little money." See "Yale Friends of the HPA," Box 1, Folder 9, Joseph Goldstein Papers (MS 1787), Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library, New Haven, Connecticut.

⁹¹ "Yale Friends of the HPA," Box 1, Folder 9, Joseph Goldstein Papers (MS 1787), Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library, New Haven, Connecticut.

⁹² "AIM: The Bulletin of the American Independent Movement," Volume 1, Issue 14, November 22, 1966, Box 1, Folder 1, Paul Joseph Bass Papers (MS 1826), Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library, New Haven, Connecticut; Steven Ney, "Harris to Businessmen: 'Struggle for Justice,'" Box 1, Folder 9, Paul Joseph Bass Papers (MS 1826), Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library, New Haven, Connecticut; "Yale Friends of the HPA," Box 1, Folder 9, Joseph Goldstein Papers (MS 1787), Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library, New Haven, Connecticut; For more on the preschool coop envisioned by the HPA, see "Project 'Real Start,'" Box 1, Folder 9, Joseph Goldstein Papers (MS 1787), Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library, New Haven, Connecticut. The proposed preschool program would serve 30 children and had two major goals: to provide essential early childhood education to children in the Hill and to "free between 100 and 150 mothers who are now on welfare, so they could go to work assured that their children would be cared for" because "The HPA does not believe that welfare is any way for human beings to live."

⁹³ "Fred Harris to run for state assemblyman / 106th district New Haven," Box 80, Folder 1477, Richard C. Lee Papers (MS 318), Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library, New Haven, Connecticut.

CPI and the city. While CPI's Sviridoff refused to "attempt the impossible" in favor of maximizing the program's chances of "success," the HPA kept its office doors open to the public to welcome input on grant proposals and defined success as including "the significance of the total involvement of the people."

This bottom-up social programming also directly offered an alternative to CPI's programs by competing with CPI programs for funding. The HPA's proposal asked the city for \$34,000 in OEO funding for the summer of 1967 for their summer camp, neighborhood park, and other programs.⁹⁴ CPI offered them \$6,000.⁹⁵ The city ultimately changed its mind and offered full funding after four CPI offices were firebombed, which they suspected was connected to the HPA.⁹⁶ Intimidated by the Watts rebellion in Los Angeles in August of 1965 and other outbreaks of Black resistance in American cities, Lee made a deal with the HPA "that in return for [the funding] we should make sure there was no trouble this summer."⁹⁷ The head of Lee's Commission on Equal Opportunities later said that this incident showed "that it was not until the city administration was literally confronted...with threatened violence that they agreed to give the funds for these programs, notwithstanding the fact that they agreed in principle that it would be a good idea to

⁹⁴ Balzer and Harris, *Street Time*, 25.

⁹⁵ According to Fred Harris, "Although CPI said it didn't have the money, no one really believed them." Balzer and Harris, *Street Time*, 25.

⁹⁶ Balzer and Harris, *Street Time*, 25; Jackson, *Model City Blues*, 125; Powledge, *Model City*, 168; Asbell, "They Said It Wouldn't Happen," 42.

⁹⁷ Balzer and Harris, *Street Time*, 26. The stakes of preventing violence in New Haven were high: according to Mandi Isaacs Jackson, "there was some sense among national policy makers and urban fire watchers that New Haven would be exempt, with its nationally renowned antipoverty initiatives and its highly publicized urban renewal successes. In the McCone Commission Report, charged with investigating the Watts riots of 1965, New Haven was cited as a "model city," where "a great deal ha[d] been done" for poor African Americans." Jackson, *Model City Blues*, 129. HPA members, including Fred Harris, reported that "the mayor gave the money to the HPA because he was afraid of violence in the black ghetto." "HPA Gets Money from City," *AIM: The Bulletin of the American Independent Movement*, Volume 2, Issue 3, July 5, 1967, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library, New Haven, Connecticut.

give these funds for these programs.”⁹⁸ This was the first and last substantial funding that the HPA would receive from the city.⁹⁹ Nonetheless, the \$32,120 that the HPA received from CPI that summer represented a radical, if temporary, shift in the way social programs were done in New Haven.

“The People Don’t Have No Voice Here”: Competing Narratives of the Model City

As the HPA was developing an alternative to CPI, its members also leveraged community power to more explicitly contest the city’s top-down “human renewal” programming. One strategy was to show up at “public” meetings to which they had not been invited. Fred Harris called these “meetings that concerned us but that none of us had been invited to.”¹⁰⁰ At these meetings, HPA members undermined the city’s operations not only by speaking against them but through a carefully choreographed display of community power that they said played on white people’s “fears and ideas about blacks, especially militant blacks.”¹⁰¹ They would walk in slowly, stand by the doors, pile their jackets on the floor, and sit down silently. One such meeting was the hearing for the National Commission on Urban Problems in May 1967. The HPA was tipped off by “somebody downtown” about the hearing.¹⁰² The hearing opened with a statement from Mayor Lee, who played up his humble model city mayor act, padding his extensive description of his

⁹⁸ Powledge, *Model City*, 168. Belford was also concerned at this time about the potential of riots over race relations. He said that “the fact that people living in the slum areas don’t have much of a say, much of a determination, much control, over their own destiny” was a potential cause of violence. He wrote a memo to the city about citizen participation, suggesting steps like installing more street lights in the ghetto, cleaning the streets, hiring young people from the slums for summer jobs, and improving police-community relations but was met with “anger and hostility” from Lee. For more, see Powledge, *Model City*, 164-165.

⁹⁹ Powledge, *Model City*, 172. The HPA also sought funding from Yale, but Kingman Brewster refused. Fred Harris said, “Yale, like most universities, does a lot of studying of black people, but we don’t receive very much of the benefit of it.” Balzer and Harris, *Street Time*, 44.

¹⁰⁰ Balzer and Harris, *Street Time*, 32.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid*, 32.

¹⁰² Balzer and Harris, *Street Time*, 32.

successes with the line “if New Haven is regarded as a model city, God help urban America.”¹⁰³ Fred Harris interrupted Lee’s question and answer session with the Commission and said, “If this is supposed to be a public hearing, you should allow the people that are involved in all this...to speak their opinion, seeing that we are the ones that have to go through all this redevelopment, all these urban problems.”¹⁰⁴

The commission tried to shut Harris down and move on with their scheduled testimonies, but Harris resisted.¹⁰⁵ Harris’s interruption of the hearing brought to light the Lee administration’s failure to achieve community involvement in urban renewal and the “big whitewash” of the model city narrative.¹⁰⁶ Harris told the commission, “Lee is a dictator. He controls the whole town. The people don’t have no voice here.”¹⁰⁷ Harris specifically attacked CPI’s focus on individual uplift, saying “They don’t do nothing” for structural issues like welfare and bad housing and asserting that:

you can’t take a guy with a white shirt and a tie, with a college degree, that doesn’t understand the functioning of these people’s minds, and comes down looking down his nose on us, when he lives in Woodbridge or he lives in a better neighborhood and doesn’t have the same problems that we have, and he’s going to tell us, ‘Clean yourself up. Pull yourself up by your bootstraps.’¹⁰⁸

¹⁰³ The general orientation of Lee’s statements toward the city’s accomplishments was “We’ve tried our best, but we haven’t done enough, so the federal government should give us more money.” For example, Lee said, “We have done some housing. We haven’t done nearly enough housing, but we have done everything from low-income senior citizens, scattered housing, to 221(d)(3), to rent-certificate, plus all the standard approaches, of course.” National Commission on Urban Problems, “Hearings Before the National Commission on Urban Problems,” Volume I (May-June 1967), January 1968, 111-113.

¹⁰⁴ National Commission on Urban Problems, “Hearings Before the National Commission on Urban Problems,” 129.

¹⁰⁵ When a commission member said, “we will try to give you a chance to speak,” Harris responded, “You will try? Our lives are involved. Our wives and children are involved in all this, and you are going to try? What is trying, man?” Ibid, 129. See also “Too Many People are a Blighting Influence,” *AIM: The Bulletin of the American Independent Movement*, Volume 2, Issue 3, June 11, 1967, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library, New Haven, Connecticut.

¹⁰⁶ National Commission on Urban Problems, “Hearings Before the National Commission,” 129.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid, 153.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid, 148.

Such interruptions at public hearings allowed the HPA to strategically leverage the power of their image as Black militants to question the mechanisms of New Haven's urban renewal operation. In Fred Harris's words, "you have to do more than just present your grievances. People have been presenting grievances for an awful long time. It is the way you present them that is important."¹⁰⁹ Evidently, the urban renewal elite did not intend for these hearings to welcome or even solicit public feedback or criticism. At one meeting on the city's Model Cities plan in the Hill, the city failed to even send a stenographer to record concerns or suggestions from the public.¹¹⁰

By strategically attacking the city's public narrative about urban renewal and its antipoverty programs, Harris and the HPA successfully impacted the city's decision-making process. Responding to a proposal for an extravagant dedication of a new CPI center in the Hill, Lee wrote, "In my opinion, the Multi-Service Center...ought to be opened without any fanfare whatsoever.... It is in the middle of Fred Harris' district, and we don't want to give him any opportunity to shoot off his mouth, and say this kind of thing is just tokenism."¹¹¹ The fear of Harris's criticism reshaped the city's priorities in at least this small way. Public dissent also disrupted plans to redevelop the central portion of the Hill and convinced the city to obtain agreement from Hill residents before moving forward.¹¹²

¹⁰⁹ Balzer and Harris, *Street Time*, 33.

¹¹⁰ John Wilhelm, "News from the HPA," *AIM: The Bulletin of the American Independent Movement*, Volume 1, Issue 20, April 27, 1967, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library, New Haven, Connecticut; for more on HPA presence at public hearings, see "A Special Issue for the Hill," *AIM: The Bulletin of the American Independent Movement*, Box 1, Folder 1, Robert C. Wilhelm Papers, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library, New Haven, Connecticut and also Ronald Johnson, "Ronnie Johnson on Housing," *AIM: The Bulletin of the American Independent Movement*, Volume 2, Issue 5, September 26, 1967, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library, New Haven, Connecticut.

¹¹¹ Richard Lee to Eric Sandahl, October 12, 1966, Box 78, Folder 1452, Richard C. Lee Papers (MS 318), Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library, New Haven, Connecticut.

¹¹² Powledge, *Model City*, 192.

The Limits of Community Participation

The funding that the HPA received from the city turned out to be conditional on their ability to prevent violence in the poor neighborhoods of the city.¹¹³ Violence broke out in the Hill in August of 1967 after a white business owner shot a Puerto Rican man. The HPA evacuated people and tried to work with the city to calm things down, but Lee was unresponsive: “He didn’t come for a while and then all he really had to say was, You guys didn’t keep your bargain.”¹¹⁴ Lee brought in state troopers and instituted a curfew, the phone wires and electricity to the HPA office were cut, and the police began using mace.¹¹⁵ After several days, hundreds of people had been arrested with unusually high bails, including Fred Harris.¹¹⁶

¹¹³ A white doorman at a downtown hotel reportedly said during the rebellion, confusing his acronyms, “I thought the city gave the CIA \$32,000 so we wouldn’t have any riots this summer.” Robert Gelbach, “Wheels of Justice Turn On Accused,” *AIM: The Bulletin of the American Independent Movement*, Special Edition, August 31, 1967, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library, New Haven, Connecticut.

¹¹⁴ Balzer and Harris, *Street Time*, 33. For an account of these events from the perspective of the HPA’s allies in the American Independent Movement, see “After Violence in New Haven – Business As Usual,” *AIM: The Bulletin of the American Independent Movement*, Special Edition, August 31, 1967, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library, New Haven, Connecticut.

¹¹⁵ Balzer and Harris, *Street Time*, 34; Jackson, *Model City Blues*, 145; “A Lesson in Ingratitude,” *Connecticut Sunday Herald*, August 27, 1967, Box 114, Folder 2031, Richard C. Lee Papers (MS 318), Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library, New Haven, Connecticut; The police’s violence prevention and response tactics, particularly relating to racial violence or fears thereof in the Hill, had been increased surveillance even before the events of August 1967. In August 1966, a CPI report noted that “several residents [of the Hill] were afraid and did not feel that they were getting adequate police protection,” that residents felt that “the police do not make immediate arrests when minority groups are fighting among themselves or against each other,” and that “people in the area do not call the police because they are afraid to become involved or identified.” See Frank Corbett, “Review of Activities to Deal with Intergroup Tension in the Washington Avenue Area of Hill Neighborhood,” August 17, 1966, Box 114, Folder 2031, Richard C. Lee Papers (MS 318), Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library, New Haven, Connecticut; As summer 1967 approached, officials again turned to policing and surveillance to prevent potential violence. One proposal suggested that the Police Department collect confidential data to predict outbreaks of racial violence on factors such as “Number of personal abuse or mocking of police officers,” “Number of gun sales, Number of Negro-white altercations,” “Number and size of crowd gatherings,” “Arrivals of out-of-town Negroes identified with previous riots, Finding of caches of stones, bricks, and sticks on roof tops, Rumors, Contents of racist literature distributed in the city.” See more in “A Daily Report of Tension Indicators,” Box 114, Folder 2031, Richard C. Lee Papers (MS 318), Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library, New Haven, Connecticut.

¹¹⁶ Jackson, *Model City Blues*, 146-147; Green and Cheney, “Urban Planning and Urban Revolt,” 135. Harris told television reporters, “Yes, you have to say that Mayor Lee is a kind of liberal. More liberal than most. But when this broke out, his answer was the answer they all give. These police around here. Look at all these police. When you get deep down, he’s like all the rest of them. He’s a racist.” Asbell, “They Said It Wouldn’t Happen in New Haven,” 42. The HPA bonded out at least 52 men in the aftermath of the rebellion. See “A Sequel to August,” *AIM: The Bulletin of the American Independent Movement*, Volume 2, Issue 12, March 5, 1968, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale

After the rebellion, a confidential internal NHPD investigation found that many of the violent or weapons-related arrests were of white, non-Hill residents who had come into the Hill to escalate the situation, including an armed white man who pledged to help the police “kill the n—s.”¹¹⁷ The investigation also found that a significant number of arrests were of people involved in CPI programs, suggesting that CPI’s social programs were not effective in preventing violence.¹¹⁸ Despite the results of this investigation and the success of the HPA’s city-funded summer programs, the city blamed the HPA. According to Fred Harris, “When things blew, our only value to them disappeared.”¹¹⁹ The police department increasingly used surveillance techniques like wiretapping to track and control the actions of the HPA and other militant groups.¹²⁰ After the rebellion, Mayor Lee said, “Fred Harris is not a leader in the real sense. They’ve tried to *make* him a leader.”¹²¹ Lee told a city official that Fred Harris should not be considered “a spokesman for anybody” and that “it was [his] job as executive director [of Lee’s Commission on Equal Opportunities] to quote keep down unquote people like Fred Harris.”¹²² Despite Lee’s claims, a 1968 UConn study found that the majority of a sample of Black teenagers in New Haven thought Fred Harris was the most important and powerful person in the Black community, followed by Martin Luther King, Jr.¹²³

University Library, New Haven, Connecticut. The HPA reported that bails were set between \$10,000 and \$15,000 in Robert Gelbach, “Wheels of Justice Turn On Accused,” *AIM: The Bulletin of the American Independent Movement*, Special Edition, August 31, 1967, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library, New Haven, Connecticut.

¹¹⁷ Yohuru Williams, “No Haven: From Civil Rights to Black Power in New Haven, Connecticut.” *The Black Scholar* 31, no. 3/4 (2001), 59.

¹¹⁸ Jackson, *Model City Blues*, 149-150; New Haven Police Department, “New Haven Disturbance Arrest Study: Confidential - Not For Release,” September 20, 1967, Box 114, Folder 2031, Richard C. Lee Papers (MS 318), Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library, New Haven, Connecticut.

¹¹⁹ Balzer and Harris, *Street Time*, 37-38.

¹²⁰ Williams, *Black Politics/White Power*, 99-100; “Statement from Hill Parents” and “Word Is Out: Break HPA,” *AIM: The Bulletin of the American Independent Movement*, Volume 2, Issue 7, November 2, 1967, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library, New Haven, Connecticut.

¹²¹ Powledge, *Model City*, 176.

¹²² Powledge, *Model City*, 181.

¹²³ Powledge, *Model City*, 176.

The city was no longer willing to fund HPA programs or meet with HPA leaders. Private foundations privately told HPA leaders that “no foundation was going give [them] money because Lee had let it be known that he didn’t want HPA to get any.”¹²⁴ HPA leaders were picked up by police on small charges: driving violations, marijuana possession, breach of the peace.¹²⁵ The NHPD submitted the names of Fred Harris and several other HPA leaders to the FBI.¹²⁶ The FBI tracked HPA protests and public expressions of discontent with white liberals. Agents infiltrated HPA meetings.¹²⁷ A Hill CPI worker said, “I believe there was a rather conscious decision to pursue any real – and to create or fabricate other – situations where they could use the law to limit and discredit the activity of the Hill neighborhood leadership.”¹²⁸ *Progressive Architecture* called it “the city’s ‘Break HPA’ movement.”¹²⁹ In October 1967, police raided Fred Harris’s apartment while he slept, where they planted heroin and accused him of stealing a typewriter he had received

¹²⁴ Balzer and Harris, *Street Time*, 37-38. HPA materials sent to sympathetic Yale professors asking for direct funding in 1968 also claimed that the “OEO in Washington has issued a directive to CPI to give no further funds to H.P.A.” “Appendix B: The History of the Hill Parents’ Association,” Box 1, Folder 9, Joseph Goldstein Papers (MS 1787), Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library, New Haven, Connecticut.

¹²⁵ Balzer and Harris, *Street Time*, 38; Powledge, *Model City*, 173-175.

¹²⁶ In an internal memo, the FBI characterized the HPA as a “Black militant organization” whose leaders had “long criminal records.” Williams, *Black Politics/White Power*, 88-89. In June 1966, an FBI agent observed a HPA protest at the New Haven welfare office. See “Re: New Haven Chapter, Congress of Racial Equality, and Hill Parents Association Demonstration Protesting Inadequate Welfare Benefits,” July 6, 1966, Box 1, Folder 1, Paul Joseph Bass Papers (MS 1826), Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library, New Haven, Connecticut.

¹²⁷ Box 1, Paul Joseph Bass Papers (MS 1826), Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library, New Haven, Connecticut. The FBI also tracked resistance to the prosecution and jailing of HPA leaders beginning in the fall of 1967 and the HPA’s support for the New Haven Panthers accused of murder. See “AIM Asks Drive Against Jailing of Hill Leaders,” *New Haven Register*, November 13, 1967, Box 1, Folder 6, Paul Joseph Bass Papers (MS 1826), Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library, New Haven, Connecticut; “Coalition for Defense of the Black Panthers,” Box 1, Folder 8, Paul Joseph Bass Papers (MS 1826), Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library, New Haven, Connecticut; “Appendix: Hill Parents Association,” Box 1, Folder 8, Paul Joseph Bass Papers (MS 1826), Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library, New Haven, Connecticut.

¹²⁸ Powledge, *Model City*, 173. In 1968, six Black New Haveners, including five HPA members, sued the city and the *New Haven Register* for systematic and unconstitutional political harassment. See “AIM: The Bulletin of the American Independent Movement,” Volume 2, Issue 13, March 26, 1968, Gale Primary Sources, *Indigenous Peoples of North America*, <https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/DOWQQH481014767/INDP?u=29002&sid=bookmark-INDP&xid=83c238f0>.

¹²⁹ Green and Cheney, “Urban Planning and Urban Revolt,” 154.

as a gift.¹³⁰ In December 1967, several HPA leaders were charged with plotting to blow up a police station and two banks.¹³¹ White New Haveners involved in fundraising in support of the HPA against police harassment reported receiving phone calls from Mel Adams, the director of the Redevelopment Agency, telling them to back down.¹³² City officials largely saw the purpose of the HPA's anti-poverty programs (and their own) as social control and pacification of the inner city. When that purpose failed, they were no longer willing to tolerate the threat posed by the HPA to their urban renewal bureaucracy.

The legacy of the HPA as a militant organization has lingered, although the city effectively crushed the organization's growing power.¹³³ The issues the HPA addressed continued to affect the urban poor: at the meeting to decide the candidate for Lee's successor, Black New Haveners protested because they "wanted whoever's elected mayor to know that kids are dying in the Hill

¹³⁰ By his own admission, Fred Harris had used heroin before, but had been clean while working with the HPA. Balzer and Harris, *Street Time*, 40-41; For more, see Mike Avery, "Fred Harris Convicted," *AIM: The Bulletin of the American Independent Movement*, Volume 3, Issue 1, April 20, 1968, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library, New Haven, Connecticut. Avery's account concludes, "Fred Harris was convicted because 'respectable' New Haven citizens let him be convicted. They not only tolerate but maintain a police force that will arrest and see to the conviction of a Fred Harris....white society relies on the police force as its first line of defense against the Fred Harris of this world."

¹³¹ Powledge, *Model City*, 175; In court, HPA leader Ronald Johnson said, "The administration thinks it can deal with the problems by arresting everybody – it won't work.... A black man can't buy a gun in this city, but the Winchester Gun Club has tripled.... My people here last August were treated like cattle. On August 19th... we embarrassed the New Haven Police Department by the fact that there were 200 policemen there and they just stood around, and we, the actual people, asked them for brooms and trucks to ocean up. But we didn't get the brooms....I pulled a woman out of a third floor apartment that was burning... but we embarrassed them and they said they'd strip us of our power.... We involved more people in our programs than the city." "AIM: The Bulletin of the American Independent Movement," Volume 2, Issue 13, March 26, 1968, Gale Primary Sources, *Indigenous Peoples of North America*, <https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/DOWQQH481014767/INDP?u=29002&sid=bookmark-INDP&xid=83c238f0>.

¹³² Powledge, *Model City*, 187. These people described the power of Mayor Lee and Yale over the New Haven community at large, saying that New Haven was small enough that almost anyone with power was somehow connected to the city government or to Yale, so stepping out of line could jeopardize their jobs.

¹³³ In a 2020 podcast, New Haven-born journalist Mercy Quaye said, "Ask anyone who grew up here: the Hill Parents Association was the precursor to the Black Panther Party." Mercy Quaye, "Revolution on Trial, Episode 1: The Makings of a Movement," *The Narrative Project* and *Artspace New Haven*, Podcast audio, May 15, 2020, <https://artspaceneewhaven.org/episode-1-the-makings-of-a-movement/>. The similarities between the platforms of the HPA and the Panthers are evident in their calls for self-determination, better schools, full employment, decent housing. For more on these connections, see Williams, *Black Politics/White Power*, 108-109.

in...the so-called Model City, because of lead poisoning.”¹³⁴ As for the HPA itself, leader Ronald Johnson said in 1969 with his bomb plot conviction still under appeal that they “ did our thing initially, and now it’s time for people to do their *own* thing, to carry on where we left off.”¹³⁵ Fred Powledge has suggested that HPA might have survived police repression if white liberals, particularly those with ties to Yale, had been more willing to vocally address the city’s harassment of the organization.¹³⁶

Conclusion

An organization that sprouted from Black parents insisting upon their children’s right to a better, safer, cleaner school environment eventually became a major player in New Haven politics, with reverberations far beyond. The HPA represented an alternative vision of a slumless city to Richard Lee’s, one that prioritized residents of the urban core instead of suburbanites and businessmen. The HPA sought to alter the conditions under which poor people lived while CPI sought to alter poor people themselves. Ultimately, the city’s willingness to tolerate the HPA’s vision was conditional on its perceived potential for social control and prevention of urban violence.

The story of urban renewal in New Haven is important because New Haven was hailed as a model city and was on the vanguard of urban renewal planning but also because it was not alone. In a 1973 study of seventy-seven cities, “fewer than half had any citizens involved in the creation and development of Model Cities programs, and citizen approval of the city’s proposals was

¹³⁴ Powledge, *Model City*, 306.

¹³⁵ Powledge, *Model City*, 302.

¹³⁶ Powledge, *Model City*, 198-203. For contemporary critiques of the complacency of white society relating to the police and Fred Harris’s arrest, see Mike Avery, “Fred Harris Convicted,” *AIM: The Bulletin of the American Independent Movement*, Volume 3, Issue 1, April 20, 1968, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library, New Haven, Connecticut.

necessary in only forty-eight cities.”¹³⁷ Like CPI, anti-poverty programs in these model cities focused on individual uplift and social control rather than reshaping the structural social and economic conditions facing America’s urban poor.¹³⁸ As cities continue to grapple with the social issues that CPI and the HPA sought to address, it is helpful to explore alternative visions of urban futures.

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¹³⁷ Powledge, *Model City*, 159.

¹³⁸ For more, see Hinton, *From the War on Poverty to the War on Crime*.

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