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# STORIES OF LYNWOOD PARK

by

VERONICA MENEZES HOLMES

Under the direction of Dr. Clifford M. Kuhn

## ABSTRACT

History of African American underclass community in northwestern DeKalb County, Georgia, from its settling in the late-1920s to its present displacement through gentrification. Thesis is that black underclass communities are the result of America's historic racism and subordination of blacks, whose members are left little choice but to engage in illegality as survival strategies. The work reveals the hard-work routines of people relegated to the bottom of American society, as well as their fun-loving leisure activities and embracing of vice as pleasurable. Established during Jim Crow segregation, Lynwood Park cultivated a reputation for danger and toughness to keep out outsiders, so that its children could have some semblance of a "normal" upbringing. The community's color line was then patrolled by dangerous men who created somebodiness for themselves as tough protectors, which ensured that they would be emulated as heroes.

The work records the social and cultural history of the community as recalled and interpreted by residents in an oral interview project. Covers community organization and institutions, such as churches and schools, as well as tensions within the community and tensions against both the white and black outside. Records social life of partying, hog killings, barbecues, baseball, drag racing. Includes culture of illegality and vice, school

desegregation, racism, and the community's relationship to DeKalb County, its affluent white neighbors, and the various dynamics that eventually led to the displacement of the traditional black residents.

The work challenges the golden-age-of-the-ghetto argument and demonstrates that Lynwood Park suffered from intragroup tensions and was not a safe cocoon for all its residents. The interviews also reveal that many children were left behind in the community's school during segregation because institutional caring generally rallied around only those children who demonstrated academic potential and a desire to eschew the negative dynamics of the enclave's street life. The work also demonstrates the ways in which whites were implicated in promoting, and profiting from, the community's illegality, which led to the eventual displacement of the traditional black residents.

INDEX WORDS: Underclass black community, Jim Crow, Segregation, Racism, Self-help institutions, Boundary, Bootlegging, Juke joint, Hog killings, Drag racing, Baseball, Spirituality, Churches, Illegality, Drug trafficking, DeKalb County, Gentrification.

STORIES OF LYNWOOD PARK

by

VERONICA MENEZES HOLMES

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

2008

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2008

STORIES OF LYNWOOD PARK

by

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Office of Graduate Studies  
College of Arts and Sciences  
Georgia State University  
December 2008

## DEDICATION

For the people of Lynwood Park—past and present—and all the other Third World people of the United States of America—the black underclass—who have had access to opportunities eclipsed and lives stunted by the nation’s historic practice of racism.

And for my grandmother Mohadai, and my grandfather Mangal, two indentured servants from India who were worked to death far from their homeland by the exploitive mechanisms of First World British colonialism, but who were never forgotten.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This work could not have been possible without the generous sharing of their knowledge of all my teachers, beginning with my first-grade teacher, Mrs. Simon Green, who recognized that I could read at age three. At Oglethorpe University I was trained in philosophy and the liberal arts by brilliant scholars such as Philip Neujahr, Jason Wirth, Douglas MacFarland, and Alan Woolfolk. Oglethorpe's faculty and administration were always supportive, especially president Lawrence Schall and his wife Betty, provost William Shropshire and his wife Patricia, Stephen Herschler, Bradford Smith, Robert Steen, William Brightman, Jay Lutz, John Cramer, and Michael Rulison.

At Georgia State University I owe a deep debt to all my professors, especially Jared Poley, James Heitzman, Andrew Altman, and Christopher White. Clifford Kuhn was a dissertation director who knew exactly when to reel me in when I leaped too far beyond the edge, and he, along with committee members Ian Fletcher and Charles Steffen, always asked pertinent questions and probed my ideas, yet allowed my voice to emerge.

My graduate colleagues offered friendship and an exchange of ideas over the years. It was Andrew Reisinger, Rebecca Huskey, Clif Stratton, Jennifer Dykman, Laurel Koonz, Jodie Talley, and Fakhri Haggani who kept me sane when the power of ideas were bombarding and torturing me.

And ex-husband Malcolm Holmes generously financed my academic career and research project.



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| DEDICATION  | iv  |
| ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS  | v   |
| LIST OF MAPS  | vii |
| CHAPTERS  |     |
| Introduction  | 1   |
| 1    The Development of Lynwood Park                        | 36  |
| 2    The Revival and Destruction of Lynwood Park            | 75  |
| 3    The Dangerous Boundary and Life Behind its Veil        | 112 |
| 4    Social Life Beyond the White Gaze                      | 158 |
| 5    Churches and Spirituality                              | 210 |
| 6    Illegality: From Survival Strategy to Career of Choice | 273 |
| 7    Schools and Education                                  | 342 |
| Conclusion  | 412 |
| References  | 432 |

## LIST OF MAPS

|   |                                   |    |
|---|-----------------------------------|----|
| 1 | Geographic Locale of Lynwood Park | 36 |
| 2 | Lynwood Park Street Map           | 37 |
| 3 | Expanded Lynwood Park             | 55 |

## **Introduction**

Lynwood Park is an underclass African-American community that was settled in the late-1920s in the then heavily wooded and rural northwestern DeKalb County, Georgia. The enclave provided safety from white racism during the Jim Crow era, and was in close proximity to Oglethorpe University, and two exclusive golf clubs, which provided employment within walking distance of the community. The founding residents were mostly rural sharecroppers born at the turn of the century, who had little schooling. Using their innate intelligence, they built their homes and churches themselves, established a vibrant community beyond the white gaze, and eked out a living performing manual labor. Many residents were housekeepers and laundresses, cooks and dishwashers, and many of the men worked for decades as groundskeepers and caddies at the golf clubs. In Lynwood Park, the residents planted gardens, raised chickens and hogs, hunted in the woods, and engaged in illegality to supplement the household economy. The community was a warren of dirt roads two wagons wide, since mules and wagons were the common form of transportation when the enclave was settled. With no county services, the residents established self-help institutions, tried to keep their children safe from racism, and rallied around to educate them. Beginning with moonshine, the community's pursuit of illegality added products over time: marijuana in the 1970s and crack cocaine after the mid-1980s, whose addictive qualities added greatly to the enclave's demise.

White neighborhoods began surrounding Lynwood Park after World War II, and provided domestic jobs close to home for the enclave's residents. The community became highly desirable real estate as DeKalb County developed, since Lynwood Park is located within easy access to highways and public transportation, upscale shopping centers, and a medical network of hospitals and other health care facilities. And while surrounding land

values escalated steadily after the 1980s, Lynwood Park's land remained a fraction of their cost, since it was seen by the outside as a black slum that had fallen into dereliction and decay. Moreover, the enclave had become increasingly dangerous after many residents joined the crack cocaine industry that began sweeping across the United States in the mid-1980s. As crime radiated from Lynwood Park into affluent residential communities and business sectors, the enclave was targeted for police crackdowns and revitalization by the county. This program made Lynwood Park increasingly safe, and real estate developers began building mini-mansions on tiny lots on the community's boundary.<sup>1</sup>

In 2002 many Lynwood Park homeowners were senior citizens living on social security, and many had lived in the community for as long as fifty years. After efforts to have Lynwood Park designated as an historic district failed, many residents were happy to sell their properties to developers and realize some wealth for the first time in their lives.<sup>2</sup> However, many others were forced to relocate, since they could not afford the increasing property taxes caused by mini-mansion development. The displacement of the traditional residents escalated rapidly after 2004 as real estate developers moved from the perimeter inward with their development.<sup>3</sup> At present most of the traditional community has been essentially displaced. However, several of its original institutional structures still remain: four of its churches, the community center, and Lynwood Park, which is owned and operated by DeKalb County, with its swimming pool, softball field, tennis courts, and gymnasium. The former residents and their families return to Lynwood Park to worship

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<sup>1</sup> "The Lynwood Park Project: A Community Oriented Policing Initiative," undated, Roy H. Benifield Papers; Bebe Bahnsen, "New Life for Lynwood: People Are Moving In, Revitalizing Longtime Black Neighborhood in Brookhaven," *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, 1 May 1997, A-1.

<sup>2</sup> Alyssa Abkowitz, "Lynwood Park Pressure: Amid Eager Developers, Longtime Residents Fight For Their Property," *Creative Loafing*, 1 July 2004; Jerry Portwood, "Lynwood Park: Neighborhood Remains Strong against Development," *Creative Loafing*, 16 May 2001.

<sup>3</sup> Alyssa Abkowitz, "An End of an Era in Lynwood Park," *Creative Loafing*, 27 April 2005.

several times a week, and gather annually from around the nation on Lynwood Park Day, which is held in the community's park.

The irony of Lynwood Park is that after a feeding frenzy by developers since 2004, who had entire streets under construction at once, the community is now suspended in the amber of the country's economic downturn. There are presently seventy new homes that range in price from one half million to two million dollars standing empty and unsold, while their developers are falling into foreclosure. In addition, some of the original white gentrifiers who were brave enough to buy in a transitional community at a lower price are now putting their homes on the market since they hold mortgages in excess of the present value of their homes. And some other gentrifiers are selling because they have become victims of the increasing number of layoffs in the employment sector. Of those traditional homeowners that were holding out for the highest possible price, the present downturn requires that they remain in the community until real estate values recover. However, some cannot afford the higher taxes, and others are also impacted by the present negative economic climate, and thus Lynwood Park at present is a community where most properties—old and new—boast For Sale signs.

In the 1980s the county attempted to revitalize Lynwood Park because it was an unsightly enclave with numerous deserted buildings, abandoned vehicles, dense overgrowth, and litter. By 2006 so much of the traditional community had been displaced that Lynwood Park's black residents were essentially treated as outsiders in their own community. White gentrifiers increasingly complained about the dereliction of the traditional homes in the enclave, and the police regularly issued citations for broken windows, abandoned vehicles, and aspects of buildings that did not meet current building codes. However, in recent community meetings, white gentrifiers have united with

traditional black residents to speak out in one voice about the high number of empty mini-mansions, unsightly piles of construction debris throughout the enclave, un-landscaped, weed-filled yards, and the general lack of developers' responsibility towards the community. Yet the county takes no action against the developers for their role in this new type of community "dereliction" as it did in the 1980s against the traditional black residents. And since there is still a small group of traditional residents in Lynwood Park, who also entertain their kinfolk and friends, historic community behaviors and illegality persist—albeit on a smaller scale—and white gentrifiers generally complain in meetings about all-night, noisy parties that spill onto their lawns, and prostitution and drug-trafficking that they witness from their windows.

Scholars such as Ronald Bayor and Larry Keating pointed out that Atlanta has had a long history of underclass black displacement since the 1930s, through slum clearance and urban renewal projects, commercial development and the building of highways, and the later building of the MARTA rail system and sports stadiums.<sup>4</sup> Lynwood Park developed as a dead-ended community with only one point of ingress and egress, and offered a haven for many of the scattered fragments of the displaced underclass black enclaves. The historical record contains information on the geographical locations of some of the former underclass African American communities in the Atlanta metropolitan area that have disappeared since the 1930s. And thus Bayor and Keating could discuss their dates of displacement. There also exists much scholarship on the area's elite blacks, their lifestyles, and their interaction with white business leaders and members of the white

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<sup>4</sup> Ronald H. Bayor, *Race and the Shaping of Twentieth-Century Atlanta* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 58, 69-79; Larry Keating, *Race, Class, and Urban Expansion* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001), 48-49; Dana F. White, "A Geography of Expansion and Containment, 1870-1970," *Atlanta Historical Journal* 26 (1982), 199-225.

political elite, such as Karen Ferguson's work on Atlanta during the New Deal era, and Jacqueline Rouse's biography of Lugenia Burns Hope.<sup>5</sup> Much has been written about Martin Luther King, Jr., the Ebenezer Baptist Church, and life on the black elite corridor of Auburn Avenue. But an historical lacuna exists on Atlanta's underclass communities. According to Bayor and Keating, at least twenty of these communities have been eliminated since the 1930s.<sup>6</sup> There is no record of the lives of those who inhabited them, and this work is an attempt to partially address this gap in the historical record.

There were three distinct periods in Lynwood Park's history. The first is the founding era from the 1930s to the 1960s. This period during segregation is widely described by scholars as the golden age of the ghetto, when blacks cooperated and helped each other, and collectively raised and educated their children, while instilling in them a sense of somebodiness to oppose the negative influences segregation wrought on the young black psyche. Lynwood Park's second era was from the 1970s to the 1980s, when the community's youths dropped out of school in large numbers, due to school desegregation and the racism they encountered in DeKalb County's white schools. The dropouts entered the marijuana trade as an alternative to working at minimum wage, service-industry jobs, the only legitimate employment available to black youths with a limited education. The third era was from the 1990s to the present, when crack cocaine trafficking and addiction led to a decline of institutional life, and the eventual displacement of the majority of the traditional community.<sup>7</sup> My Masters thesis "Scattering

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<sup>5</sup> Karen Ferguson, *Black Politics in New Deal Atlanta* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002); Jacqueline Anne Rouse, *Lugenia Burns Hope* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1989).

<sup>6</sup> There were many more than twenty displaced black enclaves. For example, the Lynwood Park respondents mention at least ten that were displaced from the immediate environs of their community.

<sup>7</sup> For more on the constellation of issues driving gentrification, see Neil Smith, *The New Urban Frontier: Gentrification and the Revanchist City* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 39; Gary Bridge and Sophie Watson, eds. *A Companion to the City* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers 2000), 337.

the Fragments Again” documented and analyzed, in a chronological format, the relationship, dynamics, and competing agendas between Lynwood Park and DeKalb County that eventually led to the community’s displacement.<sup>8</sup> This work documents aspects of Lynwood Park’s social and cultural history in a thematic format, how these changed over time, and how the residents recall the community and its history, and what it was like to come from, and live in, Lynwood Park.

I have been conducting an oral interview project over the past four years, which has yielded in excess of four thousand pages of testimony. The project documents aspects of the lived experience of ordinary working people, and hopes to also serve a social purpose by bringing into history the voices of a marginalized and generally ignored group of people. The project employs the oral tradition of the underclass, people who generally leave no written records, and is in the form of popular autobiography that offers the silenced an opportunity to speak. This work analyzes how these living witnesses interpreted and made sense of their lives and experiences, the community dynamics that influenced their personal identities, the survival strategies they adopted to ameliorate poverty, and the ways in which they remember the enclave’s culture and important events.

Interviews were conducted across a wide cross-section of residents, from community and church leaders to those who sold their grandparents’ homes for a pittance to support a drug habit, and are now homeless in Lynwood Park. Respondents range from upstanding citizens and criminals, and criminals who have become upstanding citizens over time. And the totality of interviews also includes the views of white outsiders, police officers, and county officials, as well as Lynwood Park residents who moved away in adulthood, long before the commencement of redevelopment. The history project does not

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<sup>8</sup> Veronica Menezes Holmes, “Scattering the Fragments Again” (M.A. thesis, Georgia State University, 2005).



seek some abstraction as *the* truth, but is rather recording what the truth represents for each respondent. For this work, I analyzed discussions of the web of feelings, attitudes, and values that gave meaning to the community's activities and events, to get to the respondents' interpretations of what it meant to come from and live in Lynwood Park, in the belief that this could reveal something about the people and their mentalities that could add to the historical record.

Lynwood Park was always an empowered community that projected an identity of autonomy and independence. The residents were always coping with scarcity, and were ingenious at finding ways to survive and solve their problems. In effect, Lynwood Park was a community that could survive without assistance from the outside, and this character strength is reflected in the testimonies. All the respondents have strong personalities, speak matter-of-factly about events in their lives, as well as the lives of others in the enclave. Interviewees speak with the conviction that they have a right to their stories and lived experiences, whether or not they are palatable to the outside. But more than this, Lynwood Park is a deeply Christian community, and many respondents were clear about what they knew firsthand, what they were involved in, and what they heard about but could not confirm. Others declined to speak about events they did not witness directly, citing that they did not wish to repeat gossip.

Without exception, the residents have frankly spoken about all aspects of Lynwood Park's dynamics, from church and home life, to street life and its illegality, and there was never any discernable attempt to sanitize any aspect of the enclave's dynamics. What also comes across in the testimonies is that the respondents are proud of being from Lynwood Park. They are proud of their struggles, and their survival strategies, even though some of their choices destroyed lives and limited their options. The residents seemingly air

everything—the good, the bad, and the ugly—with a frankness that indicates that they have a right to the lives they have lived, that they have paid the price for its bad aspects and their unfortunate choices, that they have used the good aspects of coming from Lynwood Park to recover their lives and rebuild identities, and that Lynwood Park as a community, with all its various dynamics, is simply what it is. In several instances, respondents maintained that the interviews were cathartic, that they felt unburdened after recording their stories. One resident, Patricia Martin, who had lived in the community for sixty-five years, and who sold her property during our series of interviews, said that she could then move from the enclave with an unburdened heart, since recording her Lynwood Park history represented an appropriate closing of the door on one phase of her life’s journey.

This work presents only snippets of the stories of Lynwood Park. While documenting the community’s social and cultural life, selections were made as to which threads would be pursued, and those that made clear the dynamics that led from the settling of the community, to its displacement, were privileged. In other words, narratives that speak, for example, of female-headed households, which demonstrate the moral strength of black underclass women is only alluded to, and thus the narratives contain many nuggets that could be mined at a later date. In presenting pertinent sections of the stories, a decision was made that in some instances the respondent’s snippet could stand alone within an argument, while at other times the interviewer’s questions were also included in the excerpt, to demonstrate the co-creative nature of oral history. Throughout the work, the trope “born in” is intended to assist the reader in locating each respondent generationally within Lynwood Park’s three eras, and to demonstrate that certain negative dynamics were prevalent throughout the enclave’s entire history.

Each respondent was advised that he/she would be provided one copy of the transcript and a dubbed copy of the interview. All Lynwood Park respondents signed a release form that stated that the interviewer had the right “to use the interview for research, and other purposes, including print and electronic reproduction.” The interviewees also were advised that all master tapes and final copies of the transcripts would be housed at the Weltner Library of Oglethorpe University, where copies of tapes and transcripts would always be made available to them and their families. The respondents were asked to proof the transcripts, but no one made any changes in the past four years, nor has anyone asked to have his/her interview withdrawn from the collection, nor has anyone requested that his/her identity be disguised. All transcripts will be proofed one final time against the master tapes of the interviews, and converted into pdf files before being turned over to Oglethorpe University and be made available to the public. After four years of building trust and goodwill in Lynwood Park, many other residents have requested to be included in the project, so the interviews will continue, and the collection will grow, as long as there is anyone with a Lynwood Park connection who wishes to participate.

Scholars such as Belinda Bozzoli argue that oral interviews conducted by someone of the same race, gender, age, and cultural background as the respondents can be the most successful, because of an insider perspective that puts respondents at ease. Bozzoli contends that the interviewer’s understanding of the community’s culture and dynamics leads to the uncovering of more authentic data.<sup>9</sup> However, historian Kathryn Anderson explained that the sharing of a similar background and gender could also present a hindrance, since the community’s etiquette could prohibit initiating certain topics or

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<sup>9</sup> Belinda Bozzoli, “Interviewing the Women of Phokeng,” in Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson, eds. *The Oral History Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 159.

disagreeing with and challenging the respondent, especially if the respondent is older than the interviewer.<sup>10</sup> In fact, scholar Susan Burton pointed out that outsider interviewing can actually lead to more effective data-gathering, as it is much easier to talk to strangers, and respondents are more likely to tell secrets and uncomfortable details to outsiders rather than those of the same background, while outsiders are not loath to ask challenging questions about controversial issues.<sup>11</sup> And all scholars advise that the establishment of trust between interviewer and respondent is one of the critical components of successful oral interviewing.

Elijah Anderson took advantage of his cultural background and gender when he conducted fieldwork for his Ph.D. dissertation by interviewing men in the corner bar of an underclass African American community in Chicago in the 1970s, which resulted in *A Place on the Corner*.<sup>12</sup> Similarly, Marla Frederick interviewed elderly churchwomen in an underclass African American community in Halifax County, North Carolina. She chose to write on eight of these women for her Ph.D. dissertation, which resulted in *Between Sundays: Black Women and Everyday Struggles of Faith*.<sup>13</sup> Both Anderson and Frederick took advantage of their gender and insider cultural knowledge, since they are both African Americans. Because of this cultural affinity to their respondents, Anderson and Frederick were immediately welcomed and accepted into the group, and found respondents readily willing to talk.

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<sup>10</sup> Kathryn Anderson, "Interview Techniques: Shedding Agendas," in Perks and Thomson, *The Oral History Reader*, 130.

<sup>11</sup> Susan K. Burton, "Issues in Cross-Cultural Interviewing," in Perks and Thomson, *The Oral History Reader*, 167.

<sup>12</sup> Elijah Anderson, *A Place on the Corner* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976).

<sup>13</sup> Marla F. Frederick, *Between Sundays: Black Women and Everyday Struggles of Faith* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).

My status as an outsider in Lynwood Park has necessitated the overcoming of racial and cultural barriers. Sociologist Herbert Gans conducted fieldwork on a white immigrant community in Boston that resulted in *The Urban Villagers: Group and Class in the Life of Italian-Americans*. Gans mentioned in his introduction that he would have liked to have conducted a similar study of an underclass African American community but was prevented from doing so because he could not gain acceptance into such a group because of racial and cultural barriers.<sup>14</sup>

I have spent four years establishing a relationship with the people of Lynwood Park. And although I am a white outsider, they have welcomed me and feel at ease with me, and I find that this applies to both men and women, young and old. Therefore, I believe that my work is unique, in that it brings into the historical record the voices of a group of marginalized African Americans in the South responding to a white outsider. This approach adds another dimension to the scholarship of the African American underclass by scholars such as Anderson and Frederick. And while Anderson and Frederick's research examined only a limited number of respondents exclusively of the same gender: men in the case of Anderson, and women for Frederick's study, my work incorporates voices from a broad cross-section of Lynwood Park, and range across age, gender, and economic spectrums.

My life before Lynwood Park was preparation for my relationship with the people of Lynwood Park. I was born in 1949 in British Guiana, and was raised in a remote country district of that Third World country where the British designated all non-British as

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<sup>14</sup> Herbert J. Gans, *The Urban Villagers: Group and Class in the Life of Italian-Americans* (New York: The Free Press, 1962).

inferior.<sup>15</sup> The descendants of African slaves and East Indian indentured servants, brought by the British to work on rice and sugar plantations, made up ninety percent of the population. The other ten percent were white: the Portuguese, Dutch, Chinese, and their mixtures. Under the British colonial umbrella of inferiority, local inhabitants delineated themselves along class rather than racial lines, and blacks generally held positions of power and respect as politicians, government ministers, doctors, lawyers, judges, educators, and civil service employees. In fact, up until my last three months of high school, all my teachers were black. All races mixed socially and intermarried within their classes. And while I was designated as upper class due to an educated and economically successful Portuguese father, my mother was the child of East Indian indentured servants who had arrived in the country in 1907 to work on a sugar plantation. My mother was born in what was essentially a slave shack, had little education, and as a child trapped rats in the rice fields and baby alligators in the swamps for the family's diet. My grandparents never escaped the plantation. So steeped in debt were they after their five-year indentureship was satisfied that they spent their lives "working off" the debt of an exploitive system designed to entrap them for life. But unlike black slaves in America, their children were free.

I was born in the county's capital, a metropolis of approximately three hundred. The remote district in which I was raised was comprised mainly of subsistence rice farmers, many of whom—including my mother's relatives—lived in mud huts with thatched roofs and dirt floors. There were also shopkeepers, the requisite civil servants, and a handful of British administrators who never bothered to disguise their disdain for the locals. The one main road—thirty-one miles long—was unpaved, there was no running

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<sup>15</sup> British Guiana gained its independence from Great Britain in 1966 and changed its name to Guyana.

water or electricity, most children went to school barefooted but in their best clothes—their school uniforms—and wore what essentially amounted to rags the rest of the time. My mother's relatives had numerous children—a dozen per family would not be unusual. They were the future labor force, and were also seen as assets by people who had practically nothing materially. When I visited, I played with cousins in the rice fields, sat cross-legged on the floor and ate with my hand off banana leaves, and all the children slept like puppies on jute bags laid over the dirt floor.

In Guyana, East Indian, African, and European cultures blended, people worked hard and played hard, parties would begin at midnight and last until dawn, and no one thought it unusual for a man to work hard from before sunup to noon—when the temperature was most bearable—and spend the rest of the day under a palm tree enjoying a bottle of rum with his mates. There were many who did not work but lived off the land: picked the plentiful fruit from prolific trees, fished in the rivers, and could live outdoors in the tropics year round. Itinerant Hindu sadhus and mystics would wander the paths, be fed by householders, and one sadhu lived under a mango tree in our garden for one year.

As a peripatetic, I traveled the world for forty years, have visited the Third World extensively, and have lived in Third World countries in South and Central America, the Caribbean, and Africa. I have lived in several countries where I was unfamiliar with the language and culture. I always went in friendship and with curiosity, without guile or judgment, and was always made welcome and embraced. Over time I came to see myself as a member of a human family, and a citizen of the world. But more than this, I am also a product of the Third World, have a Third World sensibility, and grasp what is required to eke out an existence in abject poverty. The German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche argued that only those who suffer greatly are able to truly celebrate life and experience

great joy. In other words, the pendulum swings equally in both directions and to the extent that one's abyss is deep, so too will one's peak be high.<sup>16</sup> Nietzsche's truth is borne out in the Third World, where people have little, work hard, and yet live passionately. People in the Third World essentially live at the very bottom of the economic spectrum, yet are always smiling. Many Third World people dance in the streets, whistle and sing out loud, double over and cry from laughing, celebrate their cunning at devising survival strategies, and live in a symbiotic relationship with nature—in many ways very similar to the people of Lynwood Park.

I began attending Oglethorpe University in 1998, drove along Windsor Parkway, passed Lynwood Park every day for four years, and generally ignored the community, and “saw” but “didn’t see” the enclave, just as most whites had done since its founding. After graduating with a degree in philosophy in 2002, I began graduate studies in history at Georgia State University. In October 2004 I drove along Windsor Parkway to attend a meeting at Oglethorpe, and was shocked to see extensive mini-mansion construction taking place in the enclave. I was also taking a class in oral history that semester, and decided that I would attempt to document the history of Lynwood Park before the community was completely displaced. I am often asked how I was able to establish trust among the residents, and I can only surmise that the same skills that got me accepted in Third World countries across the globe worked equally well in Lynwood Park: the extension of friendship, curiosity about the lived experience of the residents, lack of judgment, and genuine empathy. The people of Lynwood Park have been historically hostile to outsiders—both white and black—and say they can sense racism at first meeting. Patricia Martin, born in 1932, was the executive director of the Lynwood Park Community

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<sup>16</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*. Trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1974), 244.



Development Corporation (CDC), the enclave's non-profit organization, when I first entered Lynwood Park in 2004. Martin said of the community's relationship with whites: "If we don't like you, we ain't got nothing to say."<sup>17</sup> The people of Lynwood Park have not only welcomed and accepted me, but had a lot to say to me during the interviews.

Many respondents have expressed gratitude at having someone care about them and their history. They express regret that the histories of other displaced underclass communities have been lost, since many of their kinfolk were born and raised in them. They have also said that each of them knows only a few snippets of Lynwood Park's history and are happy that someone with scholarly credentials is gathering the stories and recording the history, such that they also will be informed about their community's history and dynamics.

While as an outsider and an historian I am able to maintain an objective remove, which enables me to write a balanced history of the community, over the past four years I have also become embedded in the history of Lynwood Park. In 2005 the residents elected me to the board of the CDC. As an instructor at both Georgia State and Oglethorpe Universities, my students have volunteered for extra-credit, service-learning projects by working annually at Lynwood Park Day. I attend all four of the community's remaining churches, and many of the people have become my friends: from homeless street people, ministers, and community leaders, to residents, many of whom were former criminals, and many others who dipped and dabbled in other forms of illegality over time. I find that the people of Lynwood Park are decent and good, and I have learned much from them in terms of patience, tolerance, and forgiveness.

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<sup>17</sup> Patricia Martin, interview by author, 27 October 2004, transcript, 14-16.

I am engaged in a two-way relationship with Lynwood Park. They have shared their stories, which have yielded a Masters thesis and a Ph.D. dissertation for me. In return, I have produced transcripts of their life stories and recordings of their voices for future generations. I am writing a history from which they will also benefit. I have given them an opportunity to enter into the historical record, and I have contributed to Lynwood Park fundraising drives. I am also presently arranging a partnership between Lynwood Park and Oglethorpe University, so that Oglethorpe's students can tutor Lynwood Park's children in an after-school program as part of their service-learning credit, which is required of each Oglethorpe graduate. But more than all this, I suspect that the people of Lynwood Park welcomed me into their community and lives, and shared their stories with me, because I was the only one who cared about their lived experiences.

When I turned into Lynwood Park that first time I knew nothing of its history. The first interview was with Patricia Martin, and was conducted in her office. Martin sat behind her desk as executive director of the community's non-profit development organization, and I sat beside her desk as a humble and grateful graduate student. In that first interview Martin spoke of Ku Klux Klan marches in the displaced black enclaves, Lynwood Park's dangerous boundary and the men who patrolled it, the community's illegality, spirituality, and self-help organizations. Three of the first five interviews that I conducted in the community were with Martin, and the knowledge she gave me of the community's history and dynamics informed many of the threads that I explored in subsequent interviews with other respondents, who then added other snippets that I could then explore with other respondents, in an attempt to record major events from multiple perspectives. The vast majority of the interviews were conducted in an institutional setting—in the reading room of Lynwood Park's community center—and the fact that the

respondents had to make an effort to travel there—especially those who no longer lived in the enclave—speaks to their desire to have their stories documented for the historical record. My task was to respect the integrity of both the individual and the collective community history, and the threads included in this work were those to which a number of respondents alluded and discussed.

In many ways, this work is an *apologia* for Lynwood Park and all black underclass communities. In teaching U.S. history over the past several years, I came to realize that Lynwood Park, and all black underclass communities in the United States, are the result in the present of a long history of racism in America that organized white supremacy and passed laws to keep blacks subordinate. This work is also a commentary about white racism and the failure of America to live up to its ideals of freedom and equality. The people of Lynwood Park are embedded in, and are the result of, historical mechanisms to establish and maintain white supremacy that began at least since Bacon's Rebellion in 1676, which have subordinated with impunity a wide swath of the American population virtually since the settling of the first colonies.

The plight of Lynwood Park's residents did not begin in 1928 when the first black person purchased a lot deep in the woods of DeKalb County. Lynwood Park is rather the twenty-first century result of a long history of white supremacy that began after elite planters realized in the aftermath of Bacon's Rebellion in 1676 that poor whites and blacks did—and could again—unite against them and their exploitative power structure.<sup>18</sup> Members of the white elite then put in place a series of political and social measures whereby poor whites would identify with them, while blacks were designated as inferior

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<sup>18</sup> Historian Kenneth Stampp pointed out that before 1676 black and whites in servitude worked together, got drunk together, made love, ran away together, and rebelled together. See Kenneth M. Stampp, *The Peculiar Institution: Slavery in the Ante-Bellum South* (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 86-140.

and enslaved for life over time. Whites in power then fanned the flames of racism and instilled a fear of blacks in the white psyche, to ensure that poor and exploited whites would never again unite with blacks against the *status quo* as they had in Jamestown in 1676. And after the scientific and industrial revolutions of the eighteenth century, Europeans invented race to delineate themselves as white, intelligent, rational, moral, and superior. They chose Africa as Europe's opposite, and designated Africans as black, inferior, savage and superstitious, guided by passions—like animals—rather than by rational thought, like themselves.<sup>19</sup>

Historian Ivan Hannaford claimed that race is a recent phenomenon, constructed since the eighteenth century. Race is the European triumph of *nomos* (laws) over *physis* (nature).<sup>20</sup> In the eighteenth century, explorer James Cooke brought the world's exotica—including knowledge of its various peoples—to Europe, which Europeans then named, categorized, and ranked in hierarchical order. On the human hierarchical scale, Europeans—the namers—placed themselves at the top, apes at the bottom, and Africans just above apes. Europeans then took themselves out of nature, saw themselves as the masters and rulers of nature, and made laws and rules to control those in nature. Europeans created and perpetuated stereotypes about the world's various others, which assisted in establishing and maintaining European dominance and the subordination of the rest of the world's peoples.<sup>21</sup> Hannaford explained that race was not constructed through a

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<sup>19</sup> Michael Adas, *Machines as the Measure of Men: Science, Technology, and Ideologies of Western Dominance* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989), 3-15.

<sup>20</sup> For the etymology of *nomos* and its contrast with *physis*, see Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 15, 63.

<sup>21</sup> Anke Te Heesen, *The World in a Box: The Story of an Eighteenth-Century Picture Encyclopedia*. Trans. Ann M. Hentschel (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 42-9, 193-5.

gutter philosophy, but rather by a race discourse that ran through many canonical thinkers and texts of modern thought.<sup>22</sup>

The German philosopher Martin Heidegger held that each individual interprets the world through the lens of his “thrown” context—the situation and constellation of ideas into which he is “thrown” at birth.<sup>23</sup> Founding Fathers Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin were two of America’s most prominent Enlightenment *philosophes* whose thrown contexts were influenced by the race discourse of the eighteenth century. It is therefore not surprising that Jefferson and Franklin saw no contradiction with enslaving blacks after supporting a war for their own freedom.<sup>24</sup> In 1751, at age forty-five, Benjamin Franklin wrote that one hundred years of slave importation “has blacken’d half America,” that only Anglo Saxons were white, and Franklin said of the nascent republic:

[W]hy should we . . . darken its People? Why increase the Sons of *Africa*, by Planting them in *America*, where we have so fair an Opportunity, by excluding all Blacks and Tawneys, of increasing the lovely White?<sup>25</sup>

Historian Ira Berlin explained that slavery and racism was not limited to the American South but was prevalent in the North by the eighteenth century, where “large slaveholders took on the airs of a planter class,” and slave traders took boatloads of slaves directly from Africa for their auction blocks. In other words, the entire country was implicated in

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<sup>22</sup> Ivan Hannaford, *Race: the History of an Idea in the West* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996).

<sup>23</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time: A Translation of Sein und Zeit*. Trans. Joan Stambaugh (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), 164-8.

<sup>24</sup> Although the Constitution does not contain the word slavery, it nevertheless gave the institution legitimacy. Article 1, Section 2 recognizes the legality of “persons” bound for labor as property that can be bought and sold. And Article 1, Section 2, Clause 3 *prevents* Congress from abolishing the importation of slaves until 1808. Nearly all of the Constitution’s drafters were slave owners, many slaves were lost in the Revolutionary War, and Clause 3 in effect gave them twenty years to replenish their supplies and then rely upon natural increase after 1808 to produce their labor force.

<sup>25</sup> Benjamin Franklin, Ormond Seavey, ed. *Autobiography and Other Writings* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 255-60. By the mid-1780s Franklin became convinced that slavery had to end, and founded the first abolitionist group in America. See H. W. Brands, *The First American: The Life and Times of Benjamin Franklin* (New York: Random House, 2000), 703.

slavery, the concept of white superiority and black inferiority, and the approval to pass laws to keep blacks in a subordinate position after slavery was abolished.<sup>26</sup>

E. M. Halliday claimed that *Notes on the State of Virginia*, completed in 1782, was “a revelation of the mind of Thomas Jefferson,” who drafted the Declaration of Independence, which stated that “all men are created equal.” In his *Notes*, Jefferson wrote that blacks were unattractive, possessed “a very strong and disagreeable odor,” were inferior to whites in the faculty of reason, and in imagination were “dull, tasteless, and anomalous.” Jefferson concluded that blacks were “simpler folk . . . better suited to a life of captivity than whites.”<sup>27</sup> Franklin and Jefferson seem racist from the present *etic* (outsider) perspective, yet in their eighteenth century *emic* (insider) context, it would have been rare to find a white person holding a view contrary to theirs.

While Franklin and Jefferson are often thought to have championed abolition later in their lives, neither man conceived that equal rights should be extended to blacks. The quote inscribed on the Jefferson Memorial honoring the Founding Father as an abolitionist reads: “Nothing is more certainly written in the book of fate, than that these people are to be free.” However, left off the inscription is the second part of Jefferson’s sentence: “nor is it less certain that the two races, equally free, cannot live in the same government.” In fact, Jefferson devised an elaborate scheme to rid America of blacks through emigration, keeping black men from procreating, and a deliberate program of miscegenation of black women with white men to eliminate all traces of African ethnicity from America.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Ira Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 106, 177, 181-2.

<sup>27</sup> E. M. Halliday, *Understanding Thomas Jefferson* (New York: HarperCollins, 2001), 46, 149-50.

<sup>28</sup> Halliday, *Understanding Thomas Jefferson*, 151-3.

It is therefore not surprising that Supreme Court Chief Justice Roger B. Taney, the inheritor of a long tradition of white belief in black inferiority, attempted to seal the fate of blacks in America with his 1857 ruling in *Dred Scott v. Sandford* when he wrote:

The African race in the United States even when free, are everywhere a degraded class, and exercise no political influence. The privileges they are allowed to enjoy, are accorded to them as a matter of kindness and benevolence rather than right . . . They are not looked upon as citizens by the contracting parties who formed the Constitution. They were evidently not supposed to be included by the term citizens.

In other words, no person of African descent—free or enslaved—could be considered an American citizen after 1857. Taney concluded that the Declaration of Independence did not apply to blacks, and that its author and signers did not intend that blacks be entitled to the natural rights of “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.”<sup>29</sup>

The practice of legally marking blacks as different has ancient roots in Greek philosophy and Aristotle’s ideas about equality, which influenced the *philosophes* of the Enlightenment, including Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin. Aristotle supported slavery, and formulated the principle of like/unlike of human equality, which legal scholar Catharine MacKinnon explained is still “treated as common sense in our law until today.” According to MacKinnon, Aristotle’s principle supported laws whereby “segregating those seen as likes from unlikes constitutes equality,” for both groups, thus supplying the justification in 1896 for *Plessy v. Ferguson*’s doctrine of “separate but equal.”<sup>30</sup> However, Aristotle also maintained that equality had to go beyond written law, a principle that had little influence on American jurors. In other words, Aristotle could be used by American

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<sup>29</sup> Paul Finkelman, *Dred Scott v. Sandford: A Brief History with Documents* (Boston: Bedford Books, 1997), 56. The 1868 Fourteenth Amendment gave blacks citizenship and made citizenship in the United States *droit de sol*—citizenship by birth—rather than *droit de sang*—citizenship by blood.

<sup>30</sup> Aristotle, *The Nichomachean Ethics*. Trans. Terence Irwin (Indianapolis: Hackett 1985), v.3, 1131a-b; Catharine MacKinnon, “Revised Opinions in *Brown v. Board of Education*,” in Jack M. Balkin, *What Brown v. Board of Education Should Have Said* (New York: New York University Press, 2001), 152. The *Plessy* ruling only applied to railroad cars in the city of New Orleans, but the precedent naturalized segregation across the South.

lawmakers to justify “separate but equal” conditions for blacks, but then ignored when separate and *unequal* conditions resulted. In fact, when inequality resulted from lack of facilities, lawmakers could further appeal to Aristotle’s like/unlike principle to maintain separation.<sup>31</sup>

In 1890 Henry M. Field, the liberal and progressive Presbyterian minister, wrote that a color line existed in the North. Field was the younger brother of Supreme Court Justice Stephen J. Field, who ruled with the majority in *Plessy*. The younger Field wrote that racial separation is the result of instinct, and that no court should legislate against instinct. Known as a liberal, Henry Field argued that although blacks were in America as long as whites, they had had no great achievements, nor produced a great leader, which was a sign of their inferiority, since it is impossible to keep down a race of millions if they were truly great. Field then pointed out that Northern blacks had been free for one century, and yet “the same inferiority exists . . . [and] it is with extreme regret that I recognize the backwardness of my colored brethren.” Yet Field spoke fondly of one black woman, to whom he owed a debt he could never repay, since she raised him from birth.<sup>32</sup> The comments of this liberal minister from the North suggest that by the end of the nineteenth century the idea of black inferiority was naturalized across America.

Legal scholar Derrick Bell wrote that European immigrants in the nineteenth century, exploited and brutalized in the factories and mines of America, created whiteness

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<sup>31</sup> Aristotle, *The Rhetoric and Poetics of Aristotle*. Trans. W. Rhys Roberts (New York: Modern Library, 1954). Aristotle’s principle of equity was reformulated by Saint Augustine as natural law theory, the idea that freedom and equality were bestowed by God when the universe was created. Any positive/man-made law that violated natural law principles is unjust, and Augustine said, “an unjust law is no law at all.” Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. appealed to natural law theory to demonstrate why he was morally obligated to break positive laws that limited black freedom and equality. King underscored his point by explaining that everything Adolph Hitler did was legal according to positive law, but immoral according to natural law theory. See Martin Luther King, Jr. *Letter from a Birmingham Jail*, 16 April 1963 (Philadelphia: African Studies Center, University of Pennsylvania), 5-6.

<sup>32</sup> Brook Thomas, *Plessy v. Ferguson: A Brief History with Documents* (Boston: Bedford Books, 1997), 101-3; for an overview of African American history and achievement, see Joe William Trotter, Jr. *The African American Experience* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2001).



for themselves by donning blackface and denigrating blacks in minstrel shows, which were popular across the country. The shows perpetuated racial stereotypes, and helped to assimilate immigrant “wage slaves” into a white nationalism “whose common theme was the disparagement and disadvantaging of blacks.” Bell also explained that America is a country that views property ownership as a measure of worth. Whiteness was regarded as a property right by those poor whites without the traditional types of property, such as money, land, and securities. Social segregation then “became a physical manifestation of this property right, one the law enforced,” and whites saw any challenge to *Plessy’s* “separate but equal” ruling as a threat to their vested property rights. According to Bell, whites have always needed blacks in a subordinate position “in order to sustain the myriad fictions of white racial integrity . . . [and] America has been able to define itself as a white country by marking blacks as that which does not constitute it.”<sup>33</sup> Similarly, Richard Kluger explained that from the beginning of the republic “American whites had exploited Negroes. That was what they had been brought here for, and the tradition was sanctioned by law.”<sup>34</sup> And economist Gunnar Myrdal pointed out: “when slavery disappeared, caste remained,” and discrimination against blacks “*in every generation* is . . . rooted in this tradition of economic exploitation” (emphasis added). Therefore, it is the historic mechanisms of racism and discrimination, which Myrdal termed “the vicious circle of cumulative causation,” that created underclass blacks steeped in poverty in America.<sup>35</sup>

Derrick Bell explained that racism is widespread across America and is not a few unsightly weeds that can be extirpated with a few laws. Rather, racism has invaded the

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<sup>33</sup> Derrick Bell, “Revised Opinions in *Brown v. Board of Education*,” in Balkin, *What Brown*, 191.

<sup>34</sup> Richard Kluger, *Simple Justice: The History of Brown v. Board of Education and Black America’s Struggle for Equality* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1976), 313.

<sup>35</sup> Gunnar Myrdal, *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1944), 207-8.

entire landscape of America, and planted deep roots within and across the structures and institutions of the country. Therefore, being born and raised in the United States, with its historic racism and denigration of blacks in both the North and the South, it is not surprising that judges frequently reflect a bias against blacks. Supreme Court Justice William J. Brennan Jr. was one of the few who pointed this out in his 1987 dissent in *McCleskey v. Kemp*, a death penalty appeal, when he cited *Dred Scott* “to illustrate the way racism has long been a factor in American law.”<sup>36</sup>

Urbanization, the need for workers during WWI, and the boll weevil epidemic helped drive many rural blacks into cities looking for a better life in the early twentieth century. The Great Depression hurt many blacks, as whites took traditional Negro jobs, which pushed underclass blacks like those of Lynwood Park into near starvation in the 1930s. Then as blue-collar jobs were increasingly eliminated after the 1960s, to be replaced by white-collar jobs requiring more education, many underclass blacks were trapped in urban ghettos across the nation.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was one of the new theologians who saw sin in a new way, and was deeply influenced by social gospel minister Walter Rauschenbush. Whereas in the nineteenth century sin was individualistic: “you are a sinner/you need to be saved,” in the twentieth century sin was no longer about the individual because urbanization meant that no single person could produce to satisfy his subsistence needs. Urbanization meant that everyone was interconnected, and if people were trapped in cities, which led the underclass to commit sinful acts in order to survive, that meant that the structures and

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<sup>36</sup> Finkelman, *Dred Scott*, 6. Particularly salient to McCleskey's claim were figures from a study showing that although only 9.2% of all Georgia homicides involved black defendants and white victims, prosecutors sought the death penalty in 70% of those cases. Most notably, a death penalty conviction was given in only 1% of the cases involving a black victim and a black defendant. Justice Lewis Powell, Jr. expressed post-retirement regret over his majority opinion in the case, and admitted that people who killed whites were significantly more likely to receive the death penalty as punishment than people who killed blacks.

institutions of the society—and its leaders—were evil.<sup>37</sup> The new theologians claimed that people were made poor and fail because the system is evil, unjust, and racist. They believed that laws had to be changed to give the underclass a political voice and social equality, and these changes would then enable the underclass to prosper, which meant they would commit less sinful acts. Therefore, changing laws to give blacks equality would eventually lead to a more spiritual people.<sup>38</sup>

Martin Luther King, Jr. combined the ideals of Christianity, and the non-violence ethos of *satyagraha* of Mahatma Gandhi, and appealed to natural law theory to overturn positive laws that segregated, disenfranchised, and subordinated blacks. King set out to arouse the conscience of the nation about white injustice toward blacks, and clashed with racist politics in Birmingham, Alabama in 1963. Images of the resultant riots, mainly caused by racist Eugene T. “Bull” Connor’s attack on non-violent marchers, seared the front pages of the world press, outraged millions of people, and contributed to the civil rights gains of the 1960s.<sup>39</sup> Yet in 1993 social scientist Andrew Miller pointed out that despite those gains, little had changed in the mechanisms of black subordination that continued to produce and perpetuate the underclass.<sup>40</sup> And the stories of Lynwood Park reveal that in the South, black civil, political, and social gains engendered a white backlash against blacks, since whites interpreted black rights as a threat to white supremacy.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Walter Rauschenbush, *Christianity and the Social Crisis* (New York: MacMillan, 1911), 216-9, 359-361.

<sup>38</sup> Rauschenbush, *Christianity*, 347-357.

<sup>39</sup> Rauschenbush, *Christianity*, 368; Staff, “Never Again Where He Was,” *Time*, Vol. 83, No. 1 (January 3, 1964), 5; Glenn T. Eskew, *But for Birmingham: The Local and National Movement in the Civil Rights Struggle* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 265-97; see also Charles Marsh, *God’s Long Summer: Stories of Faith and Civil Rights* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), 33-48.

<sup>40</sup> Andrew T. Miller, “Social Science, Social Policy, and the Heritage of African-American Families,” in Michael B. Katz, ed. *The Underclass Debate: Views from History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), 280, 287.

<sup>41</sup> W. J. Cash, *Mind of the South* (New York: Vintage Books, 1991), 245. Cash competently chronicles the myriad ways in which blacks were firmly under the yoke of white supremacy, *and* that white southerners needed a black underclass in order construct and maintain the fiction of their identity as superior.

Lynwood Park is the evidence of the failure of America to extend its ethos of equality to all its citizens. And while one could appeal to the three Reconstruction amendments, the civil rights gains, and affirmative action, as evidence of the country's attempt to correct past injustice towards blacks, there is also ample evidence that America passes laws seemingly to give blacks equality to serve international exigencies, and thus never seriously cares about enforcement. And there is ample evidence of structural and institutional racism in America that continues to subordinate blacks, and impoverish further the black underclass. In other words, the very existence of black underclass communities in America prove that the country continues to limit the options of a significant segment of its population.

Some social thinkers, such as Daniel Patrick Moynihan, pointed to many of the underclass dynamics that exist in communities such as Lynwood Park as evidence of a tangle of black pathology that perpetuates black deviance and a culture of poverty. Such thinkers judge the black underclass by middle-class standards, and fail to recognize the limitations the nation places upon its black citizens with its culture of racism. Social commentators such as Moynihan do not recognize that for those in abject poverty, children represent something that those who have very little can call their own.<sup>42</sup> Middle-class citizens park boats and vacation trailers in their driveways, yet denigrate underclass blacks for "littering" their communities with unsightly abandoned cars. These negative opinions of the underclass fail to see that abandoned vehicles represent material wealth, offer a

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<sup>42</sup> For more on the value the underclass places on its children, see Lisa Dodson, *Don't Call Us Out of Name: The Untold Lives of Women and Girls in Poor America* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1998). For more on the culture of poverty argument, see N. Glazer and D. P. Moynihan, *Beyond the Melting Pot: The Negroes, Puerto Ricans, Jews, Italians, and Irish in New York City* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1963); D. P. Moynihan, *The Negro family: A case for national action* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1965).

place where a person can “sleep it off” rather than disturbing a crowded household, and offer shelter to the homeless.

White thinkers who denigrate underclass black enclaves as breeding a culture of poverty see too little, and do not acknowledge the extent to which whites have benefited from white affirmative action—preferential treatment—since the birth of the republic. These white critics do not grasp the extent to which members of the black underclass have had their lives stunted and deformed by face-to-face and structural and institutional racism in America. For the people of Lynwood Park, engaging in illegality was one way to win everyday battles of survival, always knowing that they could never win the war against racism in America.

The people of Lynwood Park are proud of their community and the lives they have lived. They willingly shared their stories and the community’s underside, because they are Christians who are invested in telling the truth, they have served their time for criminal activity, and many testify in church about the illegal aspects of their lives as evidence of their present reformed and upstanding identities, and typify Nietzsche’s query: “What is the seal of liberation?—No longer being ashamed in front of oneself.”<sup>43</sup>

The Lynwood Park research project was never intended to be a mission to find facts or discover “truth,” but rather sees history as meaning making based on interpretation. The principal aim was to record the perceptions of the people of Lynwood Park about their changing environment and way of life, since gentrification and selling their land not only offered improved economic prospects for some, but also a loss of cultural continuity for all of them. The interviews reveal the complexity of everyday life from a group of people formerly elided from the historical record on Atlanta. The project

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<sup>43</sup> Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, 220.

hopes to establish a fuller picture of community history and social evolution, and Lynwood Park's strong cultural and religious influences on identity formation. It is hoped that the analysis of this one community can then be expanded outward to make some generalizations about African-American underclass communities, and the role school desegregation might have played in the acceleration of their devolvement into serious criminality, and eventual disintegration. But more than this, the work aims to demonstrate the ways in which Lynwood Park—and other underclass black communities—is the twenty-first century's result of America's historical racism towards its black citizens.

As an outsider, I had no preconceived thesis that I intended to manipulate or massage the interviews into proving or disproving. I had no investment in any particular outcome, and themes, arguments, and insights developed as I became steeped in the numerous voices and stories of Lynwood Park during the writing process. In fact, it was the stories, in many ways, that “spoke,” and determined which arguments would be selected, examined, analyzed, and followed. There were many instances when theoretical and historiographical musings issued their tangential siren calls, but the voices of the people of Lynwood Park always seemed to ambush me and return the writing to their lived experiences. In other instances it seemed as if the people, as living witnesses and texts, were actually dictating the narrative, as shared authorities of the finished product. In other words, this is a work in which the people of Lynwood Park can always locate themselves and see how their lives were constructed and engineered by the policies of the nation.<sup>44</sup> It is a work that is intended to demonstrate to the people of Lynwood Park that their lives, their community, and their lived experiences are an important aspect of American history.

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<sup>44</sup> For more on how the structures of society engineer its people, see Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Random House, 1991). See especially 135-169.

It is my hope that the people of Lynwood Park will realize that their community was not merely an enclave in the woods of DeKalb County, but rather one that brings to light aspects of American history that many in the nation have been loath to discuss and acknowledge.

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Chapters one and two are an overview of the history of the community, and offer a synopsis of the issues, debates, discussions, and disagreements between Lynwood Park and DeKalb County that led to the community's destruction. Chapter one focuses upon the main events from the establishment of Lynwood Park, to its devolvement in the 1980s. The chapter describes the community geographically, its settlement, and institution building. It discusses the color line and the racial and territorial dynamics that necessitated the establishment of a dangerous boundary along House Road, later renamed Windsor Parkway, to keep all outsiders—black and white—from the enclave. And while black enclaves before the 1960s are often considered to have operated as one large family, Lynwood Park was divided into four quadrants, and was stratified to some extent along economic lines. All Lynwood Park residents were poor relative to the outside middle-class, and the chapter gives a brief overview of the types of illegality the community engaged in over time. Residents established a thriving moonshine industry in the founding era. The community became involved with marijuana after the 1970s saw a high dropout rate among its youth after school desegregation. And by the mid-1980s illegality and drug dealing was so widespread and accepted that residents added crack cocaine to their repertoire, and were ambushed by the drug's destructive influences on community life, which led to increased danger and dereliction in Lynwood Park.

Chapter two explains the county's programs and mechanisms to revitalize, recover, and save Lynwood Park. The county established a partnership with the Lynwood Park Community Project, known as the LPCP, to build low-income, affordable homes in the enclave, in conjunction with a police crackdown on drug dealing. The LPCP later separated from the partnership, renamed itself the Lynwood Park Community Development Corporation (CDC), and set out to build low-income houses on its own. The county then cut off funding to the CDC, and began allowing mini-mansion development within the community.<sup>45</sup>

The CDC believed that the community was being penalized for its independence, attempted to get Lynwood Park designated as an historic district, but the effort failed. The county then allowed developers to build mini-mansions with footprints that essentially filled most of the small lots, and which towered several stories above the small traditional homes.<sup>46</sup> Not surprisingly, property taxes increased, and panic set in among the homeowners, many of whom were senior citizens. After 2004 many property owners began playing the real estate market, wanted to sell for the highest price, and wanted no limitations placed on their land's potential value, and thus most of the traditional residents were displaced by 2006.

Chapter three discusses the dangerous boundary—a liminal color line—that Lynwood Park had to establish when it was first settled, in order to keep its residents and children safe from the white outside. The boundary was patrolled by men of a muscular masculinity who gambled, fought, and partied at the holes-in-the-wall along House Road. Seen as heroes for keeping the community safe, bullying became one way to establish a

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<sup>45</sup> Mini-mansions are also referred to as McMansions.

<sup>46</sup> David Pendered, "Infill Housing Limits Weighed: Atlanta and DeKalb Grapple with the Issue of Huge Houses Being Built In Older Neighborhoods Where They Don't Fit In," *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, 6 September 2004, E-1.



sense of somebodiness and be respected. The enclave established a reputation for toughness and danger, which became one facet of a Lynwood Park identity. As a result, youngsters practiced bullying from a young age, which made the community dangerous for many of its residents. Children were required to remain close to home, many did not wander far outside their quadrant, and were not allowed “on the corner.” Similarly, if a youth could mature and take his place on the corner, then his siblings and family could have safe passage within the community. This bullying dynamic offered an identity as community protector to some residents, kept others safe, and ensured that many would be destroyed.

Chapter four records Lynwood Park’s vibrant community life, which was a bustling enclave of honking horns, men drinking under the trees in the afternoons, women washing laundry in their yards, music wafting on the wind, and men walking through the enclave with broken-open shotguns on their way to hunt in the woods. Weekends were spent playing baseball, drinking, and partying, and traveling to other black enclaves to play baseball, drink, fight, and party. Moonshine running necessitated fast cars and many residents developed a passion for drag racing as a hobby. They drag raced along House Road, in front of the juke joints and other holes-in-the-wall, while women ministers preached, beat tambourines, and exhorted to try to save the souls of the sinners on the corner. The chapter documents accounts of hog killings, barbecues and fish fries, all-night parties that spilled onto lawns, while elders imparted their philosophies to the community’s youth. The residents also describe that the community enjoyed its share of eccentrics, all of whom were tolerated, enjoyed, and teased, and who added greatly to the rich tapestry of Lynwood Park’s social life.

Chapter five chronicles church history and the spiritual life of the enclave, from churches that were brought from other displaced underclass communities, to the Holiness churches that were created in Lynwood Park. The chapter covers the spiritual power of charismatic ministers, their influence on the residents, and the degree to which everyone in Lynwood Park was raised a Christian. The chapter chronicles the spiritual *praxis* of the residents, the sharing of the little they could eke out for themselves, and the extent to which the people of Lynwood Park see God's hand in their lives, and believe God intervenes in space and time to help and guide them. The people of Lynwood Park believe that Jesus came for the downtrodden and the humble and against the rich and powerful, and that is why they feel God's presence in their lives, and hear God's voice guiding them daily. The residents do not live secular lives. They believe in miracles, see visions, become filled with the Holy Spirit, and recount compelling conversion experiences that changed the course of their lives.

Chapter six records Lynwood Park's engagement with illegality and the community's widespread involvement in illegal *licit* activity, such as off-the-books, in-home businesses and personal services earning undeclared income, as well as *illicit*—criminal—activity. In the founding era, moonshine sellers were widespread across the community, and the moonshine kingpin Herman Ouisley was admired for his entrepreneurship and wealth. In the marijuana and crack cocaine eras drug dealers gave back to the community, financed projects in Lynwood Park, helped the homeless and the addicted, and were seen as heroes. Lynwood Park produced one of America's biggest crack cocaine kingpins, who was on the FBI's Ten Most Wanted list, but he was seen as Robin Hood to the community, someone who took from the rich and gave to the poor. Many in the community enjoyed the excitement of the community's illegality, protected its

illegal actors, who were worshipped as heroes by the community's children who wanted to eventually emulate them.<sup>47</sup>

Chapter seven follows the efforts of the residents to educate their children, from building a one-room schoolhouse in the enclave, to persuading the county to locate one of its new consolidated black schools in the community. Many scholars claim that black students fared better academically in their segregated schools because community institutions rallied around them, set high standards, and supported and encouraged them to attain their highest potential. The evidence of Lynwood Park suggests that institutional caring primarily applied to those students with a desire to learn, and those who stayed in the church. The community and teachers then “adopted” those focused on learning. Other students were left to fend for themselves, and many were advanced through grades without learning to read. The chapter situates Lynwood Park within the national debate about school desegregation in the 1950s and 1960s, and chronicles its children's difficulties when the Lynwood Park School was closed and its students encountered racism in the white schools.

Lynwood Park parents, who were active in the PTA when the school was in the community, were not welcomed at the white schools, and thus the community lost its rallying focus around its children's education. At the same time, attending school outside Lynwood Park shifted the students' allegiances from the enclave to the outside, where they attended school, played sports, and engaged in other activities. In the early period of desegregation—the 1970s—many of the community's youth were penalized, suspended, and expelled from school for minor infractions, due to the racism they encountered in the white schools. These dropouts then entered the marijuana industry as an alternative to

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<sup>47</sup> “Me and Courts: Most Wanted,” *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, 20 December 1992, Roy H. Benifield Papers.

working at minimum-wage, service-industry jobs, and then escalated into crack cocaine trafficking, which eventually led to the community's demise.

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In the 1830s Alexis de Tocqueville warned that the next crisis facing America would be the presence of millions of freed blacks. Tocqueville noticed a fear of miscegenation among Northern whites in 1831, and wrote in 1835 that "the abolition of slavery . . . will increase the repugnance for blacks felt by the white population."<sup>48</sup> Tocqueville's prediction came true, and W.E.B. Du Bois, while living in Atlanta, claimed in 1903 that "the problem of the Twentieth Century is the problem of the color-line."<sup>49</sup> Underclass blacks in America have always lived on unfulfilled hopes and desires, and while more blacks have moved into the middle-class since the 1960s, the reality is that the majority of blacks in America remain impoverished in the twenty-first century.

Some black scholars maintain that it is not possible for a non-black to understand what it means to be black in America. However, many white scholars have been able to capture the pulse of black/white relations and racism in the United States. Historian W. J. Cash captured the dynamics of white supremacy in the South, and understood that whites had to keep blacks subservient in order to maintain their white identities.<sup>50</sup> In 1944 Gunnar Myrdal traced the ways in which twentieth-century blacks were the products of America's historic racism.<sup>51</sup> Many other non-black scholars have been able to capture the *pathos* of

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<sup>48</sup> Alexis de Tocqueville, Harvey C. Mansfield and Delba Winthrop, eds. *Democracy in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 343.

<sup>49</sup> W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, Henry Louis Gates, Jr., and Terri Hume Oliver, eds. (New York: W. W. Norton, 1999), 11.

<sup>50</sup> Cash, *Mind of the South*, 110.

<sup>51</sup> Myrdal, *An American Dilemma*, 207-8.

the underclass black condition, such as Carol Stack, a young white anthropologist in The Flats, in fictitious Jackson Harbor.<sup>52</sup>

In 1992 black theologian Samuel D. Proctor claimed that the idea that a non-black cannot comprehend black issues represents black egocentricity and tribalism, which the black community had to overcome. Proctor wrote: “others have the freedom and capacity to roam beyond their bio-data and to enter the portals of the Black world.” According to Proctor, the necessary ingredients were objectivity, sensitivity, empathy, and the grace “to love with selfless disinterestedness in other aspects of life.”<sup>53</sup> I believe I took some of these ingredients to Lynwood Park, which the people of the community recognized, and thus were able to honor me with their stories. And I believe that a Third World perspective is a useful theoretical lens with which to study the black underclass in America, for their communities are akin to Third World pockets in the First World, and their struggles and survival strategies resemble those of many Third World communities across the globe, and comparative work in this area could yield interesting future scholarship.

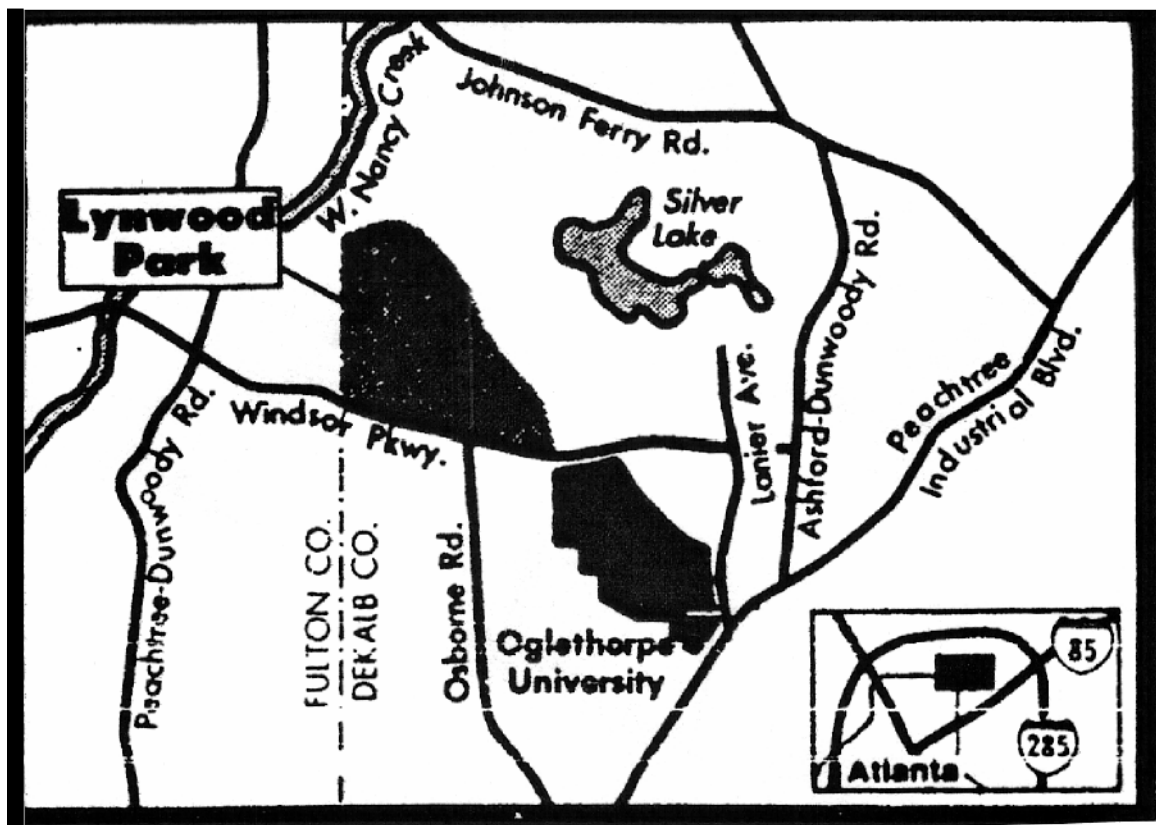
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<sup>52</sup> Carol Stack, *All Our Kin* (New York: Basic Books, 1974). Stack conducted her study on the dynamics of the system of exchange across the black underclass kinship network in the mid-1960s.

<sup>53</sup> Samuel D. Proctor, “The Metes and Bounds of Black Theology,” Forrest E. Harris, Sr., ed. *What Does It Mean to be Black and Christian?: Pulpit, Pew, and Academy in Dialogue* (Nashville, TN: Townsend Press, 1995), 67-8.

## Chapter 1: The Development of Lynwood Park

Lynwood Park is a working-class African American enclave in DeKalb County, Georgia, that became surrounded by white affluence after World War II. The community was settled during the period of Jim Crow entrenchment and widespread racism.<sup>1</sup> It offered shelter and safety to blacks, whose neighborhoods were disrupted for a variety of reasons, such as slum clearance in the 1930s, and urban renewal programs in the 1950s. The residents relocated there in family units, and made Lynwood Park an intergenerational community that could boast as many as six generations living there concurrently.



Map is from "Lynwood Residents Fear Buyout," *Atlanta Journal*, 16 June 1986.

<sup>1</sup> For more on black/white racial dynamics in Georgia before the 1930s, see John Michael Matthews, "Studies in Race Relations in Georgia, 1890-1930" (Ph.D. diss., Duke University, 1970), 90-139.

The community is located in the northwestern section of unincorporated DeKalb County, where it adjoins Fulton County. Located in the county's eighteenth district, Lynwood Park consists of approximately 180 acres that are portions of Land Lots 275 and 303. The enclave is



bounded by Silver Lake Drive to the east, Georgia Avenue to the west, Devine Circle to the north, and Windsor Parkway to the south. Theodore Drive does not presently exist, and all the land stretching from Antioch to Mendell Circle in the west is covered with kudzu. The original school site to the north, located between Mendell and Devine Circles, was converted into a community center in 1984, and houses a gymnasium, meeting rooms, and offices. The building sits in a seventeen-acre park run by the DeKalb County Department of Parks and Recreation, and its outdoor facilities include an Olympic-size swimming pool, tennis courts, ball fields, and children's playground.

The Lynwood County Park north of Mendell Circle is approximately sixteen acres, and is adjacent to Nancy Creek. Owned by the Department of Parks and Recreation, the parcel is the abandoned site of the community's former swimming pool. Approximately sixty feet below Devine Circle, it can only be accessed by Osborne Road, which runs north from Windsor Parkway and dead ends at the parcel. Beyond the flat section where the pool was located, the land drops off precipitously into an abandoned stone quarry, making this site completely isolated and removed from the community, and inaccessible from any other direction. The parcel, called the Devil's Workshop by the Lynwood Park residents, lies fallow at present, and is dotted with mounds of bagged garbage and discarded articles

Lynwood Park is generally referred to by its residents, the press, and county officials as the oldest African American community in DeKalb County, dating from before the Civil War.<sup>2</sup> However, an 1860 map of DeKalb County indicates that Land Lots 275 and 303 were

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<sup>2</sup>Liane Levetan, interview by author, 18 April 2005, transcript, 1; "Lynwood: A Pre-Civil War Community," *The Brookhaven Buzz*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (February 1992); Keith Dunnavant, "Lynwood Residents Fear Buyout: DeKalb's Oldest Black Neighborhood Fighting Developers' Squeeze," *Atlanta Journal*, 16 June 1986; Chris Hardnett (Morris), Director of DeKalb County's Department of Community Development, said of Lynwood Park that "Large tracts have been owned by African-Americans since the Civil War. Deeds and titles have been handed down from family to family since then." Quote is from "Lynwood Park Group Eyes Development," by Phillip Hermann, *Decatur-DeKalb News/Era*, 26 May 1994.



owned by John L. Evins and James W. Reeve respectively, both of whom were white. A 1915 map indicates that these two land lots were subdivided and owned by the heirs of J.A. Cates, and B.A. Allen. The Cates family was white, and B.A. Allen was black. Although the Allen property was not incorporated into descriptions of Lynwood Park until the 1950s, it could be said that the Allens were the first African Americans to live in the community. An index of DeKalb County landowners to 1910 does not indicate that B.A. Allen owned any property in Land Lots 275 and 303. Therefore, contrary to widespread belief, Lynwood Park as an African American community does not date back to the Civil War, but actually developed as such in the twentieth century.<sup>3</sup>

In 1926 B.J. Fuller purchased the land of Louisa Cates for a tax lien of one hundred dollars, and in August of that year J.C. Lynn purchased a one-half interest in this land for three thousand and ten dollars, with a ten-dollar cash down payment. The two men, who were white, formed a syndicate, and hired J.C. Lynn's brother, Mel, to sell house lots fifty feet wide by one hundred feet deep—one-ninth of an acre—to African Americans for fifty dollars each, payable at a rate of five dollars down and five dollars a month. Since the land was heavily wooded, the project was known as Lynn's woods. It was later known as the Lynnwood Park Subdivision, or the Sub, and was later officially named Lynwood Park by DeKalb County.<sup>4</sup> Cates Avenue bears the Cates family name, while Mae Avenue, and Francis and Victoria Streets are named after the Cates children. On the west side of the community,

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<sup>3</sup> Biographical Files: Reeve Family, DeKalb Historical Society, Decatur, Georgia; Walter P. McCurdy, J.D., *Map of DeKalb County*, 1860, DeKalb Historical Society, Decatur, Georgia; 1915 Map of DeKalb County, Atlanta History Center, Atlanta, Georgia; Vivian Price, *The History of DeKalb County, Georgia: 1822-1900* (Fernandina Beach, FL: Wolfe Publishing Company, 1997), 110-111; "The Lynwood Park Legend—1992," Roy H. Benifield Papers, 2; *Index of Landowners to 1910*, Department of Deeds and Land Records, Decatur, Georgia; *Land Lot Map: 1935-1939*, 8:145, Property Mapping Division/Geographic Information Systems Department, Decatur, Georgia.

<sup>4</sup> The sale was recorded on 13 August 1926, Deed Book 230, Page 541, Department of Deeds and Land Records, Decatur, Georgia; Lynwood was originally spelled as Lynnwood; one "n" was dropped later.

Theodore Drive, and Madison and Georgia Avenues, are named after members of the Allen family.<sup>5</sup>

Windsor Parkway, the axis that currently connects Roswell Road and Ashford Dunwoody Road, was originally named House Road from the Allen property, along the Lynwood Park corridor, to Woodrow Way, where the road terminated. House Road honored Samuel House, a planter who settled in the area in 1830, and the name House Road was changed to Windsor Parkway in 1960, when its black section was paved.<sup>6</sup> According to current Lynwood Park resident Mamie Lee Mathis, who was born in 1920, Windsor Parkway was always paved from Roswell Road to the edge of the Allen property:

- MLM: *Look, it changed its name to House Road when it got . . . to the black folks houses. . . . [I]t was paved all the way . . . [t]hen when it got . . . to the Allen's house, that's when the street got named House Road. . . . [T]hey were black, then the pave ran out. Then it got rough on down here to Woodrow Way. . . . [W]hen it rained it was mud this thick.*
- VMH: *Really? That's like six inches.*
- MLM: *See, cars used to get stuck over in here, you know, going. And when it didn't rain, it was dust that thick. Like that's the way it was, see.<sup>7</sup>*

Atlanta's white community often manipulated streets to limit black residential patterns and movement. Streets were often dead-ended and abandoned to wall-in blacks, while others were closed to prevent blacks from driving through white neighborhoods. And other streets were assigned different names as they passed from one racial community to another, and these street tactics effectively demarcated and isolated this African American community as well.<sup>8</sup> According to psychiatrist Kenneth Clark, black ghettos are colonies of

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<sup>5</sup> Patricia Martin, interview by author, 17 May 2005, transcript, 7; Patricia Martin, interview by author, 13 October 2004, transcript, 35, 4. The majority of lots are 50 by 100. However, there are many lots that are 50 by 200, and others that are only 40 by 80. Many residents purchased two lots, which they straddled with modest homes of 600 to 850 square feet in size; "Lynwood Park: Application for Historic Designation," 2; "Lynwood Park Community: A Touch of Country in the City," Lynwood Park Archives, Office of the CDC.

<sup>6</sup> Paul Stephen Hudson, "Campus and Commercial Development in Suburban Atlanta: The Symbiotic Relationship between Oglethorpe University and Silver Lake," *Atlanta History: A Journal of Georgia and the South* 39 (1995): 48-62; *1960 Tax Map*, Property Mapping Division/Geographic Information Systems Department, Decatur, Georgia.

<sup>7</sup> Mamie Lee Mathis, interview with author, 1 April 2008, transcript, 17-18.

<sup>8</sup> Ronald H. Bayor, *Race and the Shaping of Twentieth-Century Atlanta* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina

subject peoples, created by white society with invisible walls, both to confine those with no power, and to perpetuate their powerlessness.<sup>9</sup>

After World War II white suburbs were developed to the south of Lynwood Park, between House and Peachtree Roads. Mabry Road was closed at House Road to prevent blacks from traversing its white neighborhood. And Mabry Road's continuation north, which enters Lynwood Park, was named Antioch Road. A 1945 map shows that Johnson Ferry Road was once routed across Nancy Creek, through Lynwood Park, to House Road. DeKalb County allowed the bridge across Nancy Creek to fall into disrepair, which made Lynwood Park a dead-ended community, with House Road, later Windsor Parkway, as its only point of ingress and egress. The county then renamed the portion of Johnson Ferry Road through Lynwood Park as Osborne Road in 1957.<sup>10</sup>

Sociologist Monica Gaughan claimed that Lynwood Park's land was made available for a black-only community in order to provide a steady stream of personal servants to the affluent white residents of the surrounding areas. However, widespread white residential development did not begin in this area until 1951, as part of the post-World War II boom of DeKalb County, after the county installed a water-purification plant.<sup>11</sup> After the elite Capital City Club took over the Brookhaven Country Club in 1913, the Silver Lake Park Company, a real estate and development firm, dammed several tributaries of Nancy Creek,

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Press, 1996), 65-68; Attachment B, "Lynwood Park: Current Proposal to be Considered by the Community," Lynwood Park Archives, Office of the CDC.

<sup>9</sup> Kenneth B. Clark, *Dark Ghetto: Dilemmas of Social Power* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), 11.

<sup>10</sup> DeKalb County, Georgia Road Map, 1945, DeKalb Historical Society, Decatur, Georgia; Interviews by author: Peter Scott, 4 May 2005, transcript, 36; Horace Ouisley, 28 March 2005, transcript, 13; Anne Jackson Ouisley, 15 November 2004, transcript, 16; Paul Stephen Hudson, 21 May 2005, transcript, 16; Martin, 13 October 2004, 34; *1957 Tax Map*, Property Mapping Division/Geographic Information Systems Department, Decatur, Georgia.

<sup>11</sup> Historian Walter Harris pointed out that as late as 1940 most of DeKalb County consisted of "a predominantly rural landscape of forests, small truck farms, and pastureland for cattle and the dairies that operated in the county." Walter R. Harris, "The Provision of an Adequate Education: Race, Modernization, and Education in DeKalb County, Georgia, 1946-55" (M.A. thesis, Georgia State University, 2003), 40-3.

and created the 28-acre Silver Lake. The company envisaged an upscale golf/country-club/yachting community around the lake, but needed another stimulus to accelerate development, since the area had no post office, or other services, such as electricity and water. Oglethorpe University's president Thornwell Jacobs attempted to stimulate development of the area when he relocated the college from downtown Atlanta to Peachtree Road near Silver Lake. The campus was built from 1916 to 1930, and many laborers from the surrounding black enclaves worked on constructing its buildings. Whites still considered the area to be too far out in the country in the 1930s, and residential development in the region only began after the county's post-war boom attracted some seventy-eight industries, which led to the residential development that began surrounding Lynwood Park after 1951.<sup>12</sup>

African Americans settled Lynwood Park because of its close proximity to Oglethorpe University, the Capital City Club, and the exclusive Peachtree Golf Club.<sup>13</sup> Before the enclave was established, much of the unskilled workforce of these three institutions came from the black settlement of Remount, which was tenement housing along what is now Ashford Dunwoody Road where it intersects with Windsor Parkway.<sup>14</sup> Mamie Lee Mathis, born in 1920, explained that the area was heavily wooded, and that blacks lived in shacks amongst the trees. Many black families moved from these scattered settlements and established the Carroll Avenue and Hard Rock neighborhoods in Chamblee, within the abandoned World War I Camp Gordon, after the camp was relocated as Fort Gordon in Augusta, as Anne Jackson Ouisley, who was born in 1916, recalled:

*[W]e lived on Kell Avenue, which is Chamblee Tucker Road now, where Lawson General Hospital—it was an Army base there. And when they moved to Augusta, Fort Gordon,*

<sup>12</sup> Monica Gaughan, "Ethnography, Demography and Service-Learning: Situating Lynwood Park," *Critical Sociology*, 28 (2002): 1-2, 217-233, 222; Hudson, *Campus and Commercial Development*, 59; Martin, 17 May 2005, 40.

<sup>13</sup> The Peachtree Golf Club allows only two hundred members, and sits on the former plantation of Samuel House.

<sup>14</sup> Ashford Dunwoody Road did not exist when Lynwood Park was first established, and House Road ended at Woodrow Way.

*people moved from . . . over off of Johnson Ferry and Ashford Dunwoody Road—a lot of people moved over there, in the barracks. . . . we called it The Camps.*<sup>15</sup>

Gertrude Booker, born in 1918, said that black families rented rooms in these former barracks for seventy-five cents per month.<sup>16</sup> But The Camps was a long distance from Brookhaven by foot, and creating Lynwood Park as a black-only community served to locate the labor force within the immediate vicinity of Oglethorpe University and the two golf clubs. Mamie Lee Mathis lived in the WWI Camp Gordon barracks and said that living in Chamblee was difficult because of a lack of jobs, and the long walk to work in Brookhaven. She claimed that living in Lynwood Park was less of a struggle because of its closer proximity to jobs in Brookhaven in the early era, and then the white suburbs surrounding the community after the 1950s:

- MLM: *I started to work when we was living in Chamblee. Then I walked all the way from Chamblee to Brookhaven . . . it was so hard up there . . . my hard labor, that's in Chamblee, up there.*
- VMH: *Why was it better in Lynwood Park? You didn't have to struggle as much?*
- MLM: *See, we was working hard, everybody was, but we didn't have to struggle like we did up in Chamblee. There wasn't nothing up there.*<sup>17</sup>

A wave of blacks moved to Lynwood Park during the 1940s, when the Camp Gordon site was rebuilt as the Naval Reserve Air Base, which was renamed the U.S. Naval Air Station Atlanta in January 1943, in response to World War II.<sup>18</sup> In addition, Oglethorpe University housed some of its unskilled workforce on its grounds, as Patricia Martin remembered, and these blacks then settled in Lynwood Park.<sup>19</sup> Creating Lynwood

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<sup>15</sup> Anne Jackson Ouisley, 15 November 2004, 9, 46. Mamie Lee Mathis explained that Lawson General Hospital also trained doctors, who hired some of the women in the barracks as maids, and that that is where she began her career as a domestic worker when she was a teenager, Mathis, 1 April 2008, 2.

<sup>16</sup> Gertrude Booker, interview by author, 11 November 2005, transcript, 16; Raymond Jackson, interview by author, 7 October 2005, transcript, 2, 151.

<sup>17</sup> Mathis, 1 April 2008, 1, 4-5, 32.

<sup>18</sup> Paul Stephen Hudson and Troy H. Campbell, "The Best Years of Their Lives: The Naval Air Station Atlanta & Lawson General Hospital Site," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 81 (1977): 988-1005, 994.

<sup>19</sup> Martin, 17 May 2005, 40.

Park as a black-only community served the dual purpose of removing the university's unskilled service personnel from its grounds, while keeping it within its immediate vicinity.

Other Lynwood Park settlers came from the forgotten black neighborhoods of Armour, off Piedmont Road, Dubals Alley, in Sandy Springs, and Nicklebottom, among others. Still others were rural farmers and sharecroppers who moved closer to the city to find employment during the Depression era. And some came from further afield in Georgia, run out by racism and the threat of violence against blacks.<sup>20</sup> And the employment of domestic help occasioned by white suburban development after 1951, coupled with the later displacement of other black enclaves, such as Johnsontown, to facilitate the construction of Lenox Mall and the later MARTA rail system, ensured that blacks would continue settling in Lynwood Park.<sup>21</sup>

The enclave's founding families built their modest two- and three-room houses themselves, with much of the lumber coming from purchased tree trunks, and felled trees from their lots, as Horace Ouisley, born in 1932, recounted:

VMH: *[Y]ou and your father built the house?*

HO: *Yes. . . . he got somebody to lay the foundation, and he went and bought some logs from his friend, and cut them up. And we scraped all the bark off them. And when they dried out, then we started putting them up . . . they stayed whole—round. . . . Just stripped the bark.*<sup>22</sup>

Lynwood Park's residents hold common memories of sub-standard housing, and John Chatman, born in 1945, explained that "[T]he houses back then, you know, were sitting up on blocks. You could see underneath the houses, and go under the house," and

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<sup>20</sup> Peter Scott, "Church to Honor Lynwood Park Resident for Work in Community," *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, 17 June 1993; "Lynwood Park: Current Proposal to be Considered by the Community." Lynwood Park Archives; Interviews by author: Evelyn Banks, 20 October 2004, transcript, 2; Melvin Pender, 27 April 2005, transcript, 14-5; Anne Jackson Ouisley, 15 November 2004, 9; Bayor, *Race*, 58; Larry Keating, *Race, Class, and Urban Expansion* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001), 49; Jessica Thomas, "Buckhead Girl Scouts spruce up Frankie Allen Park," *Northside/Sandy Springs Neighbor*, 13 March 2005, A-7.

<sup>21</sup> Hudson, *Campus and Commercial Development*, 49-59; Martin, 17 May 2005, 41; Mathis, 1 April 2008, 28.

<sup>22</sup> Horace Ouisley, interview by author, 1 November 2004, transcript, 7-8.

Patricia Martin remembered large gaps between the floorboards.<sup>23</sup> Residents recalled that every available lot in Lynwood Park was developed during the time of segregation, with as many as fourteen family members and extended kinfolk packed into houses of 600 to 800 square feet.

John Wright, born in 1964, said that his mother and siblings lived with his grandparents:

- JWW: *[L]iving with my grandmother and grandfather . . . was very difficult . . .*  
 VMH: *Okay, now, how big was this house on Osborne Road?*  
 JWW: *Well, at the time there was the porch, the living room . . . the bedroom—not including the kitchen—it was just like a two-room house. When you throw in the kitchen, three rooms.*  
 VMH: *And how many people were living there . . .*  
 JWW: *[Y]ou're looking at close to fifteen.*<sup>24</sup>

With no water and sewer service, and limited financial resources, many of the founders dug their wells by hand, and had outhouses in the back garden, where they also grew vegetables and raised animals for food, such as cows, pigs, and chickens. Rachel Harris, born in 1948, recalled that in her household the family bathed and dressed in shifts:

- RH: *We would boil the water on the stove, put it in the tin tub, and my baby sister would bathe . . . Then my brother would bathe, then I would bathe . . .*  
 VMH: *And what about your parents and granny—when did they bathe . . .*  
 RH: *They did it when we were in bed . . . in the morning when I got up . . . I would get dressed in the bedroom while my aunt dressed my sister in the living room. My brother waited until I got dressed, and then he would come in and get dressed.*<sup>25</sup>

Roads in Lynwood Park were narrow dirt tracks carved through the woods, and former DeKalb County CEO Liana Levetan remarked that she was surprised that Lynwood Park still had some dirt roads in 1973, when she became a county commissioner. In 2005 longtime Lynwood Park resident Gary McDaniel said, “You got some roads that’s really just changed from dirt roads—like Fala Place, and maybe at the end of Georgia Avenue, over there. . . .

<sup>23</sup> John Chatman, interview by author, 21 March 2008, transcript, 16; Martin, 13 October 2004, 45.

<sup>24</sup> John Wesley Wright, interview by author, 20 November 2004, transcript, 11-12.

<sup>25</sup> Rachel Harris, interview by author, 27 July 2005, transcript, 29-30.

And even all the way down, round here behind the gym. . . . Devine Circle. It still was dirt roads. . . . I would say as late as '80.<sup>26</sup>

Lynwood Park's residents spoke of the wood-, coal-, and ice-man delivering critical goods to the community, while winter vegetables, such as cabbages and sweet potatoes, were purchased at the downtown Farmers Market by Luzelle Rogers, known as Preacher, and sold from the back of his truck.<sup>27</sup> The founding families established what was essentially an economically self-contained community in the 1930s, with a variety of in-home businesses that served the needs of its residents, such as hairdressers and barbers, small shops and convenience stores, and even a drycleaners, part of their strategy to eke out an existence. Liane Levetan claimed that being black enabled Lynwood Park's residents to live without services for decades, because they did not know any better, and that it is only after an underclass community receives services that its residents realize how difficult life was without them.<sup>28</sup>

Historian Paul Stephen Hudson, who lived on Wimberly Road, the white section just across the color line of House Road/Windsor Parkway during the 1950s, recalled that Lynwood Park was a crowded community, with blacks circulating on foot as they traversed along Osborne Road, the connector through the white area, to access the transportation corridor of Peachtree Road.<sup>29</sup> Affluent white suburbs surrounded Lynwood Park after the 1950s, but DeKalb County police officer M.W. Williams, who began patrolling Lynwood Park in 1986, said that the community had remained a rural throwback to the 1950s. This was a result of the

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<sup>26</sup> Gary McDaniel, interview by author, 8 June 2005, transcript, 8-9. McDaniel served on the community's boards, the LPCP and the CDC, as a Vice-President. He is also a Deacon in training at China Grove First Missionary Baptist Church, the second largest congregation in Lynwood Park.

<sup>27</sup> John Chatman, 21 March 2008, 17. Chatman is the current President of the Lynwood Park Community Development Corporation (CDC), and CEO and President of the Deacon Board of the Lynwood Park United Church of God in Christ, the largest congregation in Lynwood Park.

<sup>28</sup> Horace Ouisley, 1 November 2004, 2, 7, 31-36, 99; Martin, 13 October 2004, 8; Anne Jackson Ouisley, 15 November 2004, 11; "The Lynwood Park Legend—1992," Roy H. Benifield Papers, 4; Levetan, 18 April 2005, 5.

<sup>29</sup> Wright, 20 November 2004, 12; Hudson, 21 May 2005, 4, 8, 18.



combination of the county's historic ignoring of black communities, and Lynwood Park's deliberate strategy of keeping outsiders out of its enclave<sup>30</sup>

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After Reconstruction ended in the South, whites kept blacks in a subordinate position through the politics of fear, carried out, in part, by the Ku Klux Klan. As late as the 1930s many of Lynwood Park's founders had witnessed Klan marches through their old communities. For example, Raymond Jackson, born in 1930, remembered the Ku Klux Klan in the Camp Gordon settlement—The Camps—in the 1930s:

*[T]hey rode in there on horses. And they had these white sheets and things . . . I seen them. It scared me to death, because I didn't know what they were doing. They would come to your house, they would pull you out, and all that stuff.*<sup>31</sup>

According to historian Kenneth Jackson, the Ku Klux Klan was both very visible and very violent in Atlanta during the 1930s. And Patricia Martin, who was born in Buckhead's Bagley Park, recounted the Klan marching through her former community in 1936:

*[T]hey would come in on Saturday night . . . and burn crosses. They may have a sign with a beautiful knife on it, or "Get out Nigger". . . it was scary as a child . . . And that's the reason why I couldn't go to sleep at night until my dad got home, because I was always afraid that the duck people were going to get him. See, I knew nothing about the Ku Klux Klan. I called them duck people because they had the pointed hoods. That's what the children called them, duck people, because somehow they reminded us of ducks. . . . We were afraid of the police, because the police always came ahead of them with the siren, and they marched behind them with the beating of the drums, and the torches, and the white robes.*<sup>32</sup>

These incidents contributed to the resolve of its founders to make Lynwood Park safe for their families. Martin recalled her sense of fear when she first moved into

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<sup>30</sup> M.W. Williams, interview by author, 18 April 2005, transcript, 8.

<sup>31</sup> Raymond Jackson, 7 October 2005, 59.

<sup>32</sup> Kenneth T. Jackson, *The Ku Klux Klan in the City, 1915-1930* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), 43; Martin, 13 October 2004, 12-13; The Lynwood Park residents who are from Macedonia Park refer to it as Bagley Park, named after Bagley Street, the main road through the settlement. However, the community was not officially named Bagley Park until 1952, after it had been converted to a whites-only park, Bayor, *Race*, 58; Keating, *Atlanta*, 49; Thomas, "Buckhead Girl Scouts," A-7.

Lynwood Park in 1939, at age seven, and her later sense of safety growing up in the community, away from the white gaze and the reach of the duck people:

*[M]y dad said, "We will never witness that [KKK parades] again." And he met with other people in here, and they said . . . "If they ever come here, we will fight." And so here to me was safety. As a child I felt very safe here, you know, because I knew that if they ever came here there would be a fight, that none of these people would put up with it. Because by this time everybody had guns. . . . No household was without a gun.<sup>33</sup>*

Current resident LaTrelle Lockwood, born in 1955, confirmed that weapons were widespread in the community, and that many men walked through Lynwood Park with shotguns:

*I remember the old men going hunting in the woods. . . . going off with a little shotgun. Well, everybody had 'em. I had a .22mm. Everybody had guns. I mean, we were southerners. . . . I had a .22mm rifle. You know, we'd hunt squirrel, and rabbit . . . so it wasn't anything said about it, because everybody had one.<sup>34</sup>*

To keep the community safe, Lynwood Park established and maintained a dangerous boundary on its House Road/Windsor Parkway corridor, and cultivated a reputation for being so dangerous that outsiders would be loath to intrude. This strategy ensured that the community could enjoy a safe and somewhat normal life beyond the white gaze, and that Lynwood Park's children could be shielded from racism in their formative years. Eldridge "Pee Wee" Jackson was born in Lynwood Park in 1950, and lived there until leaving to attend college in 1968. Raised in the cocoon of Lynwood Park, he first experienced racism at age twelve:

*I did not know segregation truly existed until . . . I was twelve years old, because I was insulated from that by my parents and by the other folk in the neighborhood. . . . I had to go to Grady Hospital to get my six-year molars pulled. . . . [M]y father couldn't take off work . . . So I rode the bus myself. But on the way back I was standing in the front of the bus and . . . this old white lady was getting on the bus—and the bus driver turned to me and said, "Nigger, move back." And, you know, it was like "I don't know what you talking about." And he had a Billy club. . . . It was a leather pouch-filled thing that was about twelve inches long, but it covered lead. And he threatened me with that pouch. . . . and I patted the black jack and grabbed him by the hand and I threw him out of the front*

<sup>33</sup> Martin, 13 October 2004, 45.

<sup>34</sup> LaTrelle Lockwood, interview by author, 9 August 2005, transcript, 70. Related to the Allens on his mother's side, the Lockwoods moved to Lynwood Park in 1955.

*door of the bus. But the strange thing . . . All the white folks on that bus attacked me . . . but I was too fast for them, because this happened right in front of Oglethorpe. And so I just merely exited the bus and ran through the woods. And once I got in the woods they were in trouble because I knew where I was and they didn't. And I ran through the woods and ran home.*<sup>35</sup>

Racism was inculcated in whites at a young age, while Lynwood Park's residents claimed that black children were not taught to hate, and this ethos is the reason why blacks could go into white homes to perform domestic labor. For example, Maudina "Peaches" Horton recounted the encouraging of hatred for blacks in a white child:

*I experienced it when I was in A&P Grocery Store . . . and a little boy says, "Mom, you know, I hate niggers." [She replied] "I know it."*<sup>36</sup>

Conversely, John Wright recalled his grandmother punishing his brother Ronny when he made a derogatory statement about whites:

*I'll never forget my brother said, "I don't like white people," and she just hauled off and slapped him in the face. She said, "Don't you ever let me hear you say that word again. You don't hate no one, and you don't mistreat no one . . . [y]ou got to love everybody, regardless." So that was just something that was instilled in me.*<sup>37</sup>

Patricia Martin confirmed that black children were raised differently from whites during the time of segregation. She related that there were no words in the English language that were available to blacks that represented the equivalent of the racial slurs that whites used to describe blacks:

PM: *Black children aren't taught to hate. And that's the reason why they cut up and have fun, and you see them playing all the time. . . .*

VMH: *Do you think that white children were taught to hate?*

PM: *I think that white families are more liberal with their language to their children [who] . . . would say the "N" word. Now, there's no word that the black kid could say that equals that.*<sup>38</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Eldridge "Pee Wee" Jackson, interview by author, 2 September 2006, transcript, 4-6.

<sup>36</sup> Maudina Horton, interview by author, 17 September 2005, transcript, 95. For more on how children in the South learned race, see Jennifer Ritterhouse, *Growing up Jim Crow: How Black and White Southern Children Learned Race* (Asheville: University of North Carolina Press, 2006).

<sup>37</sup> Wright, 20 November 2004, 40-1.

<sup>38</sup> Martin, 13 October 2004, 50; Patricia Martin, interview by author, 27 October 2004, transcript, 22.

And Martin, born in 1932, explained that in a time of widespread white racism, this aspect of a black upbringing made it possible for blacks to work for whites:

*[O]ur people don't teach segregation to the children—and discrimination . . . And that's the reason why I guess we could go in [white] homes and work . . . it was like I knew my place . . . You had to know your proper place to get from A to B . . . [and] It was teaching you that you're okay . . . right where you are, and you can be better . . . you're somebody . . . that was the way that I came up, and most of the children around me came up.<sup>39</sup>*

Retired *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* reporter Peter Scott, who moved to Lynwood Park in the 1950s, explained that there was a rigid line between black and white housing, that House Road/Windsor Parkway was the color line, and that whites and blacks kept to their respective sides:

*Where Windsor Parkway is, Wimberly Way is right here. Wimberly Way, at one time, was all white . . . it was right over the fence . . . it was a given code that we didn't go over there and they didn't come across the street. It was just like somebody had an imaginary electric fence up there and you knew not to cross it.<sup>40</sup>*

The white historian Paul Stephen Hudson lived on Wimberly Road until 1966 and explained that it was commonplace for whites to casually use racial slurs towards blacks during this time period, an indication of the tension between blacks and whites that necessitated the dangerous boundary:

PSH: *It was really ironic—we left church with a family . . . and these kids said, "Here's these niggers." I mean we just left Mass and everything that it stands for, and then they were talking about niggers there on House Road as they took me home . . . Just even at a young age it seemed a little ironic to go to Mass and then use these kinds of racial slurs. But I didn't like for people to take me home, you know. I would prefer to walk, or ride a bike.*  
 VMH: *Because you didn't want them to see Lynwood Park, and your proximity to it?*  
 PSH: *Yeah, and truly proximity, in the literal sense of the term. I mean right up against Lynwood Park. But it was a white street, you know. It was a white neighborhood. But it was just on the other side of the color line—as close as you can get.<sup>41</sup>*

<sup>39</sup> Patricia Martin, interview by author, 10 February 2007, transcript, 36-7.

<sup>40</sup> Scott, 4 May 2005, 35.

<sup>41</sup> Hudson, 21 May 2004, 8-9.

Hudson shared that he found it difficult to live so close to Lynwood Park:

- VMH: *You said you were embarrassed in school. . . .*  
 PSH: *Well, I mean, some of the more blunt students would say, you know, "You live with the niggers," or "You live in Niggertown" . . .*  
 VMH: *Now how did the whites in your neighborhood feel about Lynwood Park?*  
 PSH: *Well, I don't think they were as embarrassed about it as I was, 'cause I went to parochial schools, and I went to school with wealthy families . . . these were racist times. Sometimes it would be Niggertown. I don't know that we called it Lynwood Park that much.<sup>42</sup>*

Mamie Mathis, born in 1920, recalled the danger she experienced from whites when trying to cross House Road:

- MLM: *[Y]ou got a lot of mean white peoples. . . . They'd be in they cars, and they'd try to run over you . . . coming across that corner, because it was in the dark up there, see. And I'd be coming across there by myself. . .*  
 VMH: *If they tried to run over you it was just because it was dark, not because they were mean?*  
 MLM: *They were mean. They mean.<sup>43</sup>*

White racist elements were not loath to make their presence known, and Peter Scott said that the Klan maintained a visible presence to the people of Lynwood Park:

*And then, Brookhaven . . . I do remember seeing Klansmen, you know, patrolling . . . in their little marches and stuff . . . There used to be a Woolworth's up in that area, and people from the community used to walk up there. So I'm sure . . . [that] was their way of saying, "Don't come to this area."<sup>44</sup>*

Scott also remembered groups of whites driving into Lynwood Park with horns blaring when Emmitt Till was murdered in 1955:

- PS: *What I saw . . . were white men coming in there in cars, blowing their horns, and yelling, and that kind of stuff.*  
 VMH: *But not dressed in sheets?*  
 PS: *Oh, no, they would not have survived that.<sup>45</sup>*

Apart from the dramatic displays of intimidation, blacks suffered daily indignities at the hands of whites, as Mamie Mathis recounted:

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<sup>42</sup> Hudson, 21 May 2004, 8, 13.

<sup>43</sup> Mathis, 1 April 2008, 40-1.

<sup>44</sup> Scott, 4 May 2005, 24.

<sup>45</sup> Scott, 4 May 2005, 25.

*[They] give us the hard way to go. . . . [E]verything was segregated, you know. You get on the trolley buses . . . There would be two or three white people on the bus . . . and they would sit way back and . . . we'd have that one back seat back there. . . . And you better not sit in front of one of them, 'cause the driver—the conductor—would call the police on you. . . . And I would be tired, had stood up working all day, and . . . a black person better not be getting on in front of one of them white peoples . . . we had to stand back and let all the white peoples get on first. . . . We'd be right there at the door, and we had to get back and let the whites in there first. And then they get the seats, see, and you could not sit in front of one of them, no. It was against the law, and he'd call the police . . . They're mean. They're mean. They mean. . . . And if you ask them to get up, they'd turn their head, like to the wall, to the side. They were mean. "And if you get up there would be plenty of seats." But, no, they wouldn't move. And the truth was the driver just keep going. He didn't care. They were white.<sup>46</sup>*

As a consequence of the strategies required to keep the community safe, the residents of Lynwood Park became territorial, and developed a protectionist ethos, which they also applied to the members of other black communities throughout the entire history of Lynwood Park. For example, John Wright, born in 1964, related that blacks from other communities were allowed to attend sports events in Lynwood Park, but had to leave immediately afterward:

*We had our own club, our own store—it's just more protecting your own. . . . We're gonna protect our own by any means necessary." But we'll have events, you know, come in—like basketball games, whatever. That's okay. But after that, you had to leave. That's it—go—gone. You have no other reason to be here . . . you don't come into Lynwood Park, or you're gonna get beat down, shot, or whatever. . . . If they didn't know you, you couldn't come into Lynwood Park. . . . [I]f a guy was coming into Lynwood Park . . . once he come across that corner, and a guy saying, "Who you're coming over here to see?" Well, you couldn't say, "Well, I'm just coming over here." No. You had to say that "Well, I'm coming to see So-and-So." And someone in Lynwood Park would have to confirm that. Other than that, you were gonna get run out of the neighborhood.<sup>47</sup>*

Olympic gold medal winner Melvin Pender, born in 1937, was raised in Lynwood Park.

Pender claimed that the men of Lynwood Park jealously guarded their women and would not allow black outsiders to date them:

VMH: *Are you talking about young black men?*  
MP: *Black men, yes.*

<sup>46</sup> Mathis, 1 April 2008, 43-4.

<sup>47</sup> Wright, 20 November 2004, 24-25.

VMH:           *So you wanted them to stay away?*  
 MP:           *From taking our girlfriends, yes.*<sup>48</sup>

As a result, Lynwood Park became endogamous over time, and developed into a tapestry of overlapping and interwoven family networks. The community developed a vibrant social and cultural life behind its dangerous boundary, with its churches serving as the central focus of its self-help associations and community life. John Chatman, born in 1945, explained that the people of Lynwood Park relied only on themselves and each other:

*[G]rowing up in Lynwood Park—it's kind of we felt like whatever we got in life, and what we earned in life, that's what we deserved. We didn't look for anything more . . . [from] outside.*<sup>49</sup>

Alexis de Tocqueville observed in 1831 that Americans practiced communalism, and counteracted the threat of individualism by working together in associations of mutual dependence, which he maintained was self-interest properly understood: the recognition that an individual could not survive and thrive unless the community is a healthy and viable one.<sup>50</sup> The people of Lynwood Park employed the *phronēsis* and *praxis* that Aristotle counseled: the practical wisdom and action that should be applied to concerns of both the individual and the community, in the service of improving the *status quo*, because they could rely only on themselves.<sup>51</sup> Within Lynwood Park—behind the Jim Crow veil—laborers, domestics, laundresses, and other working-class people served on boards and voted for community projects. They held positions of importance within the community,

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<sup>48</sup> Pender, 27 April 2005, 111-2. See also Scott, 4 May 2005, 23.

<sup>49</sup> John Chatman, interview with author, 28 March 2008, transcript, 12. This confirmed Liane Levetan's point about Lynwood Park. Levetan claimed that "it's the squeaky wheel that gets the money," and that the residents of Lynwood Park did not agitate enough for county services, were too accepting of their underclass status, and that is why it was easy for the county to ignore the community, Levetan, 18 April 2005, 2.

<sup>50</sup> Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (New York: Vintage Books 1990), 103.

<sup>51</sup> Aristotle, *The Nichomachean Ethics*. Trans. Terence Irwin (Indianapolis: Hackett 1985), 1141b9.

although they were only allowed traditional Negro jobs by the white supremacist world across the House Road/Windsor Parkway color line.

Throughout its entire history, Lynwood Park was home to both law-abiding and illegal elements. Although bootlegging and gambling existed throughout the community's entire history, down to the present, they were the main illegal activities in Lynwood Park during the enclave's founding era of the 1930s to the 1960s. These two illegal activities were eclipsed by a thriving marijuana trade after 1970. All illegal activity operated—and their products were available—concurrently in Lynwood Park from the 1930s to the mid-1980s, but they were all displaced in economic importance after crack cocaine emerged in the mid-1980s as the most economically lucrative illegal product.

From the 1930s to the mid-1980s Lynwood Park's corner—the community's dangerous boundary—was the site of a vibrant social life. During the Jim Crow era, teenagers “jooked” in its juke joints, young men spun their tires on Saturday nights on House Road/Windsor Parkway to pick up a drag race, while lady ministers preached, sang hymns, and beat tambourines to save the souls of “sinners” enjoying themselves on the community's dangerous boundary. In the 1960s the juke joints gave way to nightclubs featuring live entertainment, and in the 1970s nickel-bag marijuana sales were added to the corner activities, as young men from the community—mostly high-school dropouts after school desegregation—sold the drug to whites driving by on Windsor Parkway. After the mid-1980s the corner culture largely disappeared, while drug dens proliferated in houses along Windsor Parkway and throughout the community.

The people of Lynwood Park presented a united front to the white outside, but segregation forced blacks of all educational and economic levels to live together, and there were social stratifications, tensions and divisions within the enclave itself. Whites regarded Lynwood





Map is from *The Lynwood Park Neighborhood Strategic Plan*.

Park as a homogeneous working-class community, but within Lynwood Park, there were spatial divisions, and separate groups of residents did not mix on a regular basis. Peter Scott explained some of the housing dynamics of the community:

*[E]ven in black communities you have . . . a middle class, a middle-middle class, and a lower middle class, and then lower class and, you know, down the line like that . . . [the] little area right there by the Lynwood Park Church of Christ, that was one of the nice areas . . . Those houses . . . the people in them were the ones with the steady jobs . . . Mae Avenue was another street where people with the steady jobs lived. Lynwood Drive was a place where people with old money lived, so there were a couple of good-looking houses over there . . . Osborne Road, a mixture of good and bad. Down on Mendell Circle was the newest part. Those houses were some of the better houses . . . we lived on Francis Street. Those were houses that people got in and fixed up, because they weren't the best.<sup>52</sup>*

<sup>52</sup> Scott, 4 May 2005, 27, 31-2. See Maps 2 and 3, pp. 37, 55. The church Scott referred to is at the corner of Windsor Parkway and Silver Lake Drive, at the far eastern end of the community. Lynwood Park residents pronounce Mae Avenue as Mays Avenue.

Eldridge “Pee Wee” Jackson was born in 1950, and was raised in Lynwood Park. He was educated in the community’s school, then earned a Masters in biomechanical engineering, and worked for the federal government—assigned to the Veterans Administration—in the conceiving, designing, and fabricating of artificial body parts, ranging from prosthetics to orthopedic shoes. Pee Wee charted the community’s spatial divisions and the people of influence in its four quadrants, along with the person who communicated information among the leaders of the four sections of the community:

*Lynwood Park is divided into four quadrants . . . in each one of those quadrants you had a matriarch and a patriarch that essentially dealt with the acculturation and the socialization of all the kids in that quadrant . . . you talked to me once about Ms. Truitt. I didn’t have any dealings with Ms. Truitt because she was not one of the influential matriarchs in my acculturation period. The person that was significant in my life during that period of time was a lady named Miss Sally Jones, Mr. David Hamilton, which was our neighbor, Mr. Bryson Bailey, and . . . Miss Ida Mae Cox . . . because I lived in the southeast quadrant of Lynwood Park.*

*Now, if you went to the southwest quadrant of Lynwood Park, you dealt with Reverend Sawyer, you dealt with Miss Brooks, and Deacon Scott . . . that quadrant was divided into two sections, because you also had Mr. Tibbs . . . And then you also had Mr. John Epps . . . a rock mason. And, see, the masons in Lynwood Park were the men that were making all the money. And he had a lot of influence in that southwest quadrant of Lynwood Park.*

*Now, Miss Truitt was in the northwest quadrant of Lynwood Park. But in addition to Ms. Truitt you had Deacon Calloway, you had Deacon Holsey, and you had Miss Geneva Cook . . . a friend of Mother Clement’s. Now, Mother Clement was in the northeast quadrant of Lynwood Park, which also included Pat Martin, her mother, Reverend Broaden, and Mr. T.J. Hood.*

*Mr. T.J. Hood was the barber in that particular quadrant. Mildred Jackson was the barber in my quadrant. And then you had Cleo Hudson was a barber in another quadrant. . . . [so] you had different clans of Lynwood Park that had the influential people in there. . . . Mr. [Charles] Niles was in the middle that let all of these people in these quadrants know what the significant information we need to be dealing with from a political perspective.*

*See, socially, Mr. Niles had no influence on my life, because his concern was not a social thing. His thing was that we need to be informed politically about stuff that affects our community and our lives . . . he would go to the churches and tell them that there was a zoning issue in DeKalb County and you all need to deal with that and dealing with this. But Charles Niles never came to me and said, “Look, you don’t need to be out here acting*

*crazy, because if you keep doing this you're going to get in trouble and you're going to jail." I never had that relationship. I dealt with—that was Ms. Ida Mae and Mr. David.<sup>53</sup>*

John Chatman, born in 1945, lived on Osborne Road, the boundary between the northeastern and northwestern quadrants. Chatman claimed that children had to stay close to home, and could not wander the community, or go up on the corner, the community's dangerous boundary. His sector's matriarch was laundress Annie Truitt, who worked from home. Chatman also explained that he was not allowed to be outside of hearing distance of his mother's voice:

*If she said, "John," she wanted us to hear her. . . . Whenever she would call us, we're supposed to be saying, "I'm on my way," or "we're coming," because if she called us she's not just calling us just to call us. She's letting us know to come on home—now. . . . Miss Annie Truitt. . . . that's the person I respected. She looked after us when my mom wasn't around. We actually lived across the street from her.<sup>54</sup>*

Chatman did not know Georgia Clement, the matriarch of the northeastern quadrant, and Patricia Martin's grandmother, who lived only a few houses away from him, up the hill on Lynwood Drive, the next street over from Osborne Road:

JC: *Well, I knew of her, okay.*  
 VMH: *She was kind of close to your district . . .*  
 JC: *Yeah, the top of the hill up there.*  
 VMH: *But she wasn't in your sector . . .*  
 JC: *Right.<sup>55</sup>*

So, essentially, residents in one sector did not necessarily know what was occurring in another, nor did they seem to pay much attention to who was living in the

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<sup>53</sup> Eldridge "Pee Wee" Jackson, interview by author, 17 September 2006, transcript, 6-9. Pee Wee served on the primary research team that designed and produced the first prosthetic leg for the son of Edward Kennedy, who had lost the limb to bone cancer. Deacon Scott is Peter Scott's father. Charles Niles was a highly-respected community leader who drafted and presented petitions to DeKalb County for public services. He also served on the community's boards, the LPCP and the CDC, until his death in December 2000. Mildred Jackson was known as Mook, and was an older sister of Anne Jackson Ouisley. Although her nickname was Mook, the residents refer to her as Moot. Similarly, they refer to Patricia Martin's grandmother Georgia Clement as Clemmons, as does Martin herself. Charles Niles worked in a warehouse. See Peter Scott, "A Walk in Lynwood Park," *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, 1 February 1970, A-1.

<sup>54</sup> Chatman, 21 March 2008, 18-19, 23.

<sup>55</sup> Chatman, 28 March 2008, 35.

other areas of Lynwood Park. According to Gary McDaniel, who was born in 1951, and who still lives in Lynwood Park, the children in the different quadrants of the community formed groups, the equivalent of today's youth gangs, but during his childhood they were known as teams, and were not violent towards each other:

- GLM: *We were divided into sections. Over on Mae Avenue, we used to call that the nursery. They had something like a football team, basketball team. I was born and raised up on the side where Cates Avenue, Antioch Drive—we had a section. Over here in Hillview they had another section that had a team. Down here, right here, where they call Osborne, lower Lynwood? They had a team down here. And then . . . right over here—Mendell Circle, they had another team. And everything we did, everything, was together. . .*
- VMH: *When you say there were teams, are you talking about sports team?*
- GLM: *Sports teams. . . . now they call them gangs.*<sup>56</sup>

McDaniel claimed that back in the day people left doors unlocked and spanked each other's children, yet it would seem that this was only an intra-quadrant practice. Other respondents indicated that individuals in Lynwood Park could turn on each other, which suggests inter-sector conflict, tension, and territoriality. Historian David Thelen argued that when collective memory is constructed, negative elements are often repressed, forgotten, and reshaped, which speaks to the ways in which a community myth was created of Lynwood Park as one large and supportive family.<sup>57</sup>

Sociologist Sudhir Venkatesh, in his study of Chicago's Maquis Park, found that the black ghetto is governed by a set of rules that "defined who traded with whom," and these dynamics also governed Lynwood Park's relations.<sup>58</sup> For example, Horace Ouisley, who has lived in Lynwood Park since his birth in 1932, recalled that a black entrepreneur opened a grocery store in Lynwood Park in the 1950s but was put out of business by the community's residents who continually looted his establishment. Patricia Martin said that

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<sup>56</sup> McDaniel, 8 June 2005, 6-7.

<sup>57</sup> David Thelen, "Memory and American History," *The Journal of American History*, 75 (1989): 1117-1129, 1127.

<sup>58</sup> Sudhir Alladi Venkatesh, *Off the Books: The Underground Economy of the Urban Poor* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), xv.

the storeowner was Paul Dillard, who was known as Tap. Dillard was raised in Lynwood Park, and Martin confirmed that some of the community's residents made it difficult for him to succeed, and that his business failed because they looted him out.<sup>59</sup> John Jett, born in 1943, claimed that the police did not care about black-on-black crime in the enclave's early period, and the residents could loot Dillard's store with impunity. This dynamic allowed non-black businesses to thrive, since the police prosecuted crimes committed against whites, which then acted as a deterrent:

- JJ: *They broke in [Tap's] store every night . . . the police . . . wouldn't do nothing. . . .*  
 VMH: *But then the Jewish people who owned stores . . . were allowed to thrive.*  
 JJ: *They came in here and got rich. . . .*  
 VMH: *[I]f you broke into a Jewish person's store then the police came after you?*  
 JJ: *And they gon' knock on everybody's door in the community. . . . [Tap] put a nice store in there . . . They broke in the store every night . . . They was going in there just like it was open for business.<sup>60</sup>*

Mamie Mathis, born in 1920, said that Dillard lived downtown at the time he had the store in Lynwood Park, so it could be argued that he was seen as an outsider by the residents, and thus was fair game. And while there could be tensions among residents within the enclave, Jett said that the community's territorial ethos generally suggested to outsiders that Lynwood Park operated as a single cohesive network. Jett explained that this image of the oneness of the Lynwood Park community is a myth. In actuality, Lynwood Park's residents regularly turned on each other, and dashed the hopes of many of its own members. For example, even Jett, born and raised in Lynwood Park, with grandparents as founders, fell victim to the vindictive element of Lynwood Park. In addition, the practice of selectively sabotaging the efforts of entrepreneurial members of the community existed throughout the entire history of Lynwood Park. For example,

<sup>59</sup> Patricia Martin, telephone conversation with author, 6 June 2008, in Fieldnotes.

<sup>60</sup> John Jett, interview by author, 13 November 2005, transcript, 129. The non-black businesses were located on the House Road/Windsor Parkway color line, and were grocery stores owned by Jews.

while the outside black storeowner was sabotaged in the 1950s, Jett opened a café in Lynwood Park in the 1980s. After 1977 one of the former grocery stores on Windsor Parkway was rented to a series of Asians. Jett explained that two of his elder children were working in his café with him, but the community would not allow him to succeed:

- JJ: *When I opened up my store up there on that corner, they would go next door to the Japs and buy food and come over there and throw the trash in my yard. . . . If you'd seen my trash. . . . You'd said, "This man right here is really making some money. Look at all his trash." But I was taking home twenty-five dollars some nights. . . .*
- VMH: *Why didn't they support you . . . you come from this community. . . .*
- JJ: *They was the crab and the barrel situation. . . . you put a lot of crabs in the barrel, and when one crab almost about to get out, they reach up and pull him back. . . . That's the nature of this community . . . They don't want to see their own succeed, 'cause you think you smarter than we are. Or you think you this, you think you that. . . . But the Jap is riding out . . . going back up in Dunwoody, living in his big pretty house, and not giving you nothing.<sup>61</sup>*

Jett suggested that members of the community, while sabotaging *licit* enterprise, such as the black-owned grocery store in the 1950s, and his café in the 1980s, readily came together to support illegal enterprise. But, again, as Venkatesh argued about the underclass community, the residents controlled who would be allowed to succeed, and Jett offered that this dynamic informed Lynwood Park's enterprises:

- JJ: *[I]f you want a drink or you want to do something that's no good, they were down with that. . . . [but] don't ask them to patronize you, you know. And that's the same thing today with the liquor houses in here. If I would open a liquor house they would send the police down there and get me. . . . But my buddy—if they like him, he run his liquor house for years . . . But let somebody else try and open up one . . . This is a awful place.*
- VMH: *Sounds like a snake pit.*

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<sup>61</sup> Mathis, 1 April 2008, 41; Jett, 13 November 2005, 126-8. Alvin Miller, a Jewish man, bought a store on the boundary in 1961, which he operated with his father. He closed the store in 1974 and rented the building to a series of tenants. From 1977 to the present the building has been rented to a series of Asian tenants. Helen Miller, interview by author, 19 February 2008, transcript, 10; Helen Miller Papers, property of Helen Miller, Atlanta, Georgia.

JJ: *Hey. The black mambo is the baddest poisonest snake in the jungle. That's what this is. A place where they raise black mambos. . . . Yes. They deadly. It's a deadly place (chuckles).*<sup>62</sup>

Similarly, David Sutton, born in 1958, whose grandparents were early Lynwood Park settlers, confirmed that residents could be vindictive towards each other:

*It was kind of bad in Lynwood Park, because there was a lot of confusement going on, with different peoples . . . that people there, they didn't like them, so they argue and stuff, and it was a lot of devilement going on . . . People hurting one another, and stuff, shooting at one another . . . You probably had something more than they did, and they didn't want you to have that. They didn't want to see you with nothing, and they wanted it themselves. So they would be jealous of you because you got something and they didn't . . . You worked hard for what you get, and they just, you know, want to take from you, and stuff.*<sup>63</sup>

These accounts suggest that the community's residents have romanticized a past in which Lynwood Park operated as one large, supportive family. The reality is that throughout its history Lynwood Park also contained elements that were destructive to certain of its residents and their ambitions, which contradicts the claims of the golden age of the black ghetto before the 1960s. In fact, sociologist Mark Stern pointed out that “[t]he “golden age” myth of the ghetto is flawed,” and that “[t]he census is silent on the perceived safety, stability, or quality of life of the old ghetto” [italics in original].<sup>64</sup> In a similar vein, David Thelen pointed out that people construct their personal histories “as a record of stability, continuity, and consistency,” and romantically remember harmony, and a warm and unchanged past, when confronted by imposed change.<sup>65</sup> Gary McDaniel explained that Lynwood Park was always comprised of good and bad elements, and said,

<sup>62</sup> Jett, 13 November 2005, 130. Liquor houses sell bootlegged government liquor, usually by the shot.

<sup>63</sup> David Lee Sutton, interview by author, 1 May 2005, transcript, 5-7.

<sup>64</sup> Mark J. Stern, “Poverty and Family Composition since 1940,” in Michael B. Katz, ed. *The Underclass Debate: Views from History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), 221-2.

<sup>65</sup> Thelen, “Memory and American History,” 1121, 1125-6.

“It’s a good side, and it’s a bad side. You got that side where you got that criminal, where you got that street side.”<sup>66</sup>

Many of Lynwood Park’s residents did unite around the community’s school and their children’s education, which produced many successful professionals, such as Peter Scott and Pee Wee Jackson. This positive aspect of the community was unfortunately short-lived, due to the changes that were ushered in during the late-1960s, which were due, in part, to the successes of the civil rights movement, such as the desegregation of DeKalb County’s schools in 1969. The Lynwood Park School had served as a source of pride for many of the residents in the community. It was where black teachers generally pushed students to excel and a group of parents served on the PTA. The community’s churches also augmented the school curriculum by offering Lynwood Park’s youths opportunities to develop leadership skills, such as public speaking.<sup>67</sup> Unfortunately, DeKalb County closed the Lynwood Park School in 1968, and its students encountered racism in much of the white administration and student body at Cross Keys High School, which contributed to a high dropout rate for Lynwood Park’s youths in the 1970s.<sup>68</sup>

Additionally, affirmative action, and the promise of white-collar jobs encouraged some residents to leave Lynwood Park, especially after the passage of the Fair Housing Act in 1968, which contributed to middle-class black flight. Sociologist Monica Gaughan held that black flight caused a “profound loss of stability” in Lynwood Park, which led to social disruptions, “such as the entrenchment of poverty, attracting homeless and criminal

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<sup>66</sup> McDaniel, 8 June 2005, 63.

<sup>67</sup> Scott, 4 May 2005, 42-3.

<sup>68</sup> McDaniel, 8 June 2005, 25; Horace Ouisley, 1 November 2004, 113; Raymond Jackson, 7 October 2005, 74-6; Chatman, 28 March 2008, 37; Steve Daniel, interview by author, 6 May 2007, transcript, 41-6.



elements, and creating a context in which a North Atlanta drug trade could flourish.”<sup>69</sup>

Homeowners leaving in 1968 were younger and better-educated residents, many of whom rented their Lynwood Park properties to less economically secure kinfolk who had also been raised in the community. Thus a large amount of the housing in the community shifted to rentals, while the enclave also had an ever-increasing group of retired homeowners living on social security after the 1970s. The older unskilled population lacked the resources to maintain the community’s properties. This two-fold dynamic of an influx of renters, and an increasing senior population living on Social Security—as Gaughan argued—increasingly attracted drug dealers, many of whom were originally from Lynwood Park, who then used the community’s high-school dropouts as sellers.

From 1970 onward Lynwood Park became a place that sold every type of drug. In the 1970s high school dropouts chose to sell marijuana on the corner, rather than working at mainstream jobs for minimum wages. This new economic activity had a minimal impact on the community’s dynamics, since Lynwood Park had always engaged in, and tolerated, illegal activities and products, such as gambling, selling bootlegged government liquor, and the production and marketing of moonshine. Considered just as benign as alcohol, marijuana was simply added to the repertoire of illegal products offered for sale by Lynwood Park’s residents. But after Lynwood Park joined the crack cocaine epidemic sweeping the nation after the mid-1980s, many residents abandoned their properties and fled the community, while others barricaded themselves in their homes to avoid being robbed or shot. Minnie Lee “Weddie” Thompson, born in 1947, was raised in Lynwood Park from the age of three, and explained the change in the community after crack was introduced:

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<sup>69</sup> Gaughan, “Ethnography,” 222. This is a problematic claim, because while college-educated children of the early residents, such as Scott, Pender, and Pee Wee Jackson, settled outside Lynwood Park, others, such as Patricia Martin and her parents, who were always community leaders, remained behind. For example, Patricia Martin only moved from Lynwood Park in 2005, after living there continually since 1939.

MLT: *When this crack came in, it just like turned everybody against everybody. . .*  
 VMH: *[Y]ou're saying when the crack came in it was different? Why?*  
 MLT: *I don't know. It was like the users, you know, they turn on one another. They would tell on one another. It was a whole different chaos when it came in . . . it was just like an epidemic everywhere . . . the older people that would come out on the weekends to a ball game and things, they didn't come out no more, you know. Because you really don't know what's going to happen when you're out.<sup>70</sup>*

As a result of these changing dynamics, participation in local organizations diminished, and the churches lost their hold on the community. Lynwood Park was run by drug dealers after the 1980s, and they became the new role models for many of the community's youths. Sociologist William Wilson argued that ghetto-related practices are transmitted by precept to youths, through role modeling, and this was the case in Lynwood Park, as young boys aspired to become like the community's crack cocaine dealers. Sudhir Venkatesh hoped to learn why youths chose dangerous drug-trafficking as an enterprise from his research in Chicago's Maquis Park, and former Lynwood Park drug dealer John Jett explained the lure of drug trafficking, and why youths in underclass communities such as Lynwood Park forego pursuing an education and working at a mainstream job.<sup>71</sup>

*You don't go to school to be educated. You go to school to be able to make money. . . . You got to be educated enough to make money. But once you get into the drug trade, alrighty, why should I go to school and work for somebody when I can get me some cocaine and be rich . . . It's a career. . . and it is a good business. . . . And if you got sense, if you got some goals, I can say, "Well, alright then, I'm gonna sacrifice a year of my life, and I'm just gonna sell drugs." Do you know the rest of your life you can be financially situated . . . [o]ut of that one year of being dedicated to the game. You will never have to work another day in your life. . . . That's attractive, especially to the black male. The black male, he can go to college and come out and can't get a job.<sup>72</sup>*

Before the 1980s Lynwood Park's illegal products were also enjoyed by their sellers and many in the community. While many residents drank to excess, alcohol and

<sup>70</sup> Minnie Lee Weddie Thompson, interview by author, 11 August 2005, transcript, 24-5. Thompson's nickname is pronounced Weedie by Thompson and the other residents.

<sup>71</sup> William Julius Wilson. *When Work Disappears: The World of the New Urban Poor*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1996), 56, 71; Venkatesh, *Off the Books*, xi.

<sup>72</sup> Jett, 13 November 2005, 101-2.

marijuana usage were recreational, and did not result in community-destroying behaviors. However, crack cocaine was a wholly different product, highly addictive, and ensured that the community would deteriorate further, as economically-stable residents became addicted. LaTrelle Lockwood, born in 1955, never drank alcohol, but he used marijuana recreationally, and he sold it as a wholesaler. Lockwood witnessed the devolvment of Lynwood Park's residents after they became addicted to crack cocaine, which hastened the destruction of the community:

- LL: *Crack cocaine was probably one of the most powerful drugs they sell . . . That's one of the drugs I was afraid of, because it's just that potent . . .*
- VMH: *Did you see changes in this community?*
- LL: *Yes. . . . I seen people who had good jobs, plenty of money in the bank, get on crack and lose everything they had . . . homes, bank accounts, all the way down: cars, go to prison, go to stealing, you know. I've seen it. . . . My friends. Guys my age.*
- VMH: *Respectable?*
- LL: *Yeah. Oh, yeah.*
- VMH: *Because they got addicted to crack?*
- LL: *The first and second time they ever smoked it. . . .*
- VMH: *So there were respectable people with property and jobs who lost everything and then they end up on the street?*
- LL: *Or young guys who end up in prisons.*
- VMH: *Women, too?*
- LL: *Oh, yeah, women too.*
- VMH: *I've spoken to a couple of them who ended up being prostitutes . . . they had to start selling to support their habits.*
- LL: *Exactly. . . .*
- VMH: *Did you know people who died from crack cocaine?*
- LL: *Yeah, I knew one or two people who did.<sup>73</sup>*

Drug trafficking in Lynwood Park, and the addiction of its residents, was so widespread that by the 1980s the attendant crime radiating outward to the surrounding affluent white communities ensured that Lynwood Park would become a target for displacement, although many of the community's residents claimed that it was whites who were purchasing Lynwood Park's drugs. Anne Jackson Ouisley, born in 1916, lived on

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<sup>73</sup> Lockwood, 9 August 2005, 42-4.

Windsor Parkway, and said of the drug buyers, “Well, now, I can sit on my porch and see sales going on. But they selling to peoples that’s in a Rolls Royce, BMW, Mercedes—big fine cars,” which John Jett confirmed when he spoke of Lynwood Park’s sellers and their customers:

*You could go pay fifty cents for some cocaine. . . . You could make you two or three hundred dollars off the white people coming through the neighborhood to buy it . . . that’s why the community is out of control. They weren’t selling to the black people. They sold to the white people . . . ’cause the black peoples ain’t gonna buy it from you, ’cause they can go get they own and smoke it. But it is the white people that cause this community to spin out of control on the drug selling. They’d ride through here and get it.*<sup>74</sup>

Similarly, LaTrelle Lockwood lives on Wimberly Road, and he maintained that it was the white demand for crack cocaine that ensured that Lynwood Park trafficking would thrive:

*[Y]ou got to understand that over seventy percent of the people who come to buy drugs are from the surrounding neighborhoods, so if they could stop them from coming, there wouldn’t be any business. . . . If you just go down Wimberly Road, there’s a lot of BMWs, company trucks, taxis, you know—they’re coming down through there.*<sup>75</sup>

In other words, the white appetite for crack cocaine, in large part, ensured the availability of the drug in the community, the residents’ addiction, the criminalization of the people in Lynwood Park, and the disintegration of the community. And thus it is ironic that while Lynwood Park existed because it shielded itself from the white world across the boundary, its demise was hastened because of its illicit drug trade with that same white outside.

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Lynwood Park falls within census tract 021100, which is comprised of four block groups, three of which are affluent white communities. Block group one is the Oglethorpe University complex, block group two is the country club section, and includes the exclusive

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<sup>74</sup> Anne Jackson Ouisley, 15 November 2004, 87; Jett 13 November 2005, 99-100. A fifty-cent piece of cocaine is really a rock of cocaine that costs fifty dollars.

<sup>75</sup> Lockwood, 9 August 2005, 48-9.

Historic Brookhaven neighborhood, Capital City Country Club, and Peachtree Golf Club.

And block group four is the affluent Silver Lake neighborhood, which is clustered around the lake.<sup>76</sup> White flight from the section south of Windsor Parkway began in 1965 when the first black family moved onto Wimberly Road, and white historian Paul Hudson was relieved when his family moved:

*We moved in 1966, because—somehow a black family moved in on Wimberly Road. I don't know when or where, or the circumstances. But in other words, it was no longer a white street. And then it was the classic white flight . . . I just remember relief that I'd be living in a white neighborhood that wasn't adjacent to a black one, and I wouldn't have to deal with that stigma.*<sup>77</sup>

Historian Kevin Kruse held that civil rights gains in the postwar period caused working-class white flight, due to white outrage that blacks were encroaching upon their neighborhoods.<sup>78</sup> Black families wanted homes with modern amenities, and many wanted to move closer to their kinfolk in Lynwood Park. They bought homes in a five-block area of the formerly all-white southern side of Windsor Parkway that encompassed Fala Place, Hillview Avenue, Dickson Street, and Wimberly Road.<sup>79</sup> This area became exclusively black, and shared a parallel history of deterioration with Lynwood Park after 1970.<sup>80</sup>

By the end of the 1960s the newly extended Lynwood Park was completely surrounded by affluent white communities, and by 1982 homes in the white neighborhoods were selling for upwards of \$300,000 while a vacant lot in Lynwood Park could be purchased for \$1,000.<sup>81</sup> The Lynwood Park rent gap—the difference between the land value in its actual versus its potential use—made Lynwood Park a prime target for displacement in the 1980s.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Hudson, "Campus and Commercial Development," 59.

<sup>77</sup> Hudson, 21 May 2004, 39.

<sup>78</sup> Kevin M. Kruse, *White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), 8-10, 41.

<sup>79</sup> See Maps 2 and 3, pp. 37, 55.

<sup>80</sup> Hudson, 21 May 2004, 40.

<sup>81</sup> Douglas S. Massey and Nancy A. Denton. *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 13; Eric Sturgis, "A Taxing Time in Lynwood: Soaring Property Valuations Put Squeeze On Longtime Residents," *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, 12 September 2002.

However, Lynwood Park's residents shared a perception that developers wanted to displace the community as early as the 1960s, as Anne Jackson Ouisley, born in 1916, explained:

*All of it is prime property. . . . They wanted the whole thing. . . . They got this planned from way back there, thirty years ago. . . . they intended to get this community, regardless of what, when, and where. But they had patience to wait. They wouldn't deal with the older crowd, 'cause they would not sell. And didn't deal with the second generation, because they would not sell. . . . They wait. Who did they buy from mostly in here? Drug addicts. The guy that would take \$65,000 for his mother's property, just to get him some money to buy more drugs. Okay? [Then] this family didn't want to live next door to a drug dealer, so they sell.<sup>83</sup>*

In other words, Anne Jackson Ouisley believed that homeowner flight and addiction to crack cocaine after the mid-1980s left Lynwood Park vulnerable to acquisition and enabled developers to acquire property within the community. In addition, Pee Wee Jackson claimed that Lynwood Park was historically slated for elimination, and added that not only did the developers and the surrounding white communities want Lynwood Park displaced, but that the county cooperated in the venture:

*[T]he master plan for Dekalb County . . . always showed Lynwood Park future, or what you see now. . . . because of the tax base—is to get rid of the people in Lynwood Park that are paying minimum taxes, to build these mega houses to increase the tax base.<sup>84</sup>*

Yet Jewish Helen Miller, whose family purchased a grocery store on Windsor Parkway in 1961, pointed out that DeKalb County made aesthetic improvements of benefit only to the residents of Lynwood Park. Miller's husband purchased a small vacant lot on the southwestern corner of Windsor Parkway and Osborne Road—within extended Lynwood Park—in 1978, on which he planned to build a liquor store. He changed his mind and the lot lay fallow until DeKalb County sought and received his permission to

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<sup>82</sup> For more on rent gap theory, see Neil Smith, "Gentrification and the Rent Gap," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 77,3 (1987): 462-465.

<sup>83</sup> Anne Jackson Ouisley, 15 November 2004, 95-7.

<sup>84</sup> Pee Wee Jackson, 17 September 2006, 75.

convert it into a sitting park for the Lynwood Park community.<sup>85</sup> The county installed plantings and benches, and had an official ribbon-cutting ceremony.<sup>86</sup> Miller remarked that the park was beautiful, but that soon afterward the furniture and their replacements disappeared, and the county eventually gave up the effort to maintain the facility:

HM: *DeKalb County made it into a park and put benches and everything. We had an opening. It was very beautiful and then it just got carried away.*  
 VMH: *What do you mean "carried away"?*  
 HM: *Everything disappeared. It just became an empty lot again.*  
 VMH: *You mean like the benches?*  
 HM: *Yeah.*

County commissioner Judy Yates pointed out that Lynwood Park received services from the county in excess of its low tax base. So it would seem, contrary to the claims of Lynwood Park's residents such as Anne Jackson Ouisley and Pee Wee Jackson, that DeKalb County had no plan to displace Lynwood Park in the 1960s and 1970s.<sup>87</sup>

Rumors are significant because they often drive behavior, and a rumor surfaced of a possible buyout of Lynwood Park in 1986, and residents feared a slum clearance displacement, since many of their homes had been constructed before building codes were established by the county in 1959.<sup>88</sup> The residents formed the Lynwood Park Improvement Association, hired then City Councilman Bill Campbell as their attorney, and applied for, and received, grants from the county to restore deficient housing. They also began working with DeKalb County to clean up the eyesores left by absentee landlords, in an attempt to prevent their community being confiscated through eminent domain. The community launched the first Lynwood Park Day celebration in 1986 to promote community pride, and

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<sup>85</sup> Letter of permission from DeKalb County to Mr. Alvin Miller, 27 June 1978, Helen Miller Papers, property of Helen Miller, Atlanta, Georgia.

<sup>86</sup> Letter advising that beautification project was completed from DeKalb County to Alvin Miller, 9 May 1979; Letter of invitation to ribbon-cutting ceremony of sitting park from DeKalb County to Alvin Miller, 19 May 1979, Helen Miller Papers, property of Helen Miller, Atlanta, Georgia.

<sup>87</sup> Miller, 19 February 2008, 6; Commissioner Judy Yates, interview by author, 13 May 2005, transcript, 1.

<sup>88</sup> Yates, 13 May 2005, 1.

long-time resident Eulas Calloway said at that time: “We want to stay . . . and make this community a place where we can walk down the street again.”<sup>89</sup>

Geographer and anthropologist Neil Smith made the interesting argument that it is disinvestment by government that establishes the *opportunity* for the spatial reversal that drives gentrification. In other words, if a neighborhood is undervalued due to government neglect, gentrifying pioneers will take an interest in its profitable re-development. But just as importantly, once gentrification begins, governments then assist in the process by reinvesting in the newly-emerging, higher-income community.<sup>90</sup> Sociologist Harvey Molotch explained that intervention in affecting the growth of an area is a key function of government, but that this government involvement is the one most ignored by scholars who study the dynamics that change communities.<sup>91</sup> In other words, communities devolve and are revitalized according to both the neglect and interest of the government. While this dynamic eventually played out in Lynwood Park, in 1986 DeKalb County’s CEO Manuel Maloof asserted that there would be no buyout and displacement of Lynwood Park, and the community then collectively exhaled. However, real estate developers were not deterred, and residents found blank sales contracts slipped under their doors offering them \$45,000 for their properties.<sup>92</sup> The community then drew up a Group Property Package Agreement, “in response to a threat of a Community Buy-out,” in 1987. Commonly referred to as the Neighborhood Agreement, the document set out the terms under which a property owner in Lynwood Park would sell: the asking price per lot had to be \$450,000, with a minimum price of \$250,000. In addition, the community also required payment for

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<sup>89</sup> Dunnivant, “Lynwood Residents Fear Buyout,” 16 June 1986.

<sup>90</sup> Neil Smith, “Of yuppies and housing: gentrification, social restructuring, and the urban dream,” *Society and Space: Environment and Planning D* 5 (1987): 151-172, 165.

<sup>91</sup> Harvey Molotch, “The City as a Growth Machine: toward a Political Economy of Place,” *American Journal of Sociology* 82 (1976): 309-332, 313.

<sup>92</sup> Dunnivant, “Lynwood Residents Fear Buyout,” 16 June 1986.



air rights at \$400 per month for fifteen years, and required buyers to pay renters that were uprooted \$3,000 for relocation expenses. Residents kept a copy of the agreement in their homes and showed it to developers, saying, “This is what I want,” to which the developers replied, “You’re crazy,” and went away.<sup>93</sup>

The developers then changed tactics, while the community went back to business as usual after the initial threat of a buyout subsided. The crack cocaine trade continued to flourish, Francis Street was named “Crack Street,” crack houses proliferated, and the community devolved into dereliction, decay, and overgrowth. Meanwhile, real estate investors were contacting out-of-town landlords and buying properties at fire-sale prices, since the owners knew of the problems in Lynwood Park, and did not consider the increasing property values in the communities surrounding the enclave. And as members of the founding generation began dying, some heirs could not afford the property taxes that had accumulated for years, and these properties were snatched up for tax liens on the courthouse steps. Other heirs who were out of town, or who could not see the neighborhood’s future potential sold for low prices. Still others sold inherited properties to support drug habits. In this manner, the white real estate agent, Amy James, was able to acquire thirty-four lots in the community, most for tax liens, and Judge Bobby Cobb was able to amass twenty-six properties, which they would “sit on” for nearly two decades. Other outside investors began purchasing scattered properties within the community, which included many vacant lots, and properties with structures, some of which were allowed to fall into decay, while others were rented.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> Stirus, “A Taxing Time in Lynwood,” 12 September 2002; Keith Dunnavant, “Blacks in DeKalb Fear Developers Overwhelming Area,” *The Atlanta Journal* 28 May 1986, D-4; “Group Property Package Agreement,” 26 February 1987, in the *Lynwood Park Community Project, Inc., Business Plan*, 1997, Lynwood Park Archives, Office of the CDC; Patricia Martin, interview by author, 10 November 2004, transcript, 4-5.

<sup>94</sup> Martin, 27 October 2004, 61; Letter from Bobby L. Cobb to Lt. R.H. Benifield, 18 March 1993, Roy H. Benifield Papers.

Census data show Lynwood Park's population at 1,105 in 1970, with eleven percent elderly. In 1970 there were 352 houses, three apartment buildings, numerous duplexes, and several triplexes. The 1990 census reports that the community had 727 residents, or a loss of thirty percent since 1970. And since many of its buildings were decayed and uninhabitable, while others had been torn down, in 1990 there was an increase in vacant lots. And while the 1980 census listed the single-family dwellings as sixty percent owner-occupied, the 1990 data show only 159 owner-occupied housing units. According to Officer M.W. Williams, by 1990 drug kingpins were in control of the community, and the law-abiding residents were staying in their homes and locking up all possessions that were not nailed down. Although Patricia Martin never felt unsafe in Lynwood Park, because of her reputation as a well-respected community leader, she nevertheless took precautions:

*I never have felt unsafe, because I knew everybody. We just started closing doors to keep them from stealing things, not out of fear of harm . . . They would steal, and all, like that, but they weren't harmful. And there were fights, and there were killings, and all like that . . . But I knew everybody. I've never had a fear.<sup>95</sup>*

Gertrude Booker, born in 1918, had moved to Lynwood Park from The Camps. Booker lived on Windsor Parkway, in the center of the community's dangerous boundary, and said that she lost many belongings, but that her shotgun, in large part, kept her safe:

*I had used ladders . . . I didn't have no tool house, and I would just leave 'em out. I didn't think. Come back, they'd be gone. . . . Lawnmower. . . . Leave it out in the yard, come back, it's gone. . . . and that's why I started to shoot, to let them know if you come any closer I'll kill you. [T]hey knowed that I lived here by myself. And I would get out there in the night—back in the back—and shoot down in the ground . . . [i]n the front, and shoot down in the ground. . . . And come on in the house and feel safe. So nobody never broke in on me.<sup>96</sup>*

But not everyone was safe in Lynwood Park, as Booker recalled: "I had one boy to get killed right out there at my driveway one night. And then my friends had a son that get

<sup>95</sup> Census data is from *The Lynwood Park Neighborhood Strategic Plan*, 1995, 8-9; Williams, 14 April 2005, 26-8; Martin 17 May 2005, 45, Williams, 14 April 2005, 17.

<sup>96</sup> Gertrude Booker, interview by author, 17 August 2005, transcript, 67; Booker, 11 November 2005, 38.

killed right down the street from me.”<sup>97</sup> John Chatman claimed that outside drug dealers were responsible for many of the killings in Lynwood Park:

- JC: *[A] lot of people were making a lot of money, but peoples were dying too . . . because, see, a lot of times they give those young guys out here the wrong stuff. And then when those guys buy that and go and find out it's not the right stuff, they come back.*
- VMH: *Oh, so they ran a scam on these people coming in to buy?*
- JC: *Yeah . . . big dealers comes in and they brings them stuff that's just not good, and they give them to little kids. And them kids will just be out there selling it. And then them guys come and they want their money back. And some of the little guys get killed, because they don't have the money to give them. So a lot of killing was going on at that time to young peoples. And a lot of young people got on that stuff, and couldn't get off of it.*<sup>98</sup>

Lynwood Park became even more dangerous when a drug ring from Miami tried to take over the community's drug trade. Michelle Cleckley, born in 1971, is a crack addict and former dealer, who is homeless in Lynwood Park today. Cleckley once ran with the drug kingpins and remembered when the Miami Boys attempted to control Lynwood Park:

- MC: *Some people from Miami started coming in to this neighborhood and started trying to run this place. . . .*
- VMH: *And then one of your friends got killed?*
- MC: *Yes. . . . They thought he had smoked up their drugs and they killed him . . . and dumped right up there behind China Grove Church. . . . They took him off and killed him, and then brought him back and dumped him in the church ground.*<sup>99</sup>

Lynwood Park had been continually pushed beyond the threshold of stability since the 1960s, beginning with school desegregation in 1969, and black middle-class flight after the passage of the Fair Housing Act in 1968. These events led to a concentration of housing abandonment, crime, and social disorder within the community, plus a greater availability of drugs, which increased Lynwood Park's influx of renters, vagrants, drug addicts and drug dealers. In 1970 Peter Scott wrote that the future of Lynwood Park “hinges on the

<sup>97</sup> Booker, 11 November 2005, 49.

<sup>98</sup> John Chatman, 28 March 2008, 38.

<sup>99</sup> Michelle Cleckley, interview by author, 25 July 2005, transcript, 10.

ability of its residents to persuade young adults who have left the community to return and work for its development.” This had not happened in the two decades following Scott’s prescription. Yet while residents were battening down the hatches in the beginning of the 1990s, they could have no idea that Lynwood Park was about to enjoy an efflorescence.

## Chapter 2: The Revival and Destruction of Lynwood Park

In 1992 incoming DeKalb County CEO Liane Levetan (1992-2000) employed new policing methods promoted by the Justice Department, in combination with county and state programs and private partnerships, in an attempt to revitalize Lynwood Park. Levetan's strategy to recover Lynwood Park began with the initiation of Community Oriented Policing (COP) in 1992. Part of the Justice Department's plan to combat the nationwide drug epidemic, COP was a program in which law enforcement officers formed relationships with a community's law-abiding citizens, to take back their drug-infested neighborhoods. COP was instituted in Lynwood Park after DeKalb County leaders learned that an organization from Florida known as the Miami Boys was attempting to control the enclave's drug trade.<sup>1</sup> The COP program required the community's cooperation, but Officer M.W. Williams pointed out that Lynwood Park had been historically hostile to outsiders, and especially the police:

*The community was real, real belligerent . . . if a police officer stopped to say something to somebody, next thing you know, you have fifty or sixty people around you . . . there was really an air where they seemed to want to intimidate the police . . . they wanted to enjoy a reputation whereby the police were supposed to be afraid to come down here because we're so bad . . . and we don't fear the police, or law, or government, or nothing.<sup>2</sup>*

Lieutenant Roy H. Benifield established COP in Lynwood Park, and was given *carte blanche* to clean up the enclave. He officially included the extended southern section as a part of Lynwood Park in 1992, and set up sting operations of undercover police making drug buys and sales. He and his team made hundreds of arrests, of both sellers and buyers.<sup>3</sup>

Lynwood Park began to look safer after 1992, due in large part to the COP crackdowns and Benifield's efforts to physically clean up the community of overgrowth

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<sup>1</sup> Roy H. Benifield, interview by author, 23 March 2005, transcript, 13.

<sup>2</sup> Williams, 14 April 2005, 16. For more details of the residents' attempts to intimidate the police, see Veronica Menezes Holmes, "Scattering the Fragments Again" (M.A. thesis, Georgia State University, 2005), 74-8.

<sup>3</sup> Benifield, 23 March 2005, 1-7, 35-6, 41-5.

and trash, abandoned vehicles, and derelict housing that was being used as drug dens. In 1994 the community again feared slum clearance after an upscale townhouse development was constructed at the southeastern corner of Windsor Parkway and Osborne Road. Lynwood Park petitioned the county to help it preserve the neighborhood and its cultural heritage, and DeKalb County leaders formed the Lynwood Park Community Project, Inc. (LPCP), with Patricia Martin as its executive director, and trained several of the community's leaders in non-profit organizational skills. The county then established a three-way partnership between the LPCP, the county's Housing Authority, and its Department of Community Development, headed by director Chris Morris, to build low-income housing in Lynwood Park.

The community's residents believed that the county's plan would make homeownership possible for the enclave's kinfolk who were living outside Lynwood Park, the youths who Peter Scott had said in 1970 needed to return to Lynwood Park and save it.<sup>4</sup> The goal was to ensure that the traditional population remained in place, to entice youths to return through offering them affordable housing, while displacing the criminal element with COP crackdowns.<sup>5</sup> The strategy was also designed to keep developers out of the community, since their potential homebuyers would not want to purchase inordinately expensive houses in a community with longtime working-class black residents living in fifty-year-old houses of 600 square feet, while the three-way partnership was concurrently building affordable houses in the \$70,000 to \$90,000 price range, with the county providing forgivable loans of forty percent to low-income qualifiers. The plan was designed to ensure that Lynwood Park's seniors, many of whom were living on an income of three

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<sup>4</sup> Scott, "A Walk in Lynwood Park," 1 February 1970.

<sup>5</sup> See "Celebration Held For New Homes in Lynwood," *The Champion*, 2 October 1997, Roy H. Benifield Papers.

hundred dollars per month, could live out their lives in the community that had been home to many of them for more than half a century. The housing project began along Windsor Parkway, the community's historic dangerous boundary, which made Lynwood Park appear safe to the outside. For the first time since its founding, outsiders could turn into the enclave without fear of becoming the victim of a crime. Those venturing in found a tidy neighborhood of tall oaks, small houses, and friendly people who waved to them. One developer remarked, "Convenience, convenience . . . Y'all won't be here long."<sup>6</sup>

The relationship between the LPCP and the Department of Community Development deteriorated when the LPCP separated from the Housing Authority in 1998, and decided to become an independent developer of low-income housing in Lynwood Park. The relationship declined further after the LPCP board rejected a proposal by director Chris Morris of Community Development, that the LPCP build affordable houses in the \$100,000 to \$190,000 price range. The LPCP believed the proposal would push up land values, and their attendant property taxes, which would undermine its goal to build low-income houses that the community's residents and their kinfolk could afford.<sup>7</sup>

The LPCP applied to have Lynwood Park designated an historic district, both in 1998 and 1999, after the county allowed developers to build houses of 3,000 square feet on Lynwood Park's perimeter that did not conform architecturally to the existing homes. The county claimed that it did not receive the 1998 application, and the LPCP submitted a new one in 1999. The LPCP still received no response, which led the organization to speculate that the county did not want the community preserved as it was, and that it was being penalized for rejecting Morris's plan to build higher-priced low-income housing in Lynwood Park.

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<sup>6</sup> Martin, 27 October 2004, 49.

<sup>7</sup> I conducted a two-hour interview with Chris Morris on 7 June 2005. At the end of the interview, Morris declined to sign the release form, saying that she would only do so after reading a draft of my Masters thesis.

Patricia Martin claimed that Chris Morris, in partnership with Atlanta property developer Tom Cousins, intended to develop Lynwood Park into a mixed-income community, which was not what the community's three-way partnership with the county was set up to do:

- PM: *[I]n 1998 and 1999, Chris wanted a mixed-income neighborhood, and she had Mr. Cousins . . . ready to come in and do [it] 'cause this is what she told me personally. And I told her that the board turned it down. When we turned it down, that's when she went after us . . .*
- VMH: *But you can't have a mixed-income community unless you have tax relief for the traditional residents. Because the moment you start building new houses, property taxes go up . . .*
- PM: *If you do it right, that's the way it would be. But that's what communities are hollering about, 'cause it's not done right.*
- VMH: *You would have to have tax freezes or tax subsidies.*
- PM: *And, hey, I went on committees to try and get that done. Nothing.*
- VMH: *So you are saying that in '98, '99, she wanted a mixed-income community, and the LPCP board turned it down.*
- PM: *They said, "No, we don't want no mixed-income community."*
- VMH: *You just wanted affordable houses?*
- PM: *Right. That's what we set out to do. That's what we were set up to do. That's what the non-profit is about. So if you start to build something different, you're gonna mess up your non-profit status. So you either live by your own rule, or what? So we were set up to build affordable homes.*
- VMH: *You're saying your perception is that she wanted to come in with developers, and build housing that was not in that category?*
- PM: *Right.*
- VMH: *And she was doing this in '98, '99.*
- PM: *She voiced it then. She wasn't doing anything, but she voiced it then.*
- VMH: *To whom?*
- PM: *To me.*
- VMH: *But that's the same time you were applying for the Historic Preservation designation.*
- PM: *Right.*
- VMH: *So you are saying the two are connected?*
- PM: *Oh, all of it's connected. Together, it would be a beautiful puzzle.<sup>8</sup>*

John Chatman joined the LPCP board in January 2000, and related what Chris Morris told him about the enclave's historic designation application after he became president of the CDC:

*Chris indicated that she didn't think Lynwood Park would want to look the same way, because as a historic site you have to keep within the same styles of homes as in Lynwood Park. And she felt like Lynwood Park didn't want to look the same. But I*

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<sup>8</sup> Martin, 17 May 2005, 62-4.



*believe it wasn't Lynwood Park that didn't want to look the same. It was Chris and the developers that didn't want it to look the same. And that's the reason we didn't get the historic site.*<sup>9</sup>

Chatman believes that the county deliberately ignored Lynwood Park's two applications for historic designation. Patricia Martin wrote to David Cullison of the county's Planning Department querying the status of the 1998 application. Martin claimed in the letter that she had had "three conversations with a Mr. McCullen about the status of our application [and] was told that the County was working on it." The letter also advised Cullison that Representative Cynthia McKinney's office had also queried the status of Lynwood Park's 1998 application, and had received the same response. In the letter, Martin appealed to Mr. Cullison to confirm in writing that the application was still pending. She wrote: "We are still awaiting a written response to our application. Please send me an answer as soon as is possible. Time is of essence." The LPCP resubmitted the application in 1999, and Martin explained in 2005 why the LPCP again received no response from the county:

PM: *[O]ur regular commissioner [Elaine Boyer] doesn't like historic designation, because we tried to get the community as a historic designation in 1998, which would have worked [tapping desk for emphasis]. Okay? It would have worked then.*  
 VMH: *And what did DeKalb County do at that time?*  
 PM: *They swallowed the application.*  
 VMH: *So, basically, they didn't want the community to survive?*  
 PM: *You're getting it . . . [Raises voice] Not as it is.*  
 VMH: *But the whole idea of historic preservation is to keep it the way it was.*  
 PM: *They didn't want it the way it was.*<sup>10</sup>

While Martin said in 2005 that the county "swallowed" the community's two applications for historic preservation, the CDC's files show that David Cullison did respond to a query. Martin's letter requesting a confirmation about the 1998 application was undated. The CDC's file contains a faxed response from Cullison to Martin dated

<sup>9</sup> Chatman, 28 March 2008, 3.

<sup>10</sup> Letter from Patricia Martin to David Cullison, Planning Department, Historic Preservation (undated), Lynwood Park Archives, Office of the CDC; Martin, 27 October 2004, 54.

April 5, 1999, with the letterhead “DeKalb County Historic Preservation Commission.” Cullison attached a nine-page blueprint entitled “17 Steps to a Successful National Register Nomination,” with sub-headings such as “Getting Started,” “Planning Ahead,” “Documenting Your Property or District,” “Submitting Your Application.” The packet included an explanation of the state’s review process, instructions on how to cite documents, the suggestion to use Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps and the institutions where these were located, detailed instructions on documenting a structure, the historic value of the community, and a bibliography of possible references to support the claim, among other critical information, suggestions, and guidelines. On the fax’s cover sheet Cullison remarked: “If you have any questions or problems with the documentation, please call me. I work out of the Planning Department, so I have easy access to maps, zoning information, and so forth. I look forward to hearing from you.” Cullison sent Martin another fax on May 28, 1999 with a map and the remark “A map I received of potential historic neighborhoods,” all of which suggests that Cullison did respond to Martin’s inquiry.<sup>11</sup>

The LPCP submitted a six-page Application for Historic Designation dated May 18, 1999, which describes the community, and its location and history in essentially narrative form, which in no way satisfied the guidelines Cullison sent to the LPCP.<sup>12</sup> According to Commissioner Judy Yates, Martin and the LPCP board had been discouraged from pursuing the historic preservation designation by representatives of the Druid Hills neighborhood. Druid Hills had been successful in getting the designation, but had found it too restrictive. Liane Levetan confirmed that the Druid Hills residents were disgruntled with the limitations the designation placed on their agency. Levetan also maintained that Lynwood

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<sup>11</sup> Fax from David Cullison to Patricia Martin, with nine-page attachment, 5 April 1999; Fax from David Cullison to Patricia Martin, 28 May 1999, Historic Designation File, Lynwood Park Archives, Office of the CDC.

<sup>12</sup> Application for Historic Designation, 18 May 1999, Lynwood Park Archives, Office of the CDC. A copy of this application is also housed at the DeKalb County Historic Society, Decatur, Georgia.

Park did not officially apply for the designation, nor did the community fully understand its implications:

*[I]t puts a lot of restrictions on what a neighborhood can do . . . And you really have to have a certain percentage of the people to sign. Now I never saw anything [Lynwood Park's] people signed on that. They may have just said they wanted to start the designation, but they didn't even know what it would entail . . . while I think historic designation is good thing, I don't think that [Lynwood Park's] people would have really understood what they were getting into . . . they talked about it, but I didn't know that they had formally applied . . . I would have supported it, had the ordinance been written correctly . . . and with what I have seen with Druid Hills, I just would want to be sure that the people thoroughly understood what it meant . . . It's very, very restrictive . . . I don't think anybody would have understood the ramifications.<sup>13</sup>*

There are no documents extant in Lynwood Park's "Historic Designation" file to indicate that the concept and its ramifications were presented to the community, and that any residents signed a petition to have the application formally submitted.

Commissioner Elaine Boyer suggested that Lynwood Park be designated as an overlay district, which would enable the county to mandate that new houses built there by outside developers be closer in size to those already existing in the community.<sup>14</sup> By limiting the size of new houses, Boyer's strategy would have prevented large increases in property assessments. The plan would have enabled the traditional senior citizens, who made up eighty-five percent of Lynwood Park's homeowners in 1999, to remain in their homes for the rest of their lives, if they so desired, since they would have qualified for some property tax relief. Moreover, the overlay designation could be repealed at a later date, if a majority of the residents agreed, when the demographic makeup of the community changed.

Boyer's plan would have allowed developers into the enclave, but any kinfolk of the traditional residents who wanted to move back to the community would have had to pay substantially more than the cost of the low-income houses that the three-way partnership had

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<sup>13</sup> Yates, 13 May 2005, 2; Levetan, 18 April 2005, 27-8.

<sup>14</sup> Yates, 13 May 2005, 2-5; Elaine Boyer, interview with author, 2 May 2005, transcript, 10.

built. And since kinfolk required financial assistance from the government to qualify for the low-income homes that the three-way partnership was building, it is infeasible to think that they could have moved back to Lynwood Park as homeowners under Boyer's strategy to have the community designated as an overlay district. In other words, the overlay district designation would have kept the traditional black senior citizens in their homes, brought in higher-income outsiders into Lynwood Park as homeowners, and the entire enclave's housing could then have been redeveloped to reflect housing in the surrounding upscale communities after all elderly traditional residents passed away, since their kinfolk could not have become entrenched in Lynwood Park due to the higher prices of the houses under the overlay plan.

The LPCP's Board Minutes indicate that Chris Morris of Community Development attended the December 1998 board meeting and presented developing Lynwood Park into a mixed-income community. The minutes recorded that "The Board was not comfortable with this concept."<sup>15</sup> A meeting was then held in Elaine Boyer's office, with Chris Morris in attendance, at which Boyer and Levetan presented their concept of designating Lynwood Park as an overlay district to the officers of the LPCP board. The idea was then presented to the full board in an emergency board meeting on December 17, 1998, where the board decided that the concept was "the best plan heard to date and it sounded workable." The board then officially approved preparing an application for an overlay designation in the December 21, 1998 board meeting.<sup>16</sup>

The CDC's files contain a copy of the detailed "Lynwood Park Community Project Overlay" application.<sup>17</sup> At the February 1999 board meeting, the LPCP's housing consultant,

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<sup>15</sup> *1999 Board Minutes: June to December*, Minutes, 3 December 1998. Of note is that these minutes of the 1998 meeting, along with documents through February, 1999, are in the file of 1999 board minutes.

<sup>16</sup> *1999 Board Minutes: June to December*, Minutes of 17 December 1998 Emergency Board Meeting; Minutes of 21 December 1998 Meeting, Lynwood Park Archives, Office of the CDC. For more on Boyer's views on the feasibility of an overlay district designation for Lynwood Park, see Boyer, 2 May 2005, 3-4.

<sup>17</sup> Yates, 13 May 2005, 4; "Lynwood Park Community Project District Overlay," Overlay File, Lynwood Park Archives, Office of the CDC.

John McLean, reported that the LPCP *and* the county had signed a contract to prepare documents to have Lynwood Park designated an overlay district, which was expected to be approved by the county commissioners in their April 1999 meeting. In this report, McLean also recommended going forward with the application for Historic Preservation designation, since the overlay designation would affect the sizes of houses built, while the historic designation would affect their appearance. Commissioner Judy Yates explained that the Old Fourth Ward in Atlanta had acquired an overlay district designation and that Patricia Martin wanted to use that community as a model for Lynwood Park, because it was less restrictive in terms of changes to buildings. In February 1999 the LPCP board was again not comfortable with Chris Morris's plan of a mixed-income community, was focused on working with the county to acquire the overlay district designation, and moved forward with a minimal effort to attain an Historic Preservation designation.<sup>18</sup>

DeKalb County's legal department ruled that the overlay plan was illegal, because of technicalities in the planning of the City of Atlanta<sup>19</sup> However, in 2005 Patricia Martin claimed that the plan was not illegal, and that the county deliberately exploited the board's inexperience to carry out the county's plan of the unrestricted redevelopment of Lynwood Park:

*Elaine [Boyer] told us that we needed an overlay, rather than a historical designation, that the overlay would allow people to still build their choice, but it would in compliance with what was already here . . . we got the overlay started . . . and their attorney there said it was illegal, and we never got it. . . . Ms. Levetan paid for it. . . . And it was shameful, because the architectural company that was doing [the plan] was restricted . . . The overlay was done by a company hired by DeKalb County. And when we met to discuss it, and all, we were told by the county attorney that it was illegal. And so that stopped that, and we didn't get to go any further . . . We didn't know 'til just in the recent years that it wasn't illegal, but that's what we were told.<sup>20</sup>*

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<sup>18</sup> John McLean, "Housing Consultant Report," February Activities, 1999 Board Minutes: June to December, Lynwood Park Archives, Offices of the CDC; Yates, 13 May 2005, 4; there is nothing in the Lynwood Park archives suggesting that a financial subsidy/forgiveness solution would be put in place to make it possible for returning kinfolk to be able to afford the higher-priced houses built under the overlay plan.

<sup>19</sup> Boyer, 2 May 2005, 3. For more on the overlay option, see Holmes, "Scattering the Fragments Again," 118-20.

<sup>20</sup> Martin, 17 May 2005, 13-7.

Judy Yates said that an overlay designation was difficult to achieve, because it required a consensus—the agreement of the property owners who also wanted wealth, because the overlay designation limits the size and value of what can be built on a lot. Therefore, it is difficult to get the owners to agree to restrict the use of their property.<sup>21</sup> Lieutenant Roy Benifield confirmed that there were a lot of residents in the community who did not want Lynwood Park to be protected by any laws and ordinances, because they wanted to sell their properties and leave the community, and therefore wanted no limitations placed on rising property values. Therefore, if Yates and Benifield were correct, the majority of Lynwood Park’s residents would never have signed a petition to have the enclave designated either as an historic or overlay district.<sup>22</sup>

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Patricia Martin claimed that DeKalb County treated the LPCP as an unequal partner in the three-way partnership. The county dismissed Martin’s knowledge of the community when she advised the county that it was building an affordable house over the lot’s official property line, and onto one of two lots that the LPCP was negotiating to purchase. In addition, Martin claimed that county officials were not respectful to the purchasers of the low-income homes that the county was building—the kinfolk of Lynwood Park’s residents—all of which left the LPCP no choice but to separate from the three-way partnership:

*DeKalb County Housing Authority had bought a lot next to these two lots, and they built over on one of these lots. And we knew they were on the lot. So, as a partner, we went to them and told them. And they said that wasn’t true. And they continued to grade. Then, when they . . . put the foundation down, we went to them again and told them they were wrong. We went to them three times to tell them they were on the wrong property. They did not listen. . . . Turns out that they framed the house on somebody else’s property, and had to end up buying the two lots, okay? So that was one of the big disappointments there, that you can’t go up to your partner and tell them something and they listen to you, you*

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<sup>21</sup> Yates, 13 May 2005, 4-5.

<sup>22</sup> Benifield, 23 March 2005, 26.

*know, and look at it real serious . . . Well, that's the way they had been doing it here, seemingly, all of Lynwood Park's life. . . . they dismissed us . . .*

*[T]hen the other thing was that we had to send the clients that were buying the homes to them. We did the training, the homebuyer's training here, and screened them for eligibility, and then sent them on over there, for their final eligibility. And our clients was coming back saying how nasty they were to them. They said, "We're buying homes, we're not welfare recipients, and we'd try to talk, and their employees were very ugly." So we just decided to develop our own properties. And that's when Community Development, Chris Morris, and DeKalb County Housing Authority seemingly were offended. . . . [Chris] was footing the bill. Her thing was that she didn't think we were capable.<sup>23</sup>*

The LPCP intended to continue building low-income homes in the 1,200 to 1,400 square foot range, but in a letter dated December 10, 1999, Chris Morris made it clear to Patricia Martin that houses the LPCP was planning to build had to be around 1600 square feet, selling for approximately \$166,000. Morris concluded the letter with a veiled warning:

*[I]f LPCP does not support moving forward with this development, even though it will be different from previous initiatives, the alternative provided by private developers could pose more affordability threats for the existing community.<sup>24</sup>*

Morris then presented the same scenario to the Lynwood Park Housing Committee on February 11, 2000, and the minutes of this meeting stated:

*Mrs. Morris said that the Realtor had called her and asked for her support even though the Realtor stated that the houses built would be upscale homes, not affordable by community resident[s]. Since mixed income has been desirable by Mrs. Morris for some time, the empowerment of homeowners is grave.<sup>25</sup>*

This suggests that realtors were contacting Morris and were seeking her cooperation in allowing the building of larger and more expensive houses in Lynwood Park, and the fact that she revealed this in the meeting could be interpreted as another warning to the LPCP to approve the mixed-income project that she had proposed. The March 2000 board

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<sup>23</sup> Martin, 17 May 2005, 21-3.

<sup>24</sup> Chris H. Morris, "Letter to Patricia Martin," 10 December 1999, *Board Minutes 2000*, Lynwood Park Archives, Office of the CDC.

<sup>25</sup> "Lynwood Park Housing Committee Report," 11 February 2000, *Board Minutes 2000*, Lynwood Park Archives, Office of the CDC.

meeting's minutes stated that the LPCP was building houses without funds from Community Development, and that the organization was marketing its own properties.<sup>26</sup>

After the autonomous and independent LPCP sold its second house for \$90,000 in 2001, which was financed with state and federal grants, residents were shocked when their property assessments increased more than eleven-fold in 2002. The LPCP believed that the community was being penalized for its independence, while county officials claimed that the steep hike was merely the county's assessor "catching up" with the state mandate to assess all properties in the county every three years. However, the residents saw the move as more than a coincidence, since the LPCP had sold twenty affordable houses since 1997 under the three-way partnership, without an inordinate increase in property assessments. The tax increase sent a panic through the residents, and many seniors sold their homes and left the community. Once owner-occupied properties began changing hands, developers recognized that there was no upper limit to prices they could command for Lynwood Park houses. Developers then built even larger houses, which pushed tax assessments even higher, which then forced even more of the traditional residents to sell and leave.<sup>27</sup>

Believing that its mission was not to be a "project" but rather to be for "development," the LPCP changed its name to the Community Development Corporation (CDC) in 2002 and attempted to build four affordable houses on four lots that it had purchased with federal funds when it was still the LPCP. However, Community Development threw obstacles in the CDC's path at every turn, ensuring that the CDC

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<sup>26</sup> "Board Meeting Minutes," 6 March 2000, *Board Minutes 2000*, Lynwood Park Archives, Office of the CDC. The minutes also mention that Rep. Cynthia McKinney was looking into the status of Lynwood Park's application for historic designation.

<sup>27</sup> In 2002 Carrie Henderson's property tax bill increased from \$45.35 to \$526.14, a more than eleven-fold increase. Eric Stirgus, "A taxing time in Lynwood; Soaring property valuations put squeeze on longtime residents," *The Atlanta-Journal Constitution*, 12 September 2002, DeKalb Section, JA-1.



would default on its contract to have the structures built within a set timeframe.<sup>28</sup> Community Development then cut off all funding to the CDC in November 2003, which meant that the CDC had no funds with which to purchase Lynwood Park lots, and thus owners wanting to escape high property taxes could only sell to developers. Gary McDaniel, who served as Vice-President of the LPCP/CDC, purchased one of the first low-income houses on Windsor Parkway, and said of the organization's relationship with the county and the three-way partnership:

*All the peoples that we was dealing with in these three organizations, it was just like brother and sister love. . . . And then all of a sudden everything just broke off. So it's some bad blood went in there somewhere, if the truth ever be told.*<sup>29</sup>

Patricia Martin said that Chris Morris turned her back on Lynwood Park when the LPCP's board voted against Morris's plan to develop Lynwood Park as a mixed-income community. John Chatman, the current CDC president, explained that once the LPCP's relationship with DeKalb County soured, the county's office of Community Development stalled on the applications for historic designation, and abandoned Lynwood Park to developers in order to increase its coffers with tax revenues.<sup>30</sup> This decision also pacified the affluent communities surrounding Lynwood Park which did not want their property values dragged down by the presence of an underclass black community in their midst:

JC: *Chris, concerning the historic site . . . she didn't think that's what Lynwood Park should be.*  
 VMH: *Chris Morris told you that?*  
 JC: *Yes. She just said that's not what the peoples really wanted in Lynwood Park . . . Chris was thinking in terms that if we give you all that historic site, the older houses that are there now, that's the way Lynwood Park would always be. And she knew that the surrounding homes of Lynwood Park didn't want that. . . . The Brookhaven area . . . They wanted to see Lynwood Park with an upscale, which would produce their value on their homes also.*

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<sup>28</sup> For a more in-depth study of the relationship between the CDC and DeKalb County, see Holmes, "Scattering the Fragments Again," 2005.

<sup>29</sup> McDaniel, 8 June 2005, 51.

<sup>30</sup> Roy Benifield also shares the view that tax revenues drove DeKalb County's decisions in Lynwood Park's redevelopment. See Benifield, 23 March 2005, 26.

VMH: *Yes, and also it would bring in more tax revenues for the county.*  
 JC: *Well, that was the county part as far as Lynwood not staying the same. It's because of the fact that the homes that are around Lynwood Park were bringing in quite a bit of revenue, and that one area wasn't bringing that much revenue in. So they felt like we needed to do more to bring more revenue in in DeKalb County. So they allowed the developers to come in, and they didn't put anything in place to keep them from destroying Lynwood Park as it was.<sup>31</sup>*

Lynwood Park capitulated to real estate redevelopment after 2002, when the first white resident moved into a newly-constructed “McMansion” within the community, which led to an irreversible escalation in land values and property taxes. Most of the community’s traditional residents then openly decided that their self-interest would be better served by cashing in on escalating property values, rather than by making an effort to preserve their community’s culture and history.<sup>32</sup> Harvey Molotch pointed out that a city’s moneymakers need the cooperation of local government in their schemes, and that it is governments, in largely unseen ways, that determine, “who, *in material terms*, gets what, where, and how” (emphasis in original).<sup>33</sup> And the longtime residents maintained that both DeKalb County and property developers had always planned to displace the traditional residents of Lynwood Park. In addition, the community was historically mistrustful of outsiders in general, and county government in particular. Intended to preserve Lynwood Park and its history and culture, the low-income housing program turned out to be the main reason why Lynwood Park came to be described as the site of one of the fastest gentrification processes to occur in any of the nation’s changing neighborhoods, because it cleaned up the dangerous boundary, and made the community look safe to outsiders<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Chatman, 21 March 2008, 39-40; Chatman, 28 March 2008, 4.

<sup>32</sup> This process is generally referred to as gentrification, and is incorrectly used to describe what has happened to Lynwood Park since 2002. The word *gentrification* was coined in Britain in the 1960s to refer to derelict homes that were restored to their earlier genteel grandeur. Lynwood Park has been the victim of redevelopment, the razing of original buildings, and the building of wholly different structures in their place.

<sup>33</sup> Harvey Molotch, “The City as a Growth Machine: Toward a Political Economy of Place.” *American Journal of Sociology* 82 (1976): 309-332, 313.

<sup>34</sup> This is according to Professor Frank Alexander, an expert in the nationwide gentrification process, who addressed Lynwood Park residents at a community meeting on 9 May 2005.

After 2003 new houses in Lynwood Park began moving into the one-million-dollar price range and property values began rising at a rate of \$50,000 every six months. The traditional residents began playing the real estate market, so that they could convert their property assets into the greatest wealth. The small vacant lot the Millers owned that was the former DeKalb County park was zoned commercial on June 7, 2005, and the residents expected that the entire Windsor Parkway corridor would soon follow. An interview with Gary McDaniel—who still lives on Windsor Parkway—the day after the zoning change, exemplified the developer feeding frenzy and one resident’s resolve to cash in on the Lynwood Park real estate boom:

GLM: *Well, I tell you this right here, I paid sixty-three thousand for mine. I’m going to get four hundred and fifty thousand.*

VMH: *You’re going hold out for four fifty?*

GLM: *I’m planning to get it, and not necessarily holding out. Right now we up to three. They come by the other day, it was two eighty something. This morning it was three-something. . . . right now it’s going up to four fifty as I speak to you. . . . ’cause last night they just made the park over there commercial. . . .*

VMH: *So you’ll sell for four fifty.*

GLM: *I’ll sell for four fifty. And if I have to wait another year I want eight hundred thousand.<sup>35</sup>*

Many of the traditional residents believed the rumor that those who sold in Lynwood Park were able to purchase large, new homes, debt-free, in outlying communities, while banking their remainders as “nest eggs,” and McDaniel explained the dilemma that this concept created between cultural preservation and realizing wealth:

GLM: *[Y]ou got a lot of them getting a chance to buy a brand new house and have cash. . . . why would you stay in a run-down, old house—you been living there fifty years—when you could go right up here and buy you a brand new house and then have income. Historical don’t mean that much to a lot of them . . . I see a senior citizen . . . she paid eight thousand for her lot, she can get three hundred thousand now.*

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<sup>35</sup> McDaniel, 8 June 2005, 55-6.

- VMH: *So, basically, okay, you're saying that people in the community didn't really care about historic preservation.*
- GLM: *Yes, peoples did care. . . . But, you know . . . things do happen.*
- VMH: *And so when the value started going up they cared more about getting some wealth.*
- GLM: *They cared—it was about wealth all the time.*
- VMH: *Rather than staying in Lynwood Park.*
- GLM: *Money talks. . . . You know, if you put the right kind of money on the table anything can happen.<sup>36</sup>*

This example supports the finding of Sarkisian and Gertsel that communalism in impoverished communities—exchange and reciprocity across a kinship network—exists only when there are no prospects for gaining wealth. In addition, the studies conducted by Carol Stack and Sudhir Venkatesh only looked at communalism and its attendant reciprocity when there are no prospects for wealth accumulation, and do not consider how communalism transitions into individualism once the possibility of attaining wealth appears on the horizon.<sup>37</sup>

Lynwood Park's older homes were replaced with McMansions upwards of 4,000 square feet on their tiny and completely denuded lots at an alarming rate. In a twist of irony, one of the white gentrification pioneers to infiltrate Lynwood Park was Mark Kucera, who said that he knew Lynwood Park well when he was a student at Georgia State University, since he would drive out to the community to purchase “party favors”—drugs, in other words. He later wanted to live in Brookhaven, but property values had skyrocketed. However, he remembered Lynwood Park, knew of its danger, and that its land was undervalued. He decided to become a speculator, knowing that the traditional black community would be eventually displaced and that property values would inevitably

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<sup>36</sup> McDaniel, 8 June 2005, 55-57.

<sup>37</sup> Carol Stack, *All Our Kin* (New York: Basic Books, 1974), 32-49; Sudhir Alladi Venkatesh, *Off the Books: The Underground Economy of the Urban Poor* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006); Natalie Sarkisian and Naomi Gerstel, “Kin Support among Blacks and Whites: Race and Family Organization,” *American Sociological Review* 69, 6 (2004): 812 -837. See especially page 817 and 830.

rise. Kucera has not been disappointed and reported that he also bought an additional property on Wimberly Road, where the lots are larger, which he presently rents. His future plan is to sell his present home when all the traditional residents have been displaced, and to build a multi-million dollar home on his Wimberly Road lot.<sup>38</sup>

The LPCP's 1995 Strategic Plan pointed out that the community's past experiences left it mistrustful of government programs. Martin and other longtime residents, such as Anne Jackson Ouisley, maintained that the LPCP was set up and trained by DeKalb County to fail, because the county always had a plan to displace the community's traditional residents. Martin used a bumblebee and yellow jacket metaphor to describe the LPCP, the county's departments, and the real estate developers: the bumblebee goes about its business in a non-aggressive manner, while it must also live in an environment with yellow jackets that are aggressive and harmful to others:

*Well, the corporation is made up of concerned people . . . we didn't know very much. We didn't know nothing about a corporation, but we wanted to improve our community, so we were willing to be trained . . . So we get the training, and we start on a journey . . . and we were learning as we went along . . . And so we discovered that we were not ever set up to succeed. But we didn't know it. We thought we were set up to really make a big difference. But we never saw the plans that the county had. We never saw all of this gentrification actually coming. We never saw the tax rising seven times what it was. And so it just reminded me of the bumblebee . . . I'm fascinated at them, in comparison to the yellow jackets. The yellow jackets are very aggressive. They sting. They get on you. They just pester you. But the bumblebee goes about its business. If you're in its way, it stops, it looks at you. It's not aggressive. It decides whether or not it wants to deal with you—never heard of anybody being stung by a bumblebee. It's too busy minding its own business.<sup>39</sup>*

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<sup>38</sup> Kucera was the third white purchaser of a Lynwood Park McMansion. However, the other two white purchasers bought new homes on the fringes of the community, while Kucera was the first white person to purchase in the very center of Lynwood Park. Other McMansions had been purchased by middle-class blacks with no ties to the traditional Lynwood Park community, such as local news anchor Jovita Moore. Kucera knew that Lynwood Park was dangerous but believed that the risk was worth the reward, and moved there because he was single, with no children. Interestingly, after more whites moved into Lynwood Park proper, Kucera acquired an unmarried professional as a neighbor, whom he successfully encouraged to also purchase a rental property on Wimberly Road. The couple was married in 2006, and will enjoy a net profit well in excess of one million dollars on their Lynwood Park property speculation, Mark Kucera, interview by author, 23 April 2005, transcript, 1-9.

<sup>39</sup> Martin 27 October 2004, 41-42; Anne Jackson Ouisley, 15 November 2004, 95.

When Chris Morris introduced the idea of a mixed-income community, the LPCP—the bumblebee—decided that it did not want to continue dealing with the county, and withdrew from the three-way partnership. Martin and the LPCP could not realize at that time that withdrawing would leave the community vulnerable to the yellow jackets—the real estate developers—who then were able to work in concert with the county to displace the traditional community. The original three-way partnership was actually a defense strategy that the county had originally devised to keep the yellow jackets at bay. Yet when Chris Morris changed the strategy for low-income development in the community, the LPCP did not realize then—and could not know then—that wide-scale redevelopment and its attendant displacement of the traditional community could be managed only if the LPCP worked in concert with the county and its long-term goals for Lynwood Park.

The community had traditionally protected its own, and the LPCP believed its mission was to build houses for which its residents and their families could qualify. The LPCP also wanted to develop and manage Lynwood Park’s commercial-zoned property, and planned to build rental units for its elderly and disabled residents within easy access to the bus line on Windsor Parkway. In other words, Patricia Martin and the LPCP wanted the enclave’s residents and their families to finally benefit from being from Lynwood Park, the only black people on the “rich” side of the railroad tracks in Brookhaven—most of whom had been poor all their lives.

The LPCP’s board consisted mainly of longtime residents, who were descendants of Lynwood Park founders, such as Martin, McDaniel, Horace Ouisley, Charles Niles, and others. Both the LPCP and CDC’s boards supported Martin’s vision for Lynwood Park,

who believed that the LPCP was set up to take care of the people of Lynwood Park.<sup>40</sup> Therefore, Martin could not approve Chris Morris's plan to build higher-priced, low-income homes in Lynwood Park, because not only could the community's residents and their kinfolk not qualify for these homes, but Morris's plan would bring *outsiders* into Lynwood Park, and thus the LPCP ended its partnership with the county's Housing Authority and Department of Community Development. Chris Morris and DeKalb County invested no effort to comprehend Lynwood Park's history of territoriality, and the enclave's historic abhorrence of outsiders, both black and white. Morris and the county simply imposed their agenda for Lynwood Park upon the LPCP without any sensitivity towards the enclave's historic protectionist dynamics and mindset, which would leave the members of the LPCP's board no choice but to reject any plan that allowed outsiders into Lynwood Park.

Patricia Martin stated that DeKalb County deliberately kept the LPCP as a minor partner because it wanted to control the redevelopment of Lynwood Park, and that is why the low-income housing project began on Windsor Parkway. She suggested that the LPCP, in its naiveté, was actually used by the county to create a safe environment in Lynwood Park for the developers that displaced the traditional residents, through building affordable housing on Windsor Parkway first, and choosing older homes on Osborne Road for government-funded renovations in 1999 and 2000, which made Lynwood Park safe to outsiders. Martin admitted that the LPCP was to blame for Lynwood Park becoming "the fastest gentrification that [Alexander] had ever seen. And we had set that up," she said, "because we didn't know, and we were following Chris

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<sup>40</sup> Martin's grandparents, and McDaniel's great-grandparents were some of the first purchasers of Lynwood Park property before 1930.

and them's suggestion. So we were set up from the very beginning, okay? Because we didn't know."<sup>41</sup>

In 2005 Martin claimed that the LPCP should have left the dangerous boundary along Windsor Parkway, and developed affordable housing from the back of the community towards the front, because "once we started building those five houses [on Windsor Parkway] it looked secure. It looked favorable . . . But if we had started in the back, and built forward, we'd had a better chance of surviving . . . they [developers] wouldn't have come in as quickly as they did." This strategy would have made it possible for more of the traditional residents and their returning family members to become entrenched in the community. This dynamic would have automatically limited the size and price of any new houses that developers might have considered building in a community with a dangerous boundary and a large settlement of traditional working-class black residents and their kinfolk.<sup>42</sup> Yet it can be argued that Lynwood Park's historic protectionist mindset, dating back to its founding during Jim Crow segregation, and the community's negative experience with school desegregation, subconsciously contributed to the LPCP's and Martin's tensions with DeKalb County and Chris Morris, which resulted in the community's eventual eradication.

Gary McDaniel saw the relationship between the LPCP and DeKalb County differently from Martin, and agreed that the LPCP made decisions detrimental to Lynwood Park that eventually caused the community's demise:

GLM: *The county was trying to save the community. The LPCP was trying to save the community too . . . [and] You have to have outsiders if you selling new homes.*  
 VMH: *So you think that breaking off from the partnership was really a bad idea?*  
 GLM: *Yes, I do. . . . We went broke. The whole organization fell apart.*<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Martin, 17 May 2005, 63.

<sup>42</sup> Martin 17 May 2005, 63; Martin, 27 October 2004, 55-56.

<sup>43</sup> McDaniel, 8 June 2005, 48-9.



Lynwood Park had been a dangerous community, and had been hostile to outsiders since its founding, an atmosphere in which Martin and the members of the LPCP's board were raised. With the constant threat of danger eliminated through the COP program, Martin believed that, for the first time, Lynwood Park's residents and their families could live together without fear of crime, in well-constructed homes, with all county services, and yet enjoy a low tax base, and one of the best locations in the Atlanta metropolitan area. In other words, low-income blacks in Lynwood Park would finally also be able to enjoy all the amenities that white yuppies were pursuing. As a long-time community leader, Martin saw that she and the LPCP could give all this to the people of Lynwood Park, through bringing safety, services, and affordability to the traditional community.

For Patricia Martin family is community and community is family. For her, the lines between the two are blurred and overlapping—and Lynwood Park was well-known for running strangers out. The philosopher Martin Heidegger argued that each person develops a lens through which she sees and interprets the world, based on the context into which she is “thrown” at birth, coupled with the context in which she was raised. And David Thelen claimed that the memory of past experiences is profoundly intertwined with the basic identities of individuals.<sup>44</sup> Like many others on the LPCP's board, Martin's grandparents were Lynwood Park founders, and she also had an aunt and her family living there, and Martin spent part of every day in Lynwood Park with her grandparents and cousins. Her parents moved there in 1939, and Martin lived there continually until 2005.<sup>45</sup> Therefore, raised in the crucible of Lynwood Park by strong matriarchs, such as her

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<sup>44</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time: A Translation of Sein und Zeit*, (1927), Trans. Joan Stambaugh (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), 164-8; David Thelen, “Memory and American History,” *Journal of American History* 75 (1989): 1117-1129, 1117-8.

<sup>45</sup> Martin, 13 October 2004, 1-3.

grandmother, Georgia Clement, who Martin claimed “was not afraid of anything, *nuh-thing, nothing*,” Patricia Martin developed a formidable personality that could easily be construed as intimidating.<sup>46</sup>

VMH: *Where did you get this sense of independence about yourself from? . . .*

PM: *I got a lot of it being the only child, because my parents didn’t spoil me. . . . they made me do things on my own—period. So I’ve always been independent . . . I was never afraid to step out on anything I believed. And I always try to be right.*<sup>47</sup>

Patricia Martin is well-educated and articulate, and Monica Gaughan rightly claimed that Martin “is a visionary, charismatic leader who can rattle off feasible research ideas at a rate that would be the envy of novice and established social scientists alike.”<sup>48</sup> And Chris Morris, who is also African-American, can reasonably be described in the same terms as Martin. LaTrelle Lockwood, longtime Lynwood Park resident, and current CDC board member, worked as a full-time employee for the CDC in its property development stage, and said of Chris Morris, “She’s a very powerful black woman . . . she’s very, very good at what she does, but she might could have done things a little differently.”<sup>49</sup>

In effect, Patricia Martin and Chris Morris faced off in a struggle of whose vision would come to fruition in Lynwood Park, and neither would compromise, according to John Chatman:

*I understand Chris . . . she wanted mid-sized, mid-income, low-incomes through the high-incomes, and she wasn’t looking for peoples in Lynwood Park to purchase those homes. She was looking for peoples outside of Lynwood Park to purchase those homes . . . Pat wanted to help her peoples into homes, and she knew that it wasn’t anyone here to afford those homes . . . Pat’s vision, and her dream, was just for low-income. And [Pat] felt like if we could put enough low-income homes in the neighborhood, then we would be able to supply the homes for the people that’s in here already. But Chris wanted a mixed-income within the community. . . . Both of them dug in, and if one couldn’t have their way, they just hold to what they had and didn’t do nothing with it.*<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Martin, 13 October 2004, 22.

<sup>47</sup> Martin, 10 November 2004, 99.

<sup>48</sup> Monica Gaughan, “Ethnography, Demography and Service-Learning: Situating Lynwood Park.” *Critical Sociology* 28 (2002): 1-2, 217-233, 219.

<sup>49</sup> Lockwood, 9 August 2005, 66.

<sup>50</sup> Chatman, 21 March 2008, 39; Chatman, 28 March 2008, 6.

In their study of the revitalization of Ivanhoe, Virginia, Mary Ann Hinsdale and Helen M. Lewis demonstrated that a powerful leader with a confrontational style can alienate those attempting to help a community. Charismatic and a natural leader, Ivanhoe's Maxine Waller was president of a community board that generally deferred to her wishes. But Waller failed in confrontational negotiation, and Hinsdale and Lewis claimed that conflict is a major problem in small communities, since a leader who comes from the community generally adopts a "non-negotiation stance" with outsiders, because she is protective of the community, its kinship ties, friendships, experiences, and history.<sup>51</sup>

Similarly, the LPCP had a board of directors, yet Martin's vision for Lynwood Park essentially prevailed, and John Chatman confirmed that the board essentially rubber-stamped Martin's ideas for Lynwood Park:

*They pretty much followed Pat's decisions. They felt like Pat was more involved into the development of Lynwood Park, and she pretty much knew what Lynwood Park needed. And they was backing her up. Whatever she decided to do, as far as the low-income, this lower-income, then they were with her one hundred percent.*<sup>52</sup>

The LPCP's board minutes for its July 1999 meeting reflects that Martin declared to the board, "Our role has changed. We are now a Development Company plus."<sup>53</sup> Not all the LPCP's board members agreed with Martin. For example, Gary McDaniel believed that Lynwood Park could have profited from Morris's plan to develop Lynwood Park as a mixed-income community:

VMH:            *So the LPCP decided that they wanted all the houses to be on the lower end.*  
GLM:            *Correct.*

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<sup>51</sup> Mary Ann Hinsdale, Helen M. Lewis and S. Maxine Waller, *It Comes from the People: Community Development and Local Theology* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995), 128, 134-9.

<sup>52</sup> Chatman, 28 March 2008, 4-5.

<sup>53</sup> "General Meeting," 8 July 1999, *1999 Board Minutes: June-December*, Lynwood Park Archives, Office of the CDC. There could have been discussion, debate, and a vote, but the minutes only record the statement by Martin.

- VMH: *And was the LPCP doing that because they wanted to make the homes affordable for people who lived in Lynwood Park?*
- GLM: *That's exactly what they wanted.*
- VMH: *And if those higher-priced houses were on the market, that would bring people in from the outside.*
- GLM: *That's what it did.*
- VMH: *Who were higher income people?*
- GLM: *Right.*
- VMH: *And what was the problem with that? The people on the board didn't want outsiders?*
- GLM: *Well, you had some peoples on the board didn't want outsiders. Everybody didn't feel the same way about the homes. Some didn't want outsiders. As for me, it was all right. I felt like outsiders should have came in here. . . . I felt like it was healthy for the community for outsiders to move in.<sup>54</sup>*

The board minutes do not indicate that there was any discussion after Martin's July 1999 declaration, nor is there any record that any board members voiced that the LPCP should seriously consider the merits of Chris Morris's plan for Lynwood Park's future.

In June 1999 the LPCP produced a business plan in which it stated that it was "steering our ship." The business plan was intended to introduce the organization and its goals to the private sector, from which it was hoping to raise \$4 million. The LPCP planned to combine these monies with \$2.5 million in federal grants from the county's Department of Community Development, to build 35 new homes in Lynwood Park by the end of 2001. The LPCP claimed in the business plan that its first priority was "new home" construction and renovation, and that its development project will become "a classic example of community empowerment and revitalization for DeKalb County and the Atlanta Metropolitan area." The LPCP advised that it would be employing a holistic "bottoms up" approach that would keep its residents well-informed and "ensure that they participate as "valued" community partners." Throughout the business plan, the LPCP stated that its development goals were to serve the needs of the residents of the Lynwood

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<sup>54</sup> McDaniel, 8 June 2005, 46.

Park community. The organization described itself as “a private not-for-profit corporation *chartered for the purpose of stimulating economic development and creating affordable housing opportunities for Lynwood Park residents* [emphasis added].”<sup>55</sup>

Once the LPCP and its board voted to continue building only low-income affordable homes, Chris Morris essentially threw Lynwood Park to the developers, and the county cooperated with the developers’ plan to displace the traditional Lynwood Park community, as John Chatman explained:

*Chris wouldn’t do anything to assist in getting things done in Lynwood Park . . . the developers have to come through the county. So, you know, there could have been a blockage there if [Chris] wanted it. But since Pat wasn’t going to build the larger homes, she allowed the builders to build the largest homes. She knew that the middle-income wouldn’t be allowed to afford those homes that they built—\$300,000, \$400,000 homes in here. That’s what it started out with.*<sup>56</sup>

And after the falling out with the county, Chatman believed that Chris Morris did everything in her power to work against the LPCP/CDC:

*[B]ecause of the feeling between her and Pat, I’m pretty sure that whatever Pat wanted in Lynwood Park, [Chris] was going to be opposite of it, because of the fact that she wasn’t able to put her plan into Lynwood Park along with Pat.*<sup>57</sup>

Chatman believed that Martin’s plan to build only low-income homes was a workable solution that would have preserved the traditional Lynwood Park community:

*So what we was trying to do—the houses that we was building—those houses would have been considered for this community . . . They would have been built like the houses that we already got. And those houses would have been perfect for this community.*<sup>58</sup>

In 2005 LaTrelle Lockwood agreed with Gary McDaniel that Chris Morris’s plan might have preserved the traditional Lynwood Park community for a longer period of time:

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<sup>55</sup> Smyther Fallen, *Lynwood Park Community Project, Inc. Business Plan*, June 1999, Lynwood Park Archives, Office of the CDC.

<sup>56</sup> Chatman, 28 March 2008, 6.

<sup>57</sup> Chatman, 28 March 2008, 5.

<sup>58</sup> Chatman, 21 March 2008, 39-40.

- LL *[I]f we had went ahead with [Chris's] plans, I don't think it would have been as pronounced as it is now.*
- VMH: *It would have been more controlled change?*
- LL: *Yes, yes.*
- VMH: *So you're saying her idea of a mixed neighborhood would have been better for the community?*
- LL: *Yeah.*<sup>59</sup>

Because Martin, Chatman, and other LPCP board members believed that Lynwood Park belonged to a particular group of people, they could not see that Morris's plan might actually have preserved the traditional Lynwood Park community for the longest period of time. If Martin's and the LPCP's plan had been realized, Lynwood Park would have become a low-income enclave with homes in the \$100,000 price range, surrounded by affluent communities with homes upwards of two million dollars, and would have experienced a repetition of many of the difficulties that Lynwood Park had faced historically. And if the LPCP's low-income plan had prevailed, the successful children of the present traditional residents would find no suitable housing in the community, and would have left Lynwood Park, just as many of the children of the founding generation had done. For example, Peter Scott said of Lynwood Park housing when he was ready to settle down permanently:

*There were very few houses that were desirable. I mean, there just were not many. And the ones that were desirable, were occupied. . . . I lived in the Army, and I lived in Washington, D.C. And so, you know, it's like you get used to what you get used to, and it's a little hard to step back down, especially if you don't have to.*<sup>60</sup>

Pee Wee Jackson, who became a biomechanical engineer, claimed that he, too, found Lynwood Park unacceptable as a place to settle:

*I left Lynwood Park in September of sixty-eight . . . I left and went to undergraduate school in Daytona Beach, Florida. When I left there I went to graduate school in New York. And when I got out of graduate school I went into the military. . . . And when I got*

<sup>59</sup> Lockwood, 9 August 2005, 66-7.

<sup>60</sup> Scott, 4 May 2005, 30-1.

*out of the military I went to work. And my first job was in Wichita, Kansas. So I left Lynwood Park in sixty-eight to go to school, and I came back to Atlanta in 1984. . . . By that time I had a family . . . and there was no place in Lynwood Park that I wanted to live, you know. So, no, I never went back.*<sup>61</sup>

Chris Morris's strategy could have prevented this from happening to the children of Lynwood Park's present residents. If it had worked, the plan would have kept older residents in their traditional homes, and built some low-income housing in the \$70,000 to \$90,000 range that kinfolk, such as Gary McDaniel, could afford with government assistance and forgivable loans. In this manner, property taxes would be kept low, and developers would be kept out. Then the medium-priced affordable homes would bring outsiders with higher incomes into the community and these homes would later be available to the successful children of the present residents, such as McDaniel, who has four children in college. They would be able to then purchase homes in the \$200,000 range in Lynwood Park, and when the elderly passed away, their homes, and the original low-income homes could have then be rebuilt over time into higher-priced homes. And thus Lynwood Park for its traditional black community possibly could have been preserved in the near future, and gradually transitioned to conform with its surrounding neighborhoods over time.

With Morris's strategy, the elderly could have stayed in the homes in which many of them had lived for half a century, they would have remained in walking distance of their churches, and they would have been surrounded by returning family members. And although some of them sold their lots for more money than they had ever seen, they have now been scattered around the metropolitan area and have a great difficulty finding transportation to their churches. As Chatman, who is also the president of the Deacon

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<sup>61</sup> Pee Wee Jackson, 17 September 2006, 70-1.

Board and CEO of his church in Lynwood Park put it, selling in Lynwood Park had its positives, but important aspects of life also became difficult for the traditional residents:

*[I]t helped a lot of peoples out of debt, and that's a blessing for some of them, [but] what it does, it puts them in the driving seat . . . Anytime you put them in the driving seat it's a different thing, because they could have walked to church, and now they got to drive to church.<sup>62</sup>*

The LPCP made two critical decisions that were detrimental to Lynwood Park: vetoing Morris's revised plan, and proceeding on its own as the CDC. However, DeKalb County's reactions to the LPCP's rejection hastened the rapid redevelopment of the community. DeKalb County claimed that its role in Lynwood Park was "to preserve and revitalize the community." Nevertheless, its reaction to the LPCP's decisions actually undermined its own and the LPCP's efforts to preserve the community and its cultural heritage in the short term. By refusing the LPCP the federal funds to purchase Lynwood Park properties, and by throwing obstacles in the LPCP's path that foiled its low-income housing development, the county actually undermined its stated mission for Lynwood Park, since it did not advise the LPCP in the beginning that it intended to develop a mixed-income community. In effect, DeKalb County was disingenuous, and ambushed the LPCP in midstream with its plan for a mixed-income community. And when the LPCP refused to negotiate a middle ground, the county then cooperated with developers against the community, and thus essentially ensured that even the low-income houses it built in Lynwood Park would be torn down to make way for McMansion development<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Chatman, 21 March 2008, 41. To date, the highest price paid for a Lynwood Park lot has been \$265,000. Most of the traditional residents sold for well below that figure, and properties on Wimberly Road were purchased by speculators like Kucera for under \$100,000.

<sup>63</sup> "Lynwood Park Homeownership Program," [http://www.nahro.org/home/lynwood\\_park.html](http://www.nahro.org/home/lynwood_park.html); the affordable houses that were built in Lynwood Park by the county began selling in the \$200,000 price range in 2004, Martin, 27 October 2004, 59. Many of the original affordable homes built along Windsor Parkway have now been replaced with McMansions. The county sold one of its completed affordable houses, on Francis Street, to a developer, who then immediately replaced it with a McMansion.



Quite a lot of Lynwood Park's property was owned by white speculators who had been sitting on their investments for over two decades. For example, real estate agent Amy James had acquired thirty-four, most for tax liens, and Judge Bobby Cobb had amassed twenty-six properties. In addition, much of the community's housing had focused on rental units after the 1960s. Many Lynwood Park properties were sold for very low prices—for under \$10,000 per lot—relative to values in the surrounding affluent communities. In other words, it is only a handful of traditional homeowners who have profited from escalating land values, which peaked at the mid-\$200,000s before the current nationwide downturn in the real-estate market.<sup>64</sup> While \$200,000 may have appeared to be a windfall for the enclave's long-term property owners, it hardly translates into great wealth in the present marketplace. As John Jett, born in 1943, remarked, it was hardly enough to finance the elderly residents for the rest of their lives:

*I would say a lot of peoples in this community that's selling this property is not gon' do very well. . . . Because they don't know what the world is like out there. . . . they're gonna sell their house worth \$260,000. That's the top price. Okay. What you think gonna happen when they got to go somewhere else and buy? Most of 'em on fixed income. . . . If you gon' go buy anything that's worth living in, you gon' pay a hundred some thousand for it. . . . well, naturally. . . . they want to go buy some furniture for it. That's another twenty thousand. . . . after they do all of that, they got a hundred thousand dollars left. That ain't no money . . . They gon' end up on the reservation. . . . Public housing. And you know what? You can't bring nobody but you. What if you've got your grandchildren . . . They gon' end up alone.<sup>65</sup>*

Lynwood Park native Melvin Pender, born in 1937, voiced many of the same concerns for the people of Lynwood Park, but Pender maintained that the CDC should have been more proactive in ensuring that the displaced could be adequately resettled:

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<sup>64</sup> Martin, 26 October 2004, 61; Letter from Bobby L. Cobb to Lt. R.H. Benifield, 18 March 1993, Roy H. Benifield Papers; Martin, 17 May 2005, 21. Martin claims that in 2003 the CDC was negotiating to purchase two lots for a combined price of \$17,000.

<sup>65</sup> Jett, 13 November 2005, 121-4. In 2004 Martin said, "Don't you know if I sell my property, I'm going to dance my way out of here?" 26 October 2004, 69. Martin sold four lots that had belonged to her parents, and she and her husband, and left Lynwood Park. She gave some money to her family, paid cash for a new house in Grayson, Georgia, and recently shared that she is out of money and, at age seventy-six, needs to find a job.

- VMH: *[Y]ou're saying . . . that the development corporation and certain people in Lynwood Park knew what would happen . . . And they didn't advise the residents . . .*
- MP: *If they had somebody that was honest to tell them that this was coming . . . I blame myself for not stepping up . . . I would have got . . . one of my real estate lawyers out of Buckhead and have a meeting down there in the recreation center to educate the people on this is what's coming, this is what your property should sell for . . . [and] when they sell their properties . . . find another place for them to go. Sell your property for a certain amount of money that you would be able to buy something for. This people giving their property away, they can't go buy another house, you know, or find an apartment, or town home, where these people can be placed once they sell their property. That should have been something I would have set up. You sell your property, these are the locations that we have set up that you can buy something with the amount of money that you're selling your property for. A lot of people they didn't know where they were going.<sup>66</sup>*

John Jett placed the onus for relocation planning on the residents themselves, but Pender believed that it was the CDC and Lynwood Park's children with resources and contacts, such as himself, who are to be blamed, in part, for not coming to the aid of the residents when it became apparent that the displacement of the entire community was inevitable, and that the owners could not sell for enough money to adequately resettle elsewhere. In other words, both Jett and Pender knew that very few people of Lynwood Park would "dance out of there" with nest eggs that could last for the rest of their lives.

Ironically, it is actually DeKalb County that stands to reap the most handsome profits from the displacement of the traditional Lynwood Park community. Many of the original small houses in the community straddled double lots, and their owners were paying forty-five dollars in property taxes in 2001. Conversely, the McMansions that have replaced these are each built on a single lot, and are now swelling the county's coffers with tax revenues, and John Chatman maintained that this was Morris's and the county's plan all along:

- JC: *Chris is part of DeKalb County, and she was looking out in the behalf of the county. And it's whatever it takes to bring in more revenue, which was*

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<sup>66</sup> Pender, 27 April 2005, 98-9.

- probably part of her paycheck. That's what she's willing to do. So I understood where she was coming from . . .*
- VMH: *Now, do you think that getting the historic designation would have been good for Lynwood Park?*
- JC: *Yes. Yes, I think it would have been. I don't think it would have been as Chris looked at it. I think the homes that we was building in Lynwood Park would have been . . . just right for the Lynwood Park community.*
- VMH: *And Lynwood Park people and their kinfolk could have afforded those.*
- JC: *That's correct . . . And so I think if they would have allowed that plan—Pat's vision—to go forth, Lynwood Park would have been together today. . . . The county didn't want that. It was location, location. They understood that there's this spot that's still sitting out there that's not bringing us no money in here, because in most of them are senior citizens, older peoples, and their taxes is very low—we need to find a way—and they did find a way, and one of them was not giving us the historic site, and the other one was to allow developers to come in and do what they had did, because they could have stopped the developers. They could not have given them permits if they were gonna build this size house . . . [the county] allowed them to do that. They gave them variances to do whatever they needed to do to put those homes in there, because they knew once they get so many in there, they was on their way to where they wanted to be.<sup>67</sup>*

In addition to bringing higher tax revenues to the county, redevelopment eliminated many of the drug dens and rental properties occupied by drug addicts, which has translated into a reduction of crime in the environs of Lynwood Park, and a “saving” of the county’s policing resources and budget.

While Lynwood Park historically lacked infrastructure and other public services, Patricia Martin nevertheless admitted that the community received a great deal of public funds from DeKalb County. Gary McDaniel added that Chris Morris and the Department of Community Development initially did a lot to help Lynwood Park.<sup>68</sup> But county agencies

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<sup>67</sup> See Eric Stirgus, “A Taxing Time in Lynwood: Soaring Property Valuations Put Squeeze On Longtime Residents,” *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, 12 September 2002. Stirgus mentions that Carrie Henderson’s 2001 tax bill was \$45.35, and that it jumped to \$526.14 in 2002; Chatman, 28 March 2008, 5-8. For more on the obstacles DeKalb County placed in the path of the CDC, see Holmes, “Scattering the Fragments Again” 2005.

<sup>68</sup> DeKalb County’s Department of Parks and Recreation built the Lynwood Park recreation complex in 1984, which it staffs and manages, along with the swimming pool that was added in 1994. The department offers numerous programs for the community’s seniors, and offers facilities for after-school programs for the community’s children, and rent-free offices for the CDC. In addition, the department runs many sports programs for the community’s youths, with help from Lynwood Park volunteers, such as Gary McDaniel and John Wesley Wright.

withheld funds and abandoned Lynwood Park to developers after the LPCP voted against Community Development's mixed-income plan for Lynwood Park. This decision left the traditional residents with no option but to sell to developers, since their kinfolk could not afford the McMansions, and they could not pay the rising property taxes, regardless of whether or not their selling price could finance their futures. In other words, they had no choice but to sell, since they were being crushed by rising property taxes. It cannot be ignored that DeKalb County has already benefited enormously from Lynwood Park's redevelopment and, as the largest landholder, stands to realize the greatest future return from the escalation of land value in Lynwood Park.

DeKalb County attempted to slow the redevelopment of Lynwood Park, but the community's longtime residents claimed that it is developers who run DeKalb County. In 2004 Martin held that the type of redevelopment that occurred in Lynwood Park "can only happen when the county works with developers against the community," but Martin and the LPCP's board also failed to see—at that time—that Morris's plan might have preserved the traditional community for the longest period of time, and that the developers were allowed to build in Lynwood Park without restrictions *only after* the LPCP voted down the county's plan for a mixed-income community.<sup>69</sup>

Lynwood Park has had a long and problematic history, and in 1970 Martin said, "[T]his community is like a ship in a storm at sea, it manages to survive but you wonder how. We have been wandering around, lost in Lynwood."<sup>70</sup> However, this is no longer the case. The traditional residents who are still living in Lynwood fall into two categories. The first are a few seniors who can afford to live in the redeveloped Lynwood Park, since

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<sup>69</sup> Benifield, 23 March 2005, 13, 32; Martin, 27 October 2004, 49; Anne Jackson Ouisley, 15 November 2004, 95; Abkowitz, Alyssa. "Lynwood Park Pressure: Amid Eager Developers, Longtime Residents Fight For Their Property," 1 July 2004; Scott, "A Walk in Lynwood Park."

<sup>70</sup> Peter Scott, "A Walk in Lynwood Park."

they do not have to pay the school tax, and have also been able to get a freeze on their property assessments. They number very few, but they will be able to stay and enjoy Lynwood Park's sought-after location and an improvement in county services. The others have a lower income, or are seniors living on a fixed income, and they are making plans as to where they will live next after they receive their asking price in Lynwood Park. They continue to pay higher taxes, relative to their incomes, as they await the recovery of the real estate market. And then there are quite a number of renters who also have to find another abode when redevelopment forces them to move. The tragedy of Lynwood Park is that the protectionist ethos that afforded the enclave's residents safety and a semblance of normalcy during the Jim Crow era actually contributed to the community's demise, because the LPCP separated from the three-way partnership with the county to keep out higher-earning outsiders.

And, so, in the end, both the success and demise of Lynwood Park hinged largely on keeping outsiders out of the community. Ironically, DeKalb County could not lose with its strategy for Lynwood Park. Geographer David Hodge explained that both the physical improvement of an area *and* the growth of a new tax base drive residential revitalization and displacement.<sup>71</sup> Lynwood Park was being improved physically, and Chris Morris's plan for a mixed-income community might have brought the county "revenues delayed," while cooperating with developers against the community would bring it "revenues now." With scattered lots throughout the community, as well as its two parks, DeKalb County presently owns in excess of thirty-five acres of Lynwood Park's land. The county has been enjoying a period of "revenues now" with the property taxes that have been swelling

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<sup>71</sup> David C. Hodge, "Residential Revitalization and Displacement in a Growth Region," *Geographical Review* 71, 2 (1981): 188-200, 188.

its coffers, and its future land sales of Lynwood Park property could bring DeKalb County monies in excess of all that it spent on the community since its founding.<sup>72</sup>

The greatest tragedy is that the traditional residents of Lynwood Park have benefited the least from the community's redevelopment. They weathered the storms of racism in the Jim Crow era, and the dangers of the drug periods in the community's history, only to lose in a period of relative calm. They were people without wealth, the group at the bottom of the American economy. Hodge pointed out that revitalization creates losers as well as winners, and that the process "unfairly rejects former residents and displaces them from their homes at great financial, social, and psychological costs."<sup>73</sup>

Urban planner Chester Hartman pointed out that displacement of the poor has been occurring across the nation in ten-year cycles since the 1930s, and has imposed great economic, social, and psychological costs upon the poor, while governments side with neighborhood revitalizers and their allies. Hartman argued that displaced households negatively impact the elderly, large families, and female-headed households, with over eighty percent experiencing a cost-of-living increase after displacement. But more than this, the psychological and social effects of uprooting are severe, especially for the elderly who had had a long-term residence in their former neighborhood and close ties with its people and support structures<sup>74</sup>

In his study of revitalization in six U.S. cities, Frank DeGiovanni concluded that the revitalization of decayed neighborhoods generally brought economic benefits to the city and developers, but "adversely affected the households living in the neighborhoods prior

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<sup>72</sup> In April 2008 DeKalb County put on sale, to the highest bidder, the five lots that the LPCP purchased with federal, state, and local grants, but upon which it could not build affordable low-income housing because Community Development refused it the necessary grant monies.

<sup>73</sup> Hodge, "Revitalization and Displacement," 118-9.

<sup>74</sup> Chester Hartman, "Neighborhood Revitalization and Displacement: a Review of the Evidence," *Journal of the American Planning Association* 45, 4 (1979): 488-491, 488-90.

to the beginning of reinvestment.”<sup>75</sup> DeGiovanni suggested that gentrification carries important social-psychological consequences for the displaced, and social worker Daniel Thursz, who conducted a study in 1966 of those displaced from a Washington, D.C. neighborhood, found that they were “grieving for a lost home.” Although their former residences were inadequate, unsanitary, and dirty, it was nevertheless home to people who had been there for a long time, and Thursz found that their sense of loss was deep. In addition, a substantial number had not made a single friend in their new community.<sup>76</sup> Hartman speculated that forced displacement can also add “profound feelings of bitterness” about victimization by market forces to the “indices of harm” of the displaced.<sup>77</sup>

To the landowners of Lynwood Park, \$200,000 was a lot of money to be paid for a small lot with a broken-down, fifty-year-old, three-room shack on it. But this was a mere pittance in comparison to the huge sums of profit that the developers and the county have been able to realize. In addition, very few residents sold their property in the \$200,000 price range. Many sold for a sum inadequate for them to purchase outright replacement housing, and Lynwood Park had a high number of renters and homeless people. When asked about the fate of those who do not own property in Lynwood Park, Chatman said:

JC: *They would have to move out.*  
 VMH: *And all those homeless people in Lynwood Park?*  
 JC: *They will probably end up moving in another community somewhere . . . wherever their peoples are—if their peoples are over there at Johnson Ferry East, they’ll be hanging over there at Johnson Ferry East.*  
 VMH: *So they go wherever their kinfolk are?*  
 JC: *Right.*<sup>78</sup>

<sup>75</sup> Frank F. DeGiovanni, “An Examination of Selected Consequences of Revitalization in Six US cities,” *Urban Studies Journal Limited* 21 (1984): 245-259, 258.

<sup>76</sup> Daniel Thursz, “Where Are They Now: A Study of the Impact of Relocation on Former Residents of Southwest Washington Who Were Served in an HWC Demonstration Project” (Washington, D.C.: Health and Welfare Council, 1966), 100-2.

<sup>77</sup> Hartman, “Neighborhood Revitalization,” 490.

<sup>78</sup> Chatman, 28 April 2008, 19-20.

Hartman explained that low-income displacement annually affects more than one half million households nationwide and that federal and local governments refuse to recognize the problem and its effects on the displaced because this will upset the “revitalization/renewal process, which is regarded as paramount.”<sup>79</sup>

John Wright, born in 1964, saw his grandparents’ home—in which he and his siblings were raised—torn down to make way for a McMansion. Wright cannot stay away from Lynwood Park. He mourns the loss of the community, and especially the tall oaks, which he claims were important to the traditional residents who believed that they stood for strength and majesty. He especially misses the oak that once stood in front of his grandparents’ home, because it was his connection to his deceased elder brother:

- JWW: *And then, just like one oak tree in particular, from where my brother was in the car accident . . . the developer cut down the oak tree. And I just watched there, with tears in my eyes, because the mark to where my brother had hit that tree, that mark stood there for over thirty-something years. . . . no matter what, when I used to go up the street, I used to just see it, and touch it. And when that tree got cut down, I felt like a part of me was being cut down.*
- VMH: *It was like a part of your history.*
- JWW: *Yes, a legacy. . . . And I mean I was in tears. . . . And a part of that tree—I wish I knew where it was. I asked them just to cut that piece to where my brother had hit the car.*
- VMH: *What did you want? You wanted that piece?*
- JWW: *I wanted that piece, because I just felt connected—even though my brother was deceased—I just felt connected, because that tree did not move—it did not budge. It withstood that impact, and they said my brother had to been going about sixty or seventy miles per hour, and it just indented that piece right there. It’s just something about that oak tree where it felt like the end of something. This is the end, and it just felt like a legacy, and I was just losing. And when I walked by today, I still look at that same spot. . . .*
- VMH: *So do you think that what you’re feeling about the oak tree other people are feeling about what’s happened to Lynwood Park?*
- JWW: *Yes, they feel that [it’s] an end of a legacy . . . the sun is setting on Lynwood Park. . . . That’s what a lot of people feel, that the sun is going down. That’s an old saying that they have in the church: it’s getting late in*

<sup>79</sup> Hartman, “Neighborhood Revitalization,” 490. Many displaced residents habitually return to wander around Lynwood Park, and it would be interesting to conduct a study in about a decade to determine if the elimination of Lynwood Park had long-term emotional and psychological effects.



*the evening, and the sun is going down, and it's time to go on home. You're leaving, like how the cowboy would be leaving in the sunset. That's how a lot of people are looking at what's happening to Lynwood Park. The sun is setting, and it's the close of an era in Lynwood Park. And that's why I try to tell my little boy about it, because by the time he gets old enough, I'm sure that Lynwood Park will all be gone. And that's the way I look at it—the end of an era, what's happening in Lynwood Park. The sun is going down on Lynwood Park. So it's just a matter of time. It will be, you know, dusk on Lynwood Park.<sup>80</sup>*

And so, once again, another working-class African American community is being displaced from Atlanta's landscape, this time due to the reverse flight of whites moving back to the city, often the grandchildren of the original white flight generation who fled the city for the suburbs after African American gains threatened their homogeneous white world.<sup>81</sup> For the people of Lynwood Park, the fragments have been scattered again, and they must find niches in outlying communities, far away from their churches, and the place, and landmarks, where their identities and memories were formed.

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<sup>80</sup> Wright, 20 November 2004, 124-7.

<sup>81</sup> For more on the urban dream parallel to the earlier suburban dream, see Neil Smith, "Of Yuppies and Housing Gentrification: Social Reconstruction and the Urban Dream." *Society and Space: Environment and Planning D* 5 (1987): 151-172, 151, 165-170.

### Chapter 3: The Dangerous Boundary and Life Behind its Veil

W.E.B. Du Bois argued that all blacks had a double consciousness of being black, while also seeing themselves through white eyes. Du Bois claimed that segregation created a wheel within a wheel, namely, a separate black life within white society. Du Bois was a member of the black elite and his formulations applied to blacks in general, but the black elite actually imposed a triple consciousness on poor blacks, and relegated them to a third wheel within the black one.<sup>1</sup> In other words, low-income blacks had to also carve out separate spaces from those of elite black society, and were not only represented as inferior and diminished to the white gaze, but to that of the black elite as well, who often saw them as the “shiftless and fun-loving” mudsills.<sup>2</sup>

Displaced by the thousands since the 1930s, Atlanta’s working-class blacks sought out enclaves where they could find affordable housing, and built a parallel society—a third wheel—out of the gaze of both the whites and the judgmental black elite who contributed to their exploitation and displacement.<sup>3</sup> Larry Keating pointed out that residential segregation created artificial cities that permitted public officials to freely vent their prejudices on blacks without hurting whites.<sup>4</sup> After Lynwood Park was made into a dead-ended community, it had only one point of ingress and egress, and while white officials could neglect the community in terms of public services, whites would find it difficult to commit acts of racism against the “mudsills” of Lynwood Park, because the community established a dangerous boundary along House Road/Windsor Parkway, whose intersection with Osborne

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<sup>1</sup> W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (New York: Penguin, 1989), 11, 57.

<sup>2</sup> Karen Ferguson, *Black Politics in New Deal Atlanta* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 6-9.

<sup>3</sup> Douglas S. Massey and Nancy A. Denton. *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 2.

<sup>4</sup> Larry Keating, *Atlanta: Race, Class, and Urban Expansion* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001), 45.

Road was the gateway into the enclave. No outsider, black or white—except the police and government officials—could venture across this line without the consent of the community’s gatekeepers who cultivated a reputation for being so dangerous that both threatening whites and competing blacks would be loath to intrude.

Sociologist Kai Erikson argued that spatial boundaries are a necessary function of a society in which two distinctly separate, yet competing, currents are found: forces that encourage a high degree of conformity, and that which encourages a certain degree of diversity. When Erikson’s paradigm is applied to the Jim Crow South in general, and to Lynwood Park in particular, whites engendered conformity in their community, while black society—and the blacks of Lynwood Park in particular—selected for diversity, because they were forced to create ways to survive and thrive in a society that limited their options. The boundary then becomes a critical liminal space between the terrain occupied by the two groups and, according to Erikson, is patrolled by the deviant. In Erikson’s formulation, the deviant—the patroller and maintainer of the space between the two forces of conformity and diversity—is a natural product of group differentiation, and “is not a bit of debris spun out by faulty social machinery, but a relevant figure in the community’s overall division of labor.”<sup>5</sup>

The intersection of House Road/Windsor Parkway and Osborne Road was fiercely guarded by a group of Lynwood Park men of muscular and robust masculinity. Their ranks included Bob Niles, Big Howard White, Bobby Jones, also known as Bookie Ouisley, and the Johnson brothers, Reuben and Luther.<sup>6</sup> Described as Mandingo by John

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<sup>5</sup> Kai T. Erikson, *Wayward Puritans: A Study in the Sociology of Deviance* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1966), 18-9.

<sup>6</sup> Bobby Jones was raised in Lynwood Park by his grandfather, Herman Ouisley, and was given the nickname Bookie Ouisley because of this biological relationship. Bookie Ouisley’s given surname is Jones, and he is the nephew of Wallace Jones, father of Columbus and Fox Jones. Wallace Jones had two brothers and other extended family living in Lynwood Park, and one of his brothers is Bookie’s father, while Herman Ouisley’s daughter Onie May was his mother. The Johnson brothers hailed from the nearby black community of

Jett, these men were well over six feet tall, and so physically imposing that grown men had to look up when addressing them. The gatekeepers carried knives and guns, and were so aggressive and intimidating that few dared challenge them. They gambled at the various holes-in-the-wall on the corner, hauled, produced, and sold moonshine, bootlegged government liquor within the community, and were quick to shoot and stab anyone that threatened either the community's residents or their illegal commerce.

When Mel Lynn began selling lots on the former Cates Estate, the new community was marketed as the Lynwood Subdivision, and the residents referred to it as The Sub. Because of the ferocity of the men on the corner, Lynwood Park developed a reputation of being so dangerous that the outside would not attempt entering. According to John Wright, born in 1964, this control dynamic existed throughout Lynwood Park's history:

*It would just have to be, you know, recognized that these people . . . got reason to come into Lynwood Park. It wasn't gonna be like, you know, someone outside to cause trouble. They wouldn't come in because they heard the stories: you don't come into Lynwood Park, or you're gonna get beat down, shot, or whatever. . . . If they didn't know you, you couldn't come into Lynwood Park.<sup>7</sup>*

Of the enclave's protectors, Bob Niles was one of the most fearless. Some of the residents loved him, some feared him, and others called him—and his compatriots—a bully. Patricia Martin, born in 1932, recalled the community's reputation for danger and Niles's part in upholding it:

PM: *[I]f you were a stranger, you didn't come in the Sub. . . . [d]ay or night—unannounced. You best know somebody. There was always going to be some boys that were going to run you out of here. We were bad. We were considered bad in those days. . . .*

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Johnsontown. Reuben and Luther were both called Buckhead, because Johnsontown was in Buckhead. Reuben was further delineated from his brother as Bubba Johnson. Luther was married to Georgia Jones, the sister of Columbus and Fox, and Dennie Jones Wesley. When Bubba Johnson opened a hole-in-the-wall on the boundary, his brother Luther acted as the keeper of the peace in the club. Dennie Jones Wesley, interview by author, 19 October 2005, transcript, 53; Daniel, 6 May 2007, 7. Dennie is pronounced Deenie.

<sup>7</sup> Jett, 13 November 2005, 60; Wright, 20 November 2004, 24; Martin, 13 October 2004, 72; Minnie Lee Weddie Thompson, interview by author, 29 July 2005, transcript, 59.

VMH: *And so white people didn't come in here?*  
 PM: *If they did, they knew what was going to happen to them. . . . I remember one time one of the big guys in here that everybody looked up to . . . Bob Niles was his name. . . . He was the best guy, but he didn't take no stuff off of nobody. And this white guy . . . was up on the corner, and he kinda mouthed off at some of the guys. And Bob came up and said, "Wha? Who? You must want yourself tore up," and swung at him. And the white man ran. And I remember seeing Bob running the man [laughs] halfway across the community. And this little man ran out of his shoes [laughs]. And some guys said, "Bob, don't hurt him, don't hurt him." And so Bob said, "You get out of here, and don't you come back in here no more."<sup>8</sup>*

There were two other Niles brothers that Lynwood Park's residents spoke about, and Pee Wee Jackson, born in 1950, explained that Bob Niles developed along a different trajectory from his brothers, and that Bob also influenced people in the community:

PW: *Bob Niles was mean. He was a very secure person that had an opinion that he would not compromise. . . . he was the radical side of the Niles family . . . the black sheep, but . . . he had a lot of influence on all of our lives. . . .*  
 VMH: *[S]ome people just love him.*  
 PW: *And some people hated him.*  
 VMH: *And other people said he was a bully.*  
 PW: *He was not really a bully. He was an angry man that had had relationships in life that had molded him into a very callous individual. But in his heart he was a very, very compassionate person. He just didn't put up with no junk. He was candid and frank. What was on his mind, whether you were black, white, blue, or green, Bob Niles spoke it. . . . I loved him. . . . Bob Niles and Bookie Ouisley . . . taught us one thing: don't be afraid to speak what's on your mind if you know what you're talking about. . . . If you know what you're talking about, take a stand.<sup>9</sup>*

Dennie Jones Wesley was born in 1940, and was raised in Lynwood Park. Her brothers Columbus and Wallace "Fox" Jones were part of the corner culture, and she described Bob Niles, the men's loyalty to each other, and Lynwood Park's group dynamic:

<sup>8</sup> Martin, 13 October 2004, 72-4. Bob Niles was the brother of Charles Niles, who advised the various sectors of pertinent government matters affecting the community. Their third brother, Odell, was a plumber.

<sup>9</sup> Pee Wee Jackson, 17 September 2006, 11-2; Scott, "A Walk in Lynwood Park," *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, 1 February 1970, A-1. Charles Niles worked in a warehouse. He served on various community boards, including the LPCP/CDC until his death in 1990. Barbara Fair, whose mother married Odell Niles, said that there were actually five Niles brothers, and one sister, named Nancy. The fourth brother was John, whose two children were raised in Lynwood Park by Odell. Fair could not recall the name of the fifth brother. Barbara Fair, interview by author, 3 September 2005, transcript, 7.

- DJW: *[Bob] was friends with my oldest brother Fox. . . . [T]hey was like in the same age group so they ran together . . . He became like a brother to us too. Something happened to one of our brothers, Bob would get in it too. Something happen to Bob, my brothers would get in it too. . . . His shoes were so big, like if somebody stepped in the middle of 'em . . . the front of them just flipped up like clown shoes, they were so big. . . . He had big everything: big head, big hands, big feet.*
- VMH: *Now I heard that the cops were afraid of Bob Niles.*
- DJW: *They were. They saw his size and they saw the damage he could do to somebody if he hit 'em. If he hit you one time you weren't getting up.<sup>10</sup>*

Minnie Lee “Weddie” Thompson, born in 1944, loved Bob Niles, and suggested that he had a more benign personality:

- MLT: *[Y]ou didn't have a lot of people that would come to Lynwood Park . . . Lynwood Park had a reputation . . . if you were an outsider, you didn't just come in. But everybody that was in was safe . . .*
- VMH: *And up at House Road—that was the dangerous part that kept people out?*
- MLT: *Right. That corner, that four-way stop sign there.*
- VMH: *And so that's where Bob Niles had his territory.*
- MLT: *Not only there. Bob was the kind of person—he was a good-hearted person. Bob's fights were about other people. He couldn't stand to see people run over people . . . A lot of people said he was a bully, but he never seemed like a bully to me. He was always taking up somebody else's fight. And I adored him . . . his fists looked like boxing gloves. . . . And then he wore about a fifteen shoe.<sup>11</sup>*

Bob Niles's reputation for protecting Lynwood Park and its residents was augmented by the fact that he even stood up to a policeman from another jurisdiction, who attempted to give a teenaged Horace Ouisley a citation, as Ouisley, born in 1932, remembered:

- HO: *[Bob] was a fine person, 'til you crossed him . . . I didn't do nothing to upset him . . . He didn't let nobody come in Lynwood Park to run over them if he was there. 'Cause I know the police got after me one time in Brookhaven . . . I got in Lynwood Park . . . on the corner . . . [Bob] told him he couldn't lock me up, or give me a ticket, 'cause he had no jurisdiction over here . . . Back in them days, if I come out of Fulton County and got into DeKalb County, Fulton County police couldn't do nothing to me. . . .*
- VMH: *Bob Niles got the policeman to leave?*

<sup>10</sup> Wesley, 19 October 2005, 36-8.

<sup>11</sup> Thompson, 11 August 2005, 38-9.

HO: *Yeah. . . . The county polices didn't like him that much [either], because he was up front. He'd tell them what they could do, and what not to do.*<sup>12</sup>

Many of Lynwood Park's residents had moved from communities that had been terrorized by the Ku Klux Klan, and Pee Wee Jackson recounted the time Klansmen came into the enclave, and their fate at the hands of the men on the corner:

*[T]he first time they came, they drove through and threw leaflets on both sides of Osborne Road, all the way down to the school. . . . they did this like under the cover of darkness. . . . like about two or three o'clock in the morning. . . . [T]hat's when the guys in Lynwood Park came up with a plan. They caught them.*

*They came back to Lynwood Park. One night they burned a cross in Ida Turner's yard, and they burned a cross right there where Reverend Sawyer's church is. But one thing they did not know is . . . there was only one way in and one way out of Lynwood Park. Now, Bob Niles and all these guys . . . laid in wait . . . it was three cars—the Klansmen that went down in Lynwood Park, you know, making noise and stuff. And they caught them right at the corner of Lynwood Drive and Osborne Road . . .*

*[T]hey were running away, but they drove . . . north on Osborne Road and went down the other side of the school. They caught them down there. They almost killed two or three of them and then they turned over a car. They set one car on fire. These guys disappeared . . . in the woods and they never saw them again.*

*The Klan never came back to Lynwood Park again. Because what we found out is there was a guy that owned a body shop in Brookhaven . . . He was one of the Klansmen . . . And, see, when the word got out that they knew who he was . . . [h]e moved his shop from Brookhaven . . . [h]e was afraid, 'cause he knew that he had to deal with Bob then. See, that was the control mechanism of Bob's and them's reputation.*<sup>13</sup>

The gatekeepers effectively kept Lynwood Park safe from negative outside elements. In addition, the group also ensured that outside business owners would not

<sup>12</sup> Horace Ouisley, 1 November 2004, 125-8. Harold Spruill was the DeKalb County police officer that patrolled Lynwood Park. Another DeKalb County police officer would come to the community on an intermittent basis, and the residents only knew him as Cigar, a nickname they gave him because he always chewed a Cuban cigar.

<sup>13</sup> Pee Wee Jackson, 17 September 2006, 25-6. Ida Turner still lives on Windsor Parkway, at the southeastern edge of Lynwood Park. Sawyer's church, Saint Peter's True Holiness, is extant on the northeastern corner of Windsor Parkway and Osborne Road, but Sawyer did not move his church into the building until 1977. Belinda Marshall, born in 1932, said that the KKK threw leaflets in Lynwood Park in 1960, on the night before the presidential election, in an attempt to intimidate the people of the community into not voting for John F. Kennedy. See Belinda Marshall, interview by author, 10 September 2005, transcript, 45. Gary McDaniel, born in 1951, recalled awakening to streets in Lynwood Park littered with KKK leaflets. See McDaniel, 8 June 2005, 27. Black/white tension was exacerbated during the 1960s by the Atlanta District Court's decision in September 1960 that the Atlanta School board had to desegregate its schools, despite Governor S. Ernest Vandiver's campaign promise to "preserve segregation forever." Alton Hornsby, Jr., "Black Public Education in Atlanta, Georgia, 1954-1973: From Segregation to Segregation," *The Journal of Negro History*, 76, 1-4 (1991): 21-47, 22-3. However, the event Pee Wee Jackson recounted had to have occurred before 1960, since Bob Niles was shot and killed in Lynwood Park in 1958.

exploit, or be disrespectful to the people of the community. It was common for Jews to operate stores in black underclass neighborhoods, and several non-blacks owned and operated grocery stores on Windsor Parkway and catered to the community. According to Patricia Martin, the men on the corner also kept the storeowners in line:

*[T]he stores were white men, and they knew not to step out of line . . . 'cause they'd get hurt too. . . there were several incidents. It's a dance with the storeowners, because if they got smart, hey, those young boys didn't take it. So they learned very quickly that if you're going to be up here, certain things—certain attitudes—you are not going to show when we come in here.<sup>14</sup>*

The strategy of a dangerous boundary established a veil of protection that shielded Lynwood Park from the outside world and enabled its residents and their children to have some semblance of a “normal” life in a time when black women could be arrested for loitering while sitting on their porches.<sup>15</sup> On the surface, the men on the corner seemingly ensured that Lynwood Park’s children could experience the possibility of happy childhoods in the time of Jim Crow segregation, overt racism, and the intimidating tactics of the Ku Klux Klan, and Martin suggested that this worked for her and some of Lynwood Park’s children:

*[W]e were free. I mean we could roam all over the community and . . . [a]s children that was our world. There was a candy lady, an ice cream lady, you know. And there were fruit trees in folks' yards, and there was water down there—Nancy Creek—and all that kind of thing. And so there was freedom.<sup>16</sup>*

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<sup>14</sup> Martin, 13 October 2004, 74; Martin, 27 October 2004, 28; Levetan, 18 April 2005, 2. Abe Besser and Robert Scheinfeld, two German Jewish refugees, built a grocery store on Windsor Parkway. The property was purchased by Alvin Miller and his father, Jack, in 1961. Mrs. Miller still owns the property, which is rented, and now houses the Rendez-Vous Café and a dry cleaning establishment. On the northeastern corner of Windsor Parkway and Osborne Road, the present Saint Peter’s True Holiness Church was originally a grocery store owned by the Dirtons, then the Dannemans, both Jewish, then it became the Blue Dot Café, owned by Lynwood Park residents Bud and Lucille Walker, and finally the church founded by Bishop Cornelius Sawyer. For more on Jewish grocery store owners, see Clifford M. Kuhn, Harlon E. Joye and E. Bernard West, *Living Atlanta: An Oral History of the City, 1914-1948* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1990), 35-6.

<sup>15</sup> Hunter, Tera W. *To 'Joy My Freedom: Southern Black Women's Lives and Labors After the Civil War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 125.

<sup>16</sup> Martin, 10 February 2007, 37.



Patricia Martin, born in 1932, grew up in the northeastern quadrant of the community, and Maudina Peaches Horton, born two decades after Martin, similarly recalled a happy childhood in her southwestern section during the time of segregation:

*[W]e had a blast. We'd sit out and look at the lightning bugs and the trees all night. Talked until about two o'clock in the morning, just on the curb. Doing nothing. Or I was at their house, or she was at our house. . . . And we all just felt more like sister and brothers. We felt a connection—even now, you know, we have that unity.<sup>17</sup>*

Lynwood Park's dangerous boundary was also an exciting place, with clubs and juke joints, where those who dared could go to shoot pool and gamble, eat and dance, and see traveling singing groups and bands perform in the nightclubs—the various holes-in-the-wall. Evelyn Banks was born in 1933 and moved to Lynwood Park in 1949. Her mother was a devout Christian who worshipped at a Holiness church downtown, and when her mother left for church, Banks headed for the corner:

*[W]e were in a Holiness church, and my mom and them didn't go for that, going to parties and stuff like that. I didn't wear lipstick and pants. . . . and so when she would leave, we would too. . . . [T]hat's where everybody gathered at on the weekends. And that's where I learned to dance. . . . I just loved to dance, and go out and dance, and have fun [laughs]. I loved to dance. I just loved dancing. . . . that was our only outing . . . couldn't wait for Friday night to get here, so you could dress up, you know, dress up and put on your stepping, and go dancing, and all, you know. And it was great.<sup>18</sup>*

Lynwood Park's men also had drag racing teams that added to the excitement on the boundary. On Saturday night they would spin their tires at the corner of House and Osborne Roads to pick up a race, and dragged to the stop sign at Antioch Drive. Olympic gold medalist Melvin Pender, born in 1937, said that drag racing was important to Lynwood Park's men:

*[W]hen I was . . . stationed at Fort Bragg, I would come home on the weekends just to drag race. . . . Windsor Parkway—House Road—we used to drag up that street. We would jump that corner at Osborne Road and the car would go up in the air . . . we would*

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<sup>17</sup> Horton, 7 September 2005, 29.

<sup>18</sup> Banks, 20 October 2004, 9-10, 32.

*go to Chastain Park and race the white boys, and the police would come and cars would go everywhere. It was unbelievable.*<sup>19</sup>

Horace Ouisley, born in 1932, explained that since the police cars had no radios and could not call ahead for roadblocks, the men of Lynwood Park did not fear the police when they were in their “juiced-up cars.” They simply outran the cops and left them in a cloud of dust<sup>20</sup>

Lynwood Park’s residents were also deeply Christian, and it was no surprise that there would also be the street preachers—the exhorters—on the boundary, the community’s nexus of fun and excitement, vice and danger. Described as a sanctified woman by John Jett and Bishop Cornelius Sawyer, Georgia Clement, Patricia Martin’s grandmother, was a pastor in the Holiness chapel she built on a lot next to her house. Martin described her grandmother as “holiness itself” and explained that Georgia Clement and her pastor friend, Sister Gaither, would preach and sing on the corner on Saturday nights, trying to save the souls of the sinners on the boundary:

*They would dress up . . . they would fix their hair and put on their hats, and they would go . . . and stand on the corner and sing songs and preach, and talk about the Lord, to save the sinners . . . And my mother was totally embarrassed, you know. She’d say, “Momma, please don’t go up there on that corner.” “Oh, no, the Lord wants me to save souls.” So her and Sister Gaither would be up on the corner. And Sister Gaither had a tambourine, and they would sing, and they would praise the Lord. And they would preach and talk about the goodness of God, and how, you know, the Devil was just taking ahold of those folks.*<sup>21</sup>

The corner offered excitement at night, and the men who enforced the access into the enclave seemingly guaranteed safety for the residents of Lynwood Park by keeping hostile elements out. Elijah Anderson pointed out that in Philadelphia’s black communities the

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<sup>19</sup> Pender, 27 April 2005, 40-1. Paul Hudson, the white historian who lived on Wimberly Road, confirmed that Lynwood Park’s men drag-raced along House Road and said, “[I]t was a time to get out of the way.” See Hudson, 21 May 2004, 12.

<sup>20</sup> Martin, 10 November 2004, 40; Horace Ouisley, 1 November 2004, 42, Pender, 27 April 2005, 42-6.

<sup>21</sup> Martin, 13 October 2004, 7; John Jett, interview by author, 21 January 2007, transcript, 4; Sawyer, 9 February 2007, 43. To the people of Lynwood Park, a sanctified person is someone who radiates spirituality akin to a saint, and residents describe Georgia Clement as someone akin to Mother Theresa. Women were barred from the pulpit, so Georgia Clement and her husband Lewis purchased two contiguous lots on Lynwood Drive. They built their home on one lot and Georgia Clement’s Holiness chapel on the other.

corner joints also represented the places where the fights and shootings would occur, and many Lynwood Park residents recalled that they were not allowed on the corner because of the danger. Raymond Jackson, born in 1930, spoke of his longing to be part of the corner culture, but was not allowed there, even after he was a grown man:

*[O]n a Saturday night I could hear them playing music, and all this stuff there. And my mother wouldn't let me go up there . . . And the guys'd be up there talking loud and all that kind of stuff. . . and I could hear them . . . And I would get older, and older, and old . . . I still couldn't go . . . [S]he said, "I'm scared you're gonna get in trouble."*<sup>22</sup>

Lynwood Park native, Peter Scott, who became a journalist, wrote of the enclave:

"community wars were fought on the corner [and] repeated cases of aggravated assaults were commonplace on the corner." Scott shared why he was not allowed to hang out there when he was growing up in the enclave:

*[M]y parents . . . told us not to go up there. And . . . if you were caught up there, you were in trouble. They believed in spanking, and I didn't like spankings . . . [O]n a Saturday night . . . they had a lot of dances . . . for the most part, it had a limited audience of people in the neighborhood. Some in the neighborhood, but maybe of other parts who knew it existed, and they would come over because, basically, it was one of those things where if you were really a fairly decent, you know, black person, you didn't want to be seen there.*<sup>23</sup>

Maudina Peaches Horton, born in the early 1950s, supported Scott's position, and shared that her grown sister was sent home from the corner by their mother:

*A respectable young lady just didn't go on the corner . . . It was rough . . . they drank, they gambled . . . I can remember one time my sister Esther went up there. She was grown, with children. But I was like, "You're not going to go on the corner, are you?" She goes, "Yeah, I'm going on the corner" . . . I said, "Well, I'm going and tell Mama." She said, "I'm grown." I said, "I don't care." . . . I went and got my mom, and Mom came on that corner. She says, "Right now!" And Esther was a grown woman with children . . . so Esther turned around and walked right on home.*<sup>24</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Elijah Anderson, *A Place on the Corner* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976), 32; Raymond Jackson, 7 October 2005, 87.

<sup>23</sup> Peter Scott, "A Walk in Lynwood Park," *Atlanta Journal and Constitution*, 1 February 1970; Scott, 4 May 2005, 14-6.

<sup>24</sup> Horton, 7 September 2005, 37-8. Horton, who claims the year of her birth is a military secret, graduated from Cross Keys High School in 1969.

Dennie Jones Wesley, born in 1940, sang in nightclubs on the boundary in the group Columbus and the Rockers, that her brothers Columbus and Wallace Fox Jones organized, and in which Pee Wee Jackson, born in 1950, played the saxophone. Wesley explained that the boundary was also frequented by men of the black enclaves of Buckhead, such as Johnstontown, Piney Grove, Bagley Park, and the New Hope and Savageville settlements from the Arden Road area. Wesley said that Lynwood Park's corner attracted rough elements from those black communities, which added to its danger:

VMH: *[T]here were a lot of people up there with knives and guns.*  
 DJW: *Oh, yeah, all the time, 'cause up there was a lot of bullies, and they came from other areas . . . around Lynwood Park . . . from what's now across from Lenox Square, used to be called Johnstontown. They come from there.*  
 VMH: *And Piney Grove.*  
 DJW: *Yeah, and they were from . . . Bagley Park. And there was another place down there off of Arden Road—New Hope, and Savageville . . . Ooh, yeah. And Savageville was rough—they were bad—whooo.<sup>25</sup>*

The dangerous boundary was an effective strategy for community safety, and whites who knew Lynwood Park's reputation were afraid of its residents. The white historian Paul Hudson lived on Wimberly Road, one block south of the boundary, from 1955 to 1966. He said that whites would creep by quietly on House Road, even in their cars, and were relieved to get past its black section. Hudson also shared that as a youngster he would traverse one block of the Lynwood Park section of House Road every day in fear, on his way to and from school, and once took off running when a black boy of his approximate age looked at him in what he thought was a menacing manner:

*Lynwood Park, quite frankly, was something the whites just wanted to get through, you know, quickly . . . And they would be quiet, and probably relieved when they finally got through Lynwood Park . . . I would walk to school . . . and course I would sort of steel myself for when I got to that part of House Road . . . I was a little scared . . . I remember a black boy who was there like a couple of days in a row or something. And I had to walk past him. And I was very uncomfortable there, I guess just because of blacks and whites.*

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<sup>25</sup> Wesley, 19 October 2005, 46-7.

*And he was about my age. . . . somehow he seemed more [chuckles] threatening than I . . . and he just made some sort of move at me—or maybe I thought he did . . . but I just remember running . . . I was afraid of the neighborhood.<sup>26</sup>*

It is interesting that Patricia Martin similarly recounted that Lynwood Park’s children would walk quietly past the Cotton Building in Buckhead so as not to awaken the “duck people,” which is what some of the children called the Ku Klux Klan members in their white robes, whom they had seen marching through their former black enclaves:

*See, I knew nothing about the Ku Klux Klan. I called them duck people because they had the pointed hoods. That’s what the children called them, duck people, because somehow they reminded us of ducks. Their headquarters was in Buckhead, in the Cotton Building . . . as a child, when we went up into the town of Buckhead, we’d say, “We’ve got to walk easy, so we won’t wake them up, ’cause they sleep in the day, and come out at night, and we don’t want to wake them up.” So everybody, all the children, was always very careful not to be noisy around that building—didn’t want to wake them up. And so our thing, when we were near it [the Cotton Building], we said, “Don’t wake up the duck people. Don’t wake up the duck people. They are asleep, and they come out at night.”<sup>27</sup>*

It is ironic that while the children of Lynwood Park “walked easy” around the Cotton Building for fear of awakening the duck people, whites—both adults and children—were equally afraid of the blacks in Lynwood Park, and crept by the community, even in their cars, and were relieved to pass by unscathed. Martin explained that whites felt threatened by black men in groups, which was the visible dynamic on the community’s boundary:

*We’ve always grouped, and that was the one thing that the white man couldn’t handle, was the grouping. So the young people always group, and it’s frightening to [whites] when they see the groups, because the first thing they think is that something’s being stirred up.<sup>28</sup>*

John Jett, born in 1943, explained that the corner culture not only kept whites out, but also kept black outsiders—those of the surrounding communities who enjoyed its entertainment—from having access to Lynwood Park’s women:

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<sup>26</sup> Hudson, 21 May 2005, 19-20.

<sup>27</sup> Martin, 13 October 2004, 12-13.

<sup>28</sup> Martin, 27 October 2004, 34.

*If you was white and came in this community, hey, you got the beat down . . . If you was a black outsider that come in this community and think you going date one of these girls, you got the beat down.*<sup>29</sup>

Maudina Peaches Horton said that the community's men did not welcome her brother-in-law Flip Cook, but were unsuccessful in running him off: "[H]e stood his own ground."<sup>30</sup>

Residents of Lynwood Park admired those who looked successful. Patricia Martin explained that her beau Robert, whom she married, was allowed *entrée* into the enclave to court her because he was well-dressed, drove a car, and appeared to have money:

*He'd come down in a shiny car, and he was all immaculately dressed . . . Horace [Ouisley] said everybody was jealous of him, 'cause he always had on a suit. . . . and he had money. And he was nice. He was very nice.*<sup>31</sup>

The gatekeepers generally ran off would-be suitors, and Maudina Peaches Horton, born in the early 1950s, recalled the time that she and her girlfriends were followed back to Lynwood Park by curious black men:

*[O]nce the girls and I were downtown . . . These guys followed us back here. And we were like "Okay, let them keep coming" . . . We got to the corner, and I said, "Bookie, they following us" . . . They all just started shooting—pom, pom, pom, pom, pom . . . When you talk about people like Bookie Ouisley, or Big Howard, or people of that nature [it] was almost to me like out West—men that would shoot first and ask questions later.*<sup>32</sup>

Neighborhoods offer both spatial and social demarcations, while offering their residents an important form of identity, both for themselves and others. Land and a sense of place take on symbolic meanings as people make linkages between their location and their social standing, both inside and outside the community. Lynwood Park's boundary provided its men with an opportunity to become the community's protectors. It was the venue in which they could also construct heroism and masculinity for themselves in a

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<sup>29</sup> Jett, 13 November 2005, 98.

<sup>30</sup> Horton, 7 September 2005, 34-5.

<sup>31</sup> Martin, 10 November 2004, 34-5.

<sup>32</sup> Horton, 7 September 2005, 23, 26-7. Horton claimed that she was driving on this occasion, which would mean that the incident occurred in 1967 at the earliest.

world where they often were despised, and subjected to humiliation. This sense of somebodiness that could be constructed through the corner culture then guaranteed that the community's youngsters would want to develop and hone the necessary bullying and intimidation skills to take their place on the corner after growing up. The boundary was a place where Lynwood Park's men could "become somebody" by being tough and fearless to both whites and blacks from other communities. The reputation the gatekeepers established on the corner became one aspect of the residents' identity, to the extent that Patricia Martin and other respondents could describe themselves as *bad*, and say that Lynwood Park's residents were "not afraid of anything, *nuh-thing*, nothing."<sup>33</sup>

Evelyn Banks, born in 1933, still lives in the community, and claimed that her parents did not restrict her from associating with anyone in Lynwood Park. Although she admitted hanging out on the corner, she recalled that she always felt safe, because her family got in with the right crowd from the beginning. Yet her choice of words also suggested at the same time that there was the opposite of "the right crowd" *within* Lynwood Park. This would indicate that the community's dynamic was not that a dangerous minority hung out on the boundary, while everyone else, the inside, belonged to a majority that was the community's good element. Historian Paul Thompson found that memories of discreditable and dangerous situations can be quietly buried, and Mark J. Stern claimed that "the census is silent" on the perceived safety of the old ghetto in its "golden age," which would mean the black enclave before the 1960s. Many accounts of the ghetto of the 1930s through the 1960s speak of a utopian period of cooperation and self-help, and portray the

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<sup>33</sup> John R. Logan, and Harvey L. Molotch, *Urban Fortunes: The Political Economy of Place* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 107; Martin 13 October 2004, 22.

ghetto as akin to a large family where adults worked together for the common good, while reporting little of the danger these communities posed to those who lived there.<sup>34</sup>

Many of Lynwood Park's residents shared that the men on the corner were bullies who made the community dangerous, and thus restricted their freedom of movement within the enclave. In other words, the men on the corner, while being territorial and keeping outsiders at bay, also preyed upon the community's residents. For example, John Chatman, born in 1945, explained that as a child the grown men on the corner would try to take whatever he had—that everyone was fair game—outsider and insider alike, child as well as adult, and that safe negotiation of the boundary depended on having a powerful and feared representative among the gatekeepers:

- JC: *[W]hen you would go up there, the people are gonna see you, and try to take what you got. They'd try to bully you. But my oldest brother . . . was kind of known up on the corner. So when somebody tried to do something to one of his brothers, or whatever, they'd say, "That's Columbus's [Zumbo's] brother. You'd better leave him alone" . . . because they know if he found out you were messing with his brother, you know, it may be a scuffle going on or something. Because my brother knew a lot more guys that used to hang around with him, so they may just jump him . . . So as long as they know somebody that knows that person, you could get by.*
- VMH: *But then if you weren't known?*
- JC: *They'd try to take what I got—my money . . .*
- VMH: *Who would try to take your money? Men? Grown men?*
- JC: *Yeah, grown men. And . . . bigger boys than who I was.*
- VMH: *So they were bullies?*
- JC: *Oh, yeah, there were kinda bullies in Lynwood Park . . . Lynwood Park used to be a real rough place to come in, because people would come in here, and people would try to rob them, take what they got . . . [a] lot of shooting and stuff goes on, and that's the reason my mom wouldn't allow us to be up at the corner. Those bullets are flying, you don't know who they're going to hit . . . [B]ecause of the fact that kids couldn't go outside Lynwood Park, and a lot of them couldn't go up on the corner . . . people put candy and ice cream within their homes, and the . . . younger kids, instead of running up on the corner, they run to those places.<sup>35</sup>*

<sup>34</sup> Michael B. Katz, "Poverty and Family Composition since 1940," Michael B. Katz, ed. *The Underclass Debate: Views from History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), 222; Paul Thompson, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), 167; Banks, 20 October 2004, 11.

<sup>35</sup> Chatman, 21 March 2008, 19-20, 25; 28 March 2008, 19, 42.



In effect, safety from the corner bullying depended on the size of one's entourage of bullies, such that Zumbo Chatman could keep his family members safe because his gang was larger than that of any that another corner bully could bring into a fight. Gary McDaniel said that each quadrant had its group of youths who hung out together, and said, "Now they call them gangs." While McDaniel offered that these groups formed sports teams and competed against each other, the groups also functioned as protectors of each other.<sup>36</sup>

Dennie Jones Wesley, born in 1940, shared that those who hung together fought to protect each other and needed no explanation of the reason for the conflict, and said of her brother Columbus, who was born in 1937:

*[I]f a fight started, and he was with you, he was on your side. He would jump in. If he see you fighting, he'd jump in the fight, and fight. Next day he go, "Now what were we fighting about last night?"*<sup>37</sup>

Wesley also added of Arthur Hood, one of Columbus's friends and drinking buddies, who was known in Lynwood Park as Junior Marshall:

*[I]f anybody was fighting, Junior was always in it. Sometimes he would jump in the fight and ask you, "Who we fighting for?" If it was somebody he knew, he'd always fight with them, or for them. He didn't care if he knew what it was about or not. If that person was fighting, he'd fight the other person too.*<sup>38</sup>

Bullying and being able to protect, and stand up for, oneself and one's group, even as a child, was a necessary aspect of a Lynwood Park identity. The community's children also had to establish a reputation for toughness, so that they could both be left alone, and included in a gang, and this applied to both boys and girls. For example, Patricia Martin, born in 1932, claimed she was once disrespectful to her school's principal. As a result, her

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<sup>36</sup> McDaniel, 8 June 2005, 7.

<sup>37</sup> Wesley, 19 October 2005, 8.

<sup>38</sup> Wesley, 19 October 2005, 40. Arthur Hood was called Junior Marshall because he hung out with the Marshall family more than his own, the Hoods, in the same way that Bobby Jones was known as Bookie Ouisley because he was raised by, and lived with, his grandfather Herman Ouisley.

mother whipped her in front of the students in their one-room schoolhouse, and then she had to fight every day for two weeks to recover her reputation:

*[A] pot-gutted stove separated the fourth grade from the fifth grade, and the stove was kind of out from the wall, and then the pipe ran all the way out to the wall . . . Mr.[J.J.] Newberry was the principal . . . and he was going to go from the fifth grade over to the fourth grade . . . he stooped and went under the pipe, and thought he had cleared it . . . but when he raised up . . . and the pipe was red hot—the pipe hit his head. And I came out with some cuss words. I said, “Oh, Goddamn, look at that head.” And, of course, I was put out of school, and told to go get my mother . . . And my mother brought me back to school and beat me in front of those kids. My mother tore me up. But I was watching every last one that laughed. And for the next two weeks I was fighting. I jumped on every last one of them in the school that laughed . . . I grew up with tough, tough kids.<sup>39</sup>*

Minnie Lee Weddie Thompson, born in 1944, confirmed that the enclave’s girl groups mirrored those of the boys, and also protected and defended each of their members:

MLT: *Nobody never bothered me, but they were always jumping on Beverly. She was my friend. And Linda, she was my friend. I was always taking up they fights. I ain’t never had a lot of fights of my own. It was always helping out my friends . . .*  
 VMH: *You were a tough kid?*  
 MLT: *Yep . . . I would fight only when I had to, or if I felt somebody was really running over my friends.<sup>40</sup>*

Patricia Martin also advised that the group that she ran with regularly engaged in rock wars with the children of Mel Lynn, the white agent who sold Lynwood Park lots, who lived on the opposite side of Nancy Creek from Lynwood Park:

*Now, Mr. Lynn’s family lived across the creek . . . it was a big family of them. And they were poor . . . the children would come over here . . . [W]hen we would rock the Lynn children, we were niggers. And so that’s one of the reasons why we would rock them. We’d get to playing and . . . “Nigger, you’d better not hit me no more” . . . and so here goes the fight . . . [w]e’d rock them all the way back home, ’til we got to the creek down here. Look like maybe they’d have a pile [of stones] every time, and they’d rock us all the way back home . . . Throwing rocks and running. I mean throwing rocks, throwing rocks, throwing rocks . . . And, man, they’d bring us back across the bridge, up the hill, down the dirt road—home, okay? Next day or two, they’d be over here playing. Git them again.*

<sup>39</sup> Martin, 10 November 2004, 79-81. For more on how white and black children learned race through fighting, see Jennifer Ritterhouse, *Growing up Jim Crow: How Black and White Southern Children Learned Race* (Asheville: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 145-179. See especially 146-7 on rock wars.

<sup>40</sup> Thompson, 11 August 2005, 48.

*“There they are.” Rock them over, get to the creek. Every time we got to the creek, they’d come alive. Back over here they’d rock us.<sup>41</sup>*

Martin’s account suggested that Lynwood Park’s children fought both insiders and outsiders, and although she described the wars with the Lynn’s children as fun, play, and games, the activity, its physicality, and element of danger nevertheless demonstrated that the community’s children were constantly honing their toughness skills.

Horace Ouisley, born in 1932, opted to display his access to a means of violence—his father’s guns—so that his classmates would stop calling him a momma’s boy:

- HO: *I had a reputation of being a momma’s baby [and] we had a few bullies. . . . I might have had one or two of these start bothering me—I’d tell them what I would do—they either stopped, or I had to shoot them. And I had a bad reputation for carrying a weapon. . . .*
- VMH: *How old were you when you were carrying a weapon?*
- HO: *About ten, eleven, twelve.*
- VMH: *What were you packing?*
- HO: *.22mm, .38mm. Well, it was in my daddy’s car. . . . I’m driving the car . . . sometimes I would show it to them . . .*
- VMH: *Did that scare them?*
- HO: *Oh, they didn’t bother me . . .*
- VMH: *’Cause they were afraid of the weapon?*
- HO: *Yeah, me using the weapon.<sup>42</sup>*

This was no idle threat, since Ouisley once made good on his promise when he shot a boy, who later became his friend. The shooting established Ouisley’s reputation for being dangerous, which meant that others would leave him alone.

- HO: *I shot at a fella once.*
- VMH: *How old were you?*
- HO: *Nineteen, seventeen . . . I wasn’t intending to kill him . . . I had no more trouble with him. We got to be friends. I mean, he killed a fella or two . . . I handled peoples in Lynwood Park. Most of them said I was crazy, really, but I wasn’t. I just didn’t have folks misusing me, or run over me, ’cause I would always stand up. It didn’t make no difference whether they could whoop me or not. I’d still stand up.<sup>43</sup>*

<sup>41</sup> Martin, 13 October 2004, 70-1; Martin 27 October 2004, 26-7.

<sup>42</sup> Horace Ouisley, 1 November 2004, 66-8, 102.

<sup>43</sup> Horace Ouisley, 1 November 2004, 130-1.

In a calculated move, Ouisley bested a potentially dangerous opponent, who later killed more than once. Having established that he was equally dangerous, Ouisley, in effect, eliminated one danger to himself, and added an extremely dangerous person to his group, one who would protect him, fight for him, and potentially—if necessary—kill if Ouisley were threatened. And since they both had dangerous reputations, the chances were highly likely that they were given a wide berth by others in Lynwood Park.

Growing up in Lynwood Park meant that one had to establish a reputation in order to be left alone, either by bullying, fighting, threatening others with a weapon, or having an older brother who could offer protection, both within the community, and on the boundary. John Chatman described the bullying dynamics of the community with the example of Charles Banks, who lived three houses up the hill on Osborne Road from the Chatmans, and who later became Chatman's friend:

*Charles Banks, he didn't have a brother. And he kind of a short guy. So he had a pretty rough life, because everybody picked on him . . . [He] sometimes used to mess with my [younger] brother LeRoy. And he'd be running after LeRoy, and I happened to see him. Then when I get up there, he'd see me, and he'd take off and go home . . . [H]e know he could handle LeRoy, but he couldn't handle me. And everybody else that knew him . . . he was a short guy—they would jump on him.<sup>44</sup>*

John Chatman, born in 1945, was able to protect his younger brother LeRoy within the community, and their older brother Zumbo protected John and LeRoy on the corner. In other words, many of the community's youths honed their bullying skills growing up within Lynwood Park, and then some of them took their places on the corner as gatekeepers when they grew up. Patricia Martin, born in 1932, said that both she and her mother owned guns, which suggests that the amount of bullying, fighting, and carrying of weapons among the founding generation and their children speaks to *their*

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<sup>44</sup> Chatman, 28 March 2008, 47.

*perception* that danger was widespread in Lynwood Park, even during the presumed golden age of the ghetto.<sup>45</sup>

LaTrelle Lockwood, born in 1955, confirmed that many women in Lynwood Park carried a weapon:

*You had two types of women in Lynwood Park . . . You had the older, quote, church-type women . . . They didn't carry a gun, but they would fight. They didn't take no junk off of anybody . . . They didn't bite their tongues. They had an air about them . . . Then you had the women who'd hang at the clubs—the greasy spoons in Lynwood Park—who drank all the time. They carried guns. They carried knives [and] . . . straight razors.<sup>46</sup>*

Lockwood mentioned a third type of Lynwood Park woman: the one who liked to go clubbing but not to the holes-in-the-wall of black communities. These women partied at the upscale clubs and the City Auditorium. Lockwood then said that there were some women, such as Patricia Martin, who frequented both types of venues:

*The majority of women in Lynwood Park didn't go to, quote, the greasy spoon, diners . . . the hole-in-the-wall . . . they didn't hang out in Lynwood Park, 'cause you got two kinds of clubs: you got your trashy club, and then you got a good, upscale club. And they normally went to the more upscale places when they went out . . . They would go down to the auditorium and dance . . . Now, Miss Pat [Martin] would go to both. She would go to those greasy spoons, as well as the upscale places too.<sup>47</sup>*

The various groups of boys in Lynwood Park practiced their bullying skills from a young age, and some groups would even take on adults. Lockwood described an encounter that he and his teenaged buddies had with a female resident of Lynwood Park:

*Miss Rose Bussey was a very quick-tempered woman that didn't bite her tongue, even more so when she was drunk, or had been drinking . . . one particular evening . . . our running group [was] . . . behind Rose Bussey. She was walking down the road . . . [we were] maybe early teenagers . . . Vernon . . . always tried to start something, to always rob . . . there were no streetlights . . . [Vernon] said, "Y'all watch this: Rose, Rose, give me some money, or I'll take it!" Rose Bussey never looked back. She politely went in her*

<sup>45</sup> Martin, 10 November 2004, 36.

<sup>46</sup> LaTrelle Lockwood, interview with author, 22 May 2008, 10. As a teenager, Lockwood worked as a lifeguard at the Lynwood Park pool. He also served on the board of the LPCP/CDC, and worked as a full-time employee of the CDC when it was a property developer. He is presently the Secretary of the CDC. Lockwood also worked for Patricia Martin's husband and son Victor, who owned and operated a private sanitation company that would pick up garbage at upscale Buckhead homes.

<sup>47</sup> Lockwood, 22 May 2008, 13.

*brassiere, pulled out her pistol, waved it in the air, like this [waving hand from side to side above head], and put it back . . . she said, “You young Niggers better go home now.” And we turned around and we ran. I said, “Man, see what you messing with? [It’s] Rose, man. See how you nearly got us shot?”<sup>48</sup>*

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Future Olympic gold medalist Melvin Pender, born in 1937, lived with his grandparents on House Road, and grew up in close proximity to the boundary. Pender spoke of fights, cuttings, and stabbings among the men on the corner, the brutality of the police response, and the constant fear that he felt every time he had to negotiate the vicinity of his home, not unlike that of Paul Hudson, the white boy who lived on Wimberly Road:

*They would beat each other and they would shoot each other and they would cut each other and it was devastating . . . and the police came and beat them like, oh, God, like they was animals.<sup>49</sup>*

Pee Wee Jackson confirmed that the police brutalized the people of Lynwood Park when he said, “they were tyrants. And they were a ruthless, inhuman, people.” Yet Pender’s and other respondents’ accounts insinuated that the people of the community were, in many ways, similarly brutal to each other.<sup>50</sup>

John Chatman lived at the very opposite northern end of the community from the boundary—the equivalent of several blocks from House Road—and said that people in his sector could hear the commotion at the corner:

*We would hear the shooting going on from down there where we were, but we don’t know who’s shooting. We don’t know if it’s the police shooting at somebody, or somebody shooting at somebody . . . We know bullets were flying up there though.<sup>51</sup>*

These accounts contradict the claims of Lynwood Park’s residents who said that the community operated like a large family, that all adults watched out for each other’s

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<sup>48</sup> Lockwood, 22 May 2008, 13.

<sup>49</sup> Pender, 27 April 2005, 22-3.

<sup>50</sup> Pee Wee Jackson, interview by author, 3 May 2008, transcript, 4.

<sup>51</sup> Chatman, 28 March 2008, 42.

children, and that the community was so safe that children could roam everywhere. In fact, they could only roam within their own quadrant, and Chatman stated that he could only wander within hearing distance of his mother's voice.<sup>52</sup> Carrie Julian, born in 1933, confirmed that this was the case. Julian was raised by her grandmother only four doors from the Chatmans, and she remembered her limited movement in the enclave:

*[M]y grandmother was strict. I didn't go anywhere except church and school. I didn't know anything about anything. No bad stuff. I knew nothing about bad stuff . . . if it didn't happen in school or church I didn't know nothing about it.*<sup>53</sup>

The men on the corner were territorial and Maudina Peaches Horton recounted how the boys in the band—Columbus and the Rockers—reacted to competition from other groups playing the Lynwood Park dives, and how men on the boundary handled criticism:

*[T]he Little Rockers, they had a fabulous band . . . [a]nother band would come in, and they would get to fighting. And they'd be hitting with the guitars, and they was just tearing up the place every weekend . . . cussing, shooting . . . cutting up . . . that's why you just didn't go on the corner . . . My Aunt Annie B's . . . second husband, Miller Roberts . . . he always wanted to be more . . . to project. So he was a [chief] custodian, but he'd go "I'm a head of this," and I don't really think he could really read or write. But he'd put [his job title] on his desk, and it had "chief custodian." But as long as "chief" was in front of it . . . he was like "Oh, I'm the chief custodian." You cleaning up, okay? . . . [H]e would pretend like he was a big tough this, because he worked for the Police Department. But he was a custodian. He wasn't a police. So he goes on the corner one Friday evening and trying to tell Bookie and that whole gang: "Y'all got to stop this gambling around here. You got to stop it. You can't be gambling." Honey, he was shot, cut, and beat before he could think about it.*<sup>54</sup>

Pee Wee Jackson defended the men and the corner culture. He explained that they kept Lynwood Park safe for all the residents, and said of the sanctimonious of the enclave:

*[T]hey would say, "Oh, I don't like Bob Niles." Well, see, the people knew the impact of Bob Niles and all of those guys like them. Because they knew that I can walk the streets at night and feel safe because of Bob Niles. See there ain't no fool gonna come down here and mess with nobody, 'cause Bob Niles would kick his butt, or shoot him, you know. So it was good . . . I had no problems with it. . . . we had good times at the juke joint, Bud's and Buckhead . . . one thing that Bud's and Buckhead gave the community was an outlet and*

<sup>52</sup> Chatman, 21 March 2008, 23.

<sup>53</sup> Carrie Julian, interview by author, 29 December 2005, transcript, 2, 29.

<sup>54</sup> Horton, 17 September 2005, 39-40. To "project" is to self-aggrandize.

*an alternative to sitting around the house and getting drunk and acting crazy and shooting . . . So there was some degree of goodness that came out of those places. It wasn't all bad. Now, if you talked to all of your devout Christians, they would think that it was a hellhole, the Devil's den. But it wasn't that way. There was a lot of good, compassionate stuff that happened in those places. It was not all, you know, people in there shooting and cutting. That ain't what was happening up there . . . Buckhead and Bud's were the same as if I left here right now and drove to the Ritz Carlton ballroom. That was my place, an outlet for me to go and relax and enjoy some music, and dance.<sup>55</sup>*

John Jett, born in 1943, also claimed that Lynwood Park's people were not seriously harmful to each other, and explained his perception of the community's danger dynamics:

*We would fight and that was it. As far as taking out a gun and killing one another, taking a knife, killing one another, that was rare.<sup>56</sup>*

Yet the respondents' accounts reveal that quite a few of Lynwood Park's people killed each other, a few of which even Jett recalled. And oftentimes these murders were precipitated by the adult manifestations of the bullying, intimidation, and defense dynamics that had been so well-honed from childhood that they were second nature—part of the grammar—of the personality of some of Lynwood Park's residents. For example, John Chatman explained that all the boys jumped on Charles “Bubba” Banks when they were young, because he was small, and so they did the same thing when they were grown men, with more serious consequences for some.

Many of Lynwood Park's men served in the military. Patricia Martin's husband Robert was stationed in Germany for one year and returned to Lynwood Park in 1953. Martin mentioned that several veterans of WWII established the American Legion nightclub on the southwestern corner of House and Osborne Roads after the war ended. The American Legion had a liquor license, while many of the holes-in-the-wall did not,

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<sup>55</sup> Pee Wee Jackson, 2 September 2006, 27; Pee Wee Jackson, 17 September 2006, 65-6. Buckhead [Reuben Johnson] opened a nightclub on the dangerous boundary. The Blue Dot Café, owned by Bud and Lucille Walker, was located on the southeastern corner of Windsor Parkway and Osborne Road, and is now occupied by Saint Peter's True Holiness Church. The Blue Dot was closed after a killing occurred there, and Bishop Cornelius Sawyer then moved his Holiness church into its premises in 1977.

<sup>56</sup> Jett, 13 November 2005, 79.



and they sold liquor illegally from under the counter. Martin said that she and her husband frequented the American Legion, and that Columbus and the Rockers often played there.<sup>57</sup>

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After leaving the American Legion one night, Bob Niles was shot and killed by Edward “Nick” McDaniel, the uncle of Gary McDaniel, at the corner of Victoria Street and Osborne Road. Nick McDaniel was one of the smaller men in Lynwood Park that had been bullied since childhood by men like Bob Niles. Some residents recalled that Nick McDaniel was a quiet man, while others claimed that he, too, was a bully.<sup>58</sup> John Jett, who claimed to be related to Nick McDaniel “through some illegitimate stuff,” said that Nick was a mild-mannered person, “a quiet kind of guy.”<sup>59</sup> Similarly, Raymond Jackson, Nick McDaniel’s uncle, recalled that Nick was a gentle person who had been frequently bullied by Bob Niles:

*[Nick] didn’t bother nobody . . . He was quiet and he was nice. Now, that night Bob got killed . . . Nick left out of the little cafe right there on the corner and walked down the street. Bob followed him down the street and that’s when Nick shot him. That’s all I know . . . I never knowed him to carry a gun. I don’t know where he got the gun from. All I heard was that he shot Bob . . . Bob had beat him up there and knocked his teeth out . . . And the boy came down the street and Bob fought him down there and [Nick] killed him right there on the corner, as you go up . . . Victoria, right on the corner, right there.*<sup>60</sup>

Minne Lee Weddie Thompson confirmed that Bob Niles had been aggressive towards

Nick McDaniel:

*After Nick had killed Bob I’d heard that Bob had hit Nick in the mouth one time, and caused him to have false teeth. They say he’d knocked all his teeth out.*<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Patricia Martin, telephone conversation with author, 6 June 2008, Fieldnotes. For more on illegal liquor sales from under the counter, see Minnie Lee Weddie Thompson, interview by author, 29 July 2005, transcript, 61.

<sup>58</sup> This killing had wide-reaching effects across the Lynwood Park kinship network. For example, Raymond Jackson and Jessie Mae Polk, Edward “Nick” McDaniel’s mother, are brother and sister. Jessie Mae also had a daughter, Betty McDaniel Daniel, who is Gary McDaniel’s mother. In addition, Raymond Jackson’s father Ceab, and Anne Jackson Ouisley’s father, John, were brothers. And Anne Jackson Ouisley was married to Herman Ouisley’s older son, Robert, the brother of Horace Ouisley. Ceab Jackson also fathered Cleveland Jackson, with whom Mamie Mathis had a daughter, Betty, who then married Bookie Ouisley. And this is a minute snapshot of the kinship web that constituted endogamous Lynwood Park.

<sup>59</sup> Jett, 13 November 2005, 61.

<sup>60</sup> Raymond Jackson, 7 October 2005, 93-4.

<sup>61</sup> Thompson, 29 July 2005, 42.

Dennie Jones Wesley, born in 1940, explained that residents would go from the American Legion after it closed, to her cousin Willie Sutton's house on Victoria Street, where J.B. Truitt, the man Willie lived with, sold bootleg liquor out of the basement:

*[T]hat's where you went to buy your illegal booze . . . You could go there and get what we called sealed liquor, government liquor . . . or you'd buy beer. But you had to take it out of there, because my cousin . . . [y]ou had to walk on newspaper on the floor. She didn't want you tracking up her floor.<sup>62</sup>*

According to Wesley, her brother Columbus was standing next to Bob Niles when Nick McDaniel shot Bob. Dennie Jones Wesley also said that McDaniel was a bully:

*[Nick was] a loud-mouthed bully. He wasn't quiet, especially as he got older, and he drink a little bit, especially up at Willie's house. You'd buy your stuff and she'd put you out the door . . . Get your money and you're gone . . . Bob Niles was shot . . . coming out the back, in the driveway. He and my brother Columbus was standing next to each other . . . And Bob had a conversation, or a disagreement, with . . . McDaniel. And it ended up with him shooting Bob, and my brother was right next to him.<sup>63</sup>*

Oral historian Alessandro Portelli maintained that how people remember is as important as what they recall. Portelli found that myth and rumor are important to memory, that people conflate events when remembering, and that memories and their details have a life of their own. In addition, memories change over time, as people try to process, and make sense of, past events.<sup>64</sup> Memories are diverse and complex and accounts from multiple vantage points can vary significantly. The people of Lynwood Park hold differing versions of Bob Niles's 1958 death, which suggests that memory is subjective. Rumor and myth shaped people's memories of the killing, and the differing versions underscore the lack of "truth" and an official version of events in Lynwood Park.

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<sup>62</sup> Wesley, 19 October 2005, 34.

<sup>63</sup> Wesley, 19 October 2005, 34-6.

<sup>64</sup> Alessandro Portelli, "What makes oral history different," in Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson, eds. *The Oral History Reader*, Second Edition (London: Routledge, 2006), 35-6.

Portelli argued that there is a difference between truth and facts. He explained that each person's version of an event is valid, and is psychologically true for the narrator.<sup>65</sup>

The lack of consensus about Bob Niles's death underscores that Lynwood Park was not a single community, and that its residents were independent thinkers comfortable with their opinions and narratives. According to Minnie Lee Weddie Thompson, Mary "Baby Chick" Carter played an important role in Bob Niles's death, which included Detective Harold Spruill, and the fact that white law-enforcement wanted Niles eliminated.

Mary Baby Chick Carter was a community alcoholic that the people of Lynwood Park accepted and spoke of with fondness. Dennie Jones Wesley knew Chick well and explained the drinking dynamics of Baby Chick and her family:

*Baby Chick's family—the sisters, and the mother . . . they all drank . . . and they just partied . . . Baby Chick was a woman of the street, so to speak. She liked to party hardy, and she didn't care who knew it. She would speak to you, and in the next breath she might cuss you out if you crossed her. Or if you didn't give her some of what she asked for: to drink, or eat, or whatever.*<sup>66</sup>

Minnie Lee Weddie Thompson, born in 1944, said the rumor in the enclave was that Bob Niles had bullied Nick McDaniel, had hit him in the mouth and knocked out his teeth at one time. Thompson speculated that perhaps McDaniel feared Niles because of this. In Thompson's version of the Niles killing, Detective Harold Spruill was in the American Legion hall, and a drunk Baby Chick staggered into Spruill, who slapped her. Bob Niles, ever vigilant and protective, then hit Spruill and knocked him unconscious. Spruill later gave Nick McDaniel a gun and put him up to shoot and kill Bob Niles:

*Bob had slapped this big old detective . . . named Spruill. . . . [a]nd they say Spruill put [Nick] up to do it. So, you know, you just hear one thing after another . . . [Spruill] got where he would go in the American Legion up there . . . And that's where he were that night when he slapped Baby Chick. And Bob knocked him out . . . It's just hearsay. You*

<sup>65</sup> Portelli, *Oral History Reader*, 36-7.

<sup>66</sup> Wesley, 19 October 2005, 89, 37-8.

*never really heard . . . Nick wasn't a gun-toting person . . . they say [Spruill] gave him a gun . . . but you'll never really know the truth about it.*<sup>67</sup>

John Jett, born in 1943, knew all the parties involved and offered his opinion:

*It was a conspiracy from the beginning . . . a conspiracy to kill Bob Niles . . . I don't know how [McDaniel] got to be a part of that conspiracy, because . . . I just didn't feel that he had the guts to do what he done. So he had to have somebody that assured him that nothing was gonna happen to him . . . and he would be compensated for that.*<sup>68</sup>

Raymond Jackson, born in 1930, is Nick McDaniel's uncle, and was also related to Bob Niles through marriage, since his wife Celmay Bryant and Bob's sister-in-law Margaret were sisters.<sup>69</sup> Jackson offered that in the climate of segregation and overt racism that Detective Harold Spruill would not have "set up" McDaniel but would have rather killed Bob Niles himself on the spot:

*[I]f I slap a white policeman down like that he don't get up and say, "Here, you shoot him" . . . I do not believe that Bob hit Spruill and knocked him down, then he going to get up and give somebody that gun . . . That don't make sense. Now, that's too thin to even spread . . . I know Bob knocked [Nick's] teeth out. I seen Bob knock out a lot of teeth up there . . . But Junior wouldn't harm a fly. He wouldn't do nothing like that. Something had to happen for that boy to do that. . . . No, he wasn't a fighter. No, he wasn't.*<sup>70</sup>

Pee Wee Jackson offered one reason why Spruill did not kill Bob Niles himself, because it might seem as if the police were killing too many of Lynwood Park's gatekeepers in a close timeframe:

*[T]here's another guy too, and he was M.C. [Newell's] son . . . [he] and Bob Niles were buddies. And both of them got killed around the same time . . . the DeKalb County police killed him . . . [like] Bob Niles, he was an outspoken black man that did not fear the white establishment . . . And these guys . . . did not take to being put down. They were like "If I can't be free and be free totally, I'd rather be dead." That was the opinion that they had of life, is that "I'm gonna live this life free to where I can say, do what I want to."*<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Thompson, 29 July 2005, 43-4.

<sup>68</sup> Jett, 13 November 2005, 63.

<sup>69</sup> Margaret was married to Charles Niles, the person who advised Lynwood Park's four quadrants of outside issues pertinent to the community. Raymond Jackson, 7 October 2005, 89-90.

<sup>70</sup> Raymond Jackson, 7 October 2005, 95-8. Jackson also refers to Nick McDaniel as Junior, and claimed that he was not aggressive, although Dennie Jones Wesley held a different opinion of McDaniel.

<sup>71</sup> Pee Wee Jackson, 17 September 2006, 24-5.

But it was not only bullies who killed each other in Lynwood Park. Pee Wee Jackson explained that Deacon Arthur Calloway, one of Lynwood Park's founders, who lived catty corner from the Chatmans on Osborne Road, shot and killed Big Howard White, one of the community's gatekeepers. Big Howard was dating Calloway's daughter, Mary, and was disrespectful to the Deacon:

*Deacon Calloway shot him with a .22mm rifle. [and] killed him. Howard . . . was a bully too. . . . And he went to Deacon Calloway's house and disrespected it, and threatened him. And Deacon Calloway retaliated and shot him, and he fell down the steps . . . when he hit the bottom of the steps he was gone.<sup>72</sup>*

And in 1971 Columbus Jones, college graduate and first director of the community's gym, was shot and killed by Charles "Bubba" Banks, the small guy with no brother that everyone jumped on, which John Chatman claimed had made Bubba Banks tough. Columbus Jones's death can be seen as an allegory of the tragedy of Lynwood Park, whereby one of the community's best and brightest became a victim of the negative aspects of the community's dynamics. Columbus and Bubba Banks were in a card game—Tonk—at a house party on Mendell Circle, and got into an argument. Idell Jones, Columbus's mother, always focused on education in Lynwood Park, and Columbus graduated from Morris Brown University and came back to Lynwood Park to work with the community's youths. Minnie Lee Weddie Thompson commented on some of the services Columbus brought to the children of Lynwood Park:

*He was the first one got [DeKalb County] to start bringing these kids lunches down here during camp time and stuff. When the gym was open, he got a lot of equipment for the kids and things . . . from the county.<sup>73</sup>*

Steve Daniel, Mamie Lee Mathis's grandson, who was born in 1956, remembered

Columbus taking Lynwood Park's children on baseball outings:

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<sup>72</sup> Pee Wee Jackson, 3 May 2008, 4.

<sup>73</sup> Thompson, 11 August 2005, 38-9. The gym was renamed the Columbus Jones Memorial Gymnasium after Columbus's death.

*[Columbus] was a great guy. He used to always take the kids to baseball games. He bought an old schoolbus, and it was raggedy, man, and we didn't never know if we was gonna get back or what, without it breaking down. We used to all pile in it and go to Braves games . . . He used to take us all different places, just kids. And I have a great memory of that. . . . I didn't know too much about death . . . but I knew he wasn't coming back. But anyway, I felt the loss of him as like a mentor to all the kids, you know, just somebody you can talk to. And I just remember him doing good things. Everything you asked him for, like, "Could you help me?" Whatever you asked him he would do" . . . I couldn't understand it.<sup>74</sup>*

Residents respected, admired, and were proud of Columbus, and his sister Dennie Jones Wesley portrayed him as a compassionate person with the example of Mary Baby Chick Carter's retarded brother Trick, who called him Lumbus Jones:

*[T]he older boys always picked on him. His name is Donald, and his nickname was Trick. . . . And one night . . . some guys took him and put him in a chair, tied him in that chair, and put him in the middle of the street . . . And the cars would zoom up and down the street. And my brother Columbus, he went out there and dragged him out of the street . . . And from that time on, Trick was with him every day . . . Every day Trick'd be sitting out there . . . on the curb, waiting for my brother to pick him up . . . And he stayed with him all day at the gym. [Columbus] . . . was like his mentor.<sup>75</sup>*

Ironically, Dennie Jones Wesley also explained that Columbus was very compassionate to Bubba Banks and his family, since Columbus and Banks had both served in the Army, and their families were neighbors:

*[T]he guy that shot him, he and his mother and their family lived down the street from where my mother lives now. And every day . . . [Columbus] would go by their house and see if they needed the doctor, or go to the store. [Columbus] would take this boy to the Veterans Administration for his medical checkups, his medicine, and whatever. He took [Bubba's] mother to the store, everything, and [Bubba] was the one that killed him.<sup>76</sup>*

John Jett explained that Idell Jones had raised Columbus to escape Lynwood Park:

*He was everything in the world to her, Columbus was. Because she had nurtured him to make it out of this community, and she had did a very good job.<sup>77</sup>*

<sup>74</sup> Daniel, 6 May 2007, 7-8. Steve Daniel's mother was married to Bookie Ouisley.

<sup>75</sup> Wesley, 19 October 2005, 37-9. LaTrelle Lockwood said that Trick is not retarded, but is Mongoloid, and is actually both intelligent and savvy.

<sup>76</sup> Wesley, 19 October 2005, 8-9. Columbus was almost a decade older than Bubba Banks, so they were not in the Army together. Columbus was born in 1937, and Bubba Banks was in John Chatman's high school class, and they both served in Vietnam. Chatman was born in 1945.

<sup>77</sup> Jett, 13 November 2005, 80.

Minnie Lee Weddie Thompson claimed that Idell Jones never got over Columbus's death, and it was especially difficult because the two families were neighbors, and homeowners in Lynwood Park could not easily sell their property in the 1970s and move away. 'I don't know how they did it,' Thompson said, "I know Ms. Idell was devastated. Columbus was her heart."<sup>78</sup>

Although he had a college education, Columbus was nevertheless a product of Lynwood Park. Columbus's thrown context—his personality and identity—were informed, in part, by the community's various aspects, regardless of his mother's dedication to ensuring that he would be different. John Jett explained that many of Lynwood Park's children ended up modeling the behaviors that they saw in the community:

*[T]he children don't have a chance. You know, I've seen four generations in this community that do the same thing . . . I've seen a lot of talented children in this community that never had a chance because [of]. . . what they pattern after.*<sup>79</sup>

According to Dennie Jones Wesley, their parents were part of the Lynwood Park drinking culture, to the extent that her father could not always attend church on Sunday, yet this did not affect his steady job at the Capital City Club, where he was the greens-keeper of the golf course for fifty years:

DJW: *They supported the church all the way. But they wasn't Bible-thumping, like you see walking around, you know.*

VMH: *But your father, now, he wouldn't go to church because he was hard working, and he liked to drink . . .*

DJW: *Well, on Saturday night he was still having a party sometimes. But most of the time he went. . . .*

VMH: *So he did most of his drinking on Saturday nights.*

DJW: *Yeah, Friday and Saturday night, him and his brothers. See, he had two brothers that lived over in Lynwood Park . . .*

VMH: *And what did they drink. Was it moonshine?*

DJW: *Moonshine. . . . [a]nd my father loved Balantine Ale. . . . In fact, every time a child had a child he would feed the baby that beer out of a spoon, so all the babies was raised on Balantine Ale. God, that was funny . . . my sister's children, my children, my brother's children, all us children. And*

<sup>78</sup> Thompson, 11 August 2005, 42. Idell Jones died in 2007, at age ninety-seven, having lived in same house in Lynwood Park for sixty-eight years. The Banks family still lives catty corner across the street.

<sup>79</sup> Jett, 13 November 2005, 49-50.

- sometimes the great-grandchildren from my oldest niece . . . he used to feed him beer out of a spoon . . .*
- VMH: *And how did your mom feel about his drinking . . .*
- DJW: *She accepted it, 'cause it's what they did. That's just the way they lived. . . . she had her share too . . . They still took care of the family . . . then they would have their time.<sup>80</sup>*

Dennie Jones Wesley explained that for her brother Columbus, drinking was a nightly activity that he did with a group of Lynwood Park friends:

*[I]n the evening when they closed the center, we would hear my brother's car going up and down the street, sometimes ten, eleven o'clock at night. They would ride up and down the street drinking beer. It might be four or five of them in one car, and they'd go up there, and each one would buy a case of beer. And they would ride and drink, ride and drink, ride and drink . . . And my ma and my daddy would hear his car, the sound of his car: "I wish that boy would go home." He'd ride up and down the street every night and then he'd go home. All the beer was gone. The beer stores was closed, he'd go home.<sup>81</sup>*

Although Columbus was a highly respected and compassionate person, Pee Wee Jackson offered that Columbus was also a bully, and John Chatman had said that Lynwood Park's bullies always "jumped on" Charles "Bubba" Banks who was small in stature:

- PJ: *[Columbus] was a passive-aggressive person. On the exterior he manifested a sense of being real passive and cool. But inside, he was very arrogant and aggressive. And he was sneaky, you know, and he always preyed on people. He never fought a fight with folks that he knew he couldn't win. He always chose a fight that he thought he had a chance of coming out ahead. So he always picked on little guys. And he picked on the wrong little guy one night, named "Bubba" Banks. And Bubba Banks shot him with a . . . twenty-two . . . [i]n the abdomen. And it ruptured his pancreas, and that's what killed him, 'cause he died instantaneously . . .*
- VMH: *And did you ever know of Bubba Banks to carry a gun?*
- PJ: *No. He only carried it in that situation because he knew that Columbus was gonna be there that night . . .*
- VMH: *So Columbus was always jumping on him?*
- PJ: *Yes.<sup>82</sup>*

John Chatman was a close friend and Army buddy of Charles Bubba Banks, and explained that Bubba shot Columbus in self-defense, and did not mean to kill him:

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<sup>80</sup> Wesley, 19 October 2005, 11-3.

<sup>81</sup> Wesley, 19 October 2005, 41.

<sup>82</sup> Pee Wee Jackson, 3 May 2008, 1-2.



*[T]hey got into a struggle . . . and he shot him. And I don't think he shot him to kill him, but he shot him to get him off of him, but it didn't work out that way. I'm not sure why he had a gun with him, because when he was riding with me, or with us, he didn't have no gun. We didn't play that. That was one side of him I didn't see . . . what he told us was that he was just trying to get the man off of him. But the shot . . . was a deadly shot.<sup>83</sup>*

John Jett also said that Columbus Jones was a bully:

*[T]hat was a sad time for us to lose Columbus like we did . . . Columbus . . . He just had a lot of mouth. . . And this guy that ended up killing him, [Columbus] bullied him . . . That's how he ended up getting killed. He picked on this little 'ole boy . . . Columbus was about a six-two, six-three guy—big guy.<sup>84</sup>*

Lynwood Park engendered people who could not be discretely classified as bully, criminal, moral and ethical, God-fearing, or law-abiding. Rather, growing up in the community created identities that could encompass all of these aspects in a single individual, each of which could display itself in varying circumstances according to the situation, and the actors involved.

Similar to the Bob Niles killing, Dennie Jones Wesley claimed that it was a third party, another community bully, who egged on the conflict between Columbus and Bubba, and that it was that person who gave Banks the gun and drove Columbus to the hospital:

*We were not allowed to play cards at the home. My father wouldn't allow it . . . But my brother, being Columbus, he'd try anything. He got in the game, just playing for fun, when someone said, "We gon' play for money." And when he [Columbus] said, "No, I don't gamble, I'm not playing for money," [Banks] started an argument with him. Another person—a guy—egged him on, and egged him on. And the story I'm told is the guy who was arguing with him was given a handgun. A little raggedy .22mm. And he shot him . . . And after that everything is kind of sketchy.<sup>85</sup>*

Because of Lynwood Park's practice of policing its own, and wanting to keep the police and other outsiders out of the community, after he was shot Columbus Jones was taken by truck to Northside Hospital, and dumped outside its emergency entrance, as

Dennie Jones Wesley recalled:

<sup>83</sup> Chatman, 21 March 2008, 25; Chatman 28 March 2008, 47-8.

<sup>84</sup> Jett, 13 November 2005, 78-9.

<sup>85</sup> Wesley, 19 October 2005, 6-7.

*We found out that he was taken to Northside Hospital . . . just pushed him off the truck and drove off . . . Just dumped him out in front of the emergency entrance . . . And when they found him he was already dead. He bled to death on the inside . . . If they had gotten him there twenty, thirty minutes sooner, possibly he'd still be alive now.*<sup>86</sup>

Columbus Jones represented the best of Lynwood Park. Yet, like Bob Niles, and Big Howard White, he was a product of all aspects of Lynwood Park, and this, in part, caused his, and their, deaths. So while these men were gatekeepers that protected the community, the development of the skills that were necessary to become a successful corner fixture—which many of the community's youths desired—had become widely naturalized within the community, and in fact threatened and destroyed some of those who had mastered the necessary combination of intimidation, danger, and ferocity.

Like Bob Niles's killing, rumor and myth informed accounts of Columbus Jones's death, which Alessandro Portelli claimed are important ways in which people handle trauma and make sense of past events. For example, Dennie Jones Wesley is the only person who claimed that a third-party gave the gun to Bubba Banks, which makes her account similar to some accounts of Bob Niles's shooting. And although she was Columbus's sister, Dennie Jones Wesley did not know the exact cause of Columbus's death, which indicates that facts, in general, are not widely known or distributed, and people construct memories and stories of events without concrete evidence.

Dennie Jones Wesley thought that Bubba Banks went to prison while, in actuality, he was acquitted, as Pee Wee Jackson explained: "He went to jail during the investigation and the trial. But he was acquitted in the trial for self-defense."<sup>87</sup> And while many in the community claimed that Columbus was a bully, Minnie Lee Weddie Thompson had the opposite view of his character and recognized that there existed multiple stories about the event:

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<sup>86</sup> Wesley, 19 October 2005, 7.

<sup>87</sup> Pee Wee Jackson, 3 May 2008, 2. See also Chatman, 28 March 2008, 48.

*You know when something like that happens, you hear so many different things . . . they talking about Columbus was overbearing to Charles. Columbus wasn't a person to do things like that, and I seen Columbus in conversations where he just walk away. He was no fighting and arguing person. So you just really never know what happen with so many different stories told about the thing . . . you will never hear what really happened. When something like that happens so many things be told differently. But it was a tragic night. It was hurting to everybody.<sup>88</sup>*

The various accounts of the killings of Bob Niles and Columbus Jones also demonstrate that much of memory is subjective, and that memories have a life of their own. In other words, there is little objective truth in memories, because every event is filtered through the “thrown” lens of each actor, and thus each “truthful” account is a subjective interpretation that carries, as Portelli argued, psychological truth for the constructor.

\* \* \*

The men on the corner maintained the gateway into Lynwood Park in order to keep the community safe from outsiders, but their illegal activities also made it imperative that they keep out the police—those they could not buy. Officer M.W. Williams, who began patrolling Lynwood Park in 1986, explained that the dangerous boundary initially was established to protect the residents from the Ku Klux Klan, and then to protect the community’s illegal alcohol industry. The gatekeepers, like many other residents, were bootleggers, and did not want outsiders muscling in on their trade, or exposing them to the authorities. Luke Holsey, born in 1902, was a highly-respected founder of Lynwood Park, and explained the beginning of the community’s illegality to Officer Williams. Holsey told Williams that white bootleggers initially employed Lynwood Park’s residents to assist them in the making and selling of moonshine. White historian Paul Hudson, who lived on Wimberly Road, confirmed that this was the case:

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<sup>88</sup> Thompson, 11 August 2005, 40.

*I would play at Silver Lake . . . [and] I recall seeing moonshine stills in the Silver Lake woods, and they were tended by blacks.*<sup>89</sup>

Wilmer Harris, born in 1938 and raised in Lynwood Park, said that blacks were not allowed around Silver Lake, but he would sneak over there to swim, but was run off by whites, which would support that the blacks that Paul Hudson encountered were allowed there because they were working for white moonshiners.<sup>90</sup> According to Holsey, Lynwood Park residents then began making and marketing their own moonshine, and that is how underclass blacks raised money to purchase land. Holsey said that bootlegging started Lynwood Park on its trajectory of vice and its attendant danger, and the residents then added other illegal products over time.<sup>91</sup>

Pee Wee Jackson explained that the gatekeepers were really businessmen who had to protect their investment:

*Bob Niles and Bookie was these kind of people, in that during their lives they were not given any options with our social structure. So they created their own enterprise. So what do most businessmen do? They protect their investment . . . They were bootleggers . . . So you got to protect your investment, just like a guy that owns McDonald's, just like the guy that owns Chik-Fil-A . . . if you come in and infringe on some of their patents, they will sue you, whereas Bookie and Bob would shoot you. It was no difference . . . So I looked at it from the standpoint that these guys were trying to perpetuate their lives because that's how they fed their families and paid their bills . . . They were entrepreneurs.*<sup>92</sup>

Lynwood Park's residents admired those who could become wealthy during the period of Jim Crow segregation. The people of Lynwood Park also would not inform because not only did they not trust the police, they also feared reprisals. For example, Bookie Ouisley was known as an extremely dangerous character, as John Jett remembered:

*I've seen Bookie cut up many men . . . I seen him cut a man out his shoes. The man pick up his shoe and try to fight him off of him with it. And he just cut him, just cut him, just cut him . . . Right up on the corner . . . And down at the ball field, I seen him cut up many men*

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<sup>89</sup> Hudson, 21 May 2004, 11.

<sup>90</sup> Wilmer Harris, interview by author, 3 January 2006, transcript, 32.

<sup>91</sup> Williams, 14 April 2005, 81-2.

<sup>92</sup> Pee Wee Jackson, 17 September 2006, 12-3.

*. . . I remember the time that Bookie would go to the City Auditorium and just cut people just to cut them . . . He would get in the crowd and . . . just stab 'em . . . [T]hey would be in there like that [indicating both palms pressed together] . . . And he'd just slip around and stab that one, and slip around and just cut people, just stab peoples . . . Yes, he had fun. He used to tell me all the time what he used to do when he go to the City Auditorium—just stab people. He was a mean guy.<sup>93</sup>*

Maudina Peaches Horton, born in the early 1950s, confirmed of Bookie, and the men on the corner: “They had guns on them—knives. Bookie would cut you before God got the news.”<sup>94</sup>

Bookie was the grandson of Herman Ouisley, Lynwood Park’s wealthiest resident and moonshine wholesaler. Herman raised Bookie, and Bookie also participated in Herman’s illegal business, as Maudina Peaches Horton explained:

MH: *Mr. Herman kept them souped up cars . . . They was running that liquor back and forth . . . And that’s why Bookie and them were so awful. [Herman] spoiled them, because he had money . . . he’d buy them the cars.*  
 VMH: *And they would run moonshine for him . . . they would go pick it up?*  
 MH: *Pick it up. Bring it in.<sup>95</sup>*

In fact, Pee Wee Jackson, born in 1950, revealed that the community’s keen interest in drag racing was more than a mere hobby:

*The racing cars had nothing to do with racing cars. It had to do with running whiskey . . . All of those guys that had those big muscle cars in Lynwood Park—at one time we didn’t know what they were for. But, now, at two o’clock in the morning, you’d hear one coming down Peachtree. He was trying to run away from DeKalb County police . . . I don’t know of any guys that used to drive these big muscle cars that ever got caught . . . because there were parts of northeast Atlanta, especially up there off of Peachtree Dunwoody Road, where Northside Hopsital and all of that—that was deserted, wooded area. And once you got up across Nancy Creek, they wasn’t gonna catch you because, see, you could make a right or a left and you were down in oblivion. And back then they didn’t have streetlights and the police was just as scared as we were. They weren’t driving down that dark road after bootleggers.<sup>96</sup>*

And thus Pee Wee Jackson explained one possible reason why DeKalb County allowed the bridge across Nancy Creek to fall into disrepair, which made Lynwood Park a

<sup>93</sup> Jett, 13 November 2005, 70-2.

<sup>94</sup> Horton, 7 September 2005, 27.

<sup>95</sup> Horton, 7 September 2005, 28.

<sup>96</sup> Pee Wee Jackson, 17 September 2006, 19-20.

dead-ended community. Before this occurred, Johnson Ferry Road ran from the now-Northside/Saint Joseph's Hospital corridor, through Lynwood Park, to House Road, then its name changed to Osborne Road, and it continued north, through the white area, to Peachtree Road. This was a convenient route through the thick woods—from both directions—for Lynwood Park's bootleg runners, and eliminating the northern access into the enclave therefore enabled the police to enforce the community's illegal activities more effectively, since they would have to monitor only one point of ingress.<sup>97</sup>

Dead-ending the community facilitated its evolution into a parallel universe. The strategy also made it much easier for the county to ignore the community, which meant that Lynwood Park received very few county services and infrastructure, and thus Officer M.W. Williams could say that it resembled a rural community from the 1950s when he was first assigned to patrol there in 1986.<sup>98</sup> The dangerous boundary and the violence needed to protect the community naturalized danger across the enclave. Throughout its history, boys and girls developed skills in bullying and fighting, and to be known as coming from Lynwood Park meant that one was known for being tough, fierce, independent, and self-confident—one could build a sense of “somebodiness” by mimicking the behavior of the men on the corner. John Wright, born in 1964, explained that his older brother Paul drilled toughness and manliness into him at a young age:

JW: *[Paul] was the strongholder of the family, so he did all the discipline—even to my sisters and brothers. . . . He was THE man of the house . . . the values that he instilled in me [were] that a man is not supposed to cry . . . I couldn't suck my thumb, and I couldn't hang up under my mom, I couldn't do this or do that. . . . I had a dog, and he died. He got hit by a car, and I cried like a baby. My brother beat the living Hell out of me. He said, “Either you're gonna be a man, or you're gonna be a punk. Get the damn dog, bury it, and have a funeral. And when I see you again, the tears had*

<sup>97</sup> See also Chatman, 28 March 2008, 44, in which Chatman speaks of a moonshine runner traveling south into Lynwood Park, being chased by the police, and could not make a turn, and crashed across the Chatman driveway.

<sup>98</sup> Williams, 14 April 2005, 8.

*better be gone.” So the only thing I could do is pick up the dog, go have a funeral, and bury it, and then come back to him. I couldn’t have tears in my eyes. “Now, don’t you feel better?” And I had to say, “Yes, I feel better.” He just taught me “You’re a man. A man is not supposed to cry. You gotta be strong.” That’s what he instilled in me.*

VMH: *How old were you then, when the dog died?*

JW: *I was five years old.<sup>99</sup>*

The making of a Lynwood Park identity meant that children had to be toughened at a young age, and Wright recalled one aspect of his toughness training:

JW: *Grease was in a frying pan . . . I was bored, and I started the grease fire, and [Paul] spanked me real good . . . he beat me like I was an old man. I mean the way how he spanked me—he was chopping me in my chest, punching me, and everything.*

VMH: *With his fists?*

JW: *Yeah, with his fist. That was just—that’s the way of life.*

VMH: *You were six?*

JW: *Yeah.*

VMH: *What do you mean that was a way of life?*

JW: *It was just disciplining me, because I knew better, and it wasn’t to hurt me, but to teach me that I can’t do this.<sup>100</sup>*

\* \* \*

Lynwood Park was always steeped in illegality, danger, and fun and excitement.

While most residents withdrew from community life and Lynwood Park devolved into dereliction after crack cocaine was added to the enclave’s product list in the mid-1980s, the dangerous boundary still represented fun and excitement and remained popular.

Michelle Cleckley, born in 1971, is homeless today in Lynwood Park. Cleckley spoke of the community’s popularity in the 1990s even as its demise was on the horizon:

*[I]t was live. You know, it was people, the parties, people coming from everywhere. And it wasn’t all about the drugs. It was having fun, having parties, playing music, riding out, playing games, going to the pool hall. You know, it wasn’t all about the crack . . . this place was just popular.<sup>101</sup>*

<sup>99</sup> Wright, 20 November 2004, 29-30.

<sup>100</sup> Wright, 20 November 2004, 100-1.

<sup>101</sup> Michelle Cleckley, interview by author, 12 November 2005, transcript, 11.

Sandra Fields, an educated black woman from Los Angeles, became trapped and homeless in Lynwood Park in 1995. Born in 1955, Fields has a Bachelor's in Human Services and a Master's in Psychology, and she and her husband established a private non-profit foundation for exceptional achievers. The couple relocated to Atlanta, lived in a prestigious area of Roswell, and had everything a black couple could want: cars, home, and a successful business. The Fields socialized in a circle of successful blacks, and their weekend parties were like a car show because everyone had money. These parties also included copious amounts of cocaine, because everyone would snort.<sup>102</sup>

Several of the residents of Lynwood Park said that it was whites that were buying drugs in Lynwood Park, and that white appetite for drugs fueled the devolvement of the community. While that may have been true of the drug eras until the 1980s, Fields confirmed that members of Atlanta's black elite also were seeking drugs in Lynwood Park in the mid-1990s. Fields established a relationship with a young cocaine dealer in the enclave, and would "hang" and do drugs with him occasionally, and Fields said that Lynwood Park in the 1990s was a great place for partying and having fun, as Michelle Cleckley also asserted.<sup>103</sup>

Fields's drug dealer "Deed" was born and raised in Lynwood Park. When Fields encountered a crisis in her marriage, Deed offered Fields a shoulder to cry on and a crack cocaine pipe, and she soon became addicted. Deed professed love for Fields, emptied her bank account over time, and took everything else to which she had access. Looking back from the vantage point of 2005, Fields said that Deed was a master of street psychology. Deed was playing her all along, to make her dependent upon him, so that he could control

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<sup>102</sup> Sandra Fields, interview by author, 24 July 2005, transcript, 3.

<sup>103</sup> Fields, 24 July 2005, 2-4.



and manipulate her through offering and withholding drugs and protection within the community, which Fields claimed was dangerous to outsiders. Deed had many women in Lynwood Park that he controlled with drugs, and he would cut off Fields's supply if she did not do what he wanted, which included prostitution.<sup>104</sup>

Sandra Fields lived the underside of Lynwood Park for more than ten years and said that she was always treated as an outsider by the community's traditional residents. Deed found her shelter with an elderly woman on Social Security, to whom Fields had to supply cigarettes and forty-dollars-a-day worth of Glenmore Gin. Deed had a reputation in Lynwood Park for being crazy and dangerous, so the community gave him and those under his protection a wide berth. Fields said that the people of Lynwood Park were polite to her when she was Deed's girl, which enabled her to go anywhere in Lynwood Park, day and night, because the residents feared retaliation from Deed. But the community would turn against her when Deed was angry with her. Deed was violent and would throw bricks through the window of the house where she was staying, or would kick in the doors. The neighbors would only tell him to be quiet—not to make so much noise. Conversely, they would criticize Fields if she tried to defend herself from Deeds, who was physically abusive. Fields explained that Lynwood Park operates as a cult that protects and takes care of its own, and allowed Deed to get away with vandalism and assault because he was a member.<sup>105</sup>

In 2005 Fields was attempting to wean herself off her crack cocaine habit, in order to return to her family in Los Angeles, and Deed was trying to lure her back into his sphere with drugs as the carrot. While trapped in Lynwood Park, Fields, who is five feet three inches tall, went from a robust one hundred and forty-five pounds to about eighty-five.

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<sup>104</sup> Deed is a pseudonym, as this young man still lives in Lynwood Park, and is still in the same profession. Fields, 24 July 2005, 5-6, 18.

<sup>105</sup> Fields 24 July 2005, 6-7,, 13-5.

She had been arrested and jailed and now has a criminal record. In 2005 Fields was supporting herself by working for the builders and white gentrifiers who were invading Lynwood Park.<sup>106</sup>

Sandra Fields's account demonstrates that the land use in Lynwood Park may change but that the dynamics governing its traditional population does not. In effect, the patterns that governed the community in its founding days: protecting its own, keeping outsiders out, and illegality, are still operative within the community, which means that outsiders—both black and white—have to conform to Lynwood Park's rules in order to survive there.<sup>107</sup>

Sandra Fields was naïve about the culture of Lynwood Park, but the white gentrification pioneer Mark Kucera was not. Kucera knew Lynwood Park when he was a student at Georgia State University, since he would go to the community to buy drugs. Kucera was aware of Lynwood Park's dynamics, and knew that he could not call the police when the black residents vandalized his home and stole his property, which was in the very center of the community. Kucera explained some of the dynamics of living in Lynwood Park in 2002:

MK: *[W]hen I moved in they continued to break all my windows . . . tearing out mailboxes, kicking in my doors. Literally confronting me physically face-to-face . . . when I first came here, the entrances of Cates and Osborne were so jammed . . . with drug dealing, that I would literally, on a Friday or Saturday night, have to . . . just sit there in a car, and the line of cars would be ten deep, with fifteen or twenty people just peddling drugs. Eventually they got to know who I was, and would wave me—literally wave me on, like traffic control. And I was just stunned to see cops just drive by and do nothing about it . . . They didn't feel like it was worth the risk to their officers to bust these guys . . . 'cause there were a lot of handguns in this neighborhood when I first moved in . . . [and] it's still very family.*

<sup>106</sup> Fields, 24 July 2005, 22, 32-4. Sandra Field's family spirited her away from Lynwood Park in 2007.

<sup>107</sup> McCall makes this same argument in *Them*, with the example of the white couple Sean and Sandy Gilmore, who are gentrifying pioneers in the Atlanta underclass community known as the Old Fourth Ward. Nathan McCall, *Them* (New York: Atria Books, 2007), 301-3, 321-7.

*Everybody tends to know everybody. And so when a crime occurs, even amongst themselves, they don't want it to be handled by the police. They'll handle it themselves . . .*

VMH: *And what about them respecting private property, like your land?*

MK: *No. Zero . . . They're basically saying, you know, "Kiss my ass . . . I grew up here. This is my street . . . This is my turf. I may not own anything, but possession is nine tenths of the law. I've possessed this neighborhood for my whole life . . . so I have more rights than you."<sup>108</sup>*

For Kucera, enforcing his property rights meant bullying and threatening the perpetrators, then making friends of them, and paying them to inform on others, and to protect his property—the same dynamics that always governed relationships in Lynwood Park. In order to survive in Lynwood Park, Kucera had to adopt the community's way of operating within the enclave, and had to establish his own network of local protectors:

MK: *[W]hen things are stolen, I would go find Michelle, or Doug, or somebody that I know that lives here, and I say, "Look, man, my blower got stolen. I think So-and-So took it. Where is he? . . . I'll give you five bucks. Jump into my car, let's go find him," and they'll drive you right to the duplex, or the crack house . . . I'm networked in the neighborhood. I find out who did it and then there's repercussions.*

VMH: *So you behave just the way they behave. They've always behaved that way—taking care of things in the neighborhood.*

MK: *Yeah . . . when I first came in here, the last thing I wanted to do was be associated with the police. That would not have been smart . . . [and] I wanted to make sure they understood that . . . I'm here to stay, and . . . I can outplay you in this game. I got more money than you got. I can get done what I need to have happen . . . I would let them know what's up: "You do that again, you see these guys right over here? They'll handle it for me. I don't have to get my hands dirty." So, yeah, I had to leverage their own kind. Bringing in the police would have been disastrous.<sup>109</sup>*

Without knowing it, Kucera became like the historically powerful residents of the community and behaved no differently than a Herman or Bookie Ouisley, and the other men of the corner culture, who protected their industry, could bully, threaten, intimidate, and instill fear, to keep others at bay. Throughout Lynwood Park's history, the type of illegal products handled by the residents changed, but the community's dynamics did not,

<sup>108</sup> Kucera, 23 November 2005, 89, 80.

<sup>109</sup> Kucera, 23 November 2005, 40.

and will not, as long as there is a vestige of the traditional black community still extant in Lynwood Park. The traditional residents see the community changing and cannot change with it, because they lack the skills and education to make a life in the new Lynwood Park. Their only option is to shift to another location as the circle of redevelopment tightens and displaces their quadrant's housing and social life.

The residents of Lynwood Park have always lived passionately, and as Sandra Fields and Michelle Cleckley shared, the life has not gone out of Lynwood Park, but has rather retracted from the streets in daylight hours, only to emerge when the white outsiders are safely in bed asleep. Officer M.W. Williams has patrolled Lynwood Park since 1986, and he shared in 2005 that there are two Lynwood Parks: the gentrifying community of daylight hours, which is conventionally orderly and civilized, and the Lynwood Park of the night, which is more akin to the historic Lynwood Park.

Officer Williams explained that he generally patrolled Lynwood Park during the day with a shift that ended at eleven o'clock at night. He saw another side of the community and its traditional residents when he had to work an overtime shift later in the night. Williams then came to the conclusion that he never really knew Lynwood Park and its people. He realized that they are duplicitous, are masters of manipulation, and that they are so cunning in street psychology that they plan elaborate schedules to time their historic illegal activities for the time when the police have left the community and the outsiders are safely asleep. Then the usual Lynwood Park illegality erupts in outlying pockets of the enclave: on Mendell Circle, the farthest point north in the community—the dead-end in dead-ended Lynwood Park—and on Dickson, Hillview, and Fala, the three dead-ends in extended Lynwood Park south of Windsor Parkway. Congregating in the dead-ends is

also an ironic metaphor indicating that change is squeezing tradition into the farthest corners, and Officer Williams described the two Lynwood Parks:

*[W]e worked overtime and after hours I saw a whole other culture . . . a whole other night life that came into being, and a whole lot of other stuff that nobody really even talked about much . . . And so some of the stuff and some of the people I saw was kind of eye-opening . . . Women and people that represented themselves one way [during the day], you see them creeping around at night, which was highly suspicious . . . I can sit here and tell you that what I was seeing was like the tip of the iceberg . . . so with even what I knew I realized that there was a whole lot of stuff that I didn't know . . . a lot of people that I didn't even think about them that way, or that they would do anything . . . we worked overtime a little bit and I got a chance to see a lot more activity than even I imagined . . . there was just a lot of stuff that folks do, that goes on, that you won't be familiar with unless you're really actually living with them . . . I realized that people weren't going to bed when I was getting off. A lot of things were just starting . . . and they [were] going to work on clandestine things . . . when you think we're going to bed, these people just be starting up in something that's going on to maybe daybreak . . . there was a lot of police officers who kind of didn't want to be bothered with coming down into this neighborhood at night, and so I guess that kind of opened up the door after I got off.<sup>110</sup>*

The people of Lynwood Park had always survived through cunning in economic ventures, and through creating an identity as an enclave that was so dangerous that outsiders would be loath to enter. Sociologist Kai Erikson argued that “the amount of deviation a community encounters is apt to remain fairly constant over time.” Therefore, it could be predicted that Lynwood Park’s residents would continue their historic illegal activities. Officer Williams’s description of the residents displayed the decades of flexibility and adaptability that had been naturalized across the entire community—skills that were written into the grammar of a Lynwood Park identity. Lynwood Park’s people had always had dualistic personalities. They had always worn masks: the passive black

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<sup>110</sup> Williams, 14 April 2005, 84-8. Officer William’s account also relates to the present. There is an on-going battle with the white residents and the police in community meetings about the amount of traditional nightlife in their sectors. The white residents regularly speak in highly-frustrated tones of the partying, the loud music, drugs, and prostitution of the traditional community, which spills over onto their properties. In a community meeting with the police on 15 May 2008, Al Fowler, head of DeKalb County’s Department of Outreach advised the residents that the county is training a squad of bicycle police officers who could chase suspects on pathways between buildings and across lawns and yards, and that this squad would be patrolling Lynwood Park at night in the near future. Mendell Circle is called the Honey Hole by Lynwood Park residents, since it is the area of the enclave where a lot of moonshine production and partying occurred. See Chatman, 28 March 2008, 39-40.

labor that engaged with the white world that then transformed into a partying, drinking, fighting, bullying community behind the Jim Crow veil. When the white gaze entered into the heart of Lynwood Park in 2002 with Mark Kucera, and the floodgates were opened to white gentrifiers, the traditional residents simply adapted and switched back to the dualism of the founders—the strategies of their grandparents. Erikson found that historic behaviors are perpetuated through time because they become associated with people “who are no longer sure of their own place in the world, people who need to protect their old customs and ways all the more narrowly because they seem to have a difficult time remembering quite who they are.” Therefore, the exigencies of gentrification required both a continuation of the Lynwood Park identity through illegality, and a fine-tuning of the dualistic identity, from a black/white dualism that was demarcated by the dangerous boundary, to a day/night dualism determined by the end of Officer Williams’s shift at eleven o’clock. On the surface—during the day—Lynwood Park became an increasingly orderly, mixed-income, mixed-race community—the gentrification ideal. But in the hidden—after eleven o’clock—the veiled, guarded, and conventional mask of the day was removed and gave way to the passionate and illegal side of Lynwood Park.<sup>111</sup>

Gary McDaniel, born in 1951, claimed that in Lynwood Park “It’s a good side, and it’s a bad side. You got that side where you got that criminal, where you got that street side.” Officer Williams demonstrated that these were not discrete identities, and that the traditional residents could embrace both aspects in one personality, just as LaTrelle Lockwood shared that Patricia Martin enjoyed both the holes-in-the-wall and the upscale black clubs back in the day. McDaniel also said that “It’s still going to be Lynwood . . .

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<sup>111</sup> Kai T. Erikson, *Wayward Puritans: A Study in the Sociology of Deviance* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1966), 23, 114.

somebody's always going to be hanging around. All of us not going to go away. I still feel like it's going to be Lynwood." In effect, Lynwood Park and all that it stands for will always exist in the bounded enclave as long as people who were born and raised in Lynwood Park still inhabit space there. Outsiders are forced, in part, to adopt the rules of the community during the day in order to negotiate life in the transitional period from underclass black community to affluent housing subdivision. And the traditional residents have been so steeped in decades of survival strategies that they have constructed identities that can metamorphose into a dualism that enables them to live the historic culture of Lynwood Park at night. Danger to outsiders has been all but eliminated and is now limited to the occasional vandalism against the property of the new residents. However, the many other aspects of historic Lynwood Park still exist in the hidden and operate in a reverse-Cinderella effect that emerges around midnight and blooms until dawn.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> McDaniel, 8 June 2005, 57, 63.

#### Chapter 4: Social Life Beyond the White Gaze

Lynwood Park was nestled within the dense woods of DeKalb County, and while the dangerous boundary insulated the enclave from a hostile outside, the residents created a vibrant and colorful community behind the veil. Men hunted in the woods—where children also played—and officiated at hog killings. The women had washdays—called Blue Mondays, which were a combination of work and play. On weekends, parties spilled onto yards and into roads, and baseball and drag racing were enjoyed by many of the residents.

Before the 1960s families in Lynwood Park produced much of their food, which included raising and slaughtering hogs. The hog killings were remembered by some residents as festive occasions when the community pulled together to help each other, yet these descriptions also suggested that Lynwood Park was, in actuality, delineated by sectors, each with its own traditions and practices. LaTrelle Lockwood, born in 1955, explained that his family would buy a young pig in the spring, which would be slaughtered after the first frost—to ensure that the meat did not spoil. Lockwood also described witnessing the castration of the pig when he was a boy:

*[H]e was a pretty good size, maybe fifty pounds . . . And one particular day they came . . . [out] back to catch this hog. So they went in, flipped him over, took a razor blade, and cut his testicles out. I said, “Ooooh, God, y’all crazy! . . . They castrated him, right there . . . and that traumatized me so bad.”<sup>1</sup>*

Lynwood Park was not a homogeneous community and defies generalizations. With regard to hog killings, residents from the various sectors of the community spoke of different rituals and customs associated with the activity. LaTrelle Lockwood recounted hog killing as essentially a single-family affair that included the children as spectators:

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<sup>1</sup> Lockwood, 22 May 2008, 2.



*Somebody shot him with a .22mm . . . Then my Uncle Arthur . . . stabbed him in the heart with this long knife . . . and right behind his hind feet, they stuck a hook through the tendon, and drugged him out . . . and had a pot all ready—a big, fifty-gallon drum—already hot, with hot water—a fire up under it. Put him in it just long enough for his hair to scrape off. Scraped his hair off. Then they hung him up by his feet, and put a huge, huge pot up under him. And the next thing I know, this huge knife went from his testicles, all the way down to his neck, and he fell open. And all his intestines, heart, everything, just fell out into this bucket. And the women were saying, “Oh, look how pretty those chitlins is,” “Oh, look how pretty his heart is,” “Oh, look how pretty his liver is.” And I’m thinking to myself, “Y’all are crazy! My God, y’all so crazy!”*

*So my great aunt Nan—God, I loved that woman—she said, “Trell, I want you to help me hold his liver” . . . She wanted me to hold it up while she cut the liver up. I said, “I can’t put my hand on that liver.” It was still warm. It was hot. She said, “Boy, that blood will wash off. Help me hold this liver . . . So she cut it up, cut his intestines out, put a hosepipe through it and blew all the garbage out of it. And the men started cutting him up . . . it’s just like a whaler with a whale . . . Everybody there had a job.*

*They had one pot—a firepot—that was rendering down the fat to make lard . . . They got everything in his inside out, washed it off, sprayed it . . . And they started cutting him up, and putting in this saltbox things that they were gonna salt down, and stuff they were gonna hang up in the smokehouse . . . they even kept his head, ‘cause they make souse meat out of his head. So by the time they got through with that hog, there was nothing left of him. And that was really a traumatic experience for me.<sup>2</sup>*

Lockwood described a clinical, efficient, and traumatizing slaughtering of the hog.

Rachel Harris, born in 1948, shared that neighbors helped at hog killings, but that children were not allowed at the event in her section of the neighborhood:

*Mr. David Hamilton . . . he lived next door to us. He would kill a hog once a year, but they wouldn’t let the kids come out. All we would hear is when . . . [h]e was shot . . . and then all night long they would be out there with a big fire, you know, like they would be cutting the hog up, and everything . . . And they would cook chitlins, but it was just for the adults now . . . the little kids were kind of eliminated from stuff like that . . . I would be nosy trying to see but, you know, at that time you didn’t get into grownups’ business . . . we weren’t allowed to go out.<sup>3</sup>*

Conversely, Patricia Martin, born in 1932, related hog killing in her sector in a carnivalesque manner—as an event filled with communalism, and excitement, which included children:

<sup>2</sup> Lockwood, 22 May 2008, 2-4.

<sup>3</sup> Rachel Harris, 27 July 2005, 16.

*My granddaddy had hogs, and my daddy had hogs. And in September was hog killing time . . . And my grandmother taught us to use everything, every part of the hog. We had hog ears. We had hog feet. We had hog tail. And the fat was cooked in the wash pot for grease and lard . . . And the intestines were cleaned out, and we called those chitlins . . . I learned to clean chitlins at a very young age . . . we had to wash them out thoroughly and then pick the fat off it, and pick the grit off of it . . . It was a lot of fun, because the men dranked . . . it was a lot of fun, because people gathered . . . They may not be killing at the same time, but my dad would help my granddaddy, and my granddaddy would help my dad. And some of the neighbors would help. They helped each other, and then when it came their time, then they got help . . .*

*The men had to slaughter it, and then they had this brush that they had to get all the hair off. And they did the cutting . . . of the parts off the shoulders, and the hams, and the hips . . . and then they would cut the feet up. And it would be the women's job to wash them and start the cooking. The hog was split down the middle, and then the tenderloin comes out, and the liver. Nobody eats the heart . . . But the tongue—yeah, you eat the tongue. And the whole hog's head was made into the souse meat. And the women made the souse meat whilst the men cut it up. [The men] had the liquor. And really and truly the women would prepare food on the table so that you could eat while you were actually working . . . people ate a lot then, and shared a lot then.<sup>4</sup>*

In Martin's account, neighbors came to help, children had assigned tasks, and everyone ate, drank, and worked together.

Dennie Jones Wesley, born in 1940, narrated a hog killing akin to a fair, with an offering to the hostess of the event, in her quadrant of the community:

*[I]n the winter time all the men would get together . . . and everybody would go to one person's house and everybody pitched in, and helped. They had one man who was appointed . . . that would do all the killing. The rest of them was the ones who would take the skin off, hang the gut up, and clean 'em out. And my father was the one who'd go in after they cut the hog open . . . that would go in there and cut out different parts of the hog. And I remember he would always cut out the liver. And he would take it to the back door of whoever the lady's house was, and she would then wash and clean it, and cut it up, and she would cook the liver right there. My mother, at our house, he brought her the tenderloin, and she would clean it and cook it right there. And we ate tenderloin fresh from the hog . . . But it was a neighborhood thing for all the men to gather in the wintertime and go from house to house to kill the hog . . . It was like a fair to us. It was an event . . . We looked forward to it. Everybody would come and help . . . and we'd be there from morning until night, until the kids had to go to bed.<sup>5</sup>*

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<sup>4</sup> Martin, 13 October 2004, 29-32.

<sup>5</sup> Wesley, 19 October 2005, 22-3.

Three of the four accounts, if taken in isolation, would suggest that Lynwood Park was linked in a single network of cooperation. However, the four different descriptions of hog killings support and underscore that Lynwood Park was divided into different sectors—each with a great degree of variance and autonomy—and that cooperation, helping neighbors, and watching out for each other’s children mainly occurred only in one’s quadrant of the enclave, and were not community-wide practices.

Many of Lynwood Park’s residents had rural roots, and they were practically self-sufficient through raising animals and planting vegetables. Even as affluent suburbs were developed around Lynwood Park, the community’s founders—as late as the 1970s—still supplemented their diets with bounty from the woods, where they hunted squirrel and rabbit. LaTrelle Lockwood recalled that the founding men still shot game on a daily basis during the winter in the 1970s, and would stroll through the community with broken-open shotguns:

*You’d see them either in the early morning, or in the late afternoon. You’d see the old men walking together, and they had their hunting vests on. And the law was you had to have your shotgun broke open, with nothing in it. So they just walked slowly, meandering down the street, ’til you get to the woods, and then you loaded, and you done your business, and you come back, and you break them open again. I’d say, “Mr. Rucker, did you get anything?” He’d say, “Oh, yeah, I got them.” He’d reach in his pouch and he got a squirrel here, a rabbit here . . . They did that every morning . . . They were very, very, very good shots . . . they shot from the hip . . . I aim from my eye, up on my shoulder, and I never could hit anything . . . They’d say, “No, boy, you doing it the wrong way. Just aim it from your hip. Don’t pull it up.” I never learned how to shoot like that . . . they would tell me “It’s just like pointing your finger. Just point it.” . . . but I never could . . . I never knowed any of them to miss . . . and I heard them talk about it a lot of times: “If you want three rabbits, take three shells,” or however many animals you wanted to kill, you just take that amount of shells. No extra, ’cause they didn’t waste anything.”<sup>6</sup>*

For hunting as a winter sport, a number of the older men gathered at Deacon Arthur Calloway’s house early on Saturday mornings, and Lillie Stewart, who was

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<sup>6</sup> LaTrelle Lockwood, interview by author, 19 May 2008, transcript, 8-10.

Calloway's sister-in-law, and who lived with the Calloways, told Lockwood about the men's preparations before going into the woods to hunt:

*[T]hey got together collectively on Saturday mornings, and they hunted then . . . I am told this by my play great aunt Miss Lillie Stewart . . . she lived with [the Calloways] for a time . . . she would tell me that when the guys got ready to go hunting, you could hear them downstairs early in the morning—on Saturday morning—laughing and talking . . . but she knowed they baked sweet potatoes in the fireplace. That was their ritual before they went hunting . . . normally you don't hunt rabbit and squirrel during the summer, because they're pregnant, or either they got worms. You wait until it's fall or winter, so it was kind of cold, so it was a way to warm up and get yourself ready to go out in the woods . . . [then] they'd all go off hunting.<sup>7</sup>*

Lockwood said that the different groups of the community's children also regularly used the woods for play, because they loved the outdoors and the woods, while staying in the house meant that you had to do work and fetch things:

*[I]t was more fun being outside than being at home, because when you're at home, you got to work—do this, do that, do this, do this, go get me that, do this, because, back then, you didn't have remote control. I was the remote control: "Turn that thing on Channel 2 man." So . . . we had games outside. It was a whole different way of life . . . This is what me and my friends did every day: we got out of school, and we went to the woods. We had teepees in this set of woods. We had a tree house in this set of woods. And we had pellet guns, and .22mm rifles, and we would hunt. And we stayed in the woods. And once we got older, old enough to start fooling around with girls . . . when we wanted our time, we headed to the woods. And we would meet little groups of guys: "Hey, man, what's going on over there?" "Oh, man, there's some big fish over there." You know, we'd pass each other in the woods . . . We hung in the woods.<sup>8</sup>*

The men also had stills in the woods around Herman and Silver lakes, and Pee Wee Jackson, born in 1950, recalled raiding their stores of moonshine for his sector's drunks:

*[A]s kids we used to go steal from the stills to give to our resident drunks. We used to get paid to go steal liquor from Bookie's still. We knew where it was. We knew where Mr. Herman's still was. We knew when Mr. Herman was watching it, we knew when he had somebody watching it, and we knew when he didn't.<sup>9</sup>*

Patricia Martin, born in 1932, explained how the bootleggers kept the children away from their stills in her quadrant:

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<sup>7</sup> Lockwood, 22 May 2008, 8-9.

<sup>8</sup> Lockwood, 22 May 2008, 32-3.

<sup>9</sup> Pee Wee Jackson, 17 September 2006, 17.

*They had a bear horn, and we thought there was a bear in the woods, so we would never go near the still. That's how they kept us away . . . You were afraid to go near the still, 'cause there was a bear hanging around there [laughs] . . . [W]e knew that there was the still. We knew what corn liquor was about.<sup>10</sup>*

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Rachel Harris said that her paternal grandmother Sarah Jackson was a child of slaves who was sold into marriage at the age of twelve. Granny Jackson lived with the family in Lynwood Park, and knew how to heal with plants, knowledge she acquired from slave tradition. Harris recalled that Granny Jackson wandered the woods around Lynwood Park once a month collecting plant material, with which she made potions and poultices, in order to administer to the community's residents:

*[S]he would go over into the woods . . . and she would come back with all of these leaves and limbs and stems and flowers and things in her apron. And she would take it in her room and close that curtain. And when she opened the curtain she would have divided it up into the little jars and things. And if we got sick with anything, she would doctor on us. . . . And when the people had hemorrhoids . . . they would send word: "Tell Miss Jackson So-and-So and So-and-So got the piles, and they need her to fix them some medicine". . . my grandmother would make a solution . . . And she would stir it with a popsicle stick . . . it would have to be a certain consistency. She would stir and dip, stir and dip . . . My dad would go and fix the men. And she would go and fix the women. And they would bring her like vegetables, some of them would bring cakes and pies, or whatever, to pay her. Or they would bring her a jar of jelly or jam . . . That's how they would pay her.<sup>11</sup>*

Patricia Martin said that all black women used home remedies, including herself, even after she qualified as a registered nurse at Emory University:

*[A]ll black folks have home remedies . . . You use catnip for all babies . . . that kept them from having thrush . . . you had peppermint tea . . . it keeps you warm, and it stimulates you. It does the same thing coffee does, without the caffeine . . . Ginger was for the digestive system . . . You put garlic in your ears for earache . . . and toothache too.<sup>12</sup>*

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<sup>10</sup> Martin, 13 October 2004, 32-3.

<sup>11</sup> Rachel Harris, 27 July 2005, 7, 73-5.

<sup>12</sup> Martin, 13 October 2004, 62-3.

The women in Martin's family were healers. Her mother Leila Centers, was an LPN, and her grandmother Georgia Clement was midwife, and often took Martin on her housecalls in the middle of the night when Martin was a child:

*[My grandmother] delivered all the babies in the community, and all the other black communities. So they would get her up and would say, "Miss Georgia, Miss Georgia, wake up. So-and-So's gonna have a baby." And if I was there with her, she took me on with her, and so I would have to sit in the kitchen, where they were heating the water, and listen to the lady holler, and then hear the baby cry, all this kind of thing.<sup>13</sup>*

Lynwood Park bustled with activity day and night, and much of its social life was played out in public spaces—an outdoor theatre—where colorful characters interacted within a hive of activity and eccentricity. For example, Deacon Arthur Calloway, who hosted the men's sweet-potato breakfasts during the hunting season, added greatly to the vibrancy of Lynwood Park. LaTrelle Lockwood was a close friend of Calloway's youngest son Arthur, Jr., who was born when the elder Calloway was sixty-five. Lockwood remembered the Deacon was a World War I veteran, a stern man who "didn't take any junk," and shared that Calloway, from the time he was a young man, was prepared to kill anyone that was disrespectful to him:

*I had never known anybody in World War I . . . some part of his family was in slavery, and even somebody got hung . . . And we talked about how it was back in the day—how really, really, really prejudiced it was back then . . . [he] had just got on leave, and he was in some country town . . . and this white man told him, "You know, just because you been in the service, it don't change anything" . . . And he said, "I walked in his store." He said he was hungry, and Mr. Calloway . . . he wasn't mean, but he was stern. He didn't take no junk off anybody. He didn't take any trash off anybody . . . He said he wanted a whole loaf of bread and a wedge of that cheddar cheese . . . And the man told him . . . "Boy, I know you not this hungry. If you don't eat all this cheese, I'm gonna push it down your throat." Mr. Calloway looked at me and said, "You know what, Trelle? I was hungry enough to eat that bread and cheese, 'cause I bought it. But had I not ate it . . . If that man had tried to make me eat that cheese I would have killed him dead." Those were his exact words: "I would have killed him dead."<sup>14</sup>*

<sup>13</sup> Martin, 13 October 2004, 22. Martin's mother worked as a domestic before qualifying as an LPN. Her name Leila is pronounced Lee-eye-la.

<sup>14</sup> Lockwood, 22 May 2008, 20-1.

Lockwood explained that Deacon Arthur Calloway did not jest when he spoke:

*Mr. Calloway was a man of few words. Once he told you, that was it. The next thing is action. He not gonna tell you again. And he didn't mind shooting you.*<sup>15</sup>

This was no idle statement, since Calloway had shot Big Howard White dead for not leaving his premises when told to do so. Calloway's reputation for seriousness and action was well known in the community, and residents had to scatter when they saw Arthur Calloway's car, because the Deacon was willing to run anyone over. On Lynwood Park's narrow roads, people often held conversations in the road, leaning into idling cars on the driver's side, which meant that their lower bodies sometimes protruded into the center of an already-narrow road. LaTrelle Lockwood explained that Deacon Calloway would beep his horn and holler for them to clear the way as he approached:

*[I]f somebody was in the way with a car . . . in the street talking, and somebody got their butt stuck out in the street, and he's trying to get down the road, he'd be "Move out of the way and let me by." Beep, beep. "Move out of the way and let me by. Beep, beep . . . you're gonna jump over the other car to get out of the way . . . That's how he was. And that's how lively and animated Lynwood Park was in the day . . . It was lively, and it was vibrant. It was—oh, God—it was a good menagerie of characters, yeah.*<sup>16</sup>

Lynwood Park's roads were a hive of activity, especially from its numerous colorful and eccentric taxi drivers, who offered a critical service, since most of the community's residents did not own any transportation. Men like Wes Newell, Belchy Williams, Herschell Turner, and Luzelle Rogers all lived in the community, and shuttled residents to the bus stop on Peachtree Road, which was in front of Patterson Funeral Home. They also drove residents to grocery stores, and to jobs at Oglethorpe University, as John Jett, born in 1943, recalled:

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<sup>15</sup> Lockwood, 22 May 2008, 21.

<sup>16</sup> Lockwood, 22 May 2008, 32.

*We had our own cab system here in Lynwood Park . . . like Wes Newell—and we had Mr. Herschell . . . Now he was the dependable cab driver. You know, he was a man that had no legs.*<sup>17</sup>

While Herschell Turner was known for his dependability, Pontiac Daddy was known for his senility and speed, as Rachel Harris, born in 1948, recounted:

*Pontiac Dad carried me years and years to Patterson . . . We gave him ten cents . . . he was an old guy . . . drove real fast . . . old and senile*<sup>18</sup>

Lynwood Park was comprised of colorful and passionate characters interacting in its public spaces, and the community tolerated its resident drunks, madmen, and eccentrics. The people of Lynwood Park displayed a friendly relationship with difference, respected the originality of each of its members, and practiced tolerance rather than assimilation. Mixed in with the enclave's community life were characters such as Snake Man, who caught the reptiles in the woods around Herman Lake and kept them in a pit under his house. Minnie Lee Weddie Thompson, born in 1944, remembered Snake Man dragging his snakes along Lynwood Park's roads on a fishing pole:

*I don't even know Charlie Joe's last name—but he loved catching snakes . . . every time you'd see him he'd have a snake in his pocket . . . a grown man . . . [He'd] catch them big, old snakes, and drag them back up the street on a fishing pole. And every time he stopped, they'd be striking.*<sup>19</sup>

Although he was a close friend of Snake Man, LaTrelle Lockwood, born in 1955, also was not sure of Charlie Joe's last name, but described how Charlie Joe caught snakes:

*To catch them, he would put the stick down on its head, and pick him up, and put him in a bag . . . he also would noose the fishing line . . . and just have the snake by the head on the fishing line, and drag him down the road like that (laughs). It was some crazy stuff.*<sup>20</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Jett, 13 November 2005, 82-3. Herschell Turner was the husband of Ida Mae Turner, who still lives on Windsor Parkway. Herschell's black taxicab is still in running condition and is usually parked in Ida Mae's carport.

<sup>18</sup> Rachel Harris, 27 July 2005, 62-64. Rachel Harris's sister, Janice is married to John Chatman's younger brother LeRoy. Janice also sang with Columbus and Fox Jones's group, Columbus and the Rockers.

<sup>19</sup> Thompson, 29 July 2005, 65-6.

<sup>20</sup> Lockwood, 19 May 2008, 15-16.



Lynwood Park lacked county services, and the community was hilly topographically, and thus when there were heavy rains, it was not unusual for rushing water to flush out critters from the woods and hollows. Snake Man was known to show off his snake-handling prowess when he was tipsy, once to his detriment, as Lockwood explained:

*[I]t had rained a lot, rained a lot, rained a lot, and the snake was in the street in front of China Grove [Church, on Osborne Road] . . . and Charlie Joe saw him—this nice-sized copperhead . . . He dropped him, threw him up on the ground, drop him, threw him up on the ground, and dropping him. And the snake got mad . . . The snake was pissed . . . And Charlie Joe was about lit . . . not drunk-drunk, but . . . he was high . . . [a]nd he picked the snake up by the tail, and the snake swung around and put one tooth between his index finger and the second finger . . . so his whole side and shoulder . . . was swole up, like he had on football pads . . . and the only thing that saved him was the alcohol in his system, to keep his blood from coagulating, thickening up. I said, “Man, you’re getting old. You can’t do it anymore, man. You know, you got to let some things go, man.”<sup>21</sup>*

One Lynwood Park character about whom there was much speculation was M.C. Newell, who lived on Fala Place. Along with his wife Louise, M.C. owned a small store that sold candy and sundries, such as snuff, out of their house. The couple also operated a juke joint on the premises. M.C. was blind, yet amazed residents because he could make perfect change when paid with paper money, as Minnie Lee Weddie Thompson recalled:

*[M.C.] had a juke joint on Fala Place. Him and his wife Louise ran it and he was blind . . . [but] he could count money as good as you and I can . . . He could give change for tens, for twenties, fives. He just knew. I don’t know how he did it.<sup>22</sup>*

LaTrelle Lockwood said that people in the community wondered about M.C.’s blindness, and Lockwood related an incident that should have put the argument to rest, but people who knew M.C. preferred the myth to the reality:

*[M.C.] had a little club down there . . . [and] the word was that he was blind . . . that was like the thing in our neighborhood: was he blind, or was he playing blind? He could make perfect change . . . And, then, he was . . . repairing his roof one day, on a ladder . . . I had just got out of college. I had to walk through the woods from Oglethorpe . . . And I waved . . . and he waved back at me. “Yeah, you could see.”<sup>23</sup>*

<sup>21</sup> Lockwood, 19 May 2008, 16.

<sup>22</sup> Thompson, 11 August 2005, 59.

<sup>23</sup> Lockwood, 19 May 2008, 18-20.

M.C. Newell's "condition" added to the conversation in Lynwood Park, and added him to the menagerie of difference and eccentricity that made the community even more alive. Residents preferred to claim that he was the blind man of Lynwood Park who amazed everyone by making perfect change for paper money.

Most of Lynwood Park's residents bear nicknames and many people in the community know each other only by their nicknames, and do not know given names. For example, Lockwood knew that Snake Man's father was Edward Freeman, yet Lockwood could only speculate that Charlie Joe's last name was Smith, because the community generally referred to him as Snake Man.<sup>24</sup> John Chatman confirmed that Lynwood Park's residents generally only knew each other by nicknames:

*[A] lot of people don't know the people's real names . . . A lot of them didn't know my brother [Columbus's] real name. They called him Zumbo . . . They just knew Zumbo.*<sup>25</sup>

Nicknames derived from experiences and relationships involving the bearers. For example, John Jett's nickname is Bay Bro, a shortened form of Baby Brother, and Bugga Bear's nickname derived from a more dramatic event, as Lockwood explained:

*Bugga Bear went [to] . . . a fair once. And the guys urged him up to fight with this bear. . . he was out on a chain, but he had a muzzle on. So if you wrestled with the bear, you'd win a certain amount of money. [Bugga] was halfway drunk: "I can take on this bear." The bear beat him down, so that's why they called him Bugga Bear (laughs) . . . I said, "Bugga Bear, you tried to fight that bear, man?" He said, "Yeah, Trell, I almost had him" (laughs). I said, "Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah."*<sup>26</sup>

The dangerous boundary had its corner culture and the men who patrolled, protected, and frequented it. Once across the boundary, behind the holes-in-the wall on House Road, the community's second-tier men had their gathering spot. This group

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<sup>24</sup> Lockwood, 19 May 2008, 1, 13. Children of unmarried unions in Lynwood Park carried the mother's surname. Edward Freeman, along with Theodore Allen and Allen's two mules Pat and Cora, cut several of the roads in the western section of Lynwood Park with their mules and plows.

<sup>25</sup> Chatman, 28 March 2008, 36.

<sup>26</sup> Lockwood, 22 May 2008, 15-6.

consisted of many of the community's drinkers with steady employment. They worked in the morning, gathered and drank after work under the trees, but were not violent—men like Gertrude Booker's brother, Henry. These were men with steady jobs, who began working in the early hours of the morning. They were also men with a lot of leisure time, and they sat under the trees in the afternoon, drinking and shooting the breeze, and Booker, born in 1918, said of her brother Henry and his group:

*He had a bunch of boys that he'd drink with . . . the Hoods and the Suttons and the Jones . . . Miss Idell's husband . . . they'd all be sitting under the bushes drinking together . . . It was a gang of them . . . But they worked. Them boys worked. They would do it in the afternoon . . . And all of them boys were smart. They worked.*<sup>27</sup>

Houses in Lynwood Park were small and sheltered a large number of extended kinfolk. With no air conditioning, many of the men outside the corner culture repaired to their shady spot to wile away the afternoons. The second-tier men worked at the surrounding golf courses, keeping the greens, such as Wallace Jones, who worked as the greens keeper at the Capital City Club for fifty years. Many others in the group served as caddies, such as Bugga Bear. These men constructed their masculinity by providing for their families, such that they could relax and take it easy when they were back home in the enclave. They did not have to prove their prowess through bullying and fighting. LaTrelle Lockwood shared that they were also well-respected members of the community, and that they added to the lively atmosphere of Lynwood Park:

*[T]hese were men that read the newspaper every day. They did caddying, you know, over at the country club. Let me put it like this: they were up on current events. They weren't just drunks . . . they drank King Cotton wine . . . and some wine called Red Rose, and Mad Dog 20-20, Barton's Gin, and Glenmore Gin—you're talking about cheap*

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<sup>27</sup> Booker, 11 November 2005, 26-7. Miss Idell's husband was Wallace Jones, father of Columbus and Wallace "Fox" Jones, and Dennie Jones Wesley. Nathan McCall set his novel *Them* in the underclass black community known as the Old Fourth Ward in Atlanta, the neighborhood in which Martin Luther King, Jr. was raised, and where the King Center is located. McCall claims that those drunks who held down a steady job were respected and those who did not work were seen as a "lower class of drunk," Nathan McCall, *Them* (New York: Atria Books, 2007), 46.

gin. But they always told me, "If you fix it up, Trell, right, it's a good drink" . . . they used Bluebird orange juice, or grapefruit juice, and they'd mix the drink up with ice . . . The [group] had Cool Breeze, B.B. King—that's his nickname . . . a guy called La La. Oh, God. Oh, man—it was a few. It was quite a few. And they were characters . . .

As soon as they got drunk they would like to dance, and . . . [o]ne, once he got drunk, he would want to fight, and cut you. But when he wasn't drunk, he was mannered, didn't cuss, or do anything—he'd just change like Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. They were the color of the neighborhood. And they were well-respected still, even though they got drunk on the corner, and staggered home. People had to take them home: "Come on, get in the car, and let me take you home" . . . They didn't just leave them out. They would take them home: "You drink too much." "Aw, naw, naw, give me another drink." But they were real good characters. They were.<sup>28</sup>

John Wright, born in 1964, confirmed that Lynwood Park's residents were generally tolerant of eccentric behavior, and Wright recounted the day that J.T. and his drinking and singing buddy Jimmy hijacked the Sunday program at Little Zion Missionary Baptist Church:

*[J.T.] can sing—I mean can sing. But boy, he used to get so drunk . . . it was hot that day in church . . . and you can smell the liquor . . . so J.T. and Jimmy wanted to sing, but they were drunk—came in with their suits on, smelling like liquor, and sweating: "I wanna sing. I wanna sing. Let us sing our solo." And I mean, they were just singing away. And they had to have been singing for at least ten or fifteen minutes . . . the people just clapped, just trying to get them to stop . . . And so J.T. stopped singing, and Jimmy just kept on.*

*And all of a sudden [Jimmy] pulled up a chair to the altar and started praying. He prayed for a good fifteen or twenty minutes. So finally they just got him up and sort of just escorted them on to the back. And that was just one of the most hilarious moments in the church. They meant well, but after service, the deacons and the minister, they told them, "That's just wasn't appropriate, what you all did. It was an embarrassment, because we had other guests there in the church." But, you know, they were good people. I mean, the people that dranked and carried on—they were good people. It's just where they had their, you know, little, small habits.*<sup>29</sup>

Playing music and singing was widespread in Lynwood Park, and Dennie Jones Wesley, born in 1940, said that in the 1950s there were young boys who added to the street life of the community, as they walked the roads of Lynwood Park picking guitars:

<sup>28</sup> Lockwood, 22 May 2008, 15-6; Wesley, 19 October 2005, 1, 13.

<sup>29</sup> Wright, 20 November 2004, 114-7.

*[I]t was the Little Rockers. Albert White, Johnny T. Johnson . . . They used to walk up and down the street playing guitars. Just had the big wooden guitars, and they would just be picking, just walking up and down the street. Then they picked up the drummer . . . Melvin Jackson. . . . He was the first drummer. Albert White and Johnny T. Johnson, and I think Johnny T's brother, McDuffie, they was playing guitar. They were the first. They were called the Little Rockers, 'cause they were little, young. And they started playing just themselves. Then Columbus [Jones] . . . started singing with them . . . put Jackie Wilson to shame. He had a beautiful voice.<sup>30</sup>*

The group then became known as Columbus and the Rockers, and they performed at the holes-in-the wall on the corner. As word spread, they added other musicians, such as Pee Wee Jackson on saxophone, and women singers, such as Dennie Jones Wesley herself, Rachel Harris's sister Janice, "and one of the black sets of Hoods—Catherine—we called her Dotta—she would sing sometimes." The group picked up a manager named James Brown, "but not the James Brown that we know now," and he got them gigs on Fraternity Row at Georgia Tech and the University of Georgia during the Jim Crow era, and they even played at Ivan Allen's mayoral victory party:

*[O]n Friday night we were a sure thing at Georgia Tech . . . We'd be there almost every Friday night . . . Totally white. Everything was white in the frat house . . . And when the band would take a break we'd hear other bands playing in different frat houses on down Fraternity Row. And we'd go down and listen to them. And then when we got so popular . . . all the guys would leave the other frat houses and come up where we were. Nobody would listen to the other bands. They would listen to us.*

*I remember when we'd go to the University of Georgia . . . and we had three dates for one Saturday. We played . . . out on the lake . . . from like four to seven. Then we went back, changed clothes, and we was in the sorority house that night from like eight to twelve . . . And when Ivan Allen first became mayor of Atlanta, we had to be back at his house by 1:00 or 1:30 in the morning, to play for his victory—for becoming mayor of Atlanta.<sup>31</sup>*

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<sup>30</sup> Wesley, 19 October 2005, 46; Columbus Jones was born in 1937. Dennie Jones Wesley, telephone conversations with author, 6 June 2008, and 12 June 2008, Fieldnotes.

<sup>31</sup> Wesley, 19 October 2005, 46-9. There were two families in Lynwood Park with the last name Hood. One family was light-skinned, the other dark-skinned, so the residents generally referred to them as the black Hoods or the white Hoods. Rachel Harris, Janice Jackson, and Pee Wee Jackson are siblings. Janice is married to John Chatman's younger brother LeRoy, who is a deacon at the United Church of God in Christ, the church with the largest congregation in Lynwood Park.

This was during the time of segregation, and although whites appreciated and wanted black entertainment in their venues, Dennie Jones Wesley shared that they provided no comfort facilities for blacks:

*[A]t the University of Georgia . . . I had to go to the bathroom. But it was so clean, you couldn't go get behind a tree. You couldn't hide to squat down and pee . . . So I had to walk . . . across the street to get up to the dirt road . . . And as soon as I squatted down to pee, here come a car. And I stood up and pulled my clothes down, and it just kept right up, all down my knees, and my shoes. I had on a pair of Indian moccasins . . . When [I] walked across the stage with those shoes on, them Indian moccasins, they left wet footprints every step I made. Indian moccasins are made of soft leather. It had foam in it. And it goes squish, squish, squish, every time I made a step, and left a footprint.<sup>32</sup>*

Although the South was segregated, whites appreciated black musical talent, and Columbus and the Rockers became popular, in part, because they were endorsed by a well-known recording star, as Dennie Jones Wesley explained:

*Rufus Thomas, he lived and worked out of Tennessee. He was a singer, and a lot of people remember him as "Dog Man"—Walking the Dog? The dance, The Dog, come out . . . He's the one that made the record "Walking the Dog," and then the dance. And he would come to Atlanta. He was also popular with the college circuit. And then when he would come to Atlanta, they had to write in his contract that he would only book the gig if Columbus and the Rockers would play for him.<sup>33</sup>*

Columbus and the Rockers became so popular that Dennie Jones Wesley's older brother Wallace "Fox" Jones became the group's manager, made them a more professional organization, and had their name painted on the side of a touring trailer. Fox Jones booked out-of-town gigs for the group, such as playing at college campuses in Alabama, and even a party for the Highway Patrol in Columbus, Mississippi:

*Fox took it over . . . made it more of a business, 'cause he started doing everything by contract. . . . And that's when they started to making really good money . . . Melvin had gotten a little trailer. And Melvin was very good with artwork. And he painted that little trailer and put the band's name, and everybody's name on it, like a musical scene on it. It*

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<sup>32</sup> Wesley, 19 October 2005, 93. The group changed name several times. It was organized as Columbus and the Little Rockers, then Columbus Jones and the Rockers. When Columbus was overseas in the Army and his brother Fox, in addition to being the group's manager, became its lead singer, and the group was known as Fox Jones and the Rockers in this period. Wesley, 12 June 2008, Fieldnotes.

<sup>33</sup> Wesley, 19 October 2005, 49.

*was gorgeous, and it matched the van in front of it . . . [M]ost of their gigs came out of the white community, the schools. They were in Alabama all the time, playing for the universities and colleges—the white ones. . . .*

*We went to Mississippi to play for a reunion of the Highway Patrol. And Mississippi was so bad then, black people weren't seen out and about after dark . . . It was supposed to have been two nights, so we'd stay overnight . . . we were all kind of nervous about it . . . [and] just before we crossed the state line to go into Mississippi, Highway Patrol met us at the state line, and led us into Mississippi, to where the dance was going to be held . . . we had to have an escort, because black folks in Mississippi at night—no—it was unheard of, especially on the highway—no! . . . We were supposed to stay in a motel that night . . . “No way!” [Fox] said, “I’m not spending a night in Mississippi”. . . “I’m not sleeping in Mississippi, not the way that they hate black people. Noooo! It’s bad”. . . We drove . . . back home . . . maybe stayed a couple of hours, and had to drive right back. But that’s what we did, had to do. Good money . . . Not one weekend went by when the band didn’t have something to do.”<sup>34</sup>*

\* \* \*

The Jackson siblings—Leonard, Rachel, Janice, and Pee Wee—came from a strict Christian family, headed by one of the community’s founders, Johnny C. Jackson, who Rachel Harris recalled worked day and night. The elder Jackson and his wife Etheline began their married life as cooks at Camp Gordon army base. After the base relocated to Augusta, Jackson worked as a janitor at a chemical plant, and then as a custodian at Sexton Woods Elementary School, until he retired. Etheline went into domestic service for a number of white families after the Jacksons moved to Lynwood Park, where they bought land and built their house with the help of family and friends.<sup>35</sup>

Rachel Harris, born in 1948, enumerated the many jobs her father held, and shared that Johnny Jackson was also a preacher in Georgia Clement’s Holiness Church, and pastored his own church after Clement died:

*My dad worked. But a lot of his activities were with the church. When he wasn’t working he was basically at church . . . Miss Georgia had passed years, and my dad built a church in Eatonton, Georgia . . . And when they released him of that church, he built a church in*

<sup>34</sup> Wesley, 19 October 2005, 51-2.

<sup>35</sup> Rachel Harris, 27 July 2005, 14-16. Johnny and Etheline had five children. Son Leonard and daughter Vivian both died from cancer. Etheline died in 1996, and Johnny, the patriarch, is presently in a nursing home.

*Covington, Georgia . . . so that's where he preached until he retired . . . And he was a custodian in his regular job . . . and then he worked at night. He cleaned the General Electric building, and he cleaned some banks in Buckhead . . . He went in at night after he got off from his day job.*<sup>36</sup>

Remarkably, Johnny and Etheline found the time to organize a gospel group:

*[M]y daddy and my mother and those had a choir that they sang in. And they would travel around singing to different churches and different community activities that they were having. . . . They had a big choir and they would travel around and sing.*<sup>37</sup>

The Jackson household was filled with music and song. Pee Wee played saxophone with Columbus and the Rockers, and older brother Leonard played piano, and also organized a gospel group of the community's youth singers, as Rachel Harris recalled:

*[M]y brother [Leonard] played for the Pattersonaires . . . It was a . . . gospel singing group . . . My brother played the piano, and he would have his group to come over.*<sup>38</sup>

Leonard and Harris's sister Janice also sang with Columbus and the Rockers when she was a teenager. John Chatman, born in 1945, said that he was not allowed on the corner as a boy, but Columbus and the Rockers once played at the Lynwood Park School, which was near his home on Osborne Road, and so he was able to hear them:

- VMH: *[D]idn't your sister-in-law Janice, sing with Columbus and the Rockers?*  
 JC: *Yes, she started out singing with them. Janice could have gotten into that mode of singing—rock and roll was what she was singing. But she kind of stayed with her roots. She got away from the church for a while, but she came back.*  
 VMH: *And Pee Wee Jackson was a saxophone player with Columbus and the Rockers.*  
 JC: *Yeah, he was young too, and he played with them for a while. There was a time they played down here at the school and I was able to see them perform.*<sup>39</sup>

<sup>36</sup> Rachel Harris, 27 July 2005, 1-3, 35-7.

<sup>37</sup> Rachel Harris, 27 July 2005, 33-4.

<sup>38</sup> Rachel Harris, 27 July 2005, 82, 95.

<sup>39</sup> Chatman, 21 March 2008, 24. Chatman's younger brother LeRoy is married to Janice Jackson. Janice Jackson Chatman is the preeminent soloist at the United Church of God in Christ today, and possesses a voice reminiscent of Mahalia Jackson.



Wallace and Idell Jones also had a musical household. Apart from singing and touring with her brothers' group Columbus and the Rockers, Dennie Jones Wesley sang with Leonard Jackson's gospel group, the Fidelity Aires, which entertained a radio audience on Sunday mornings:

*[Leonard] used to play piano for a gospel group that we formed in the community, and we were on the radio station every Sunday morning—WERD down on Auburn Avenue . . . We'd sing gospel on the radio every Sunday morning.*<sup>40</sup>

The Jackson and Jones families added to the liveliness of Lynwood Park. With no air conditioning, and windows thrown open, there would have been voices raised in gospel music, practice sessions of rhythm 'n blues, with Leonard hammering away on the piano, and Pee Wee serenading on the saxophone, to be enjoyed by those residents of the community within hearing distance. Those residents who dared to go there could catch Atlanta's famous Columbus and the Rockers at the American Legion nightclub on the corner of the dangerous boundary, while others could hear the Fidelity Aires singing gospel music on the radio on Sunday mornings.<sup>41</sup>

Historian Tera Hunter found that black leisure activity was a way for blacks to have something of their own beyond the white gaze that offered relief from the physically demanding workweek. Leisure activity was not separated into "wholesome" and "hurtful" amusements, and in Lynwood Park those enjoying the "hurtful" amusements of the corner culture could be the same residents partaking of "wholesome" activities on Sundays, as Dennie Jones Wesley explained:

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<sup>40</sup> Wesley, 19 October 2005, 45-6. Wesley said that Leonard Jackson organized and played piano with several gospel groups. Wesley, 12 June 2008, Fieldnotes. Rachel Harris said that when groups came to Atlanta to perform at the City Auditorium they would hire her brother Leonard as a piano player. Harris said that he generally played for the Pattersonaires, a group organized by Edmond Patterson and his wife Mozelle. Harris confirmed that Raymond organized the Fidelity Aires, a gospel group made up of Lynwood Park youths. See Rachel Harris, 15 July 2008, Fieldnotes.

<sup>41</sup> Pee Wee Jackson presently manages two groups that he organized that are available for hire for social occasions: EJ and the Versatiles offers popular music, and The Lord's Musicians offer a repertoire of gospel music.

*[M]y brother, Columbus, he used to imitate the way this one lady dance on Saturday night when she shout on Sunday in church. He said she shout the same way in church on Sunday the same way she danced Saturday night up there on the corner.<sup>42</sup>*

Hunter pointed out that blacks also “found respite in a wide range of recreational activities in small, private circles in their homes and neighborhoods,” and that they “worked hard at having fun.” And since Lynwood Park was a dead-ended community, the residents could party in their way, without censor, beyond the white gaze.<sup>43</sup>

While the second-tier men drank under the trees in the afternoon, the community’s residents generally partied on the weekend, with some becoming so inebriated that they had to be helped home, such as Patricia Martin’s grandfather, Lewis, who was brought home by his friends in a wheelbarrow. Dennie Jones Wesley said that much of her father’s extended family lived in Lynwood Park, and that her father Wallace would get together with his two brothers and begin drinking on Friday night, and continue through the weekend, such that he would frequently miss church on Sunday morning:

*[W]e had to go to church and Sunday school every Sunday. And when my father wasn’t able to go he made us go . . . We had to go to church . . . even if he didn’t go. And at that time my father was drinking a little bit, and he just wasn’t able to go.<sup>44</sup>*

Wesley explained that the community’s residents partied hard, and that, as a child, she was tasked with seeing her Uncle Edgar and his wife Katie home:

*They partied hard, but very controlled. There wasn’t a lot of loud talking, no cussing, no fighting. Everybody knew everybody. And they’d get to a certain limit, and then everybody would just disappear and go home . . . Except my uncle, who lived down the street. He could never go home by himself, so we’d have to walk home with him . . . his name was Edgar. We called him Uncle Dank . . . I’d have to take him home . . . ’cause he was too drunk to walk down the street by himself . . . The streets was all muddy, ’cause they hadn’t put in paved streets yet. We had a dog, a big German shepherd named Shane . . . The dog would take my Aunt Katie’s dress in his mouth and hold onto her dress until they got home.<sup>45</sup>*

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<sup>42</sup> Wesley, 19 October 2005, 54.

<sup>43</sup> Tera W. Hunter, *To ‘Joy My Freedom: Southern Black Women’s Lives and Labors After the Civil War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 166-7.

<sup>44</sup> Wesley, 19 October 2005, 9.

Patricia Martin, born in 1932, said that parties in homes were common on the weekend, and also served another purpose: a way to raise revenue when the rent was due:

*The parents worked. And then everybody played on the weekends . . . They had a good time. They had parties . . . They danced, and sang. . . . [T]here used to be something called a house-rent party . . . If it was time for your rent, you had a house-rent party . . . Everybody paid you to come to your party, and you had food and drinks, and all that kind of thing—and cake.<sup>46</sup>*

The exigencies of economics, in part, determined aspects of the residents' social behavior, but Martin recalled that partying could also be based on spontaneous socializing:

*And then people would just have parties. You know, "We're gonna have a party tonight." "Okay." So you go in together, and you buy food, and fix it, and you have a party. It didn't have to be a holiday. You just had a party.<sup>47</sup>*

Partying also meant lighting the grill, cooking barbecue, and holding fish fries—all of which raised money, not only to pay the rent, but to finance community and church projects, as Gary McDaniel, born in 1951, remembered:

*Oh, yes. It was a whole lot of barbeques and fish fries . . . Peoples was having them, they had them at the church . . . they was fundraisers . . . we raised money from them.<sup>48</sup>*

Although fundraising from barbecues and fish fries was generally the norm, there were occasions when people cooked and fed residents in a display of largesse, and McDaniel explained that he was the community's cook when he became an adult:

*I'm the cooker . . . I enjoy cooking and barbequing and I still do that now. I'm still the neighborhood cook right now, as of today. I been cooking around here for people since 1975. That's when I really first got started, 'cause we always played softball here, so I been hosting barbeques, fish fries . . . [a]t the softball field, at my house, at the community center . . . we have charged for the food. Sometime we give it away.<sup>49</sup>*

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<sup>45</sup> Wesley, 19 October 2005, 14.

<sup>46</sup> Martin, 13 October 2004, 63-4.

<sup>47</sup> Martin, 13 October 2004, 65.

<sup>48</sup> McDaniel, 8 June 2005, 10.

<sup>49</sup> McDaniel, 8 June 2005, 10-11.

John Wright, born in 1964, recalled the Fourth of July barbecue of 1976 that he jokingly said nearly eliminated the people of Lynwood Park. Not everyone participated in the event, as some residents entertained at home. One resident, whom Wright would not name—because he still lives in the community—provided and cooked a pig, and generously fed it to everyone who wanted some at no charge. The festivities began, as was the custom, on the night of July the Third, on the community's softball field:

- JW: *[A]long with other barbeques, Lynwood Park was known—on the night before the Fourth of July, we'd have a big cookout and softball game . . . [f]or the community . . . everyone used to congregate, park on the field. You name it, it went on on that field: the liquor, the music, or whatever. I mean, people just did it on that field. We used to have our cookout—you would cook all night . . . And you could see the fireworks the night before the Fourth . . . [f]rom Perimeter Mall, or from the country club . . .*
- VMH: *So everybody would congregate on the field to watch the fireworks?*
- JW: *Exactly . . . and getting ready for the Fourth of July . . . [T]hey got this pig . . . They dug the pit, and they put the pig in the pit, and they were just cooking, people taking turns . . . And they started cooking that night, and cooked it for about eight hours. And that morning, they were through cooking the pig, just chopping him up, and everything.<sup>50</sup>*

On the Fourth of July residents usually gathered to play ball, eat, drink, visit, and party, and Wright said that 1976 was no exception:

*[T]hat July Fourth, it was very hot . . . probably somewhere between ninety-eight to a hundred and two degrees . . . out there on that field, it was no shade. So they was drinking their liquor . . . and giving people the ribs, the chopped pork . . . and playing softball . . . just celebrating what we used to do every year . . . [But] it takes at least one or two days to cook a whole pig, and he cooked a pig in eight hours . . . People would just drink and having a good time in the sunshine—drinking, getting drunk, just having fun. So, after a while, people just start getting sick. So one person, you know, throwing up sick—you think it was a hangover, whatever. “So-and-So’s real sick, and everything. Going to the hospital.” And you hear about another person. Then you hear about another family. You’re hearing about another person. Everyone was going down to Grady. And the head medical doctor declared an epidemic emergency, because everyone from Lynwood Park is going down to Grady sick from salmonella poisoning . . . And they say he’s the only man that almost abolished everyone in Lynwood Park from that pig. . . . He meant well, but you cannot cook a pig in eight hours . . . they’ll tease him about it, and he’ll get so mad . . .*

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<sup>50</sup> Wright, 20 November 2004, 107-8.

*They'll just say, "So-and-So, do you remember how you cooked that pig, and almost killed everybody in Lynwood Park?" He gets mad about it.*<sup>51</sup>

Pee Wee Jackson, born in 1950, shared that leisure activity on the weekend usually occurred outdoors, that every age group participated, for while adults partied, children were counseled by the elder generation:

*The way we relaxed when growing up . . . everybody on Friday would cook fish. And the ones that drank alcohol would have fish fries: drink beer, play cards, and dance. Dancing was a big part of the community . . . this happened on Friday nights in folks' yards, because the houses was so small you couldn't never dance in the house . . . it was a gathering where you had folk telling tales and stuff about life, about experiences, and people conveying life-long stories to help you out during that period of time . . . It was an exchange of information . . . and that was the way that my father would talk to us about the process of growing up to be a man and what was expected of you, as far as going to school and respecting other folk in the neighborhood, and basically respecting yourself.*<sup>52</sup>

Lawrence Levine wrote that black slaves taught their children the strategies they would have to adopt in order to negotiate and survive in the white world, and LaTrelle Lockwood born in 1955, suggested that this tradition continues down to the present. Lockwood explained that some of the wisdom that the elderly passed down to the younger generation was how to "play the game," one aspect of black/white relations, which Lockwood was taught by Lillie Stewart, Deacon Arthur Calloway's sister-in-law:

*[S]he would tell me how to play the game—my play great aunt Lillie. All of them knew how to play the game. And the game is that you pretend to be subservient, and you laugh about it when you get in the kitchen . . . You play "Yes, Sir, Boss." You play subservient. You play the game . . . we all did it.*<sup>53</sup>

When Patricia Martin said, "[W]e always joking and laughing, and finding something funny to laugh about," Lockwood claimed that one element of black fun was derived from their successful duping of whites. Lockwood recounted the event at which Lillie Stewart was taught how to play the game in the Jim Crow era, the practical wisdom

<sup>51</sup> Wright, 20 November 2004, 109-111.

<sup>52</sup> Pee Wee Jackson, 2 September 2006, 3-4.

<sup>53</sup> Lawrence Levine, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro-American Folk Thought from Slavery to Freedom*, 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 124; Lockwood, 22 May 2008, 21-2.

that she later passed on to him. At social events back in the day, each black server was assigned a specific number of guests to look after. As a young woman, Lillie Stewart was taught to play the game at her first party in Buckhead. Lillie was assigned a number of guests whom she was expected to wait upon, cater to, and look after:

*[A]unt Lillie—she also is an arrogant woman. She didn't take anything off of anybody, black or white . . . [A]unt Lillie was good about telling me about the nature of the white man: how he act, and how to act around him, and how to interact with them. . . . [S]he used to tell me that when she first worked as a server at a high-scale, uptown Buckhead party, at these parties . . . you got a guy called the house guy, the boss Negro, which is in charge of all the other servers . . . Well, he said, "Lillie, this is your first time. Let me tell you what to do. You got Dr. So-and-So, this guy here, this guy here, this guy here, this couple here. And no matter what happens, if they drop a crumb, or spill something, I want you to run over there and wipe it off them. Or get down—fall to your knees—and knock it off their shoes."*

*My Aunt Lillie said, "You done lost your mind, Negro. You think I'm gonna run over there with those white folks, and drop on my knees, and wipe them off, and act like I'm crazy?" She said, "No, I'm not doing it." He said, "Lillie, just do it one time, and you'll see what I'm talking about." So she said, "Okay, okay, okay, okay, okay." So, this one couple, the lady, she's drinking, and she waste something on her, and . . . [Aunt Lillie] run over there and dusted the lady off, got all down on her knees: "Oh, you're gonna mess up this pretty dress—don't, don't, don't. Let me get that up. Don't mess up your pretty—let me give you a napkin, ma'am. You look so pretty tonight."*

*And the white lady said, "Oh, you're so nice. Baby, give her a little something." So the white man went in his pocket and pulled out a five, which was a lot of money back then. [Aunt Lillie] said, "Shit!" And run back over there [to the boss Negro] and said, "Okay, I got it. I understand now. I understand." So at the end of the day, the drunker they got, the guys would go in their pocket and didn't care what they pulled out. They was just pulling out money and giving it to them. So by the end of the night she'd made probably a hundred dollars, or more—more than what she made in a month—just at a party.*

*So that's how to play the game. You walk up . . . "How you doing today?" You always lift them up. Tell them how good they look. "I wish I had a jacket like that. That jacket so pretty," even though she got one at the house just like it. "Oh, you look so pretty in that jacket," "Oh, you look so good." "Oh, Honey, who did your hair?" Just butter them up real good. That's what you do. And they always said, "Take anything that the white man give you, 'cause sooner or later he'll give you something that you like." That's the norm. That's what all black people will tell you . . . and that is a true statement if I ever heard one: "Take it."<sup>54</sup>*

<sup>54</sup> Lockwood, 22 May 2008, 22, 29, 23.

LaTrelle Lockwood also explained that many blacks worked in kitchens during segregation, and that this was actually a position of blacks having power over whites, which whites were too arrogant to contemplate. Consequently, blacks had fun when whites thought they were exerting their power over blacks, not realizing that blacks always had the upper hand in that setting. And Lockwood said that that was why blacks were always laughing in the kitchen back in the day:

*[I]n general, WASPs think they're better than you anyway, so you stroke them. It's good for them to think that you're less than them, not knowing that you're better than them, 'cause you have an advantage . . . You always hear [blacks] in restaurants in the segregated days . . . laughing and carrying on. They're laughing at the white folks . . . We joke . . . and stuff, in the kitchen, because [blacks] know their place in reality. They're just playing the game . . .*

*[O]ne of my good friend's mother used to . . . work in a segregated restaurant back in the day. You had [an] uppity white woman come in and . . . told her one time, "This tea ain't right. Take it back! Girl, you take that back, and I want it back right." Well, the lady said, "Yes, ma'am," went in the kitchen—politely spit in the glass, stirred it up, and brought her back the same glass. The lady tasted it, and said, "Now that's better," and the whole kitchen roared. As a matter of fact [the waitress] was so hysterical, they had to take her out of here. I mean, the whole place just roared, because of things like that . . .*

*I mean, they're cooking your food, and you're gonna talk to them like that? They cooked everything . . . There were no Mexicans then. They did everything. And so that's how they would get you . . . They would always sit back and talk about how crazy the white people were. And they would just sit back and laugh. And white people always thought that black people was always happy, but they was laughing at them all the time. And that's the way it went.<sup>55</sup>*

Lockwood shared that the politics of segregation were so illogical that it engendered in blacks a lower opinion of whites. And although blacks accommodated themselves to the white-designed rules governing black/white behavior, the silliness of many white rules of etiquette were a constant source of amusement for blacks:

*[M]y great aunt, and my grandmamma . . . [and] my Great Aunt Klee would always get together sometime and laugh about how . . . white people were just thinking that [blacks] were ignorant. And they would love this: "You know what, Trell? This white lady would come and pick me up, and I'd sit in the back seat of the car. Well, I get to the house, I go through the back door into the house. But once I'm there, I go through the front door . . .*

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<sup>55</sup> Lockwood, 22 May 2008, 25-9.

*get the mail out of the mailbox, come back through the front door, get in her car and drive the children wherever they want to go, go to the grocery store, and do whatever . . . do everything. But when I get ready to leave, I got to go back through the back door, get in the back seat, and ride home like that.” And they’d start to laughing, and say, “Do you see the thing?” And actually they fell out laughing. They said, “Ain’t that crazy?” I said, “Yeah.” But they always laughed about things like that.<sup>56</sup>*

In effect, Lockwood was describing the modern adaptation of the black trickster character of the slavery period: the role playing to meet white expectations, getting back at whites, laughing at white foibles, and deriving pleasure from the black person’s ability to dupe whites. Lawrence Levine wrote: “tricksters continually made the whites look foolish and always seemed one step ahead of them.” In other words, the trickster does not confront, but gets what he wants by outthinking and tricking whites. The trickster was always using his wits. It was the way in which he survived, and created independence, agency, and autonomy for himself. It was the way in which he could win small battles, knowing that he would always be seen as inferior to whites, and knowing that he could not win the war for equality. And Levine also pointed out black humor exposed the absurdity of the American racial system and served to release “pent-up black aggression toward it.”<sup>57</sup>

Patricia Martin, born in 1932, agreed that good treatment from whites back in the day depended, in large part, upon politeness and good service from blacks:

*[W]e weren’t allowed to have issues with whites. They were free to have issues with us, because we had to work for them. So we had to like them. And if you worked for a white person, you liked that white person, or else you wouldn’t work for them . . . And you liked them so well that you would give them your best. And they in turn would reward you for it. And you knew that, so you gave them your best.<sup>58</sup>*

Mamie Lee Mathis, born in 1920, said that whites were mean to blacks, and Patricia Martin offered that whites did not raise their children to be respectful of blacks.

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<sup>56</sup> Lockwood, 22 May 2008, 24.

<sup>57</sup> Levine, 125-9, xviii, 335.

<sup>58</sup> Martin, 27 October 2004, 14.



However, Martin explained that a different dynamic was at play when a white person liked the black help:

*[A]bout segregation, and all like that, and it sounds harsh, but here, if white people liked you, they liked you. They didn't like a crowd of you, but if they liked you as an individual, it was nothing that they wouldn't do for you . . . It was that kind of way in the South.<sup>59</sup>*

LaTrelle Lockwood agreed that whites would look after and take care of the black help that worked for the family for a long time and “raised up” their children. Lockwood worked for Patricia Martin’s husband Robert, and their son Victor, who had a private sanitation company in the 1980s that picked up trash from upscale Buckhead homes. Lockwood got to know an older black maid named Jackie very well. Jackie had served her white family since the Jim Crow era, and her white family continued to employ her, and even pampered her, long after she was needed to offer critical services to the family:

*[W]hen we go up to some of these houses with long driveways, they have a private sanitation service, because the maid was not gonna push that dumpster all the way up to the street . . . [O]ne of them named Jackie. I said, “Jackie, every time I come out you sitting there ironing and looking at the TV.” She say, “Honey, I done raised all these children. They’re grown and entirely gone. Now all I do is iron clothes. I got a maid come in and do the rest.” I said, “What?” She said, “Yes.” She said, “These white folks . . . bought me a brand-new Escort for Christmas.” They’d just give her stuff, give her stuff, give her stuff. “Take me to Florida whenever I want to go. As a matter of fact, Trell, when they moved, I made sure they had an elevator in the house, ’cause I told them I’m tired of walking up and down these steps.” And I know plenty of examples like that. Yeah, plenty examples. As a matter of fact, when my mother first got here she used to work as a maid, and those people still call her. Dr. Quarterman, his people . . . other people—Miss Fancher, and all these people, they still call.<sup>60</sup>*

The dynamics between Jackie and her white family suggests that blacks could play the game so well that they could gain the empowerment and agency to eventually make demands of their employers. Playing the game gave whites continual reinforcement of their goodness and superiority, which in part engendered self-confidence in whites. But playing the game also meant that black stroking created a white need for the nourishing

<sup>59</sup> Martin, 13 October 2004, 51.

<sup>60</sup> Lockwood, 22 May 2008, 23-4.

emotional food that blacks offered their employers, such that older black help could receive largesse and benevolence from whites long after their labor was required in the household. Jackie was only playing the game for material goods, while her white employer catered to her perhaps because of an emotional and psychological dependency.

It is curious that Mamie Lee Mathis, who was born in 1920, could remember in 2008 the names of people she engaged with throughout her life—blacks in the community, and whites from whom her mother rented housing when she was a young girl, *and* that she would follow every name she uttered with its spelling. Mathis worked only as a domestic for numerous white families throughout her life, beginning with the resident doctors at Lawson General Hospital when she was a teenager. Yet Mathis could not recall the name of a single white employer, which perhaps suggests that, to her, her domestic work in white homes was an economic exchange—merely work for pay, and nothing more, and she suppressed as insignificant the names of the whites for whom she worked.

Patricia Martin, born in 1932, spoke of a word-of-mouth reference network among black domestic workers during the Jim Crow era, across which information about employers was shared. Martin said that those blacks with good bosses never gossiped about them, but that word of bad employers spread along the grapevine, although blacks did not denigrate whites as a group with negative stereotypes:

*[W]hen white people were dirty, we said they were just low-down white folk. [Whites] weren't labeled "That's the way white people are," [but] "That's just a low-down man." "That's just a mean lady". . . If you didn't like them, you weren't going to put up with that, and you'd find you somebody else, because you're going to tell everybody "I don't like Miss So-and-So because Mrs. So-and-So said this, or Mrs. So-and-So said that." "You know anybody that wants somebody to work?" "Yes, So-and-So, and So-and-So." "Okay, all right" . . . You didn't gossip about your white lady, or your white man, now. You didn't do that, unless they were bad. If they were bad, you told everybody, so they wouldn't work for them either (laughs).<sup>61</sup>*

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<sup>61</sup> Martin, 13 October 2004, 52; Martin, 27 October 2004, 14.

Steve Daniel, Mamie Lee Mathis's grandson, said that his mother Betty Jackson, his maternal grandmother, and their neighbors—both men and women—all worked in domestic service. Daniel confirmed that the group shared information about white employers across an informal network, because the couples socialized together:

- SD: *[T]hey did domestic work . . . They would network. They didn't know they was networking, but they were networking.*  
 VMH: *They would compare notes?*  
 SD: *It was generations of this.*<sup>62</sup>

White employers also unburdened themselves of their problems upon their black help, and blacks became the keepers of white secrets, which made blacks a critically needed fixture in white households. Patricia Martin described the counseling and comfort black help gave their white employers:

- PM: *[W]e became the confidantes, somebody that they could talk to . . . because they knew we couldn't tell. Who are we going to tell it to? . . . I remember my mother being so concerned about one of the ladies she worked for that she said, "That's a good lady. But her husband . . . [h]e drinks, and he just treats her so mean, I feel so sorry for her. But I told her "The Lord will make a way somehow." And she'd just be crying, because he'd said some ugly things to her. I don't know whether he's beating her, but I think he's beating her, but she won't say so. But I told her that don't let him beat her, because that's dangerous. He could really hurt her."*  
 VMH: *So your mother was comforting her.*  
 PM: *Yes. And we do that. That's a natural thing with us, if we like you . . . If we don't like you, we ain't got nothing to say.*<sup>63</sup>

Mamie Lee Mathis, born in 1920, had said that whites had given blacks a "hard way" and described many ways in which whites were mean to blacks, and so she is possibly one who was a black maid that had "nothing to say." Yet other blacks could negotiate a space in black/white relations that allowed them to profit from playing the game.

<sup>62</sup> Daniel, 6 May 2007, 34. Betty Jackson's father was Cleveland Jackson, whose father was Ceab Jackson. Ceab Jackson was also the father of Raymond Jackson, and Ceab's brother John was the father of Anne Jackson Ouisley. Daniel's mother Betty Jackson was married to Bookie Ouisley, the nephew of Robert Ouisley, Herman Ouisley's older son, who was married to Anne Jackson Ouisley.

<sup>63</sup> Martin, 27 October 2004, 14-16.

Patricia Martin's description of the intimate side of black/white relationships suggested that blacks also supplied critical emotional and psychological services to their employers. This dynamic helped to fashion a Southern white psyche that depended, in part, on black flattery and comforting. Ironically, playing the game for blacks gave whites such as sense of superiority over blacks that they could denigrate them openly and limit their access to the fruits of being American.

Paul Hudson, the white historian who lived on Wimberly Road from 1955 to 1966, said that his aunt Dixie Lassiter lived across the street from the Hudsons and employed a black maid Lillie Mae, who lived in Lynwood Park. Hudson recounted one aspect of his Aunt Dixie's interaction with Lillie Mae, which suggests that whites depended on their black employees for much more than labor:

*[M]y aunt Dixie was an old white woman, and she sort of represented the Old South . . . like Confederate Memorial Day was a big thing to her. But I remember one time she was talking to Lillie Mae—and yeah, there was complete comfort there. But she said, "Lillie Mae, sometimes I get down, and you put your big Nigger arms around me and I feel better."*<sup>64</sup>

This intimate relationship created a bond between blacks and whites that many blacks found inessential, since they often switched employers and careers without a backward glance, and satisfied their emotional and psychological needs in their communities, such as Lynwood Park. While blacks could separate easily from white employers, some whites seemed unwilling, or found it more difficult, to fully separate from their black help. For example, Mamie Lee Mathis could not recall the names of her white employers, Lockwood's mother moved on to new employers, and Martin's mother switched careers from domestic worker to nursing. Yet some white employers demonstrated a need to keep their aging long-time black help close-by—perhaps mainly

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<sup>64</sup> Hudson, 21 May 2004, 14.

for white emotional and psychological consumption, since they had long outlived their labor usage. In other words, whites needed the fruits of their relationships with blacks on a long-term basis—emotional and psychological nurturing—more than blacks needed what whites offered to them—material objects and salaries—which blacks could readily find from a variety of white employers across the black labor network.<sup>65</sup>

Traditional Negro jobs during the Jim Crow era meant that blacks worked at the hardest and dirtiest jobs for the lowest pay, yet the people of Lynwood Park always made a space in their lives for fun. Patricia Martin shared that one female activity that represented socializing and fun for Lynwood Park's women was Blue Monday laundry day when the men were at work. In this idyllic scene, the women washed the clothes, hung them out on the line, and ate, visited, and played cards under the trees, while the children played around them:

- PM: *I remember—even in my young married days . . . [w]omen had Blue Monday, 'cause that's when you washed . . . But that's when the women played, on Blue Monday. So it wasn't uncommon to sit out in the yard and play cards all day long.*
- VMH: *Was Blue Monday every Monday?*
- PM: *Yeah [laughs] . . . That was the washday.*
- VMH: *But that's when the women got together.*
- PM: *Yeah. Fix lunch, eat, and just have a good time playing cards all day long. We played Pittypat. We played Pokina . . . a gambling game we played with pennies . . . And the children played, and you sitting out in your yard with a card table, and you playing, and the children playing. And you get up to see about the baby, and then you go back to play. "Hold my hand." "Okay." . . . [T]he laundry got done, but you did that early in the morning anyway. The laundry was on the line . . . we hung clothes out on the line,*

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<sup>65</sup>For more on this interesting unequal dynamic between white employers and underclass household workers, see Ann Laura Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002). Stoler conducted an oral history project of former Dutch colonial masters and their Indonesian servants and found that while the whites' memories of their servants were imbued with warm emotional and psychologically nurturing language and descriptions, the Indonesian servants spoke of their masters and jobs as just that: work that they performed for pay, and that their emotional and psychological nourishment derived from their ethnic families and communities. See also Ann Laura Stoler, with Karen Strassler, "Memory Work in Java: A Cautionary Tale," in Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson, *The Oral History Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 283-309.

*see. We didn't have dryers . . . and by lunchtime, hey, everybody's ready to eat and play, and have a good time.*<sup>66</sup>

Martin was born in 1932 and gave birth to her first child Victor in 1952. So when Martin spoke of the women's social atmosphere of Blue Mondays, she was speaking of an era when washing machines were available for the middle-class, and Lynwood Park as a community had running water.<sup>67</sup> Many women of Lynwood Park's founding generation were laundresses, including Martin's grandmother Georgia Clement, who made her own soap and boiled laundry in a wash pot over a wood fire in the yard. Among Lynwood Park's workingwomen of the founding generation, there were a great many laundresses. These women were some of the most independent and autonomous in the community, since they worked from home, and were exempted from employer supervision and the white gaze. In addition, laundresses were able to incorporate others into their work routine—children, neighbors, and extended kinfolk—and perform other household chores along with their work, such as doing their own laundry and household chores.

Many of Lynwood Park's laundresses were the matriarchs of their quadrants, women who supervised—and disciplined—all the children: theirs, as well as those of their neighbors, who worked outside the community during the day. For example, John Chatman, born in 1945, mentioned that he was raised by Annie Truitt during the day when his mother was out working as a domestic. Chatman, his siblings, and the other children in his quadrant, ran to Annie Truitt if they needed anything when their parents were away. For these laundresses and the children in their households, laundering was an arduous and backbreaking career, which left them no time for leisure under the trees. The Blue Mondays of Martin's generation was

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<sup>66</sup> Martin, 13 October 2004, 65-6.

<sup>67</sup> Martin, 13 October 2004, 1; Martin 27 October 2004, 24.

made possible by a modern, middle-class appliance—the washing machine—and a county service, namely running water.

Before the advent of washing machines and running water children were conscripted into the laundering industry as essential workers, in addition to performing other housekeeping chores. Rachel Harris's Granny Jackson was also a laundress, and Harris explained the time-consuming and complicated task of laundering in an essentially pre-modern Lynwood Park:

*[Granny] was a washer lady . . . my dad had a big back porch, and granny would wash out there . . . And how she kept those clothes separated, it was a God-given gift. But she would have all those clothes, and she knew what was what. . . . And she would wash them, iron them, fold them, and bundle them up . . . she tied them up in sheets . . . and then you would see her going up and down the street with bundles all over her, delivering them.*

*[W]e didn't have a well . . . [and] we boiled our clothes . . . My daddy had a stick that we would chunk them with. It was called a chunking stick . . . sheets, towels, everything, was boiled in the wash pot. But you had to know the amount of time that you left them in there because you left the white clothes in longer than you did the colored clothes . . . we scrubbed [the clothes] on the scrub board, and then we would put them in the wash pot. And what my brother and I would do—because we washed . . . we did the colored clothes first . . . then we would fill the wash pot up again with clear water for the white clothes, 'cause you had to put lye soap and Clorox in the pot . . . Miss Ida Mae Cox, our neighbor, made [soap], and daddy would buy big chunks from her . . . we would always have to go and cut a big chunk off of the soap . . .*

*[W]e starched the clothes . . . and hang it out on the line, and they would dry hard. Then we would take them off of the line, and they had a cork with holes in it that we would put in a Coke bottle with water. And we would sprinkle [the clothes], and we would roll them up, put them in a dishpan . . . And they would stay in there about an hour. And then we would take them out, and we would iron them. And when we would iron them, Honey, they would be slick as glass . . . I remember my granny, when she ironed: she ironed with an iron that you heated up on the wood stove . . . and she had a white rag that she would sit on a table. And she would take this iron off of the stove and run it across that rag and iron with it . . . Now, years ago they had what they called the coal bucket, and they did heat [the iron] in the coals.<sup>68</sup>*

In Harris's account, boys also performed traditional household tasks, and nothing was wasted:

*When we finished washing we would take the remaining water out of the wash pot and we scrubbed the floor . . . We wasted nothing . . . [we] used that to scrub the floors, and to*

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<sup>68</sup> Rachel Harris, 27 July 2005, 39, 41-6.

*wipe down the furniture, and everything . . . [with] the lye soap, whatever was left in the wash pot.*<sup>69</sup>

In Harris's account, laundering was a household industry, with children doing the washing and starching, Granny Jackson doing the collecting, ironing, bundling, and delivering, and Johnny Jackson, the patriarch, providing the porch, the chunking stick, and the purchasing of the soap from Miss Ida Mae Cox. And there was also the fetching of the water and firewood, and the constant stoking and monitoring of the fire. And while laundresses were among the most independent women of the Jim Crow era, laundering often did not pay well enough to support a household. Granny Jackson also doctored the community and received necessary goods in payment, and Harris shared that Granny Jackson also farmed corn:

*[S]he had a cornfield where she raised corn . . . And people from all over would come and buy bushels of corn . . . she raised the corn herself. And Mr. Theodore Allen . . . [h]e lived on House Road. He was the man that went to all the different houses and plowed up their gardens. And he would come with his horse and his plow and plow up her garden . . . Now she had other stuff too, but her main thing was corn.*<sup>70</sup>

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Although the residents worked hard, Patricia Martin said that Lynwood Park's residents enjoyed sports, and especially baseball:

*We've always been a sports community . . . we started with baseball. We've always had a baseball team . . . And everybody went to the baseball game. That was one of the outings . . . everybody would go.*<sup>71</sup>

Baseball historian Jules Tygiel wrote that "black baseball constituted a vital element of African-American culture" during the Jim Crow era.<sup>72</sup> Black communities organized

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<sup>69</sup> Rachel Harris, 27 July 2005, 76-7.

<sup>70</sup> Rachel Harris, 27 July 2005, 40-1.

<sup>71</sup> Martin, 13 October 2004, 68-9.

<sup>72</sup> Jules Tygiel, *Past Time: Baseball as History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 116-143.



teams and played against each other in informal competitions, and Lynwood Park and its surrounding black enclaves were no exception.

Lynwood Park's founding generation cleared some woods between House and what later became Wimberly Roads and laid out a ball field where the community's men played baseball, as Mamie Lee Mathis, born in 1920, recalled:

*Wimberly Road wasn't here. Look, all this was just woods . . . And then finally the boys made a ball field over here . . . they cleaned off up there from Osborne Road, and made a ball field. And the boys used to play baseball up there.*<sup>73</sup>

In other words, the ball field was across House Road from the Lynwood Park boundary, and was therefore also frequented by dangerous characters. Gertrude Booker, born in 1918, was a regular on the corner, because she loved to dance:

VMH: *[D]id you go up to the juke joint on the corner?*  
 GB: *Yeah, and danced myself to death . . . I loved dancing . . . mostly boogie woogie, Charleston, Lindy Hop . . . I did all of 'em.*<sup>74</sup>

As part of the corner culture Booker also went to baseball games across House Road and recalled that it too was dangerous because men from other black communities would come to play, try to date Lynwood Park's women, and the territorial men of Lynwood Park would run them off, sometimes with violence:

*[W]hen they had that ball field over there on where Wimberly Road is now . . . I was over there one Saturday and they got to fighting. And Kevin Johnson was shooting at somebody, and I couldn't get away from over there. And I just run up under a car, see . . . [r]ight up under a truck. I stayed until the shooting was over. [Kevin] was shooting at some man, 'cause . . . the boys would come in and want to see the girls and they gonna run 'em away—stuff like that.*<sup>75</sup>

Tygiel wrote that “The cafes [and] beer joints . . . of the Negro neighborhoods all benefited as black baseball monies sometimes trickled, sometimes rippled through the black community.” In Lynwood Park, Christine Allen took advantage of a natural

<sup>73</sup> Mathis, 1 April 2008, 16-7.

<sup>74</sup> Booker, 17 August 2005, 86-7.

<sup>75</sup> Booker, 17 August 2005, 73-4.

topographical setting on her family's property—which the Allens called the Ponderosa—to establish a baseball stadium—her field of dreams, in effect. Lynwood Park consisted of hills and flats, and the western end of the community fell steeply where it joined the Allen Estate, which is in Fulton County. In Lynwood Park, Antioch Drive enters the enclave from Windsor Parkway to the south, runs north, and then turns left to dead end into Georgia Avenue in the far west of the enclave. One block before this left turn, Madison Avenue begins at Antioch Drive, runs west, and becomes Georgia Avenue, which bears right, intersects with the dead-end of Antioch Drive, then continues north. The configuration of Madison, Georgia, and Antioch forms a horseshoe shape.<sup>76</sup> The land west of Georgia Avenue between Madison and Antioch descended to a flat area, which became the ball field. Christine Allen had bleachers cut into the hillside along the field's northern end. Once over the hill behind the bleachers, the land flattened out, west of Georgia Avenue, between Theodore and Antioch Drives. Herman Ouisley dug Herman Lake there and built his shack on stilts over the water. The lake could be accessed by walking down Theodore Drive, a footpath through the woods, or by descending the hill behind the bleachers of the ball field. Peter Scott described the layout of Christine Allen's ball field:

*[W]e had an area down there . . . the way the topography of the land runs . . . there was an area in there called the Horseshoe Bend. And that was what amounted to be a perfect configuration of a stadium . . . and you could actually have a field down there.*<sup>77</sup>

Christine Allen was LaTrelle Lockwood's aunt on his mother's side, and Lockwood shared that what became the ball field had been cleared earlier for corn cultivation. Lockwood explained that Christine also had a "shack" at the top of Georgia Avenue where she served soul food, and the requisite moonshine:

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<sup>76</sup> See Maps 2 and 3, pp. 37, 55.

<sup>77</sup> Scott, 4 May 2005, 12. Many of Lynwood Park's hills have been regraded and flattened to make constructing McMansions more profitable. Both Horseshoe Bend and Herman Lake were on Allen property, which is in Fulton County.

- LL: *It was a natural ball field . . . it used to be a field that they planted corn on. They ploughed it down . . . They farmed it at one time. And they flattened it out, made some bleachers into the side of this hill . . .*
- VMH: *Now Christine Allen owned the ball field?*
- LL: *Yes. And she had a little stand that sit right on the edge of the ball field, at the top . . . It was just to go in, and you'd buy stuff to go watch the game. It was like a concession stand . . .*
- VMH: *And what did she sell?*
- LL: *Oh, God, typical black food—Southern food: pickles, pickled pigs feet . . . potato chips, cookies, Coca-Colas, when they were in those little, small bottles. It was stuff like that . . . And I'm sure somebody sold a shot under the table.<sup>78</sup>*

Minnie Lee Weddie Thompson recalled that Christine's shack also had a jukebox:

*We'd go down there and play Elvis Presley, because back in them days . . . Elvis Presley was hitting the charts then . . . "All Shook Up," I remember we used to play that to death. . . . [and] like Sunday on that ballfield, it'll be 10,000 people out there. People come all out of Doraville and stuff.<sup>79</sup>*

The land along the southern side of the Horseshoe Bend dropped down to a creek, and Christine Allen and Herman Ouisley built and rented houses along Madison Avenue.

Herman Ouisley also owned more houses on Cates Avenue that he rented, and LaTrelle

Lockwood described the Horseshoe Bend/Herman Lake layout:

*Herman Ouisley had a lake, which is over the hill, then down the hill . . . And he had a shack that was on stilts . . . [built] on the edge of the water. And he sold fishing tackle, bait, cookies, and drinks also . . . but then once you turned into Horseshoe Bend, in that ravine, there were houses that sit on stilts. The back side of the house sit on stilts. The front side was level with the street, but . . . there was no back yard. You had a porch, and you had to walk down thirty steps to get down, and there was a creek down there, because it was a ravine. [Herman] owned a few [houses], going on around, up the hill, on like the Madison Avenue part. . . . They called them shotgun houses.<sup>80</sup>*

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<sup>78</sup> Lockwood, 22 May 2008, 18. Corn cultivation was important to the production of moonshine, and stills for making the liquor were located in the woods around Herman Lake and on the creek bank—at the bottom of the ravine—below Madison Avenue. The streets Madison, Georgia, and Theodore, are named after Allen family members. According to Allen family history, their patriarch Bose Allen (1855-1927) was born a slave and purchased a forty-acre parcel of land in Fulton County. His son Woodson married Georgia Jones in 1901, and they had three sons: Theodore, Madison, and Arthur, and two daughters, Christine, and Hortense, Christine Allen Sanford Jackson, *History of the Allen Clan*, 14 January 1979, Lynwood Park Collection, Weltner Library, Oglethorpe University, Atlanta, Georgia.

<sup>79</sup> Thompson, 29 July 2005, 154; Thompson, 11 August 2005, 25. "All Shook Up" debuted in 1959.

<sup>80</sup> Lockwood, 22 May 2008, 17-9. Jones learned of this from Mary Ann Sanford, Christine Allen's daughter.

Patricia Jones, born in 1949, was raised in Lynwood Park. Jones maintained that as the white communities began surrounding Lynwood Park, the construction workers were black. And since they needed housing, it was they who built the houses in Lynwood Park that Herman Ouisley and Christine Allen then rented:

- PJ: *[B]ack in the Forties . . . there wasn't nobody building houses but black mens. So when they came through there they had no place to stay . . . They was building the white folks' houses . . . So they went to [Mary's] grandfather [Woodson Allen] and told [him] if he would build some little houses that they would do the labor free just so they could have a place to stay when they came through there . . . [so] in Horseshoe Bend . . . it wasn't nothing but little . . . [s]hotgun houses, all around there, even on the other side. It wasn't nothing but shotgun houses.*
- VMH: *And down by Herman Lake?*
- PJ: *Right, shotgun houses . . . and they paid the rent . . . I remember we stayed in one of those little shotgun houses of Miss Christine's.<sup>81</sup>*

The community's residents recalled that Christine Allen owned and operated everything around Horseshoe Bend, and Pee Wee Jackson commented on her entrepreneurship:

*[Christine] built her own stadium . . . and she had a little convenience place where she sold candy and stuff on top. And on the bottom she sold bootleg whiskey . . . she was an entrepreneur and she was rich . . . she used the candy store as a front. That was on the top part. But, see, it had two levels. On the bottom level, that's where she sold the whiskey out the back door.<sup>82</sup>*

Maudina Peaches Horton was related to the Allens, since Reverend Arthur Allen, Christine's brother, was the father of Peaches's younger sister Gina. Since the Allens rented the land for Herman Lake to Herman Ouisley, and since Herman produced and distributed moonshine, and Christine sold it in her shack, Peaches speculated that some of the Allens and Herman Ouisley were partners in illegal activity:

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<sup>81</sup> Patricia Jones, interview with author, 26 June 2008, transcript, 23-5. Minnie Lee Weddie Thompson said that Ethel Jeeters built a rooming house on Mae Avenue and housed men from Perkins, Georgia who came to Brookhaven to lay the pipelines for the new housing development surrounding Lynwood Park. Jeeters's accommodation was one large room with eight beds, all the men stayed and married Lynwood Park women, one of whom was Elizabeth Holland, Bob Niles's widow, who married Egypt Davis. Thompson, 29 July 2005, 70-1.

<sup>82</sup> Pee Wee Jackson, 17 September 2006, 41-3.

*Arthur Allen, my baby sister's father . . . leased [the land] to Mr. Herman . . . they had a relationship, and I know Reverend Arthur Allen probably had a hand in that moonshine too, 'cause he owned a lot too. But the Allens had so much money. They owned so much land. Miss Christine owned that juke joint . . . And she made a lot of money in her day . . . That's why I'm thinking they were all in it together.<sup>83</sup>*

Baseball offered a venue in which blacks—considered nobodies by the white outside—could build community pride, and matches offered opportunities for sociability as a group. The Lynwood Park Tigers played against baseball teams from other black communities in a very loose amateur circuit, and the community bustled with activity on the weekends as residents and visitors watched the games at Horseshoe Bend, and then repaired to Herman Lake for food, drink, music, and dancing. Lynwood Park baseball was mainly an opportunity for fun and play, and a way to unwind on the weekends during the Jim Crow era, which limited black opportunity, presented danger when blacks wandered abroad—especially at night—and effectively kept blacks confined to their enclaves.

Patricia Jones recounted that it was Georgia Allen, widow of Woodson Allen and mother of Christine Allen, who decided that the young people of the community needed a sports outlet, and it was Christine's idea to build the ball field:

*That's where the baseball happened, and it was just so exciting. I can remember everybody wanted to go to Horseshoe Bend. Miss Christine had a little juke joint down there . . . [a]nd they called it the Recreation Center . . . Mary [Sanford] said that . . . her grandmother [Georgia Allen] decided that the young adults . . . had no place to play ball . . . [then] her mother [Christine Allen] decided that they could build a ball field, and then make a little extra money along the way. So they had the ball field and they had a little juke joint where they sold the refreshment. They had a piccolo [jukebox] in there.<sup>84</sup>*

The people of Lynwood Park were inventive and entrepreneurial, and Horace Ouisley remarked of the community in the time of segregation: “We had everything that we needed

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<sup>83</sup> Horton, 17 September 2005, 30-2. Reverend Arthur Allen was married to Nannie Allen, who was LaTrelle Lockwood's maternal great aunt, the sister of his maternal grandmother. Lockwood, 9 August 2005, 2. Rev. Arthur and Nannie's son, Arthur, Jr., pastored a church and went to prison for advocating whipping children in his church.

<sup>84</sup> Jones, 26 June 2008, 27.

to survive really. We had a good time in Lynwood Park—football, baseball—gambling, or whatever.”<sup>85</sup>

Maudina Peaches Horton shared that her father Andrew, a construction worker, was a pitcher on the Lynwood Park Tigers, and that his priorities in life were baseball, moonshine, and women:

*[M]y father was a star pitcher. He was good. My mom and everybody—you know what they would do? They would tell him—they called him Peg Leg . . . “Peg, if you pitch that ball, if you win this game, we got you a gallon of liquor over here”. . . he drank that liquor. That was one of his downfalls. He loved that liquor. Booze and women, Honey.*<sup>86</sup>

Baseball gave some of Lynwood Park’s men another venue in which to construct masculinity, become a star, someone who would be admired by their peers. Martin Luther King, Jr. wrote that the symbols and attitudes of *de jure* segregation humiliated blacks and engendered in them a degenerating sense of “nobodiness” with its “nagging signs reading “white” and “colored.” Moreover, Dr. King pointed out that blacks during segregation were “living constantly at tiptoe stance, never quite knowing what to expect next, and [were] plagued with inner fears and outer resentments.”<sup>87</sup> Lynwood Park’s corner culture and illegality gave its men opportunities to construct “somebodiness” and garner admiration and a sense of success and power. On the baseball field Andrew Horton was a star, so good that Maudina Peaches Horton said that the Coca-Cola Company wanted him for their team, but he rejected the opportunity, preferring “somebodiness” and admiration in his enclave rather than the possibility of success and acceptance in the white world:

*The Coca-Cola Company wanted my father to come and play with them . . . but he said, “No.” He was that good. He was a star . . . they would get him so drunk after he won that game . . . he was Herman Ouisley and them’s cousin . . . and they loved him.*<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Horace Ouisley, 1 November 2004, 88.

<sup>86</sup> Horton, 17 September 2005, 33.

<sup>87</sup> Martin Luther King, Jr. *Letter from a Birmingham Jail* (Philadelphia: African Studies Center, University of Pennsylvania, 1963), 4.

<sup>88</sup> Horton, 17 September 2005, 33-4.

Dennie Jones Wesley, born in 1940, said that Andrew Horton lived baseball and moonshine the entire weekend:

*After a game, all the players, they had on their uniforms and things, and . . . Andrew Horton, he was the pitcher . . . he would wear his uniform from Saturday after the game, up 'til Sunday, when the next game start. Walking up and down the street all times of night with baseball cleats on . . . Way back then they had the steel spikes in them shoes. He'd fall off that mound too . . . the way a pitcher comes off the mound, we call it falling off the mound—he'd throw the ball. Now, he'd get drunk right after the game on Saturday, and stay drunk all night. But when he got to that game on Sunday he was sober. . . . [baseball] was a big thing . . . if it was in Lynwood Park, they'd come from someplace else to play. They would all get in their cars, and they'd all come together. And when we went to other places, everybody from Lynwood Park would get in a bunch of cars, and we'd go down there . . . That's all we had to do.<sup>89</sup>*

Olympic gold medalist Melvin Pender, born in 1937, recalled that some young boys played on the adult team:

*[E]verybody would come to the baseball games, and I was a great baseball player. And I played . . . with the big team and I was only like twelve years old . . . I played shortstop, 'cause I was so great. I was such a great player.<sup>90</sup>*

Traveling to other black communities to play matches meant that Lynwood Park men were entering onto the turf of other black men that they had “beat down” on the corner in Lynwood Park, that they had run off from the baseball field across House Road, that they had prevented from dating Lynwood Park girls, with violence. And Dennie Jones Welsey explained that these historic hostilities erupted when the Lynwood Park Tigers played baseball games in the other enclaves, such as Savageville, which Wesley had said was a violent community:

*Oh, that was rough over there . . . When you talk about cutting and fighting, when they played baseball down there, if it wasn't a fight after the game, it wasn't a game. . . . They'd be fighting like cats and dogs. Maybe somebody didn't like something somebody*

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<sup>89</sup> Wesley, 19 October 2005, 55-7.

<sup>90</sup> Pender, 27 April 2005, 37-8. Wallace Jones organized a youth team, on which his sons Columbus and Fox played, but Pender was “drafted” to play on the adult team.

said. Or somebody might have stepped on their foot. Or “No, he wasn’t out. He was safe.” Any little thing would set them off, and they’d be fighting.<sup>91</sup>

But Wesley added everyone would end up as friends at Savageville’s liquor house:

*[T]he liquor house down there was a big house. It had a looooong, front porch, and like full of chairs, and rocking chairs. And the lady that ran the house, she’d be sitting up there in her rocking chair . . . she was like the mother hen in Savageville. Everybody knew her . . . And right after the game everybody would go up there, and that’s where they’d sit around and drink until we got ready to come home, every Sunday, or Saturday night . . .*

*Everybody would be trying to buy everybody a drink. The ones that were fighting were sharing money and liquor too . . . The ones that they had been fighting with they’d all be drinking together. . . Some of them would be bleeding where they got hit . . . the lady that run the liquor [house] . . . she’d doctor them up . . . And the next weekend the ones that started the fight might have to go to the other community. But there was no retaliation. It was settled that one time. That’s it. Next week we saw each other, it was all new.<sup>92</sup>*

The aggression and violence that Lynwood Park extended to other black communities was maintained by their subsequent generations. The various black enclaves, whose men had gotten the “beat down” in Lynwood Park, developed fierce sports rivalries towards Lynwood Park’s players over time, and Peter Scott recalled visiting the various black communities to play high-school sports in the 1950s. Scott said that the animosity that had been established during the time of Lynwood Park’s founding generation was still radiating downward onto subsequent generations of Lynwood Park players, and the clashes occurred later at high-school sports meets:

*[Y]ou’ve got to remember . . . that hole-in-the-wall thing. Some of these people were coming out to Lynwood Park to the club and getting run home, for a number of reasons . . . So when we, as young people, would find ourselves in their setting, then, I guess that was their way of getting back, so to speak. They . . . tried to intimidate you.<sup>93</sup>*

Scott explained that the rivalries and their potential for violence were well-enough known to attract the attention and focus of the police:

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<sup>91</sup> Wesley, 19 October 2005, 55, 57-8.

<sup>92</sup> Wesley, 19 October 2005, 57-8.

<sup>93</sup> Scott, 4 May 2005, 22-3.



*Bruce Street High School and Avondale High School, those were real intense rivalries . . . [M]y father-in-law tells me when we used to go . . . in an area, which is now Scottsdale, that they would actually have police up on the hills and stuff. . . . he claims there were people out there with Tommy guns and all that stuff. . . . in those days, it wasn't the athletes getting into fights, it was the people who came to support us.<sup>94</sup>*

Scott said that he was unaware of the potential violence at the games, but he vividly recalled traveling to the games and whites throwing bricks at the team's bus:

*[Y]ou must remember the time. We were in a segregated area. Now, our biggest concern from Lynwood Park to Scottsdale was being "rocked" here in this area by whites . . . Having rocks thrown at your bus . . . And also you must remember that during that time, it was a long trip from Lynwood Park to Scottsdale. It was like going on an excursion . . . gangs of [white] kids at a corner . . . or sometimes adults . . . they'd throw rocks at the window or they would just yell at you and try and scare you . . . and it was successful . . . It was scary, you know, for no reason, to have somebody yelling at you like that, bothering you. In our cases, I'm sure many of us didn't know where we were, because we didn't come over to this area at all. This area was almost all white. A lot of whites.<sup>95</sup>*

By the time John Wright, who was born in 1964, went to high school, there were fights after the games among the players of the all-black schools, but no one recalled why. Both sides knew that there was an historic rivalry that generally ended in fighting, but Wright said that most people had no idea how the rivalry had begun:

*[W]e used to play against this one community . . . which is known as Scottsdale. We got this history—almost like the Hatfields and McCoys. You don't know why. You just did it because your parents did it . . . Lynwood Park and Scottsdale just got this strange history to where fights would break out. . . . and we don't know why we fought. All we know is that a fight was going to break out one way or another. And after the fight, after a while, everyone is back friends. . . . It was just tradition . . . just ask someone: "Why did you*

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<sup>94</sup> Scott, 4 May 2005, 20-1. When Scott was a teenager it was the older blacks in the audience that fought with each other.

<sup>95</sup> Scott, 4 May 2005, 21-2. To get to the black high-school games the Lynwood Park bus had to drive through the predominantly white Scottsdale area. Dennie Jones Wesley said that there used to be black enclaves in the area earlier, whose men had rivalries with the men of Lynwood Park. She remembers visiting the enclaves, and said that Lynwood Park played baseball games against their teams. After being displaced by whites, the blacks of Scottsdale's original enclaves attended the all-black Bruce Street and Avondale high schools, and sports meets against these schools were generally referred to as competitions against Scottsdale, then later Scottsdale/Tobie Grant. Wesley, 6 June 2008, Fieldnotes. Scottsdale was founded by fertilizer baron George Washington Scott, who also founded Agnes Scott College. Scott employed blacks in his mill, and left the black community jobless when the mill closed. Scottsdale's second black church was established in 1897. One black resident Tobie Grant, businesswoman, healer, and fortuneteller, daughter of slave Nancy Kendall, settled a nearby black enclave. See Herman "Skip" Mason, Jr. *African American Life in DeKalb County, 1823-1970* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 1998), 108-112.

*fight?” “Because that’s what our parents did.” “Why did your parents do it?” “That’s what their parents did.” “What were you fighting about?” “I don’t know.” We just had to fight. You just had to. It was no “No, I’m not going to fight.” You had to fight.”*<sup>96</sup>

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The children of Lynwood Park’s founders loved cars and many of them frequently used the year of the car that someone owned to situate a recollection in time. For example, John Jett placed Bob Niles’s death in time when he said, “1958 was when he got killed . . . He had a brand new ’58 Buick.” While cars were the emblems for memories for some residents, they were a necessity for the illegality of the founding generation that ran moonshine, and spawned drag racing as a sport for many of the community’s men, which meant that they took their cars seriously. In fact, Lynwood Park, an isolated community nestled in the thick woods of rural DeKalb County, boasted a gas station on the boundary.<sup>97</sup> Maudina Peaches Horton had said that Herman Ouisley, the moonshine kingpin of the founding generation, kept his runners supplied with well-maintained souped-up cars that could outrun the police. Herman’s son Horace developed a passion for cars—owning them, working on them—and racing them. Horace Ouisley recounted that he and other Lynwood Park men would spin their tires up at the corner of House Road to pick up a race from any challenger—white youths or black Lynwood Park dragsters—and that they would drag from Osborne Road to Antioch Drive.

Drag racing was *the* sport that crossed the color line for Lynwood Park’s residents in the Jim Crow era, as the men of Lynwood Park recounted drag racing against whites, working on cars with whites, and having whites as friends on the drag-racing circuit. Horace Ouisley was part of the corner culture. Born in 1932, Ouisley hung out on the

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<sup>96</sup> Wright, 20 November 2004, 46-9.

<sup>97</sup> Jett, 13 November 2005, 59.

boundary as a teenager, and being a well-known and successful drag racer was an important part of his identity, and a way in which he could construct masculinity and a sense of somebodiness.

Horace Ouisley is laconic and still maintains the etiquette of the segregated South in speaking to a white person. Ouisley only became marginally verbose when speaking of his amateur drag-racing career. According to Ouisley, Lynwood Park's drag racers would display their cars on the corner. White racers would then cruise by, look at the cars, see who was available for a race, and pick up a challenge. And although the corner culture, and many of Lynwood Park's men were dangerous characters, the politics of drag-racing friendship was unique: it was one of mutual respect and an exchanging of ideas. In other words, the men on the corner were not threatened by white drag racers, since they were not there to date Lynwood Park's women, nor muscle in on the community's moonshine industry. Horace Ouisley explained how picking up a race operated:

*We all parked our cars on the corner. And we had friends that came from different places—Roswell, Atlanta, different places—to come up there . . . We'd find a way to get together. We had a lot of white friends that come looking for us at different times. Now, we didn't win all the races. We had white friends that'd just run rings around us, but we still got along fine, you know, no fighting.<sup>98</sup>*

Melvin Pender, born in 1937, had mentioned that Lynwood Park's men would race against whites around Chastain Park. Ouisley said that he began driving at age ten, was a competent drag racer as a teenager, and had many white drag-racing friends:

VMH: *[B]ecause of your drag racing, you had a circle of white friends?*  
 HO: *Yes, ma'am.*  
 VMH: *How did these white guys treat you?*  
 HO: *Just like one of them really. We didn't have no problem. We didn't fight. The only thing that we would talk about: "My car is faster than your car."*

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<sup>98</sup> Horace Ouisley, 1 November 2004, 65. Ouisley began drag racing in his early teens and raced into his thirties, as indicated by the models of his cars.

*And we'd get out there and prove it. You beat me, next time I'm gonna try to beat you.*<sup>99</sup>

As a teenager Horace Ouisley began washing cars at a used-car lot in Brookhaven, where he met white Delmer Pilcher, a car salesman there, who drag raced at the Marietta Speedway, and raced stock cars at the Peach Bowl as a hobby. Pilcher would take Ouisley to watch the races at both venues, and the two men established a racing friendship that became lucrative for both.<sup>100</sup>

*I liked to drag race . . . my boss man Pilcher, he did all that too . . . went around the Peach Bowl, and stuff. And so that's where I got into it, working with him, going to all these different places . . . he'd know people that could soup [the cars] up, make them run faster. So that's what we did, and we had a lot of friends that were always trying to outrun each other. So we just had a thing going on. They'd come over here in Lynwood Park, spin all over the street out there, and then we'd go drag in different places.*<sup>101</sup>

Pilcher introduced Ouisley to the Marietta Speedway drag-racing circuit, and since this was in the Jim Crow era, Ouisley could not race his car, but had to have one of his white friends race his car on the track. Ouisley eventually integrated the venue and recalled the process:

*I was the onliest colored person over there you're gonna see. And [the track's owner] wouldn't let me drag my car. I'd have to have one of my friends to drag my car . . . I was with about five or six white boys—and . . . they didn't like what [the owner] was doing . . . I got them all together and told them, "This is his track. If he didn't want me to drag race, it's fine with me. As long as I'm with you all" . . . And I went and told [the owner], "It's no fun for me to come up here, and somebody else drag my car, and they don't know what they're doing." He just wouldn't let me do it. So, eventually, about me coming and raising sand about doing it, then he said I could drag with my friends, but I couldn't drag to win a trophy. I said, "Fine, I just want to drive my car." So I did that for a while . . .*

<sup>99</sup> Horace Ouisley, 1 November 2004, 41-2.

<sup>100</sup> The Peach Bowl was on Brady Avenue, north of downtown Atlanta. It had a quarter-mile circle track and operated as a stock-car racing venue from 1949 to 1971. The first stock car race was in 1951 and was won by Bob Flock, "who with brothers Fonty and Tim went on to become pioneers of NASCAR's elite division." Rick Minter, "Motorsports legends recall peach of a track," *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, 30 January 2006.

<sup>101</sup> Horace Ouisley, 1 November 2004, 39-40. Ouisley said he used his father's driving license at age ten. He claimed that his father Herman was a sickly man and that he often drove him, and when stopped by the police, they would let him go, since Herman Ouisley had a special relationship with the police. See Horace Ouisley, 1 November 2004, 25-6.

*So [my friends] settled down, 'cause they got kind of upset about it, 'cause he wouldn't let me do it . . . Eventually he let me run for a trophy.<sup>102</sup>*

After Ouisley integrated the Marietta Speedway other drag racetracks allowed blacks to race, and Ouisley toured the circuit:

- HO: *I won forty trophies . . . [at] different drag strips. You know, after Marietta drag strip, they got to be open at Yellow River, Newton County, Fairburn, Georgia.*
- VMH: *So you traveled around drag racing at different drag racing tracks?*
- HO: *Yes . . . On the weekends . . . [it was] a lot of fun.*
- VMH: *Were there people, like an audience?*
- HO: *Yes, ma'am. Big crowd . . .*
- VMH: *And they'd be screaming and yelling?*
- HO: *Yes, ma'am.*
- VMH: *How did that make you feel when you drove?*
- HO: *It make you feel good to know that you can participate. Well, sometimes I could come back with two or three trophies.<sup>103</sup>*

After he became a well-known dragster, Horace Ouisley picked up two unofficial white sponsors: his boss Delmer Pilcher, and Jack Lancaster, another white car salesman:

- VMH: *So automobiles—cars—racing—was a big part of your life growing up?*
- HO: *Yes, ma'am . . .*
- VMH: *And did you have just one car that you would drag race?*
- HO: *A Pontiac . . . '55 . . . And I had a '57 that was pink and black . . . [Then] a 1965 Pontiac, with three carburetors, and it had a special paint job . . .*
- VMH: *And so back to being seventeen years old . . . and you're drag racing, and winning all these trophies. Where are you getting the money for all this?*
- HO: *Working.*
- VMH: *Working for Mr. Pilcher, selling cars and making a commission?*
- HO: *Yes, ma'am . . . [And] I had a white friend that worked at a dealership. His name was Jack Lancaster. And he would fix my car in any way I wanted . . . He took care of it for me . . . put dual exhausts, chrome fender skirts, lighter hood ornaments, and radio in the front and the back seat, and all the little extra things . . . and he'd fix it up, bring me the bill . . . [he'd] show it to me, and tear it up, and put it in the trashcan.<sup>104</sup>*

Although Ouisley maintained that Lancaster's generosity was based on friendship, he did acknowledge that his driving reputation and flashy wheels sold cars for both Pilcher

<sup>102</sup> Horace Ouisley, 1 November 2004, 42-3. Ouisley maintained that he was around seventeen when he integrated the Marietta Speedway, which would mean that it occurred in 1949.

<sup>103</sup> Horace Ouisley, 1 November 2004, 45-6.

<sup>104</sup> Horace Ouisley, 1 November 2004, 48-9.

and Lancaster, and that he was happy with the arrangement, since it enabled him to get what he wanted: the latest, well-maintained racecars.

- HO: *[Lancaster] liked me . . . new cars—that's how I got a lot of them, by him being my friend, although he was making money. But I was getting what I wanted . . . he help[ed] me to keep my car running—me selling cars for him . . . I guess he wrote it off in some kind of way . . . He kept my car in A-1 shape. My car was something like a demonstrator. They'd see my car, and ride in my car, and that's what they wanted . . . [O]ne fella owned a grocery store we used to call Penny Profit, in Brookhaven. He bought one. . . . then his son bought one. And then we sold a lot more to our friends . . . I had three or four here in Lynwood Park that bought Pontiacs . . .*
- VMH: *Did [Lancaster] admire you as a racer?*
- HO: *Yeah, 'cause he did it too . . . We did it together. You know, sometime I could beat him, but by him working there, then he could go order something that would be faster than mine . . .*
- VMH: *So the two of you just tried to get your cars faster and faster and faster.*
- HO: *Yes, ma'am.<sup>105</sup>*

Ouisley's racing history demonstrated that drag racing bridged the gap, and overcame some of the taboos, in black/white relations in the Jim Crow South. Drag-racing provided a venue in which black men could be admired by, and considered the friends of, whites, albeit in a limited social sphere. Drag racing was a popular hobby among black and white men, and there was a thin line between the cop—who had access to a fast car—and the dragster. Ouisley said that his drag-racing challenges also came from the police:

- VMH: *[Do] you think that drag racing really kind of bridged the gap for you between whites and blacks?*
- HO: *It probably did, 'cause all of our friends, we did that together, including the polices too . . . they would want to know whose car was the fastest—their car, or our car.*
- VMH: *Their police car?*
- HO: *Yes, ma'am.<sup>106</sup>*

Although Ouisley had integrated the Marietta Speedway, had won numerous trophies, and hobnobbed with white racers, he nevertheless never forgot that he was in the

<sup>105</sup> Horace Ouisley, 1 November 2004, 49-50.

<sup>106</sup> Horace Ouisley, 1 November 2004, 51.

Jim Crow South, never lorded his racing successes over whites, and was always aware that whites—and especially the police—could turn the tables on blacks at any moment:

- HO: *[The police] didn't have no radios in the car at that time, so we weren't worried about them catching us . . . They couldn't radio ahead and have us stopped. So we'd just get away—get on a dirt street, you lost them. They can't see.*
- VMH: *But when you raced against the police cars, how would they approach you?*
- HO: *Well, they pull upside of you.*
- VMH: *And say what?*
- HO: *"Want to see which one is the fastest?"*
- VMH: *And you'd say?*
- HO: *"Let's go."*
- VMH: *But you'd always let them win?*
- HO: *Right. You won't have no problem . . . I never did try to outrun them. I'd race them, but I never tried to beat them, 'cause I didn't want them to know my car was faster than theirs.<sup>107</sup>*

Horace Ouisley also had no problem with the police, because of the special relationship his father Herman had with a number of them, and with even judges. But regardless of his father's influence, the younger Ouisley was always aware that caution was required around the police:

- HO: *If you beat them they could give you a ticket, if they wanted to. But they never did do me that way. If they caught me breaking the law three times, they would give me a ticket. I'd get away—he'd allow me two—they wouldn't do nothing. But the third one, they'd have to give me one, write me up. That's what he told me they'd do. Couldn't let me get away, 'cause, you know, people'd be seeing and hearing about it, and they would have a bad reputation. So I got a ticket. Most of the time I knowed the judge, and then paid ten or fifteen dollars, and it's over with . . . it would be dismissed.*
- VMH: *Now, you could have beaten the police car?*
- HO: *Yeah . . .*
- VMH: *You had to hold back?*
- HO: *Yes, ma'am. I didn't have to [but] I didn't want him to know that I could do that . . . If he knowed that you could outrun him, and you got in front of him, he might want to shoot you—to stop you . . . I didn't want to let him know the whole car. No, I would keep back.<sup>108</sup>*

<sup>107</sup> Horace Ouisley, 1 November 2004, 52.

<sup>108</sup> Horace Ouisley, 1 November 2004, 53. Pender went on to win a gold medal in the 1968 Olympics in the 400-meter relay, at the age of thirty-one.

Drag-racing was a popular sport in Lynwood Park. Many residents owned dragsters and raced regularly. Olympic gold medalist Melvin Pender, born in 1937, had said that he came back to Atlanta from Fort Bragg, North Carolina on the weekend to drag race after he joined the Army. Pender credits drag racing at Yellow River with his awareness that he was also fast in foot races:

- MP: *Bookie was the guy, and Gene Hood was the other drag racer . . . Now we had some fast cars . . . Columbus Jones's brother [Fox] had one of the fastest cars too . . . and Pat Martin's husband's brother. . . these guys from Alpharetta and Roswell would come to Lynwood Park and other parts of Atlanta to race with us . . . and one night they had a foot race and I won the foot race.*
- VMH: *Where did they have the foot race?*
- MP: *Right on the track . . . a foot race between the draggers . . . And they would give trophies to the fastest guy, and I came down the furthest on the track. I didn't know I was fast, and so I didn't know I could run until I was twenty-five . . . It was a surprise.<sup>109</sup>*

Patricia Martin said that drag racing was one of the regular weekend activities of her married life. Racing was so important to Robert Martin that the racetrack was the first place he went to after he returned home from being overseas in the Army during WWII:

- PM: *When [Robert] came home from the service—him and his friends built race cars, 'cause he raced . . . And so, that's the first place he went when he came home. He said, "I'm going to the racetrack." "You're going to the racetrack? And you just got home?". . . "Okay, well, hold on just a minute. Let me get the baby ready." So we went to the racetrack, and from then on, we did that until we got too old to do it . . .*
- VMH: *Are we talking about drag racing . . . Like what Horace Ouisley used to do?*
- PM: *Yes.*
- VMH: *Did they hang out together racing?*
- PM: *All of us did, yes, yes.*
- VMH: *So that was like a weekend activity?*
- PM: *Yes, yes.*
- VMH: *Now, did your husband and Horace work together on race cars?*
- PM: *No. [Robert] had a play brother, and another guy, and his baby brother. They had their own car—a racecar.<sup>110</sup>*

<sup>109</sup> Pender, 27 April 2005, 42-46.

<sup>110</sup> Martin, 10 November 2004, 39-40.



The men of Lynwood Park were serious about their racing and some of them had dedicated racecars and teams that worked on them, all of which added to the color, life, and excitement of the community. The racing teams also seemed to fall within quadrants: Horace Ouisley in the southwestern, the Martins in the southeastern, the Hoods in the northwestern, the Joneses in the northeastern. Dennie Jones Wesley explained that drag racing was important to her brother Fox, who was born in 1931, and whose racing team included the white Platt brothers, Hubert and Houston, who worked on Fox's car in Lynwood Park, and who regularly hung out at the Jones house:

- VMH: *Did [Fox] have a race car?*  
 DJW: *Oooh, yeah! He had several . . . The first one he had was a '55 Chevrolet. . . . And he used to drag in that. And we used to go see him drag race . . . And then he bought a car brand new. He come home . . . got out of it, and got his toolbox, and he and his team of brothers, that did a lot of drag racing . . . they took everything they could off of it . . . Anything that would slow it down had to come off. . .*  
 VMH: *Did your brothers race at the track only, or did they race up here on . . . House Road?*  
 DJW: *They didn't do too much racing up there, 'cause the cars that they had . . . was strictly for racing.*  
 VMH: *Horace Ouisley was running up and down.*  
 DJW: *Yeah, him and Gene Hood, they would race amongst themselves.*  
 VMH: *And Robert Martin.*  
 DJW: *Yeah, yep, they would too. But my brother . . . had a racecar . . . the only time [he] drove it was on the track.<sup>111</sup>*

As Horace Ouisley had said, Lynwood Park had everything. During the Jim Crow era it was a nearly autarkic community, as the residents grew, raised, and hunted for their food, while matrons delivered babies and doctored the sick. The community devised its own entertainments, policed itself much of the time, and kept the outside world at bay as much as possible. While segregation attempted to engender a sense of inferiority and nobodiness in blacks, the enclave offered several venues in which men could construct

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<sup>111</sup> Wesley, 19 October 2005, 59-61.

positive identities as protectors, stable wage earners, sports stars, or sought-after dragsters. And while the community was historically suspicious of whites, outsiders, and the police, many residents negotiated a space of interaction with the white world: working for whites, befriending the police as participants in their illegality, and having whites as racing friends.

Behind the Jim Crow veil, Lynwood Park was a colorful community that tolerated the various aspects and peccadilloes of its members. It was a community of vice, bullying, and danger, but also one of passion, excitement, and tolerance of difference. It was a community of teasing and play, laughter and fun, drinking under the trees, and just about everywhere else. It was a place where gospel music and rhythm 'n blues, accompanied by piano and saxophone, wafted on the wind. It was a place of honking horns, and clouds of dust as taxicabs and other vehicles sped along dirt roads. It was also a place of baseball and soul food, fighting, making up, and laughing about it, and at each other. It was about hanging in the woods, relaxing at Herman Lake, passing Snake Man dragging his latest catch up the road. It was seeing blind M.C. Newell on a ladder fixing his roof and having him wave at you, yet preferring to believe in the myth of his blindness, because it made M.C. a character rather than an ordinary man.

Lynwood Park was about parties in the yard, and laughing about whites and their nonsensical rules to separate people with labels, language, and behavior. And it was about falling out with laughter at the thought that whites thought blacks were ignorant. Lynwood Park was about barbecues on the ball field, wearing a suit and drunkenly singing in church. It was about spinning tires on House Road, racing at Yellow River, fighting sports opponents and not knowing why. Lynwood Park was a vibrant enclave that treated its eccentrics and drunks with affection. It was a menagerie of people who inhaled life. It

was a place of colors, sounds, and smells. And for all its problems: bullying, stabbing and cutting, danger and violence—*Lynwood Park was alive* and teeming with passion.

## Chapter 5: Churches and Spirituality

The only generalization that can be made about Lynwood Park is that it is a Christian community. In an enclave of three hundred and fifty-two buildable lots, Lynwood Park had as many as six churches operating concurrently. When the community was first settled in the late-1920s, displaced groups from other black enclaves brought the first three churches: Hard Rock Church came from the WWI Camp Gordon barracks settlement, Little Zion Missionary Baptist Church came from Armour, a black community off Piedmont Road in Buckhead, and Mount Mary Baptist Church came from Dubals Alley, a black enclave in Sandy Springs. Four Holiness churches were created in the community. The Lynwood Park Church of God was organized and pastored by Patricia Martin's grandmother Georgia Clement, who built a chapel on a lot adjacent to her home on Lynwood Drive. Saint Peter's True Holiness Church was founded by Cornelius Sawyer. The church is extant in the building it first occupied in 1977, on the northeastern corner of Windsor Parkway and Osborne Road. Sawyer took over the premises of the Blue Dot Café, owned by Bud and Lucille Walker, which closed after Utah Clement was shot and killed there. Marshall Carter organized a Holiness church in a tent on Francis Street, entreated by his niece and Lynwood Park resident Ella Mae Hood, who believed that her crime-ridden community needed to be saved. Then there was the small Prayer House located to the far west of the community on Antioch Drive.<sup>1</sup>

At the dawn of the twentieth century, sociologist W.E.B. Du Bois observed that the black church did not only propagate religion, but was "the central organ of the organized life of the American Negro for amusement, relaxation, instruction, and religion," and this

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<sup>1</sup> Derrick Henry, Obituaries, "Marshall Carter, founded church in Lynwood Park," *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, 28 June 2003, Metro News, 4-E. Cornelius Sawyer's church was operating in his home long before he took over the premises in 1977. The site the church occupies "on the corner" is zoned commercial and is now listed for sale for one half million dollars.

was certainly the case for Lynwood Park.<sup>2</sup> In the community's early era—from the 1930s to the 1960s—the churches were the foundation of the enclave, and spirituality meant not only worshipping God, but also working in self-help organizations and institutions to provide services, such as schooling and daycare, burial services and insurance, for Lynwood Park's residents. Deacons served on community boards, and church mothers and parishioners organized fundraisers to develop Lynwood Park, since the community was essentially ignored by the white outside. Patricia Martin, born in 1932, described the role of the churches before the 1960s:

*[T]he churches have always been the foundation of the community . . . you did everything in the church . . . You had church service. You had political service . . . the deacons in the churches were the ones that talked about things that needed to happen in the community. We had community trustees over the community property . . . and they were deacons. And so they talked about things that needed to happen in the community in church.<sup>3</sup>*

Most of Lynwood Park's churches began in homes. In the former WWI Camp Gordon barracks, the two Truitt brothers and their wives—Shelley and Rosa, and George and Annie—organized a prayer band in 1921, and held services in various homes in the settlement. They later acquired a small house on a large granite formation as their place of worship and named the church Hard Rock. Raymond Jackson, born in 1930, grew up on Carroll Avenue in Camp Gordon and attended Hard Rock Church as a child. Jackson officially joined the church in 1945, and is still a member:

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<sup>2</sup> Dan S. Green and Edwin D. Driver, eds. *W.E.B. Du Bois on Sociology and the Black Community* (New York: Basic Books, 1978), 215, 228.

<sup>3</sup> Martin, 13 October 2004, 54-5. At present, Marshall Carter's Holiness church, The United Church of God in Christ, located on the corner of Windsor Parkway and Silver Lake Drive, boasts the largest congregation. China Grove First Missionary Baptist Church has the second-largest congregation. Little Zion Missionary Baptist Church is extant. Mount Mary was located in the far north of the community, at the end of Osborne Road, and struggled to maintain a congregation. The church disbanded and gave its building to Mount Tabor, a splinter group that organized in Lynwood Park after a schism in Piney Grove Baptist Church. Georgia Clement's Holiness church closed after she died, the Prayer House was an abandoned shack in the woods in 2004. Of the first three churches to relocate to Lynwood Park, only Mount Mary has been eliminated. And of the four Holiness churches created in Lynwood Park, two are extant: Saint Peter's True Holiness, and the United Church of God in Christ.

*It started in their house. They would have meetings there on Sunday . . . [when] the church [was] up there—it called Hard Rock . . . on the slabs up back there . . . it was a small church . . . I was a little boy wearing the short pants, and my mother took me up there. It might be ten to fifteen peoples up in there . . . And then when they moved to Lynwood Park, they changed it to China Grove.<sup>4</sup>*

Hard Rock Church changed its name to China Grove First Missionary Baptist Church when it relocated to a building on Mae Avenue, after the Camp Gordon settlement was displaced in the 1940s in preparation for WWII. China Grove then moved to its present location on Osborne Road in 1949. The first building was demolished in 1977 and the congregation moved into a new \$300,000 structure in April 1979, complete with a bell, and Raymond Jackson remembered its tolling:

*They had the bell up in the steeple part. And the peoples that passed away, [when] they were having their funeral, they would come out and tone the bell . . . we was at school when they had this lady's funeral, and the teacher let us out of school to go . . . And they was toning the bell and stuff. They did.<sup>5</sup>*

The building was destroyed by a fire in 1994, and the church was rebuilt with bricks in only six months. A steeple was added in 2006, but no one in the congregation knows the fate of the bell. China Grove has seen a succession of pastors and suffered through several schisms and split-offs, but the scattered flock has been returning, and the congregation has begun to grow again since 2006, when the young and charismatic Brian J. Macon was installed as pastor.<sup>6</sup>

Little Zion Baptist Church began as a Sunday school in the home of Sister Janie Gaither, who was then allowed to hold services on Sunday in a little courthouse on Cheshire Bridge Road, where church member Ed Dorsey worked as a superintendent. The church was formally organized in 1923 with a pastor and a deacon board of seven. The

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<sup>4</sup> Raymond Jackson, 7 October 2005. 31-4. A prayer band is when a group goes from house to house in a community and conducts services. So each home, in effect, is a church when it is used for prayer service.

<sup>5</sup> Raymond Jackson, 7 October 2005, 29.

<sup>6</sup> *A Tribute to Our Heritage: 87<sup>th</sup> Church Anniversary*, 2008, Lynwood Park Collection, Weltner Library, Oglethorpe University, Atlanta, Georgia, 4-5.

congregation arrived one Sunday and found that it was locked out of the little courthouse. One group of parishioners relocated to Lynwood Park—without the pastor— and built a church at the northern end of Cates Avenue. In May 1980, shortly after the church’s fifty-seventh anniversary, a fire destroyed the building. The members held a “burning” drive, and were able to rebuild the church by August 1980. There is a myth that God sent a warning before the fire in the form of a bird, as John Wright, born in 1964, remembered:

*I’ll never forget it. It sticks in my mind. We were preparing for some type of anniversary program. Somehow—which I still can’t figure out—a bird came into the church. We were up there cleaning . . . That bird was at the window, was just acting very strange. Mother Scott—she’s gone on, she’s passed on—said . . . “That bird is acting strange. That bird is trying to tell us something” . . . Three days after that I was at school, and someone ran outside . . . “You need to call home. The church is on fire.” “What?” Everyone was like, “What church?” “Little Zion is on fire”. . . the only thing that was spared was the Bible and the front of the church . . . and that bird—for some strange reason—that’s the only part that it was at, but the inside of the church was destroyed. The pulpit was saved, and the Bible was saved. But the church did burn down in 1980.<sup>7</sup>*

Like China Grove, Little Zion has had numerous pastors, and under the stewardship of its current pastor, Reginald Williams, Little Zion mainly only ministers to its congregation today.

Mount Mary Baptist Church came from the displaced black enclave of Dubals Alley in Sandy Springs. Some of its staunchest members were LaTrelle Lockwood and Melvin Pender’s families. Pender’s mother Evelyn lived in Dubals Alley when he was born in 1937, and was instrumental in bringing the church to Lynwood Park. She later married Otis Allison from Lynwood Park, who had become one of Mount Mary’s deacons. Laura Ann Watson, who was born in 1927, owned and operated the first beauty parlor in Lynwood Park. Watson attended Piney Grove Church in Buckhead, along with Nona Young, who operated a daycare nursery in her home in Lynwood Park. After a schism in Piney Grove, a splinter group held services in Nona Young’s nursery, then was given Mount

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<sup>7</sup> Wright, 20 November 2004, 7-8. Peter Scott is still a member of Little Zion, and Wright is referring to Scott’s mother as Mother Scott.

Mary's building, as Watson recounted, where they organized as Mount Tabor Church:

- VMH: *[W]hat happened to the congregation of Mount Mary?*  
 LW: *I don't know. I don't know what happened to them really . . .*  
 VMH: *I heard Mel Pender's mother was very important in terms of getting Mount Tabor that church.*  
 LW: *Yes, she, and I believe Mae Lockwood . . .*  
 VMH: *And then did they join the [Mount Tabor] congregation?*  
 LW: *No.*<sup>8</sup>

The leaders and congregations of the three founding churches worked to make Lynwood Park a viable and largely self-sufficient community. Luke Holsey, born in 1902, was a deacon in Little Zion Church, which he joined in 1932. A brick mason, Holsey worked indefatigably for the community. Holsey moved from rural Dougherty County looking for a better life in 1930. He first rented in Nicklebottom, then moved into his home in Lynwood Park in 1939. Holsey said that Lynwood Park had no electricity, roads, or running water, and remarked in 1993: "I came along during a time when we had to work together." Having only a third-grade education, Holsey was a highly respected community leader, as Wilmer Harris, born in 1938, and a deacon of Little Zion recalled:

*He lived to be a hundred and three. I know him, I know him very well. He and I spent hours together, I used to pick his brain . . . he was knowledgeable too . . . he didn't have a college education or nothing like that. I think he stopped in the third grade, but he had wisdom.*<sup>9</sup>

Holsey helped organize the Brothers and Sisters of Love Lodge to help black people out "in time of need during sicknesses and death." In 1940 Holsey organized Lynwood Park's churches and others from surrounding enclaves into the Union, and in

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<sup>8</sup> Pender, 27 April 2005, 7; Laura Ann Watson, interview by author, 31 August 2005, transcript, 29, 64. Mount Tabor was sold to a developer in 2007 and a house of approximately 8000 square feet now sits on the site and is for sale for \$1.7 million. LaTrelle Lockwood said that Mount Mary's congregation did not grow, and thus by the 1990s the members began dying and the church disbanded. LaTrelle Lockwood, telephone conversation with author, 20 June 2008, Fieldnotes.

<sup>9</sup> Wilmer Harris, 3 January 2006, 19. For a list of some of the functions, and the extent of services that the black church offered to the community, see Drake St. Clair and Horace Cayton, *Black Metropolis: A Study of Negro Life in the North*, 2 vols. (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), 2: 670, and C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1990), 244-5.



1955 he organized the North Atlanta Ushers Association, all part of a network of self-help organizations within the larger black community. Pee Wee Jackson recalled that Lynwood Park's churches shared a spirit of cooperation:

*[There was] an alliance of ministers . . . the preachers helped everybody . . . they [had] the preachers down at China Grove, at Mount Mary, at Little Zion. They all helped each other, you know.<sup>10</sup>*

Belinda Marshall, born in 1932, longtime member of China Grove, spoke of the spirit of cooperation among the enclave's churches:

*[T]here was China Grove, there was Mount Mary, and there was Little Zion . . . And they had revivals that ran a whole week . . . And all the churches associated with each other . . . we would have revivals at our church, and we have maybe spring revival, and then you would have a fall revival . . . Each church would have their own revival, and then . . . you would go to their revival and they would come to yours.<sup>11</sup>*

Church activities also represented socializing for the people of Lynwood Park in the time of segregation, when many blacks did not have transportation, and were loath to wander far from their enclaves. Maudina Peaches Horton, born in the early 1950s, recalled that she looked forward to church because it was an outing:

*[W]e could sneak on up to Buckhead's on Sunday afternoon, when nobody was looking. We'd walk. All you could do is walk, walk the community. Dressed up and walk. And you're sneaking on the corner on a Sunday . . . Or church—the second and fourth Sunday. So we looked forward to going to church . . . Honey, that was it!<sup>12</sup>*

John Wright, born in 1964, recalled that church was an all-day affair and that attendance was mandatory, since family members usually served in leadership positions:

*[Church] was the stronghold. That's what kept you going. That was your gas station. There was no compromise. You had to go to church . . . On Sundays, you didn't do nothing. You was at church. At Little Zion . . . we had to go to Sunday school from ten to eleven. At eleven-thirty, morning service. You had a break. Everyone would come to . . . different church members' houses—they'd have dinner . . . You had to get ready for*

<sup>10</sup> "The Lynwood Park Legend—1992," Roy H. Benifield Papers; Scott, "Church to honor Lynwood Park patriarch," 3; Martin, 13 October 2004, 24; Pee Wee Jackson, 17 September 2006, 60.

<sup>11</sup> Marshall, 10 September 2005, 19.

<sup>12</sup> Horton, 17 September 2005, 92.

*BTU—Baptist Training Union—and then evening service . . . That’s your whole day . . . It was very important, and no compromise. You had to be at church.*<sup>13</sup>

Congregants in the community also attended annual Camp Meetings, a gathering of the churches from the various black enclaves, as Patricia Martin, born in 1932, recalled:

*[E]very fourth Sunday in August was Camp Meeting Day . . . at the New Hope Methodist Church on Arden Road in Buckhead . . . and everybody from all around would come . . . And different churches would speak and sing and preach . . . they had ice cream stands, and soul food, and sold little knickknacks, and the picture-taking man was there . . . and, oh . . . it was just a joyous day. And you dressed up . . . You bought clothes for the Fourth of July [and] you bought clothes for Camp Meeting . . . and so you . . . put on your best clothes for those days . . . [i]t was a festival.*<sup>14</sup>

Many residents nostalgically remember that Lynwood Park behaved as one large family before the 1960s, and Martin’s account, taken in isolation, could give the impression that the majority of Lynwood Park worshippers went to New Hope Church in Buckhead for Camp Meeting. As with stories of hog killings, Rachel Harris’s account of Camp Meeting demonstrates that Lynwood Park’s residents did not behave as one community. Her family celebrated in Chamblee, and Camp Meeting there did not have a commercial component:

*RH: [E]very year . . . they put a big tent up in Chamblee, and everybody from all around would go to Camp Meeting . . . Everybody would bring food . . . after service the different members and friends that came would go out and open their trunks. And they would spread the tablecloths in the trunk of their cars, if they had a car, or on the back of the trucks . . . and they would sit their food out. . . . And they had tables like out in the yard of the church. You would go to the different cars and walk around and fix you a plate, and then you would go to the tables and sit down and eat . . .*

*VMH: Did you get special clothes for those occasions?*

*RH: No, not really, because when I was coming up we had what we called our church clothes . . . that you only wore on Sundays. . . . you didn’t wear it any other time . . . a lot of our clothes were like given to us by the people that my mamma worked for.*<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Wright, 20 November 2004, 64.

<sup>14</sup> Martin, 13 October 2004, 25-6.

<sup>15</sup> Rachel Harris, 27 July 2005, 27-9.

George Truitt, a rural farmer, became a well digger after he moved “to the city,” and his wife Annie was the most influential member of her church. Mamie Lee Mathis, born in 1920, knew the Truitts at Camp Gordon, and knew Annie Truitt well in China Grove, where Mathis is still a member:

*She was like my second mother. She was a Christian lady. A real sweet woman . . . Miss Annie was one of the head Mothers up [at Hard Rock]. And then they moved over here . . . Miss Annie was the backbone of China Grove . . . She was the head Mother.*<sup>16</sup>

Although without formal education, and limited to Negro jobs during Jim Crow segregation, blacks could become leaders in their communities, where they were respected for their wisdom and disinterest—their unselfish work for others. A laundress by trade, Annie Truitt was born in Troup County, Georgia in 1884, and died in 1990. Husband George died in 1966, and Annie raised their eight children alone. Truitt was the matriarch of her quadrant, community leader and activist, and well-respected church mother. Annie Truitt worked indefatigably for Lynwood Park education, and was one of the organizers of the DeKalb County NAACP chapter.<sup>17</sup>

Maudina Peaches Horton’s aunt Odessa married Annie Truitt’s son Joe, and Horton knew Annie Truitt well, since Horton, born in the early 1950s, has been a member of China Grove all her life, and is presently an influential decision-maker in the church. Horton recalled Annie Truitt as a devout Christian, who was revered by even the bullies on the dangerous boundary:

*I can just tell you she had an inner strength . . . she carried the Lord with her. Forget all about whatever else in the world that she did. She had a lot of children, yes. Good wife, yes. But her story was about the Lord . . . one day we said, “Mother Truitt,*

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<sup>16</sup> Mathis, 1 April 2008, 24.

<sup>17</sup> Obituary: “Mrs. Annie Belle Truitt, a community leader in Lynwood Park, at 105,” *The Atlanta Journal*, 30 January 1990. For more on the organizational skills of laundresses in Atlanta, see also Tera W. Hunter, “Domination and Resistance: The Politics of Wage Household Labor in New South Atlanta,” in Kenneth W. Goings and Raymond A. Mohl, eds. *The New African American Urban History* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 1996), 167-183.

*just tell us: what's your secret?" She said, "Let me tell you, child," she said, "I want you to take the Lord wherever you go." She said, "I don't care if you know you got to get out there in the street, you about to get fighting right out there. You might have to. You don't know if you're going to be killed, or you might have to kill somebody," she said, "but take Him with you. Take Him with you" . . .*

*[S]he'd go on the corner, and . . . Bookie and Buckhead, and all of them . . . she wore a little white turban, a little white—kind of a nurse's dress—and white shoes . . . And she had her little walking stick . . . And she got to where she couldn't work as much in the church . . . she'd go on the corner . . . selling her little bags of peanuts—or she'd just walk up there. And when she would get up on that corner you better believe everybody took silent, everybody would stand up, and . . . she'd leave with tons of money, 'cause they'd just give her all the money . . . [she was] very well respected. Somebody loved. And you just knew that she was like a Mother Theresa or someone . . .*

*[S]he would come in church some nights, 'cause we had two services then. She'd come that morning and she'd try to get back that evening . . . And she'd walk in real slow like on her little walking stick . . . After a while the Spirit would hit her, Honey, and she'd start running around and around that church. Then she'd run out the building, and somebody had to run and catch her and bring her back . . . she's the hard worker. She loved spreading love, and talking about the Lord.<sup>18</sup>*

W.E.B. Du Bois commented on the change in the devotee when the “Spirit of the Lord passed by.” It made her animated and “mad with supernatural joy,” as in the example of an aged Annie Truitt. And Du Bois claimed that this experience of the Holy Ghost was the essential of Negro religion that the congregants believed in more than any other aspect of Christianity. Congregants maintained that without a visible manifestation, “there could be no true communion with the Invisible.”<sup>19</sup> Religious interpreter Rudolf Otto wrote that man’s encounter with the sacred elicits feelings of “*mysterium, tremendum, et fascinans*”—the mysterious, terrifying, and fascinating force—that inspires an awe that leaves the devotee breathless.<sup>20</sup> This encounter with the numinous—the extra in the meaning of holy beyond the interpretation of goodness—is *sui generis*, and mediates the

<sup>18</sup> Horton, 17 September 2005, 16, 54-5. Annie Truitt died twenty-one days before her 106<sup>th</sup> birthday. A large framed photograph of her is prominently displayed in the foyer of the church. Annie Truitt’s granddaughter, Sarah Horton, is the current president of China Grove’s Mother Board. Horton lived in Annie Truitt’s house until 2007, when she sold it and moved out of Lynwood Park. A McMansion of approximately 4000 square feet now occupies the tiny lot. Horton’s daughter—Annie Truitt’s great-granddaughter—lives next door.

<sup>19</sup> Green and Driver, *W.E.B. Du Bois*, 215.

<sup>20</sup> Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy: An Inquiry into the non-rational factor in the idea of the divine and its relation to the rational* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1958) 1-49.

gap between the material realm and the beyond, thus integrating the congregant into a spiritual cosmos through a direct relationship with God.

Annie Truitt radiated an inner spirituality, which was recognized and respected, even by the children of Lynwood Park. LaTrelle Lockwood, born in 1955, had shared that he and his running group tried to bully Rose Bussey, a known drinker who carried a pistol in her brassiere. Wilmer Harris, a deacon in Little Zion church, was born in 1938, and knew as a boy that deferential behavior was required around Annie Truitt:

*[I] respected her 'cause we used to wouldn't say certain things around her, you know, because of her . . . We wouldn't curse or anything of that nature . . . We were little boys. We would curse around there sometimes, but we wouldn't curse in front of Mrs. Truitt. No, sir . . . Everybody respected her.*<sup>21</sup>

John Wright, born in 1964, explained that there was a different standard of behavior when any of the respected leaders of the church and community were in the vicinity:

*[B]ack in the day, if a preacher, deacon, or mother was coming down the street—Deacon Holsey, Mee-Maw—Mother Truitt—people see them: if he was drinking, oh, you hid it. “Hey, Mother Truitt, how you doing?” Or [if] you were smoking a cigarette, you put it down. You had respect for those people . . . with illegal gambling—you would stop until those people leave, or got well out of your distance . . . They knew what you were doing, but you respected those people for who they were . . . Those were the hierarchy, leaders, of the community. If there was a problem, or anything go wrong, you would see those leaders for calling a community meeting. They was more like the calm of the storm—trying to rationalize: “This is what we need to do. You don't need to be doing this.”*<sup>22</sup>

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Historian and theologian Gayraud Wilmore argued that before the 1960s there was a great deal of difference between black and white Christianity. White Christianity taught morality and focused on the afterlife in large part, while the black church was radical, worked for change and improvement, and “functioned closer to the survival needs of blacks in America.” The black church had always worked for freedom, for the end of Jim

<sup>21</sup> Wilmer Harris, 3 January 2006, 20.

<sup>22</sup> Wright, 20 November 2004, 26. Annie Truitt was called Mee-Maw by the people of Lynwood Park.

Crow segregation, for self-help institutions within the black community, while agitating for services from the white power structure.<sup>23</sup> Sociologist Andrew Billingsley maintained that black activist church leadership was the focal point of every movement for change in the African American community before the 1960s. Billingsley claimed that from the time of slavery, the black church has always produced intelligent and articulate leaders who had a plan for the black community. Patricia Martin, born in 1932, related that activism governed church dynamics in Lynwood Park before the 1960s:

*[They] had meetings in church—political. If somebody was running for an office, then that person had to come to the church and talk to the people. And any organizations that wanted to come into the community to talk about anything, the church was the one that they came to . . . We were very powerful in that day and time because, politically, black people voted in what they call a bloc, so that we all voted for the same person. And that came out of the church, because we would be in the church, and we would be told . . . who was the best representative, and that was gospel . . . so you voted for that. And so that made us quite powerful.*<sup>24</sup>

Carrie Julian, born in 1933, lived three doors from Annie Truitt and said that Truitt focused on voting back in the day. And Belinda Marshall, born in 1932, recalled: “mostly whatever Mother Truitt said in the neighborhood the people would do it.” Born in 1932, Patricia Martin became an activist in the 1951 voter-registration drive:

*[Y]ou had to say the Preamble of the Constitution, and you had to memorize that in order to vote . . . I was in college . . . [and] the trustees of the community, they came to me and said, “We want you to work with us in helping the people vote, and to memorize what they had to memorize.” And we had to go to Chamblee High School to register, and it was evenings that we went . . . you had to say the Preamble of the Constitution, and then you were allowed to vote . . . You registered and voted at the same time at that time.*<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Gayraud S. Wilmore, *Black Religion and Black Radicalism: An Interpretation of the Religious History of African Americans* (New York: Orbis Books, 2002), 23.

<sup>24</sup> Martin, 13 October 2004, 59-60; Andrew Billingsley, *Mighty Like a River: The Black Church and Social Reform* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 13-34, 45-52. For more on the black clergy as “race men” see Lincoln and Mamiya, *The Black Church*, 207.

<sup>25</sup> Julian, 29 December 2005, 25; Marshall, 10 September 2005, 48; Martin, 13 October 2004, 55-6. See also Clifford M. Kuhn, Harlon E. Joye, and E. Bernard West, *Living Atlanta: An Oral History of the City, 1914-1948* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1990), 252, 337.

Both male and female residents focused on community projects and improvements. Although Luke Holsey left school after the third grade, he served on the board of trustees that managed the community's common property, the Deacon Board at his church, and served as vice-president of DeKalb County's first chapter of the NAACP, and as the official spokesperson for Lynwood Park in the 1950s, when the community was part of the city of North Atlanta.<sup>26</sup> Lynwood Park's women organized the Twelve Ladies Sewing Club in 1944, with Mrs. James (Minerva) Bennett as the first chairwoman. The club later added two more groups, each of twelve ladies, and the three groups operated for approximately ten years. The thirty-six ladies combined socializing with raising money, which financed the installation of telephone and electric service, and streetlights, the purchasing of land for the community's elementary and high schools, and the enclave's daycare center, which the ladies of the clubs operated. Rachel Harris, born in 1948, remembered that the women took turns hosting the group in their homes:

*[M]other had her night that they would come to our house, and so she had to prepare refreshments . . . And it just traveled around . . . And they would laugh and talk, and enjoy each other . . . they learned how to make dresses . . . After it was over they would go somewhere and have a fashion show. And so that went on for a long time.*<sup>27</sup>

In 1964, under the stewardship of Charles Niles, the community presented a seven-point plan to DeKalb County, which included an appeal for low-cost housing, sewers and street paving, junk removal, and the development of a recreation area, an effort he coordinated through the community's various churches.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Scott, "Church to Honor Lynwood Park patriarch," 17 June 1993, 3.

<sup>27</sup> "History of Lynwood Park," Lynwood Park Archives, Office of the CDC; "Lynwood Park: Current Proposal to be Considered by the Community," Attachment C, Lynwood Park Archives, Office of the CDC. Rachel Harris, 27 July 2005, 34-5. One of the ladies, Mrs. Lena Holland, who also served as president of the Lynwood Park Association, spearheaded the drive to have streetlights installed. See Anne Jackson Ouisley, "A Look Back At Lynwood Park," *The Informer*, Vol. 1, Issue 14, April-May 1998, Lynwood Park Collection, Office of the CDC.

<sup>28</sup> "Lynwood Park: Current Proposal to be Considered by the Community," Attachment B, Lynwood Park Archives, Office of the CDC.

Christianity informed the lives of Lynwood Park's residents and one reflection of their spirituality was working for community. While many people worked in formal organizations, the residents also reflected spirituality in their day-to-day relationships with others. For example, Maudina Peaches Horton was raised by a deeply Christian mother. Horton's maternal grandparents were Essie and Harvey Parker, Lynwood Park founders with nine children. Their daughter Maudine was a domestic who raised five daughters alone in Lynwood Park, and Maudine Horton's spirituality focused on helping other women in the community, as her daughter Maudina Peaches Horton recalled:

*[P]eople in the community loved and respected her . . . she would house so many of the unwed mothers, or mothers that had abusive husbands . . . she had two rooms that she would use in the winter. And we would open it up during the summer, because she had about six rooms altogether. And it was raggedy, you know. But she would let all these families—like the Thompson families—Weddie, Marian, Earl Brown, and Modice . . . that didn't have anywhere to go, come in, and live until they could find a better somewhere to go . . . She loved doing for people. She had that kind of heart. And if those husbands, or old boyfriends, would come and try to force their way in with them, my mother would stand up to them. She said, "Don't make a step in toward my yard" . . . but they had so much respect for her that they wouldn't do it.<sup>29</sup>*

A member of China Grove Church all her life, Maudine Horton believed in practicing forgiveness and living God's commandments. Her husband Andrew, community baseball star, drunk, and womanizer, was also abusive to Maudine. And although this behavior was witnessed by her daughters, Maudine Horton insisted that all her children honor Andrew:

*[M]y mother loved my father . . . he drank, and he had women . . . He would get drunk on a Friday . . . and he come in and he tried to rule my mother . . . "Maudine, give me that purse . . . I want money" . . . even with that, she kept a place in our house for him. And I don't care if he would go and stay away for a month, or a year, if he walked into that door, she said, "That's your father, that's his room. You will honor him, you will obey him, you will do exactly what he says." She said, "Because what was between us, was between us, not y'all. I will deal with that" . . . I don't care how long he went away, we loved him . . .*

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<sup>29</sup> Horton, 17 September 2005, 5-8. For more on the spiritual *praxis* of African American women, see Gloria Wade-Gayles, ed. *My Soul is a Witness: African-American Women's Spirituality* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), 96-7, 161-179.



*And my sister Esther, she kind of like “He’s not my daddy. I don’t have to”—even she had to respect him. My mother wouldn’t have it any other way.<sup>30</sup>*

Maudine Horton was not an isolated case, as Evelyn Banks, born in 1933, saw the same in her mother, who attended a strict Holiness church:

*[M]y dad drank a lot . . . He never was mean to us or nothing . . . he would stay gone for weeks on end sometimes . . . then he just showed back up, like he’s been to the store to get a loaf of bread. And she wouldn’t say a word . . . and she told us that we were gonna respect him, ’cause that was our father. You could not disrespect him.<sup>31</sup>*

Patricia Jones, born in 1949, recalled that she and her siblings loved their mother, Mary “Baby Chick” Carter, because Laura “Aunt City” Patrick—the domestic worker who took in four of Baby Chick’s children—raised them to honor their mother. But more than this, Jones is an example of the tolerance practiced by the people of the community:

*[S]he dranked, but my mama had a beautiful heart . . . it was a sickness that she had, and Aunt City understood that, and I did too, and we loved her anyway . . . and she knew I loved her. And I believe in my heart that that’s why that God had blessed me because I have loved my mother. That’s what Aunt City taught me to do: “I don’t care what your mama does. That’s your mama.” And, then, the fact that [mama] had enough love that she knew she couldn’t raise us. She let somebody else do it . . . [a]nd it took a lot of love for my mother to do that . . . as a matter of fact . . . my mother told me that my dad tried to get her to let him take us down to his hometown and let his people raise us . . . She said, “No, I want to be able to see my children. I can’t get down there, you know.” And she said, “I can see them.” But Aunt City wouldn’t have let her do it—no way . . . [b]ecause [Aunt City] had a great love and respect for [Baby Chick].<sup>32</sup>*

As a child Jones was fiercely protective of Baby Chick, who was much loved in the community, and Jones also believes that God protected Baby Chick on the dangerous corner:

*I loved my mother . . . If you wanted to make me mad, you mess with my mama. And everybody in Lynwood Park knew that. So, you know, so people didn’t mess with my mama . . . God just protected her. I used to tell her all the time . . . God just kept his angels around her and just protected her . . . [H]er death certificate said she died of alcohol abuse, because she was an alcoholic . . . And in the older days she did try to stop drinking, after I got her to joint the church . . . she joined China Grove. We had her*

<sup>30</sup> Horton, 17 September 2005, 5.

<sup>31</sup> Banks, 20 October 2004, 69-70.

<sup>32</sup> Jones, 26 June 2008, 15, 41. Jones believes that her success in life is God showing her favor for having loved her mother despite Baby Chick’s difficulties.

*funeral at the church . . . I was in shock . . . that so many people came out for my mother's funeral.*<sup>33</sup>

It would be safe to generalize that every person in Lynwood Park was brought up in Christianity, and knew the criteria for behaving as a Christian in the world. Patricia Jones recalled that before she went to live with Aunt City, she, her mother, and her siblings were all packed into her grandmother's one-bedroom duplex, and Mary Wiggs, who was also a female preacher would give them food:

*[S]he would preach to the people . . . telling them the wages of sin is death. And that was when women's was afraid to speak out and be ministers. And her husband was a deacon, so she was very special, and was very concerned about people. She did a lot in the community to help . . . and we were staying with my grandmother . . . [and] she used to bring food down there and give it to us all the time, because she knew it was so many children that lived there . . . [a]t that duplex house—so she is truly an unsung hero.*<sup>34</sup>

Before she went to live with Aunt City, Patricia Jones was a Lynwood Park waif who recalled her hunger and the kindness of people in her quadrant. For example, she would sit on Essie Parker's steps on Cates Avenue and be fed, because the Parkers had so many children. Jones also recounted that Christine Allen was compassionate, but did not give Jones a handout:

*I never will forget Miss Christine. She had a great heart, and I just loved her so much. I would go over [to Horseshoe Bend] sometimes. That's when I was staying with my mama. She knew I was hungry . . . and I wouldn't even have to say it. She would say, "Pat, you want to make a few pennies?" I said, "Yes, ma'am! Yes ma'am!" And she said, "Well, go out on that ball field . . . and pick up those Coca-Cola bottles." . . . and she would give me a brown bag . . . that was a lot of work for a five-and-a-half-year-old . . . I knew Miss Christine would give me some pennies, but I didn't know how much. . . . When I took the bottles in there . . . she said, "You did real good Pat," and she gave me five nickels. That*

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<sup>33</sup> Jones, 26 June 2008, 14, 19. Baby Chick died in 1983. Jones was already a well-established community leader by that time, having established the first Lynwood Park day in 1976. Jones was well-known to county officials, and Liane Levetan was among those who attended Baby Chick's funeral.

<sup>34</sup> Jones, 26 June 2008, 30, 33. At age four and one half Jones went to live with Mary Wiggs for one year. Mary Wiggs pastored a church in Norcross, and also held Sunday service on the vacant lot that would later become the sitting park, which was owned by the Millers. Jones claims that Mary Wiggs and Aunt City were responsible for her staunch Christian upbringing. For more on this phenomenon of residents in communities steeped in poverty helping to feed and raise children collectively, see Carol Stack, *All Our Kin* (New York: Basic Books, 1974), and Lisa Dodson, *Don't Call Us Out of Name: The Untold Lives of Women and Girls in Poor America* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1998). See especially 210.

*was just like a hundred dollars back then. My eyes got so big. I said, "All of this mine, Miss Christine?". . . I bought me the big cookies, pig feet, a Coca-Cola—and still had some change left over! And then I went and I put me a penny in that juke joint box and played Billie Holiday' "Give me a Pig Foot and a Bottle of Beer." I thought I was rich that day. I thought I was rich. But she had such a good heart.*<sup>35</sup>

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The New Testament credits Saint Philip the Apostolate with converting and baptizing the first African, an Ethiopian eunuch in the service of the queen, Candace, and thus Christianity spread throughout parts of Africa.<sup>36</sup> In 1520 the Portuguese found in Ethiopia a Christianity that had been in existence for over one thousand years, which was radically different than that practiced by Europeans. And thus Gayraud Wilmore could argue that "God's revelation was alive and well in Africa before the coming of the white man," and that "Ethiopian Orthodoxy [is] the parent of all baptized Christians of African descent." Wilmore explained that African Americans practice a "black religion" that is a different version from the Judeo-Christian tradition of whites.<sup>37</sup> According to C. Eric Lincoln, black religion is usually seen as a folk version of white mainstream religion, and while black religion is a hybrid of the syncretic blending of "pre-existing religious norms," Lincoln argued that black religion in America also developed out of the black experience in America. Black Christianity has had an historic parallel with white Christianity, but the two are not interchangeable.<sup>38</sup>

E. Franklin Frazier explained that blacks initially were drawn to white Christianity through the emotionalism and social solidarity of revivals and camp meetings, and then

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<sup>35</sup> Jones, 26 June 2008, 27-8, 36. Jones refers to Essie Parker as Odessa Truitt's mother. Odessa was the sister of Maudina Peaches Horton's mother Maudine, who was married to Annie Truitt's son Joe. The Parkers lived next door to the Hortons and raised eight children. See Maudina Horton, 17 September 2005, 8-9. For more on the link between Christianity and black family "adoption," see Wallace Charles Smith, *The Church in the Life of the Black Family* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1985), 57-62.

<sup>36</sup> *The Holy Bible: Old and New Testaments in the King James Version* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1976), Acts 8: 26-40.

<sup>37</sup> Wilmore, *Black Religion*, xiii, 1, 9, 23.

<sup>38</sup> Billingsley, *Mighty Like a River*, xx-xxi.

they adapted white Christianity to their psychological and social needs.<sup>39</sup> James Cone held that white theology could not serve the black community because it was used to justify white oppression and gave divine sanction “for criminal acts committed against blacks.” Cone argued that blacks had to develop a black hermeneutic and exegesis, which also imaged God as black based on careful Christological investigation, because “Jesus was a Jew.”<sup>40</sup> More importantly, Cone believed that in black theology “the spirit of the authentic gospel is better expressed by “heretics” than by the “orthodox tradition.”<sup>41</sup> C. Eric Lincoln agreed, and wrote that formalized theological training is European in nature and is irrelevant to both white and black Christianity in America.<sup>42</sup>

Gayraud Wilmore explained that black theology was not developed exclusively in seminaries, but in black enclaves like Lynwood Park, “in the streets, beauty parlors, barber shops, pool halls, and nightclubs of the community, as well as in the churches.” In other words, a black hermeneutic employs the cadence of traditional black preaching, and adapts it to the lifestyle and thought patterns of the community.<sup>43</sup> E. Franklin Frazier wrote that dating back to slavery black preachers were “called” by God to the pulpit. The preacher believed that “God had chosen him as a spiritual leader,” and this has been the tradition of all the preachers in Lynwood Park.<sup>44</sup> Historian Nick Salvatore argued that the “called” preacher’s lack of formal education and training in “official” black theology is actually a

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<sup>39</sup> E. Franklin Frazier, *The Negro Church in America* (New York: Schocken Books, 1974), 18-9.

<sup>40</sup> James Cone, *God of the Oppressed* (New York: Seabury Press, 1975), 134.

<sup>41</sup> James H. Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation* (New York: Orbis Books, 1990), 31. Cone wrote that black theology refuses the degradation of blackness, and recognizes that Jesus was an outcast and was in the world as “one of the humiliated, suffering poor,” and Cone argued that Jesus was black, 34, 55, 113-5.

<sup>42</sup> C. Eric Lincoln, *The Black Church Since Frazier* (New York: Schocken Books, 1974), 141.

<sup>43</sup> Wilmore, *Black Religion*, 278-9.

<sup>44</sup> Frazier, *The Negro Church*, 24.

positive factor in an underclass community, because he is seen as bringing God's authentic voice to the poor, absent the educated and generally "white" interpretations of the scriptures.<sup>45</sup>

There have been no formally trained ministers in Lynwood Park. None have attended a seminary, and all but one of the churches in the community are independent and belong to no larger parent organization. In fact, the churches were all begun by charismatic, self-taught people, many of whom had only a rudimentary education.<sup>46</sup> While ministers were "called" by God and deacons were the leaders and pillars of the community, they were also human and many behaved like the congregants they were claiming to save. For example, LaTrelle Lockwood, born in 1955, said that his uncle, the Reverend Arthur Allen, had his special "water" in a mason jar:

*It was always a jar of this real, real clear water—in this Mason jar—in the back—the very, very back of the refrigerator. "Boy, don't bother that. That's my water." . . . [I'd] get a taste every once in a while—for medicinal purposes (laughs) . . . it was moonshine.<sup>47</sup>*

And Maudina Peaches Horton explained that Arthur Allen was the father of her younger sister Gina, despite being married to Lockwood's Aunt Nannie.<sup>48</sup> Horton also shared that preachers and deacons enjoyed themselves at church fundraisers:

*I wouldn't dare call their names, but all the Christians was down there having they own party with the fish fry . . . So someone came down from the corner, and . . . he went back to the corner, he said, "You know what? I'm going back down to this fish fry, 'cause I'm gon' tell you, them Christians—y'all think y'all know how to party? They know how to party" . . . And it got out that the Christians . . . were getting down with their little nips too . . . they were back there drinking . . . They wouldn't dare sell it . . . They would go on back in the room, you know: "Come back here. Get a little nip."<sup>49</sup>*

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<sup>45</sup> Nick Salvatore, *Singing in a Strange Land: C.L. Franklin, the Black Church, and the Transformation of America* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2005), 55-8, 63. Salvatore's book is a biography of C.L. Franklin, charismatic preacher called by God to the pulpit. Franklin is the father of singer Aretha, and espoused that singing was a critical function of the African American religious experience, as both an expiation of pain, and an imaging of a brighter future.

<sup>46</sup> For more on the different preaching styles of black ministers called by God to preach, see Henry H. Mitchell, *Black Preaching: The Recovery of a Powerful Art* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1990), 88-99.

<sup>47</sup> Lockwood, 22 May 2008, 4. Georgia Clement's Holiness church belonged to a statewide Church of God organization. The four churches that are extant in the community are all independent.

<sup>48</sup> See Horton, 17 September 2005, 30.

<sup>49</sup> Horton, 17 September 2005, 53.

Patricia Jones, born in 1949, said that her foster-mother Laura Aunt City Patrick sold moonshine to the leaders in Lynwood Park's churches:

*[E]ven deacons in the church, they wouldn't buy from nobody but Aunt City. We would have deacons and preachers coming down and buying quarter- and fifty-cent shots . . . That was amazing. And they would, 'cause they knew that Aunt City wouldn't tell nobody. So they wouldn't buy from nobody but Aunt City.*<sup>50</sup>

Belinda Marshall, born in 1932, recalled that Lynwood Park's Christians saw no conflict between Christianity and illegal industry:

*[T]hey would bootleg on Friday, Saturday, and come to church on Sunday, and go home and bootleg Sunday evening. But . . . they always respected the church.*<sup>51</sup>

Sociologist Kai Erikson pointed out that there is a fine line between a sinner and a saint. There is very little difference between the deviant and the "normal" person, *and* it is the community that filters out and codes fine behavioral details that are then labeled deviant. And in Lynwood Park, bootlegging before and after church was not considered deviant in an enclave so inured to illegality that it was widely accepted as normal behavior.<sup>52</sup>

Lynwood Park's Holiness churches offered residents a strict interpretation of Christianity, a clear definition of sin, and a doctrine of accountability before God for wrongdoing. Begun by W.J. Seymour in Los Angeles, black Pentecostalism at the beginning of the twentieth century swept across black communities and "continues to be one of the most powerful expressions of black faith in the world." Black Holiness and Pentecostal strands are the step-children of the black church, manifested in gospel tabernacles, and storefront and house churches. These strands are fundamentalist sects of

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<sup>50</sup> Jones, 26 June 2008, 11.

<sup>51</sup> Marshall, 10 September 2005, 20.

<sup>52</sup> Kai T. Erikson, *Wayward Puritans: A Study in the Sociology of Deviance* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1966), 7.

evangelical Protestantism, but “with the historic idiosyncrasies of the African American folk tradition, such as faith healing, foot washing, and shouting and dancing.”<sup>53</sup>

Andrew Billingsley wrote that traditional churches rejected women pastors, and so many black women founded churches in the Holiness and Pentecostal traditions.<sup>54</sup> Patricia Martin’s grandmother Georgia Clement founded the community’s first Holiness church, and Martin explained that Clement was reluctant when she was called by God:

*[S]he said that she had the calling. And that she couldn’t handle it and so she was in denial. And she became very, very sick . . . she was very sick unto death. She really thought she was going to die. She was so sick that she was incapacitated . . . And the moment that she said “yes” she was healed and she was up and out. So she decided . . . that she would build her own little church on her property.*<sup>55</sup>

Georgia Clement followed in the exhorter tradition established by black women such as Jarena Lee in the eighteenth century and Sojourner Truth in the nineteenth. When called, Lee thought she had been taken over by Satan and contemplated suicide by drowning, and said that it was “the unseen arm of God which saved me from self murder.”<sup>56</sup> Sojourner Truth was an illiterate slave who preferred her children to go hungry rather than allow herself and they to be compromised by the slave system that forced slaves to steal food and break God’s commandment. A proto-feminist, Truth asserted that women were not weak and helpless, and Jarena Lee offered the ontological argument that Jesus died for everyone, and therefore it was not his maleness but rather his humanity that was critical. In other words, women were equally recognized by God, saved by Jesus, and

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<sup>53</sup> Wilmore, *Black Religion*, 182-5.

<sup>54</sup> Billingsley, *Mighty Like a River*, 138.

<sup>55</sup> Martin, 10 February 2007, 4-5. Georgia and Lewis Clement were Lynwood Park founders. Patricia Martin, born in 1932, lived in Bagley Park in Buckhead and would be kept by her grandmother in Lynwood Park while her mother worked. Martin vividly recalls coming to her grandmother’s home in 1936, when she was four years old. This corrects the claim of Herman “Skip” Mason, Jr. who claimed that the “Clemmons” moved to Lynwood Park in 1954. See Herman “Skip” Mason, Jr., *Images of America: African-American Life in DeKalb County, 1823-1970* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 1998), 13.

<sup>56</sup> Jarena Lee, “The Life and Religious Experience of Jarena Lee,” in Catherine L. Albanese, ed. *American Spiritualities: A Reader* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2001), 204-5.

therefore qualified to preach. When asked to preach from the Bible Sojourner responded:

“Can’t read a letter,” and said that she preached from God’s direct revelation to her.<sup>57</sup>

These black women exhorters belonged to the pastoring class that Catherine Albanese termed “knowing through the heart”: preachers who are infused with the Holy Spirit and become God’s mouthpiece during the sermon.<sup>58</sup> Patricia Martin said that Georgia Clement was “holiness itself”, which meant that she lived the commandments, and that is why she was referred to by Lynwood Park’s residents as a “sanctified” woman—essentially a saint. And when Martin claimed that Georgia Clement feared “nothing, nuh-thing,” it was because Georgia Clement believed that she had been graced by God, that God was always with her, and therefore no harm would befall her. Georgia Clement was a living witness of the Bible’s teachings, and thus she could accept and be patient with her husband Lewis when his friends brought him home drunk in a wheelbarrow. And Georgia Clement could not refrain from exhorting on the dangerous boundary even if she wanted to, because that was what the Lord had commanded her to do. In other words, Georgia Clement’s strength and fearlessness came not from being a resident in a community known for its toughness, but from being a woman of God.

Georgia Clement ordained ministers, performed baptisms, taught school, healed the sick, and would pray and heal on an ad hoc basis, as Patricia Martin recalled:

*[P]eople would come by and want her to pray with them in the middle of the day . . . “Miss Georgia, I need you. Can you pray for me?” . . . and she would go out to her chapel, open it up, and pray . . . She believed in healing oil, laying on of the hands . . .*

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<sup>57</sup> Paula Giddings, *When and Where I Enter: The Impact of Black Women on Race and Sex in America* (New York: HarperCollins, 1984), 44, 54; Nell Irvin Painter, *Sojourner Truth: A Life, A Symbol* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1996); Jacquelyn Grant, *White Women’s Christ and Black Women’s Jesus: Feminist Christology and Womanist Response* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989), 211-2, 220. Grant took Cone’s argument about a black Jesus further and claims that Jesus is a black woman; Billingsley, *Mighty Like a River*, 138; Lincoln and Mamiya, *The Black Church*, 274-281.

<sup>58</sup> This applies to both men and women. See Salvatore, *Singing in a Strange Land*, 38.



*wherever your condition was—that's where she would put her hands. And the energy from her hands and your energy was to mix and [the sickness would] be gone.*<sup>59</sup>

W.E.B. Du Bois wrote that “The Music of Negro religion . . . still remains the most original and beautiful expression of human life and longing yet born on American soil,” and it was powerful enough to affect a ten-year-old John Jett. Born in 1943, Jett was already a seasoned one-shot moonshine seller by the time he discovered Georgia Clement’s church. Jett followed the sound of the mesmerizing singing. He joined Clement’s congregation because he was so welcomed there, and Jett’s grandmother also joined the church. Jett revered Georgia Clement, and said that he learned that God is real because of the miracles he witnessed in her church:

*She even looked like God . . . she would always wear gowns. And most of the time they would be white. And she was a big woman . . . might have been close to six foot tall . . . when you looked in the Bible and seen the people in the Bible—that's what she looked like . . . she was somebody like Mother Theresa. She was a real saint . . .*

*When they prayed, things happened right then . . . I seen my grandmother—we was poor people . . . and I would see her pray for food . . . white churches would come by before we could get up off our knees and bring us food . . . boxes of food . . .*

*And just like when a light bill needed to be paid [my grandmother] will pray. And before we could get up off our knees somebody was out there blowing the horn: “Tell Ms. Cook that I ain’t got time to come in, but get this to her”. . . It’d be money, and she could pay all her bills . . . People would give her money. People that she hadn’t seen in years . . . They didn’t owe her no money. They would just come by just because we prayed . . .*

*And I would see [one] of the brothers in the church, which he was called Brother Parker . . . they didn’t believe in doctors . . . he would have a toothache . . . I would see him stand up and pray and the bad tooth would fall out of his mouth.*<sup>60</sup>

Patricia Martin said that Georgia Clement lived a life of pure spirituality, and that God was never out of her grandmother’s consciousness:

*My grandmother was very, I guess, what they call devout. [She] got up every morning and got on her knees and prayed out loud . . . She read the Bible through and through every day, every day . . . And then at night she was on her knees again praying.*<sup>61</sup>

<sup>59</sup> Martin, 10 February 2007, 10-12. Georgia Clement was a domestic worker, a laundress who made her own soap, a midwife, pastor to her flock, and the enclave’s piercer of earlobes. Martin, 10 February 2007, 11.

<sup>60</sup> Green and Driver, *W.E.B. Du Bois*, 215; Jett, 21 January 2007, 4-6, 15-8. Georgia Clement was fair-skinned, had straight hair, and looked Native American. Clement’s father was full-blooded Cherokee.

<sup>61</sup> Martin, 10 February 2007, 10.

Martin explained Clement's understanding of the individual's relationship with God:

*God does not push himself off on us. He says that "I stand at the door and knock, and if you open I will come in and sup with you." And what that means . . . is that I am here ready to give you whatever you want because I'm a divine giver. But I won't force it on you. But I'm gonna be there with you all the time. I'm not gonna leave you. You can pull all the curtains you want to around, and you can say anything you want to say. But I'm here. And the moment that you turn to me, I've already turned to you. And so when . . . they sing a song I Surrender: "I Surrender all/All to thee my blessed Saviour/I surrender all" . . . and that's what I think my grandmother was . . . she surrendered. Her everything was like a prayer: "Okay, now, God, we fixin to go." "Alright, now, God, we fixin to eat." "Alright, now, God, we fixin to sit." "Alright, now, God, we fixin to do this." "Let your will be done, Lord."<sup>62</sup>*

As a child, John Jett was profoundly affected by Georgia Clement and the proof in her church of the existence of God. Patricia Martin recounted that Clement also taught the congregation through drawings, which left lasting impressions:

*The thing that I thought was so remarkable about my grandmother was that on the edge of the pulpit was a large blackboard and my grandmother would draw the picture of whatever she was talking about. And I remember her saying, "Broad is the way that leads to destruction," and there was this broad road going there, and "Many goes there." And she had little stick people going there. "But narrow is the road that leads to God, to Heaven." And she would have one stick person every now and then. And that was very significant to me and I've never forgotten that."<sup>63</sup>*

And neither did John Jett, who deeply believed Georgia Clement's teachings about accountability for one's actions, which made Jett leave her church because of his involvement in illegality:

*[When] you became thirteen years old you came account of your sins. And when I became thirteen years old I left the church. And I started out into the world. And along my journey I knew that there were certain things that I wasn't supposed to do . . . I knew that God was watching over me as I do all the bad things that I'd done. I knew that I wasn't supposed to kill. I knew that was an unforgivable sin. I knew that I wasn't supposed to just do bad, do really bad things to people . . . I knew the bad things that I would have to give an account of. And I knew that I wouldn't do them. I did bad things, but they was limited, because of the church I was raised up in . . . when you went to that church you seen that God was real and it was up to you . . . You come into her church if you wanted to*

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<sup>62</sup> Martin, 10 February 2007, 48-9.

<sup>63</sup> Martin, 10 February 2007, 13.

*worship God, truly worship God. You was allowed to worship God and go and come as you pleased to live your life like you want to live. But she taught you the truth. And it was up to you to live by the truth, you know. So she didn't force you to do anything.*<sup>64</sup>

What Jett learned in Georgia Clement's church stayed his hand, and kept him from escalating to the kingpin level when he became a crack cocaine dealer.

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Max Weber argued that God graced some individuals with salvation before the creation of the world, which established a "spiritual aristocracy of predestined saints of God within the world." The elected are required to glorify God by fulfilling the commandments, and "mere knowledge of theology by no means guaranteed the proof of faith through conduct." Moreover, salvation came only to those so graced and not through good works.<sup>65</sup> The Apostle Peter said in Acts 10:34 that "God is no respecter of persons," and that is why Jarena Lee, Sojourner Truth, and Georgia Clement could be called to the pulpit.<sup>66</sup> Lynwood Park's Cornelius Sawyer, born in 1917, is also one of God's elect, who said, "I believe that I had a calling in my life before I was born . . . God speaks through my spirit . . . And that's what we need to hear from Heaven."<sup>67</sup>

Sawyer was stricken with polio at age "five or seven" and considers it a blessing, because it was God's way of marking him as different, which also protected him from the peer pressure of a boy's running group:

*[M]y character was different . . . You know that you've got a calling in your life . . . I was different from any of my brothers . . . I didn't drink. I didn't smoke . . . I didn't run around. I wasn't any better, but there were some things that I disliked and sometime if you got some buddies, if you don't do what they do, they dislike you. So I had lots of friends that disliked me because I didn't approve of what they were doing.*<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Jett, 21 January 2007, 5-6, 9.

<sup>65</sup> Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 121, 129.

<sup>66</sup> *The Holy Bible*, Acts 10:34, 1618.

<sup>67</sup> Cornelius Sawyer, interview with author, 9 February 2007, transcript, 6, 16.

<sup>68</sup> Sawyer, 9 February 2007, 6, 12-6.

Like Georgia Clement, Sawyer was a reluctant saint:

*You know that you've got a calling in your life . . . [and] I really didn't think that I was going to be a preacher. And I felt like God—I heard God—he just wants to bless me. And so I tried to get out of it.<sup>69</sup>*

Cornelius Sawyer left school after the seventh grade, worked as a yardman, then at the Bell Bomber plant in Marietta as a janitor, married Margaret in 1947, and then worked as a butler for a wealthy doctor on Habersham Road. But God would not be denied and Sawyer knew that he had to preach. His minister at Piney Grove Baptist Church allowed him a trial sermon, because the congregation also had to confirm his authenticity, that he was truly called by God to the pulpit. Sawyer remembered that the church was packed:

*[E]verything worked out, because God was in the midst. And when God is in the midst of anything it's got to be blessed . . . there is something about you when God had a special calling in your life. You may try to get rid of it, but you can't. It's gonna be there. When God stamps his love in my heart and, you know, if I didn't have Jesus I couldn't be up there on the corner. But because of my love for God and what he had done, I had no doubt that he was in my calling . . . It was something different in my calling and accepting it . . . That was a different feeling when I accepted the call and had my trial sermon.<sup>70</sup>*

Psychologist and philosopher William James argued that the congregation has a series of tests to determine the authenticity of those who claim to be called by God, not only of the first event, but for the rest of the saint's life. James wrote: "The roots of a man's virtue are inaccessible to us," which means that no one can confirm that God called a particular person to preach. In other words, it is not the root—the calling itself—that authenticates the saint, but rather the fruits—what the person becomes after accepting the calling, and does with his/her life afterward. And it is the community that judges whether or not a person is authentically called, through an examination of his/her fruits after

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<sup>69</sup> Sawyer, 9 February 2007, 15.

<sup>70</sup> Sawyer, 9 February 2007, 7, 12, 19-24. Sawyer is saying that having God with him enabled him to have a church on the corner of Lynwood Park's dangerous boundary.

accepting the calling. According to James, the criteria for authenticity include

luminousness in the person and a moral helpfulness, and Sawyer remarked:

*Jesus said, "I will not share my glory with anybody." Glory of God is supposed to shine through us. And my belief is before we leave this world, some of us, we got to have the glory of God shining on the inside.<sup>71</sup>*

Sawyer began a church in his home and said that his father Will, a man of humble means, influenced his preaching style:

*We used to have a cow and a mule and a wagon. That's with what it was my daddy worked, doing yards . . . [and] my daddy was a deacon of . . . Piney Grove Baptist Church. . . . [He] was also superintendent of the Sunday school. He just went to the . . . first grade or the third grade, but my daddy didn't have much schooling, but he could pronounce those words in the Bible as good as anybody I've ever heard.<sup>72</sup>*

Sawyer's congregation grew steadily and he moved onto the corner in 1977. In the spirit of cooperation practiced by Lynwood Park's established churches, Sawyer received a lot of help from China Grove church, *and* the men on the dangerous boundary, whose help, Sawyer said, made them part owner of his church, whether or not they attended:

*[W]e got along with the guys . . . Sometimes they would come by. . . alcoholic, drug user—[they] have a part of the church. If I had to lift something heavy, I'd call the guys . . . they just wanted me to ask them to come over and help me.<sup>73</sup>*

Like Georgia Clement, Sawyer surrendered himself to God. And just as Annie Truitt overcame her age and infirmity when filled with the Holy Spirit, Sawyer forgot his affliction, which is Sawyer's confirmation that God is a real and positive force:

*I really don't know what God has for me in the future, but I believe that he has given me enough grace to go forward . . . I got to wait for God to point the way. And I know he will . . . because, you know . . . one of my legs is shorter than the other one, but when I'm in the church, the spirit be so high sometimes, we run on the inside—we run around the church.<sup>74</sup>*

<sup>71</sup> William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (New York: Modern Library, 1994), 21-24; Sawyer, 9 February 2007, 47.

<sup>72</sup> Sawyer, 9 February 2007, 6-7.

<sup>73</sup> Sawyer, 9 February 2007, 27-8, 38-9.

<sup>74</sup> Sawyer, 9 February 2007, 38. Soon after they were married Margaret Sawyer was told that she would not have children unless she had an operation costing five hundred dollars, which the Sawyers did not have. The

While God temporarily took away his affliction, Sawyer was known to heal through the laying on of hands—just as Georgia Clement did—as part of the Holiness tradition:

*We would clap our hands and I would lay my hands on some of them and they would be slain in the spirit . . . They'd be out . . . I didn't do it—God did it. And that's the way it should be . . . [it's about] believing [and] faith. Faith in God . . . [people] just need to realize their sickness sometime is the work of Satan and not of God.*

*Now if Satan can put a spirit on us, why can't God, being the God he is, take it off? Now God just give me that. Now that's something there. Have you ever thought about it? You hear what I said? Did you hear what I said? . . . if Satan can give anybody sickness . . . why can't people believe that Jesus can heal someone that is sick? Did you get that?*

*Well, people would rather believe what the Devil says than believe what God said. God said, "I'm the Lord thy God that heals thee." . . . when you come in here today, you came in and sit right there where you are with faith. I didn't see you took yourself any time to see whether you can hold onto anything. Well, that's the way faith is. Faith is believing the word of God, with power and with strength. And he is the healer. He is the one that said, "I will be with you." And there is no other God. God said can't nobody match up with him. So there you are.<sup>75</sup>*

Michael Englehaupt, a white man who was out “on the street,” was seized by God and born again. He then went from church to church trying to live a proper Christian life, and was told that he had to follow God’s law—the Ten Commandments—in order to receive salvation. Englehaupt tried to follow the commandments, and was distraught because he kept returning to sinning. One day Englehaupt was driving west on Windsor Parkway, and came to the intersection at Osborne Road, the community’s gateway: “And I looked over to my right,” he said, “and just like a spirit told me to look there, and he says, ‘You need to go in there. The Truth is being taught in there,’ so I whipped my car around right underneath the light right there and I drove in and I walked in the church.” In Cornelius Sawyer Englehaupt found no accusations or laws to follow, only welcome:

*Bishop has something that nobody else has ever had that I've ever met. And that is love. I've never met that in anybody else. Never, never, never, never, never . . . It was the Word that came out of him, and it wasn't condemning. It was accepting me . . . I've been to a lot*

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Sawyers prayed and God healed her and blessed them with five children. Sawyer sees this as proof that God has blessed him and will always be with him. Sawyer, 9 February 2007, 31-3.

<sup>75</sup> Sawyer, 9 February 2007, 50-3.

*of big churches in Atlanta . . . Nobody ever expressed love to me . . . And when that started happening through the Bishop, I got accepted by God. I didn't have to do something to get God's favor and God's blessings. And it was just amazing. Once I learned that I was accepted, my whole life changed . . . I [now] go to a lot of different churches. I believe that I'm supposed to be there to encourage other people . . . 'cause I know a lot of people were under the law like I was . . . the Ten Commandments.<sup>76</sup>*

Englehaupt shared that every church he went to tried to put him under the law—the Ten Commandments—and he kept going back to sinning:

- ME: *Bishop says to me one day, "Mike, when you were out there running around in the streets of Atlanta doing all the stuff you wanted to do, did God save you then?" I says, "Yeah." "So why did you come into the church here and think now you gotta be doing this and that, and this and that, and the church putting you under the law? So He saved you out there. So now you come in here and we want to put you under the law and handcuff you, say you got to be this way, you gotta do this, you gotta do this, you gotta do that?" [Sawyer] says, "No, just let Him do it to you. . . . He who started a good work in you is faithful to finish it." [Sawyer] says, "It's not me doing it. It's not the church doing it. It's not this building doing it, and these people in here doing it. It's He who started it. And He started out there when you were outside on some street corner or someplace in the middle of the night. He started it when you got saved. . . . He's the one that's gonna do it in you. So it's a daily thing that He does.*
- VMH: *So you don't think that you have to go out and do good works?*
- ME: *No, it'll happen. It will just happen naturally . . .*
- VMH: *[It's not about] going to church and getting on your knees every Sunday?*
- ME: *No, no . . . 'cause every Sunday is today . . . You know he's with you all the time. Once you start learning about His love it changes you, supernaturally . . . It just comes down on you. And you say, "God, I've never felt this way before."*
- VMH: *So that is what makes you change your behavior.*
- ME: *Oh, of course—love.*
- VMH: *You're not changing your behavior to get God's love; it is God's love that makes you change your behavior.*
- ME: *That's right. That's exactly right . . . He loved me first.*
- VMH: *God loved you first?*
- ME: *That's right.<sup>77</sup>*

Englehaupt described the difference between Bishop Sawyer and judgmental others:

*[Sawyer] used [God's] love to love me . . . everybody comes up and . . . they empty themselves to him . . . and then he shows them love. It's just like sitting on God's lap. It's*

<sup>76</sup> Sawyer, 9 February 2007, 69-72. Englehaupt walked in during Sawyer's interview and consented to speaking on the record. Sawyer was called by God to the Bishopric around 2003.

<sup>77</sup> Sawyer, 9 February 2007, 69, 73-5.

*like when the prodigal son came back . . . he goes walking down the road and his daddy meets him out at the mailbox . . . and [the son] says, "I sinned against you and I sinned against God." Now, that was me . . . and He put a ring on my finger, He put slippers on my feet, and He put a cloak around him. And I wanted to go choke my daddy and say, "Wait a second. How about my sin?" Well, all of the sudden it came to me through the Holy Spirit—he can't see my sin, 'cause of Jesus . . . [Sawyer] says, "Michael, what are you talking about? I can't see your sin. I don't know what that is." . . . that's what I got through the Bishop . . . [sin was] all I could see about me . . . That's not in the Bishop to judge . . .*

*[W]hen I met the Bishop I started learning about love and I got accepted. Even though I messed up I got accepted. I've been to a lot of other churches when I got saved and all I heard was law, the Ten Commandments—you got to do this, you got to do that. But all of a sudden I didn't hear that here, you know, and the Bishop accepted me the way I was. And all of a sudden my life started changing. The things I hated about myself, you know, God was just taking them away from me, you know. And I wasn't doing it. He was doing it. And it was just a miracle to me that things like that were happening in my life . . . it sure is a lot different and a lot more comforting than it was, you know, way back then twelve years ago. [Sawyer] says, "We use this word love in reference to God, and we can't even come close to the knowledge of what that is. That's way beyond us. We put letters to it, l-o-v-e, but God is love. It should be G-o-d."<sup>78</sup>*

Englehaupt believes that the Ten Commandments—the Law—is “a curse. Nobody could keep that,” which makes Christians continually feel like sinners.

There has been a longstanding debate in Christianity since the Reformation about how a Christian achieves salvation. One group maintains that there is a path to God and salvation through upholding the Commandments, practicing rituals regularly, such as gathering together and praying, and doing good works for the expiation of sins, and the sharing of God's generosity in the world. Englehaupt's account largely confirmed Martin Luther's claim that God's grace is freely given, and that following church tradition and doing good works is not necessary for salvation and entrance into Heaven.

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Social and political scientist Paul Connerton claimed that the body and its habitual performance of rituals create the spiritual self. In effect, rituals are learning devices that

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<sup>78</sup> Sawyer, 9 February 2007, 75-7.



are critical to spirituality and the performing of acts of worship shapes the inner self and changes a person's thinking and behavior. For example, kneeling creates humility, while a praying body points to God and obliges the praying person to think of good over evil. Therefore, the worshipping body creates a habit-memory that in turn creates the religious self through the repetition of rituals over time.<sup>79</sup> Similarly, religion historian Tamar Frankiel claimed that rituals "are connected to a different state of consciousness [and] prayer should open my heart to God," while American religion historian Robert Orsi pointed out that worshipping in public and sharing one's religious experiences among a community of believers is a way of building spirituality.<sup>80</sup>

While Connerton, Frankiel, and Orsi hold that the body and its rituals creates spirituality, other thinkers argued that spirituality is an event of the heart and is experienced in private, and cannot be created through the habits of the body. For example, William James wrote about the psychology of religious experience and mysticism, and explained that rituals are meaningless, since the essence of all religion is internal and depends on "the feelings, acts, and experiences of individual men in their solitude."<sup>81</sup> James was essentially echoing Saint Paul's letter to the Romans 3:28, which was later interpreted by Martin Luther to mean "God judges what is in the depths of the heart. Therefore his law also makes demands on the depths of the heart and doesn't let the heart rest content in works; rather it punishes as hypocrisy and lies all works done apart from the depths of the heart."<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 72-104.

<sup>80</sup> Tamar Frankiel, "Thought, Speech, Action: Rhythms of Jewish Life," in *American Spiritualities*, 113; Robert Orsi, "He Keeps Me Going: Women's Devotion to Saint Jude Thaddeus and the Dialectics of Gender in American Catholicism, 1929-1965," in Thomas Kselman ed. *Belief in History* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991), 137-162.

<sup>81</sup> James, *The Varieties*, 36.

<sup>82</sup> Martin Luther, trans. Brother Andrew Thornton, "Preface to the Letter of St. Paul to the Romans," [www.ccel.org/l/luther/romans/pref\\_romans.html](http://www.ccel.org/l/luther/romans/pref_romans.html), accessed 24 March 2007.

After John Jett left Georgia Clement's church at age thirteen he attended China Grove because it was not fastidious about accountability. Jett then left the church completely at age sixteen, and returned to China Grove at age fifty-eight, after serving time in prison for crack cocaine trafficking. From 2001 to 2006 Jett faithfully attended church, prayed dutifully, and tithed. Jett considered himself a Christian, albeit one who committed small sins, such as drinking alcohol and living with a woman out of wedlock. In fact, Jett testified before the China Grove congregation about his turnaround from criminality to practicing Christian. Jett credited his time in prison for allowing him to "see the light" such that he was able to get back onto the path to God—the narrow way Georgia Clement had drawn on the blackboard and said that only a few make the journey.<sup>83</sup>

After leaving prison Jett worked in the home-remodeling business. And two months after testifying in church, on October 20, 2006, Jett fell fifteen feet from a deck on which he was working, onto the concrete below. He fractured a vertebra in his neck, and lost consciousness. Jett was sixty-three. When he awoke in the hospital he was aware of a bright light in his head and that he was a completely new person looking out onto a transformed world. Paralyzed from the neck down, Jett maintained in 2007 that the accident was the moment when he became a Christian through God's grace, although he had been in love with God and the church from age ten, when he had discovered Georgia Clement's church.<sup>84</sup>

In 2005, one year before his accident, Jett had alluded to believing that he had been selected by God for a special purpose when he said, "I . . . believe that I do have a spiritual

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<sup>83</sup> Jett, 21 January 2007, 1-3.

<sup>84</sup> Jett, 21 January 2007, 3, 26; Jett, 13 November 2005, 40. There was a schism in China Grove in 2004 and the majority of the congregation, including Jett and Minnie Lee Weddie Thompson, left China Grove with the pastor Roger L. Parris, who established the Revelation Tabernacle Baptist Ministries in Chamblee. Many of China Grove's former members, including Thompson, have returned to worship in Lynwood Park, since the installation of Brian Macon as pastor. Jett remained with Parris's congregation.

calling. And I'm still seeking that now."<sup>85</sup> Three months after the accident Jett said that as a child he had had a recurring dream that he would be a preacher, and added: "I always knew that I would end up back in the church, because that was my calling—to be in the church." While Jett was a staunch churchgoer and practicing Christian, which Connerton, Frankiel, and Orsi would argue made him a spiritual person, Jett said of his former self and his Christian cohorts and their way of worshipping and honoring God:

*That's not a relationship with God . . . Most of us got a relationship with the church. And you will find that eighty percent of all churches—they just got a relationship with that church, not with God. And that's what I changed around. I had a relationship with the church, and now I've got a relationship with God.*"<sup>86</sup>

Jett came to realize that having a relationship with the church, rather than God, gives congregants a false sense of security that they will go to Heaven when they die. Similarly, congregational minister Thomas Shepherd argued that resting in duties is a path to Hell, because "by virtue of these duties a man may hide his sin, and live quietly in his sin, yet be accounted an honest man, as the whore in Prov. 7:15, 16, having performed her vows, can entice without suspicion of men or check of conscience."<sup>87</sup> In a similar vein, the fiery theologian Jonathan Edwards found in his decades of searching for God and performing rituals that he always returned to the old habit of sinning, "like a dog to its vomit," which is what Michael Englehaupt discovered when he tried to live by the Ten Commandments and the church's "Thou shalt nots."<sup>88</sup>

For James, Shepherd, and Edwards—and Englehaupt and Jett—spirituality is not authentic unless it involves an event of the heart. For example, despite years of

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<sup>85</sup> Jett, 21 January 2007, 27.

<sup>86</sup> Jett, 21 January 2007, 40.

<sup>87</sup> Thomas Shepherd, "The Sin of Resting in Duties," *The Sincere Convert*, Fire and Ice Sermon Series, <http://www.puritansermons.com/pdf/shepherd4.pdf>, accessed 23 March 2007.

<sup>88</sup> Jonathan Edwards, *Personal Writings*, John E. Smith, et al., eds. *A Jonathan Edwards Reader* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995), 282.

performing works, it was only when Edwards was near death that he realized that God's grace is freely given, with no regard to rituals. Edwards then saw that in performing rituals there is too much of the self that is seeking after God. Edwards explained that he was like the majority of practicing Christians who seek God with "too great dependence on my own strength." Edwards indicated that it was only when he was at his lowest point, when his ego was completely eradicated in the abyss of despair, that God's grace pierced through to that "depth below hell to lift him up with grace." He then was "totally wrapped up in the fullness of Christ . . . perfectly sanctified and made pure."<sup>89</sup> Similarly, Jett had his conversion experience when he was placed under extreme stress. It is therefore not surprising that Jett looks upon his tragedy as a gift. He thanks God for his accident, which makes him feel special and safe, because it is God's way of letting him know that "if I was to die tonight that I would go to Heaven."<sup>90</sup> And so instead of being angry with God and ask "Why me?" Jett views the accident as "Why not me?"<sup>91</sup>

Catherine Albanese wrote that a conversion experience is a "breakthrough to glory," which is accompanied by a sense that one is being grasped and taken over by God. This new birth in the spirit is a way of knowing God through the heart rather than through the body or the intellect, which then begins a process in which the heart feeling of the convert transmutes "into the passion and zeal of the missionary."<sup>92</sup> Like Michael Englehaupt, Jett believes he now has an active, reciprocal relationship with God, which is also a mandate to take up the cross and become a missionary, traveling from church to church, testifying and exhorting others to give themselves to God:

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<sup>89</sup> Edwards, *Personal Writings*, 286-7, 293.

<sup>90</sup> Jett, 21 January 2007, 21; Jett, 11 March 2007, 78,

<sup>91</sup> Jett, 21 January 2007, 57.

<sup>92</sup> Albanese, *American Spiritualities*, 280-2.

*So, now I can tell it . . . and I can tell 'em about my life . . . I've lived sixty three good years . . . So now God wants me to tell about them sixty three years. And I can tell it in the hope that somebody will be inspired by what has happened to me. And how God knocked me down to get my attention. Don't let him knock you down and get your attention. Because if I can tell what happened to me, maybe that would stop you from getting knocked down.*<sup>93</sup>

Jett is becoming a priestly person and feels exhilarated about testifying, the outlet for his calling, and is transfixed by the thought of doing God's work. His religious belief system is now based on an interpersonal relationship with God, rather than a creedal belief or abstract faith, and when he goes out to testify, he wants to be a living witness not as what God has done *to* him, but what God has done *for* him.<sup>94</sup> And while God broke his body, Jett holds that his mind was deliberately left intact and even sharper in order to spread God's word:

*[I]f I don't walk again, it ain't gonna worry me . . . 'cause God made sure I had my right mind . . . when I woke up, my mind was so bright that I thought I had a spotlight in my head . . . And I said, "God, you saved my life, and I'm gonna give it to you." I'm a Christian now. I know people will say, "Yeah, you all messed up now, and now you want to be a Christian." . . . they is so right . . . [but] I don't call it messed up—I call it blessed. Because He could've killed me that day. And I'd a died in sin. And that's the worst thing you can ever do for yourself is to die in sin.*<sup>95</sup>

The scholar and scientist Joseph Chilton Pearce explained that the conversion experience is a psychological transformation, a *laser* that “centers the diffusing and fragmented energy into a tight potent focus.”<sup>96</sup> Jonathan Edwards maintained that his conversion brought an “inexpressible purity, brightness, peacefulness, and ravishment to the soul” and that he would spend long moments “sweetly conversing with Christ, and wrapped and swallowed up in God,” which is similar to accounts of Georgia Clement and

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<sup>93</sup> Jett, 21 January 2007, 26.

<sup>94</sup> Jett, 21 January 2007, 29.

<sup>95</sup> Jett, 21 January 2007, 28.

<sup>96</sup> Joseph Chilton Pearce, *The Crack in the Cosmic Egg* (New York: Mentor Books, 1958), 186.

Cornelius Sawyer.<sup>97</sup> Similarly, Jett displays a peaceful mien and quiet calm about his condition. He is comforted by the favor of God and of his divine inspiration, and has embraced a new life through rebirth in Christ. And like Edwards, Jett claims that he is in constant conversation with God, and that God made his presence known immediately after Jett's accident:

VMH: *How do you communicate with God now?*  
 JJ: *I pray, and He shows up.*  
 VMH: *And He what?*  
 JJ: *And He shows up.*  
 VMH: *How does He show up?*  
 JJ: *I've felt hands rubbing on me. I've felt hands rubbing on my back.*  
 VMH: *Even though you're lying on your back?*  
 JJ: *Even though I was laying on my back. I've felt hands touching me . . . felt like somebody was touching me . . . And I know it's God assuring me that He's here . . . the hand that rubbed me is soft—gentle rubs. The hands are smooth . . . I know who it is.*<sup>98</sup>

Secure in the knowledge that he is one of God's chosen, Jett now intends to light the way for others by means of example. He intends to become a broker of grace in the world, much like Jonathan Edwards, who claimed that after his conversion his life became one of "humble, unfeigned confidence in him," and Edwards dedicated his life to the promotion of "Christ's kingdom in the world." And Jett also believes that he is now the instrument of a higher will.<sup>99</sup> Anthropologist Susan Harding explained that the inner speech of the converted is transformed and that they are alienated from their previous voices.<sup>100</sup> Harding described this process as the Holy Spirit first speaking to the convert's heart, and then once he is saved, "the Holy Spirit assumes your voice, speaks through you, and begins to rephrase your life."<sup>101</sup>

<sup>97</sup> Edwards, *Personal Writings*, 284, 287.

<sup>98</sup> Jett, 21 January 2007, 37.

<sup>99</sup> Edwards, *Personal Writings*, 292.

<sup>100</sup> Susan Harding, "Convicted by the Spirit," *American Ethnologist*, 14, 1 (1987): 167-181, 170.

<sup>101</sup> Susan Harding, *The Book of Jerry Falwell: Fundamentalist Language and Politics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), 60.

Yet merely claiming conversion is not enough. One has to provide proof of a complete change in order to be considered authentic. In addition, this proof requires that some element of the changed inner self flow outward through the physical self. Possession by the Holy Spirit causes many to fall into swoons and others to speak in tongues. For Annie Truitt it represented youthful vigor, such that she could throw aside her cane and run out of the church and down the road. And for Cornelius Sawyer, it meant that his crippling from polio could not keep him from running around inside his church. For Jonathan Edwards, the outward proof was a flood of tears and weeping aloud.<sup>102</sup>

John Jett was born and raised in Lynwood Park, known for its toughness, Christianity, and criminality, and he said that one effect of crack cocaine trafficking is that “you begin to lose your feelings for people. You begin to be suspicious of everybody.”<sup>103</sup>

Yet God sensitized his heart, and Jett said of his conversion:

*He gave me a heart that cries . . . I was a tough guy before . . . The life I had before—for me to sit up here and cry in front of you—that never would have happened . . . [I] never showed my emotions about anything. If I lose the love of my life, I showed no emotions about it . . . I raised myself that way . . . And I couldn’t show no sign of weakness in the games that I was playing . . . now I can cry in front of the whole world and it won’t bother me . . . I’m emotional. And I’m more considerate about everything . . . And I sit up and I laugh about that: “Say, man, you got a new heart. You got a new soul.”<sup>104</sup>*

The accident not only broke Jett’s body, but fractured time for him as well, much in the same way that the birth of Jesus divided time into before and after the event. Jett explained that he was born again and insisted that he wanted to be baptized again because “The last person they baptized was another person. I’m a new person now.”<sup>105</sup> And he also now wants to be known by a new name Charles, instead of John. In effect, Jett’s

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<sup>102</sup> Edwards, *Personal Writings*, 293.

<sup>103</sup> Jett, 13 November 2005, 37-8.

<sup>104</sup> Jett, 11 March 2007, 20-3.

<sup>105</sup> Jett, 11 March 2007, 25-6.

accident was a highly effective mechanism for breaking down and reconfiguring his personal identity.

The religious anthropologist Bemmetta Jules-Rosette explained that conversion is a powerful slash, “a moment of specific shock,” which alters the “very physical terms of existence.” This is accompanied by a new alertness and “another sense of [the] self in time and space.”<sup>106</sup> Before the accident Jett was a self constituted in the world, while he is now constituting a new and authentic spiritual self in God, in order to do God’s work in the world. Susan Harding argued that conversion represents an inner rite of passage, where the self is regenerated, and “washed in the blood of Christ.” A new self, “spiritual man,” then emerges, and the newborn Christian “begins to speak the language of Christ.”<sup>107</sup>

In determining the authenticity of ecstatic religious experience, William James argued that it is necessary to judge the “fruits”: one must evaluate whether or not the experience changed the person’s life afterward from one worldview and mindset to another. From this position, “it is disbelief that is false and unthinking,” and John Jett meets James’s critical criterion of proof.<sup>108</sup> Jett claimed that his previous life was God sending him into the wilderness at age thirteen, and his criminal activity was his trials. Jett was “on the street” in illegality most of his life, yet remained safe and whole physically:

*I didn’t know that He was sending me off into the wilderness . . . I had to go and be accountable for my sins. See, He sent me into the wilderness way back then, because if you think of the life I lived, I don’t have no cuts on me, I don’t have no bullet holes on me. And just think about it. I was a drug dealer . . . that’s why I say that God kept me from going to a higher level into the drug world.*<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> Bemmetta Jules-Rosette, “The Conversion Experience: The Apostles of John Maranke.” in *Journal of Religion in Africa*, 7, 2 (1975): 132-164, 134-5.

<sup>107</sup> Harding, “Convicted,” *American Ethnologist*, 170.

<sup>108</sup> James, *The Varieties*, 21.

<sup>109</sup> Jett, 11 March 2007, 45; Jett, 13 November 2005, 47.



Jett now believes his previous wholeness were signs of God's protection and the validation that God always had a higher purpose for him. Jett also believes that God gave him a personality that enabled him to view the horizon of life, to study human nature, so that he could help others later:

JJ: *I didn't mix very well . . . with other people.*

VMH: *So you're kind of a loner?*

JJ: *I would say, "Yes." Always have been. And it wasn't that I was hard to get along with . . . I really don't know how to explain what it was or what it is about people that I don't mix very well with. I'm not a nasty person. I got a good personality. And I love everybody. But I don't mix very well—never have as a child . . . I really do think God allowed me to be able to stand back and look, you know. I think he fixed it to where I would be like that, where I could stand back and look and not be a part of the crowd.<sup>110</sup>*

And Jett explained his new personality, and remarked of his experience and future goals:

*I have a different heart, a different mind. My whole being is different. I think different now, in everything. I just can't wait to get back to my calling. And my calling has always been as being a faith strengthener. So I can go out and strengthen people's faith as far as the Lord is concerned. And we need that and peoples need to hear it from a person like me . . . When they stand up and see 'ole Bay Brother talk about Jesus, it's gone make 'em think . . . "Well, if God can save him, he can save anybody."<sup>111</sup>*

Jett claimed that as a crack cocaine dealer he had a Christian compassion for his

customers, and that drug dealing prepared him for being a convincing missionary:

*I knew [dealing drugs] was sinning, and I wasn't just an 'ole dirty-dirt drug dealer. I wouldn't sell to a lot of people. If I find out that he got a family I would explain to him what this stuff will do to you, what it would do to your family: "You're gon' lose your family if you continue to do this . . . That's the first thing you gon' lose."*

*I would set 'em down there . . . especially when I find a husband and a wife doing it . . . I would set them down and say, "Hey, you're gon' lose your family, you're gon' lose your wife, because these drugs takes the place of all of that. That don't mean nothing to you no more after a while."*

*I would say, "But since I'm selling, and I know you gon' buy it, buy it from me, because I'm gon' give it to you the best that you can get it. And if you getting it good you gonna last a long time. Maybe you might change your mind before you really get really messed up with this." And I did that on a lot of cases . . . when I was hands-on selling . . .*

*I was a drug dealer with compassion for people . . . So now . . . when I go to the churches and tell peoples about drugs, I know what I'm talking about. Everything that I'm*

<sup>110</sup> Jett, 21 January 2007, 43-4.

<sup>111</sup> Jett, 11 March 2007, 24.

*gon' preach about I'm already done experienced it. And I think I done experienced enough in life to be able to make a person at least think about what they're doing. Because they talking to a man that most of 'em know what I been.*<sup>112</sup>

Nick Salvatore wrote that God, although demanding much, was also a God of forgiveness, and faith in his grace redeemed worshippers. In addition, testifying about God's grace is proof that God takes an interest in every single person, "and that carried with it a sense of personal worth and recognition, of being somebody." The testifier is a living witness of God's grace and this sends a message to the congregation that redemption is possible for all of humanity's sinners—that even the most lowly could be a somebody to God, thus proving that God is no respecter of persons. Maudina Peaches Horton claimed that God will forgive anyone who reaches out, and echoed what the residents of Lynwood Park believe when she said, "I'm a true believer in a living witness." And Gary McDaniel confirmed that every sinner in Lynwood Park is capable of receiving God's grace:

*[E]ven them that's on the street that was on crack cocaine, on alcohol, that was stealing—everybody got some Christian ties in Lynwood Park. Peoples in Lynwood Park know God. . . . ninety-eight out of a hundred percent know how to fall down on their knees and ask God for forgiveness.*<sup>113</sup>

Many who experience heart conversion are periodically wracked by doubt. Jonathan Edwards continually doubted and reaffirmed his spirituality throughout his life, and Jarena Lee even went so far as believing that she "was driven of Satan" and contemplated self-murder. Jett deviates dramatically from this norm and has expressed no doubts thus far, and is as convinced of God's grace as Georgia Clement, Cornelius Sawyer, and Michael Englehaupt:

*[W]hen I realized that God had spared my life, I totally gave God my whole heart, my whole soul, and everything . . . And it's bad that you have to be in a situation like this*

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<sup>112</sup> John Jett, interview by author, 11 March 2007, transcript, 26-8. For more on being called by God leading to testifying in church and missionary work in the African American community, see Preston Robert Washington, *God's Transforming Spirit: Black Church Renewal* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1988), 71-8.

<sup>113</sup> Salvatore, *Singing in a Strange Land*, 21, 63; Horton, 17 September 2005, 64.

*before you totally give your heart to God. But he gave me a second chance and I won't turn back . . . that won't even enter my mind, that God is not with me. Because he's done so many things for me since I been in this situation . . . And I committed myself to God. And if I turn back, take my life, you know. That's just how sold out I am. I'd rather be dead than to be a sinner again. I would truly rather be dead than to be a sinner again.*<sup>114</sup>

John Jett's experience contradicts the arguments of Paul Connerton, Tamar Frankiel, and Robert Orsi that the body performing rituals creates the spiritual self. Jett's conversion confirms the claims of William James, Jonathan Edwards, and Martin Luther, that spirituality occurs in the heart and in solitude. Yet while his is a spirituality of the heart, Jett plans to use his transformed and enlightened mind—his spiritual *praxis*—to organize and perform works, in order to improve both the world and individual human lives.

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Marshall Carter, an assembly worker at Rheem Manufacturing Company, founded the third Holiness church in Lynwood Park in 1959, the United Church of God in Christ, known as the UCOGIC. Called by God to the pulpit, Carter was one of the ministers at Jones Avenue Church of God in Christ. His niece, Ella Mae Hood, a Lynwood Park resident, entreated him to establish a church in the enclave, because her community was crime-ridden and needed to be saved. Carter conducted a prayer band in Lynwood Park homes, then held services in a tent on Francis Street during the summer, and a rat-infested building next to the American Legion hall on the dangerous boundary in the winter. Carter eventually located the church on the far northeastern boundary of Windsor Parkway, where it intersects with Silver Lake Drive.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> Jett, 11 March 2007, 14.

<sup>115</sup> Henry, "Marshall Carter," 28 June 2003; Staff, "Lynwood Slums Mar N. Atlanta," *North DeKalb Record and Tri-County Graphic*, 10 April 1962, 3. The tent was moved to the church's present site on Windsor Parkway. It sat on a lot next to row houses, which the church eventually purchased for its very large parking lot. This article contains a photograph of Carter's tent on Windsor Parkway, with a gas meter in the front, and its outhouse to the side; Mamie Minter, interview by author, 6 January 2006, transcript, 12; Rachel Harris, 27 July 2005, 66.

Carter was born into a family of nine children of sharecropping parents Lemma and Marshall Carter, Jr. in Lilburn, Georgia. Mamie Minter, born in 1912, is Carter's last surviving sibling. She remembered that the family only knew Carter as Junior, and when he went into the Army he was given his father's name, Marshall, although there was already another son named Marshall in the family.<sup>116</sup> Minter said that their mother took the children to church in a mule-drawn wagon, that their father was a drinking, cursing man, and that Marshall Carter prayed that he would not be like his father. Minter maintained that Carter was called by God to preach as a boy, but Carter did not know it. As a child, he was quiet and read the Bible a lot, stayed on the margins, and was always observing the landscape, a similar claim made by John Jett and Cornelius Sawyer.<sup>117</sup>

Marshall Carter inspired trust in everyone because he was an upstanding Christian. His Army mates called him Preacher and entrusted him with their money, which he kept in a belt. Carter married Lillian in 1940, and the two of them cleaned office buildings at night to supplement their household income. Carter worked full-time during the day, worked a part-time job at night, and pastored his Lynwood Park congregation, which was akin to another full-time job after he surrendered to his calling, as Mamie Minter remembered:

- MM: *God called him to preach . . . A lot of people just preach. But God called him . . . [when] he was young . . .*
- VMH: *So he never went to any school to be trained as a minister?*
- MM: *Oh, no. Oh, no . . . [it was] natural, 'cause when God do something he do it right.*
- VMH: *So Bishop Carter knew the Bible well.*
- MM: *Oh, yes, he knowed it. A lot of people know what the Bible say but they don't do it. He practiced what he preached.<sup>118</sup>*

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<sup>116</sup> Minter, 6 January 2006, 3-4.

<sup>117</sup> Minter, 6 January 2006, 25.

<sup>118</sup> Minter, 6 January 2006, 8, 15-8, 19, 26-7. Carter was called by God to the Bishopric in 1979. His father attended Carter's church, was born again, and became an upstanding Christian.

Minter said that her brother was a sweet and humble man who never met a stranger. He loved and cared for his parishioners, who thought of him and his wife Lillian as their spiritual parents. Carter and his wife called congregants “my son” and “my daughter,” and they in turn referred to Marshall Carter as “Father” and “Poppa,” and Lillian as “Mother.” Lillian Carter died in 1998, and Marshall Carter died on Sunday, June 22, 2003. He was found fully-dressed, sitting in a chair, an open Bible on his lap, obviously perusing the text for the lesson he would deliver to his waiting congregation, which was completely devastated by the news of his death.<sup>119</sup>

The Jackson family attended Georgia Clement’s Holiness church, where patriarch Johnny C. Jackson was trained and ordained as a minister by Clement. After Clement died, her congregation dwindled, and the Jacksons became active in Marshall Carter’s church. Rachel Harris, born in 1948, joined the tent congregation in 1960:

*[W]e asked Daddy could we leave Miss Georgia Clement, 'cause there really wasn't anybody there. I think there was about four or five of us there then . . . so that's when I started going to the tent . . . I was twelve years old, and it was nice. It was the only tent that had a hardwood floor . . . [and] I'm still going to that church. . . . [W]e had a wood heater, and . . . every Monday and Thursday and Saturday Mary Walker cleaned the tent . . . She would sweep the tent and mop the tent out . . . and line the chairs up, pick up all the papers, and the fans, and everything, and she would make the fire.<sup>120</sup>*

John Chatman, CEO of Carter’s church—the UCOGIC—and president of its Deacon Board, said that his family attended Little Zion Baptist Church. Marshall and Lillian Carter then held a prayer band in the Chatman home, and his mother Anna Mae

<sup>119</sup> Minter, 6 January 2006, 13, 20-23; Derrick Henry, “Obituaries: Atlanta: Marshall Carter, Founded Church in Lynwood Park,” *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, 28 June 2003, Metro News, 4-E.

<sup>120</sup> Rachel Harris, 27 July 2005, 66-7. The Jacksons’ eldest daughter Vivian married Bishop Carter’s son Larry, Pee Wee Jackson, 17 September 2006, 61. Janice Jackson Chatman is still a member of the church.

Chatman then joined Carter's church.<sup>121</sup> Chatman explained that Marshall Carter had an extremely difficult time establishing his church in Lynwood Park:

*The peoples on the corner, and some of the people that lived in the neighborhood, they didn't want anyone to hear what he had to say. They didn't want to live the life that he was teaching . . . but he said God sent him out here, and he was planning on staying . . . there were certain wives that was coming to his church, and they would go back home and try to tell their husbands the way we should start trying to live. And [the men] don't want to change their way of life, so they don't want him out here talking to their wives . . . they threatened his life, and they indicated that if he didn't leave, they were going to take him from out of here in an ambulance.*

*One young man came up there with a gun and told Bishop Carter that if he don't get out from Lynwood Park he was gonna shoot him. Well, actually, that man dropped dead . . . because, I guess, he had threatened a man of God . . .*

*As time went on, people began to adjust. He didn't bother nobody. And he always tell [the women] that "You don't have to go back and preach to your husbands . . . You do what you're supposed to do . . . let them see a change in your life, then they may want to make a change." So that's the type of preaching-teaching he was doing . . . his vision was that one day that he would have a large church on the corner of Windsor Parkway and Silver Lake Drive . . . big enough to hold all his members.<sup>122</sup>*

Chatman's explained that Lillian Carter worked hard to raise the money for the church, and that the Carters were about love, caring for the community, and generosity:

*Mother Carter was the one that really helped establish that church . . . she sold cakes, sold pies, to help raise money to build that first church. And after we built that first church, and the capacity was running over with peoples, we decided to tear that church down and build the one that you see standing now . . .*

*When Bishop Carter was here, if you was one of his daughters, or one of his sons . . . he'll go into his pockets and do for you. And you don't have to pay him back . . . it was all about loving peoples, and doing for peoples, helping peoples . . . Bishop Carter often said, "The church here is for spiritual blessings. The church is here to teach you how to live in a spiritual way." . . . [but] even though some do come looking for financial blessing, if they are in need . . . and they have childrens, we will assist them and do what we have to do. And they don't really have to be members . . . Bishop says, "If they got childrens, and they need some help . . . helping those childrens . . . is going to help the parents."<sup>123</sup>*

<sup>121</sup> Chatman, 21 March 2008, 2. Born in 1945, Chatman's brother LeRoy is a deacon of the church and is married to Janice Jackson, sister of Rachel Harris and Pee Wee Jackson. Chatman's mother, born in 1918, died in 2005. "Homecoming Celebration for Mrs. Anna Mae Chatman," Lynwood Park Collection, Weltner Library, Oglethorpe University, Atlanta, Georgia.

<sup>122</sup> Chatman, 21 March 2008, 28-9. Marshall Carter's dream did come to fruition, since the church and its grounds occupy an entire block, and UCOGIC boasts the largest Lynwood Park congregation.

<sup>123</sup> Chatman, 21 March 2008, 30-1.

The charismatic, self-proclaimed preachers of the non-elite black community, such as Georgia Clement, Cornelius Sawyer, and Marshall Carter intermingled the sacred and the secular, in what C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence Mamiya termed the Black Sacred Cosmos. Lincoln and Mamiya argued that it is only in the past twenty years that scholars have begun realizing that the religious worldview of African Americans is “related both to their African heritage, which envisaged the whole universe as sacred, and to their conversion to Christianity during slavery and its aftermath.” In other words, blacks in America created a unique form of culture and worldview, “as parallels rather than replications of the culture in which they were involuntary guests.” And while many middle-class blacks have been integrated into a white theology, the earlier black religious tradition has always existed in Lynwood Park.<sup>124</sup>

The community’s lay preachers demonstrated to their congregants that God was both *in* the world, as well as beyond it, and that there was a continuum between God and they.<sup>125</sup> The Holiness preachers of Lynwood Park showed congregants that they had somebodiness in God’s eyes, that they were worshipping a forgiving God, that they were never bereft of hope, and that they could find renewal and the ability to create new identities the moment they turned and embraced God. They convinced their flock that God was always with them, that God cared, and that God would be there in their time of need if they only believed in God, trusted God, embraced God, and took God into their hearts. In addition, the conversion of criminals into men of God proved the sovereignty of God, that God was not limited to a human idea of goodness, that God could give his love

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<sup>124</sup> Lincoln and Mamiya, *The Black Church*, 2, 17.

<sup>125</sup> Salvatore, *Singing in a Strange Land*, 71.

and protection, and lift to Heaven, man's worst sinners, because God's grace is a gift that is freely given and not dependent upon a human judgment of worthiness.

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John Chatman, born in 1945, was drafted to serve in Vietnam. Chatman was deeply upset when he received his draft notice and explained that he was a reluctant soldier:

*I did not have a willing mind. . . . After I finished my training and I got my orders, I was devastated that I was going to Vietnam . . . there was a lot of people dying in Vietnam. And I said to myself, "That's not where I want to be" . . . it was a burden . . . I couldn't eat, I couldn't communicate, I really couldn't sleep.*<sup>126</sup>

Marshall Carter convinced Chatman that God would protect him in Vietnam:

*"John," he said, "God is going to build a fence around you . . . and he's going to take care of you every day. So you don't worry. Just go on ahead over, and get the job done, and come on back home" . . . After talking to Bishop Carter . . . that burden just lifted right up off of me . . . So I said, "Well, I'm going to be all right" . . . even when I was going over, with the long ride, a lot of people couldn't understand: "Why you smiling?" "Why you so happy?" I said, "I'm just glad I'm on my way over, so I can get through it, and get on back." He said, "Just like that?" "Just like that."*<sup>127</sup>

Chatman was an infantryman assigned to Bravo Company and held the most dangerous position in an infantry for one year:

*I was a point man, which is a person that would be up front, leading the squad through . . . we mostly did search and destroy missions . . . the enemies . . . they always come in and do a lot of sniper firing, and go out. Our job was to go out there and round those guys up. So we had to go through and search and destroy . . . But God was with me. I was blessed, because when I first went to Vietnam . . . they told me . . . "If you ever be a point man, you won't make it back home."*<sup>128</sup>

Chatman became a sergeant and performed his task with such conviction *and* was always kept safe, that he became a good-luck charm for the men of squads that knew of his reputation. But his reputation also made him most sought-after by his superiors for the most dangerous missions, as Chatman explained about an ambush by the Vietnamese:

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<sup>126</sup> Chatman, 21 March 2008, 9-10.

<sup>127</sup> Chatman, 21 March 2008, 10, 13.

<sup>128</sup> Chatman, 21 March 2008, 9.



*I always would lead my squad out, because I was the captain . . . [one day] we got fired upon—pop, pop, pop, pop, pop—pow. So we hit the ground . . . and the bullets were just hitting all around us . . . and the dirt was just jumping up. And we were laying there, and I knew again that God was building a fence around me . . . So we all spread out, about three or four platoons . . . I took my platoon to the left, because I knew . . . [the firing] was coming from the right . . . and the lieutenant called, “Sergeant Chatman, bring your squad over here.” All these squadrons were between us . . . [and] he called me!*

*So after I got over there—and there was a big rock sitting there—and he was standing . . . maybe seven or eight feet from that rock. And when I walked over and I seen the rock, I could see that he was standing in the line of fire . . . He said, “We’re gonna go up and go around on top of the rock, and you wait for your men to get here” . . .*

*So he turned to go, and they opened fire. They hit the lieutenant in the arm, through his side, and the bullet came out of his back. At that time he was on a cliff . . . and the lieutenant begin to fall, and I reached out and I caught him around the waist . . . The enemy shot again and hit the two guys behind me. I fell down with the lieutenant . . . The radioman was right there behind me and fell. He got hit in the leg . . . The medic got hit in the mid part of his leg, and then he got hit down by his ankle.<sup>129</sup>*

Chatman was awarded the Bronze Star with a V for heroism for saving the lieutenant’s life. And Chatman has an interesting explanation of what happened on that hill in Vietnam on the day of the ambush, which is the reason why his men recognized that there was something special about his circumstance:

*After that happened I was sure of God’s fence . . . God said, “Now you see what I could do in the midst of all that was going on.” I don’t know today if I was really there. I think that sometimes when you accept Jesus, he takes you out of harm’s way. When I caught the lieutenant, if I had stood up, I would have got hit like those two guys. But by me assisting him, I was not shot in the midst of it all. So I know that God can protect us in times of danger . . .*

*And after that happened, everybody would want to be around me, because they said, “If we’re around you, we’re gonna be all right.” And I said, “God will protect you if you accept God . . . God is real, God can protect you from harm, if you trust Him, because God is good.” . . . Oh, yeah, they felt like if they hang around me they’d be all right, ’cause they figured “Whatever’s around you, it got you secured.” [so] they should be within that circle . . . none of those guys that actually was in my squad got killed . . .*

*When I got ready to leave, they all wanted to come out of the field. . . . they give you ten days to get yourself set up to go home. So I came out of the field like ten to fifteen days before time to be shipped home, to get processed out. And in that process, quite a few of them came in sick. They just said they needed to come in, to be around me for a few minutes. But I told them that they were gonna be all right, just continue trusting God, and*

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<sup>129</sup> Chatman, 21 March 2008, 44.

*believe that he was going to take care of them. . . . At the time I was over there I did trust God, because He allowed Bishop Carter to talk to me.*<sup>130</sup>

In looking back at the ambush, after analyzing the positioning of those involved, Chatman spoke of the bullet that went through the lieutenant's body:

*I don't know what happened. The bullet came out his back . . . It should have hit me, or pierce me, because of the force, and how close we was. I just felt like there was a shield between him and me, and I was protected. God had built a fence around me . . . I just felt like God was there protecting me . . . And the whole while I was over there, and what I been through, and went through, He protected me from any harm, or any danger. . .*

*When I came back, like all that was erased, because I seen a lot of things happen, a lot of mens dead, a lot of Americans dead, but no flashbacks, didn't go into a drinking problem. I just think that . . . God just walked that off out of my mind. And I was able to shake whatever it was and go forward . . . Stayed there one year, and came back in good health—God was with me—He blessed me—with no injuries, stable-minded, no flashbacks.*<sup>131</sup>

Chatman has since used the story of the ambush as a metaphor for selflessness:

*I often tell the peoples at church "Sometimes when you're in a position to help somebody, if you help them, you help yourself." So by me helping [the lieutenant], it helped me, because if I would not have grabbed him, I would have got shot also.*<sup>132</sup>

After returning from Vietnam Chatman hung around with the men of his Lynwood Park running group. They had worked at Sears and Roebuck together, had been drafted and sent to Vietnam, although they were not in the same company, nor did anyone else serve as a point man. They returned to working at Sears, lived in the same apartment complex, and partied together. And although Chatman was convinced that God had protected him in Vietnam, God had to once again get his attention:

*Before I really came into the church—we joined the churches, but actually getting in the church, spiritually—I used to like to do a lot of partying . . . My wife wasn't a party person . . . and one day I was out in the parking lot and God came to me . . . He said—just as plain, He said, "John," He said, "I been good to you." He said, "You need to be good to your wife." He said, "You need to start staying with your wife more, and you and your wife need to get into the church." Now, before that time, my mom always wanted me to go*

<sup>130</sup> Chatman, 28 March 2008, 43.

<sup>131</sup> Chatman, 28 March 2008, 23-4; Chatman, 21 March 2008, 9.

<sup>132</sup> Chatman, 28 March 2008, 23.

*to the altar and call on Jesus, and try and get saved. And I obeyed her, and I did that, but it wasn't in my heart. I called on Jesus, and called on Jesus, but it wasn't there.*

*But that evening when He said, "I took care of you in Vietnam and brought you back. I took care of you since you've been married. I watched over you as you traveled back and forth on your job." He said, "You really need to give us some time. You need to put your time into the church. The church has really been good to you" . . . I'm sitting out there in the parking lot . . . out there in the car, and this just came to me. I used to drink beer—that malt liquor 45 . . . And after talking to Him that day I thought about my friends. So after I got through talking . . . I said to myself then, "When I go back to church and they call us up to the altar, I'm really going to call on Him sincerely this time.*

*And when I got to that altar, and I begin to call on Jesus, he touched me that night. That was a touch [like] I've never been touched before. It was a good touch. It was a real good touch. And He saved me that night because I had made up my mind to get saved. But before then, I was just calling on him just to be calling. But when I called on Him that night, He knew I was sincere. And that's when He touched me that night. And then when He put that Spirit in me that night—and I'll never forget that touch—that touch was so good and so great that I wanted the touch again . . . the feeling just went all the way through me . . . It was a good feeling . . . that's when I knew that God have touched me, 'cause there wasn't nobody around me to touch me . . .*

*After that particular night—that's when I begin to walk right. I told my friends . . . "Look," I said, "I have changed my way of thinking, changed my way of living." They said, "What are you talking about?" I said, "I ain't going to be drinking no more beer with you guys. I'm not gonna be partying with you guys anymore, 'cause I have changed my way of living." I said, "I've gotten in the church now" . . . I was probably about twenty-four . . . And I said, "I'm not gonna be partying with you guys anymore. I ain't gonna be going clubbing, I'm not gonna be drinking with you all." And one of my friends said, "We hear you, but when it get hot, you'll want one of these cold beers. . . . We'll see you coming up under this tree with us." I said, "I'm not going to stop speaking to you guys. I'm just not going to be hanging around with you guys when you all are not doing the right thing." And from that day, to this day, that was it. I never did drink with them, never did go partying with them anymore . . . I didn't need that anymore.<sup>133</sup>*

Chatman discovered what Georgia Clement had instilled in Patricia Martin and John Jett: that when you sincerely turn to God, you will find God already there, already turned towards you. And like John Jett, Chatman felt God's touch, and like John Jett in the street, God had also kept Chatman safe physically in time of danger. Chatman's conversion was authentic according to William James's criteria, since Chatman reconstituted a wholly new personality and worldview, which he has lived for four

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<sup>133</sup> Chatman, 28 March 2008, 33-6.

decades.<sup>134</sup> But unlike Michael Englehaupt and John Jett, John Chatman maintains that God called him, not to the pulpit, or to spread God's word as a missionary, but rather to keep the church, the Lynwood Park UCOGIC together.

Mamie Minter remembered that her brother's last sermon was delivered on the Friday evening before he died, and that it was presciently entitled "Stay in the Ship." After Bishop Carter died, there were tensions within his family as to who would assume leadership.<sup>135</sup> John Chatman steered the "ship" through the crisis, Carter's two daughters left with parts of the congregation and founded churches in other communities, and Leon Wright, assistant pastor under Carter, became the pastor of the UCOGIC, and has served in this capacity until the present. John Chatman is an extraordinary person who has played a crucial role in his church. Yet Chatman is representative of the commonly held beliefs and practices of the Lynwood Park community. Chatman and Jett represent the two polarities of Lynwood Park: the law-abiding resident and the criminal. They are examples—living witnesses—that God's goodness and grace is available to everyone, because God is truly no "respector of persons."

John Chatman is a soft-spoken and humble man who exudes an inner strength, and he knows that he has been touched and called by God. Chatman believes that not everyone is called to the pulpit and sees that God kept him safe in Vietnam so that he could keep Bishop Carter's vision alive:

*God left me here for a reason, because I believe—and a lot of [the congregants] would probably say that—I'm the one that been kind of holding that church together up there . . . because of my wisdom in doing things the way that I do them. And a lot of the board members don't understand sometime why I say what I say . . . I just think that God tests us hard to a certain extent, and gets [board members] to the point of saying, "Yeah, let's do this, because we are trying to save the church. We are trying to go forward." . . .*

<sup>134</sup> For more on the God-human relationship, see Smith, *The Church in the Life of the Black Family*, 46-52.

<sup>135</sup> Of Bishop Carter's two daughters, one was a minister, another was married to a preacher, and one had a son in his twenties who was a preacher.

*I think I missed my calling . . . I thought about it years ago. Pastor Carter said, "Look, I'm going out of town." He said, "I want you to bring the message for me Friday night." I said, "No, Poppa, I can't bring a message if you's not here." He said, "Yeah, that's what I want you to do." I said, "Naw, maybe another time."*

*I really wanted to fulfill myself as a deacon . . . if God's given me words to give others . . . it's not in a minister's capacity, but in a deacon's . . . we have the same oath as a Bishop, and that's a higher "ought" than just a minister . . . I think God is just using me in this capacity that I can help the whole peoples. I think being a minister, I may not have been as effective.<sup>136</sup>*

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E. Franklin Frazier wrote that religion and the Negro church was important in black social organization "due to the restricted participation of Negroes in American society," and thus the black church left an indelible imprint "upon practically every aspect of Negro life." Frazier claimed that black church and social cohesion eroded after the civil rights gains of the 1960s, as blacks were increasingly integrated into mainstream American culture. In effect, black churches lost their activism and their place at the center of the Negro community "as the walls of segregation [came] tumbling down."<sup>137</sup>

C. Eric Lincoln agreed that the Negro church as community beacon, and the institution that fostered black personhood, died in the "Savage Sixties." And from its ashes, the phoenix of the contemporary Black Church has arisen, with a "conscious departure from the critical norms which made the Negro Church what it was." According to Lincoln, the Black Church's congregants became dignified during the civil rights struggle, and afterwards refused to be "Negroes" and "are not impressed by whatever it means to be white." Many preachers of the new Black Church began fostering an

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<sup>136</sup> Chatman, 28 March 2008, 51-3.

<sup>137</sup> Frazier, *The Negro Church in America*, 90.

appreciation of money, and a theology that is based on white theological interpretations that erase both white racism and blackness.<sup>138</sup>

Lincoln wrote about the emergence of the Black Church in 1974, and in his 1990 work with Lawrence Mamiya, the two authors argued that there is a polarity between the original Negro church, which was communal in its orientation, and the privatistic goal of the Black Church, which means “a withdrawal from the concerns of the larger community to focus on meeting only the religious needs of its adherents.”<sup>139</sup> After the presumed death of the Negro activist church in the 1960s, the Black Church is now focused on building wealth in the here and now, and like white churches, focused on the afterlife and the fate of the soul after death. Scholars such as Lincoln and Mamiya hold that there is less outreach into helping the black community, especially with the rise of black mega churches and televangelism.

Religious scholar Marla Frederick studied the spiritualism of eight black women in the small, rural, and impoverished community of Enfield, North Carolina. Frederick found that although the women lacked leadership roles in the church, their spirituality was expressed in tithing, which builds and supports community. So if it is the case that the Black Church is no longer politically radical and working for structural changes in America, the women of Enfield believed that they were improving the world through tithing, which financed programs across the black community. And since the women were also poor, tithing was the unselfish sacrifice they were making in the service of the communal.<sup>140</sup>

Andrew Billingsley disagreed with scholars such as Lincoln and Mamiya, and argued that most large black churches today “have not abandoned the community since the

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<sup>138</sup> Lincoln, *The Black Church Since Frazier*, 106-110.

<sup>139</sup> Lincoln and Mamiya, *The Black Church*, 13.

<sup>140</sup> Marla F. Frederick, *Between Sundays: Black Women and Everyday Struggles of Faith* (Berkeley: University of California Press), 2003, 169-73.

civil rights era,” and that it is only a minority of black churches that choose not to participate in community outreach.<sup>141</sup> Yet Billingsley’s “activist” churches only focus on community outreach, and do not attempt to change the structures and institutions that negatively affect the black community in general, such as the activist churches before the 1960s attempted to do. Billingsley also found that today’s “activist” churches are generally the older, more established ones, with a mixture of middle- and working-class members, led by young, well-educated pastors. Moreover, Billingsley found that it is Methodists that are predisposed to performing outreach programs, since Methodists emphasize the importance of “grace, scriptural holiness, free will, justification, sanctification, perfection, and good works as a product of faith.”<sup>142</sup>

Lynwood Park contradicts several of these authors’ claims. There are no Methodist churches in Lynwood Park, all the churches are involved in community outreach, both in Lynwood Park and other communities, and none have the well-educated pastors that Billingsley described. For example, Brian J. Macon, the young, charismatic pastor of China Grove has been packing the church after he assumed leadership in 2006. A reformed alcoholic, Macon reaches out to everyone in Lynwood Park, as Michele Cleckley, homeless alcoholic and crack cocaine addict, and sometimes prostitute, recounted:

VMH:        *Are you attending China Grove now . . .*  
 MC:         *I just started going back.*  
 VMH:       *What do you think of Reverend Macon?*  
 MC:         *Aw, man, he’s great! A little young child, young boy . . . He sounds like an old man, and he’s good. He’s good.*  
 VMH:       *Is he out working in the community . . .*  
 MC:         *He’s crazy about those kids . . . He draws them in [and] I don’t care how much I’ve been drinking, when I see him, “Give me a hug.” . . . And it*

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<sup>141</sup> Billingsley, *Mighty Like a River*, 94.

<sup>142</sup> Billingsley, *Mighty Like a River*, 95-96. The second quote is by Dr. Joseph M. Shopshire of the Wesleyan Theological Seminary in Washington, D.C., whom Billingsley asked to comment upon the preeminence of black Methodist congregations in community outreach.

- seems like every time I'll be drinking . . . he pops up: "Come and give me my hug. How you doing today? How you feeling? You need anything?"*
- VMH: *How does that make you feel?*
- MC: *It makes me feel good . . . And he's not judging me, holding it against me, 'cause like he said, he's been there and done that . . . he preached on it. He said he was a drinker . . .*
- VMH: *So now you're going back to China Grove?*
- MC: *I ain't making no promises. I've been going, but I'm going: "I'm not making no promises about no every day."<sup>143</sup>*

Marla Frederick found that the women of Enfield expressed their spirituality in tithing, but the residents of Lynwood Park have always expressed spirituality in community, the tradition of generations of Lynwood Park families. For example, Sarah Horton, president of the Mother Board of China Grove, organizes and runs the church's food program, although she and many other members of the board, who work alongside her, no longer live in Lynwood Park. The community's mothers collect food that they distribute to the homeless and shut-ins. Maudina Peaches Horton, long before Brian Macon became pastor of China Grove, worked with Lynwood Park's youths and their parents, in the tradition of her mother Maudine:

*I woke up about a year ago, and there was no children in our church. Okay? And I thought, "This isn't right. God is not pleased." . . . Idle mind is what? A Devil's workshop. So that means that they are idolizing the dope dealers . . . You see all the children in our church? I went and knocked on the doors, and talked to the parents . . . I, myself, and some others, brought them in, started feeding them breakfast on Sundays, school mornings, and feeding them. And I've had people to come and tell me the difference that we've made in their lives. They [now] want to go to school, they want to come to church. . . . So I would think that we've made a difference . . . I come in and I drive them to the dentist . . . and taken some of the pregnant teens to the doctors . . . one parent, the kids wasn't in school, two weeks on . . . I said, "Why the kids not in school?" "Well, I need a ride." . . . I said, "Honey, I'll be here tomorrow, okay?" I went, carried them. That's just me giving back to this community . . . I love working for the Lord.<sup>144</sup>*

<sup>143</sup> Cleckley, 12 November 2005, 41-2. Brian Macon is in his early thirties. He is a fiery preacher in the Pentecostal tradition, called by God to the pulpit. Macon is a high-school graduate and is hoping to earn a college degree one day.

<sup>144</sup> Horton, 17 September 2005, 88-91. Although Horton moved out of Lynwood Park, she can be seen there practically every day, working with the church and the residents and their children.



Gary McDaniel, reformed criminal, deacon-in-training at China Grove, has four children in college on sports scholarships. McDaniel also focuses on the community's sports programs and helping Lynwood Park's children:

*Everybody in the school system knows me . . . every [Lynwood Park] kid that's twenty-two, twenty-three years old . . . I gave them they first trophy at this recreation center . . . I taught instructional league basketball [from age] four and five years old . . . I got a book this high with every college in the United States in it. And I got several kids from Lynwood Park that I filled out they federal papers for free. Have took them down to try out for basketball . . . I have took them to Alabama, Mississippi, Tennessee, just to take kids to Florida, to see can I get them a scholarship . . . I see a kid with a lot of potential, and I hang with them . . . my house was just like the neighborhood house, and the kids would listen to me and accept me, so I raised them kids just like I raised my own . . . They respect me at the utmost . . . I can go to the street and talk to them. I have seen them going real, real wrong, and I could go and kind of reel them in. They do listen to me, and they take my advice.<sup>145</sup>*

And John Chatman, leader in the UCOGIC, serves as president of the Lynwood Park CDC, which focuses on community issues, and especially the critical services of its after-school program, which offers tutoring to the children of Lynwood Park and other black communities.<sup>146</sup> All of Lynwood Park's churches are involved in community outreach, and under Brian Macon many of Lynwood Park's homeless and addicted are attending China Grove and joining the choir, while the clothing drives of Little Zion ensures that they look respectable.

Catholics maintain that Protestantism fosters individualism and a turning away from community, since each person can have a personal relationship with God, and Christ will "come into your heart . . . without any church at all."<sup>147</sup> However, sociologist Robert Bellah and his colleagues argued that Protestantism attempted to "relate biblical faith and practice to the whole of contemporary life—cultural, social, political, economic—not just

<sup>145</sup> McDaniel, 8 June 2005, 38-9, 73.

<sup>146</sup> Children from various black communities are bused in by DeKalb County to participate in the CDC's after-school program.

<sup>147</sup> Joan L. Fee, et al., *Young Catholics: A Report to the Knights of Columbus* (Los Angeles: Sadlier, 1981), 242.

to personal and family morality.”<sup>148</sup> Lynwood Park’s churches and congregants are both Protestant churchgoers who are also community-oriented, and Natalia Sarkisian and Naomi Gerstel hinted that it is economic success, in large part, rather than religion, that produces individualism.<sup>149</sup> Alexis de Tocqueville observed Protestant Americans working for community in the 1830s, in what Tocqueville termed the pursuit of self-interest “properly understood,” the idea that each American “knows when to sacrifice some of his private interests to save the rest.”<sup>150</sup> Tocqueville’s warning—the pursuit of self-interest misunderstood, namely a radical conception of the individual—began in America after industrialization and urbanization became widespread, when Americans left their rural communities for the economic opportunities and anonymity of cities.

Tocqueville also counseled in the 1830s that deeply-rooted religious practices and beliefs should be nurtured and protected, because if men’s old religious opinions are superseded with new ones, in the gap between the two, “the soul finding itself for a moment empty of belief, the love of material enjoyments will come to spread through it and fill it entirely.”<sup>151</sup> Therefore, it could be argued that just as Protestant whites became individualists beginning with the industrial revolution, blacks experienced delayed opportunities and became individualists beginning with the 1960s, when they were given access to the mechanisms of economic advancement. In addition, C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence Mamiya claimed that there was a distinct break in black religion: from the communal focus and political activism of the Negro Church, to the wealth focus of the

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<sup>148</sup> Robert N. Bellah, et al., *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 237.

<sup>149</sup> Natalia Sarkisian and Naomi Gerstel. “Kin Support Among Blacks and Whites.” *American Sociological Review* 69, 6 (2004): 812 -837. See especially page 817, 828, 830. Sarkisian and Gerstel found that “class matters” and that a higher level of educational and economic success leads to higher levels of financial support and a “lower prevalence of all sorts of practical support.”

<sup>150</sup> Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (New York: Vintage Books 1990), 121-3.

<sup>151</sup> Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, 145.

contemporary Black Church. In effect, this fracture and reconstitution of black religion created the gap Tocqueville warned that would lead to increased individualism and materialism, because the Negro church ended its activism, although it could have continued working for structural and institutional change in areas that continued to keep blacks subordinate in America. In effect, Lincoln and Mamiya's Negro church ended blacks' "old religious opinions"—which Tocqueville warned against—when it died in the "Savage Sixties," and black religion repositioned the goals of blacks when the phoenix rose from the ashes as the Black Church.

It is hazardous to generalize about religion and the behavior of black congregants, because Lynwood Park's worshippers demonstrate a variety of practices. The enclave's churches have deep roots and did not experience the fracture about which Lincoln and Mamiya wrote. Lynwood Park's churches were de-privileged as community leaders after the 1960s, but there has been no turning away from the church, and there is no preaching of a wealth religion from their pulpits. In Lynwood Park, Protestants have always found God both in worshipping together and in solitude. Lynwood Park's congregants still work for community, although they have moved from the enclave, and even while becoming more individualistic after the 1960s due to increased access to economic opportunity. And while numerous scholars examined the dynamics of black religion and its change after the 1960s—black religion as an institution—few of them considered the spiritual experience of worshippers—the object of religion—and if that has changed since the 1960s.

Gayraud Wilmore offered that there is an African religious connection to the African American worshipper's ability both to erase the line between the sacred and the

secular, and to use religion in every aspect of life.<sup>152</sup> While the contemporary Black Church may be more similar to white Christianity, the churches of Lynwood Park maintain an historic continuity with their past, and keep in close contact with both biblical sources and historical traditions. Many of the residents of Lynwood Park do not inhabit a secular world: they see God's hand everywhere in the world and their lives, they believe in miracles and have witnessed them. For example, Patricia Jones claimed that Aunt City found favor with God because of her goodness, and God intervened in their lives to help Aunt City feed the children in her charge:

*[W]e would ride around in the evening time and go in the back of the stores and pick out the good stuff. . . . So she was always finding a way to take care of us . . . we found good stuff: good fruit, even good meat. . . . [O]ne time we was in the back of the store and this white manager came back there and he said, "What you doing back here?" And Aunt City would tell him "I'm just back here trying to find some food for my children. You know, y'all throw away a whole lot of stuff." And he said, "Okay, well, be careful. Make sure that you get the good stuff." And from that day on that guy used to put good stuff out there just for her to find. And I could remember it just like it was yesterday: I would be going through some stuff. . . . and I found some meat. I said, "Aunt City, you're not going to believe this, look at this good meat." You could tell it was fresh meat . . . "He put this out here intentionally." . . . He just took a liking to Aunt City, and saw that she was such a hard-working person, you know, saw that she was doing it, you know, to try to feed her children, like she said. And He just blessed her along the way. And it just goes to show you that when you're doing good and trying to help others how God will surely bless you along the way.<sup>153</sup>*

While it was the white manager who put out the meat for Aunt City, Jones's language is that the generosity issued from God. When Jones says, "He put this out here intentionally," and "He just took a liking to her," she is speaking of God, although recognizing that God worked through the white manager. In other words, it was God who made the white manager perform the kindness, because God saw what a good person Aunt City was, and God liked that.

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<sup>152</sup> Wilmore, *Black Religion*, 280.

<sup>153</sup> Jones, 26 June 2008, 9-10.

Lynwood Park's congregants see the world through a spiritual lens, and have a spiritual language with which they speak about the world and themselves. And attending and working in the church, and worshipping together, are of tantamount importance to them. It is ironic that while in the period before the 1960s residents indicated that church occurred only on the second and fourth Sundays of the month, all churches in Lynwood Park today conduct services *three times a week*: on Wednesday and Friday evenings, and on Sunday, *and* these are well-attended, and considered necessary to the congregants, which indicates more communalism in a time of presumed increase in black individualism. For example, Laura Ann Watson, born in 1926, said that church is her life, and that at work, during the lunch break, she and her colleagues "talk about church."<sup>154</sup>

Rachel Harris, born in 1948, and a member of the UCOGIC—which she joined when it was a tent—explained the importance of church:

*Oh, Honey, that church is my life. That's where I go to fuel up. I go to church on Sunday to fuel up for Monday and Tuesday. I go to church on Wednesday to fuel up for Thursday. I go to church on Friday to fuel up for Saturday. That's my life. That's my life. I give my whole life over to God, and if it wasn't for him, I couldn't make it. That church taught me—I started going [to UCOGIC] when I was twelve years old. So the pastor and his wife [the Carters] they raised us . . . in the fear of God. And they taught us how to be. They taught the girls how to be women, and they taught the guys how to be men.*<sup>155</sup>

LaTrelle Lockwood, born in 1955, said if he had to live his life over again, he would give his life over to God sooner.<sup>156</sup> And Lynwood Park's churches are filled with children and youths being raised in the same tradition, and thus the non-elite black churches of Lynwood Park deviate widely from Lincoln and Mamiya's contemporary Black Church.

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<sup>154</sup> Watson, 31 August 2005, 27, 66. Watson owned the first beauty salon in Lynwood Park. She said that church was important from childhood, and shared that her husband feels the same way, and that they attend together. In Lynwood Park's churches, men and women are equally represented in the congregations.

<sup>155</sup> Rachel Harris, 27 July 2005, 119.

<sup>156</sup> Lockwood, 9 September 2005, 65.

The people of Lynwood Park are familiar with miracles and signs from God. For example, Patricia Martin, born in 1932, and trained spiritually by both her grandmother Georgia Clement and her mother, shared that she levitates when praying:

- VMH: *So you would be lying in bed and you would be praying and you would lift off the bed?*  
 PM: *Yes. Yes . . .*  
 VMH: *What do you attribute that to? Is that the power of God?*  
 PM: *Oh, all of it is the power of God. And I felt that my grandmother put all of her stuff on me, and my momma put all of her stuff on me. And because I don't mind laying on hands because my practitioner was a spiritualist and she showed me how to lay hands on and not get the condition myself.<sup>157</sup>*

Martin also sees visions, especially when she took to her bed in grief after her mother died:

- PM: *I could not get over my mother's death. I just could not get beyond it . . . I was in bed and . . . in the distance across the bedroom, to the other side of the wall I saw the small figure of an eye . . . It didn't frighten me . . . it started coming closer . . . and it moved closer, closer, closer, closer. And it got bigger and bigger and bigger. And when it got to the foot of my bed it was a door. It was slightly open. And I heard this wonderful soothing voice: "You want your mother?" And I said, "Yes." "Come through the door." . . . I'm wide awake. I'm not asleep. I'm sitting up in bed looking at this. And I said, "Well, I want to see my mother. I want to be with my mother. I want to be with my mother." On the other side of the door I felt the presence of my mother . . . it was like she was panicking. She was crazy about Vic and Lanny. "No, the boys. You've got to stay for the boys. You can't come through the door. You've got to stay for the boys . . . And I said, "Well, I'll just come, and then I'll come back." And the door closed. The voice said, "No, you have to stay." And when it closed it went away. And I was never sick thereafter . . .*  
 VMH: *Do you think it was God . . .*  
 PM: *Yes, yes. Because I was just "Momma, momma, momma, momma, momma, momma. I had a husband and two children—momma, momma, momma."<sup>158</sup>*

The residents of Lynwood Park consider mystical experiences as commonplace occurrences, freely speak of them, and interpret them as encounters with the Divine.

Philosopher William James argued that mystical experiences and encounters with the Divine are real, but that skeptics dismiss them with medical materialism—the

<sup>157</sup> Martin, 10 February 2007.

<sup>158</sup> Martin, 10 February 2007, 43-5.

explanation of an organic causation of a religious experience. For example, medical materialists reduced the epileptic Saint Paul's vision on the road to Damascus to a "discharging lesion of the occipital cortex." Similarly, they dismissed Saint Theresa of Avila as an hysteric, and Saint Francis of Assisi "as an hereditary degenerate." Yet James pointed out that these same skeptics celebrate the eccentricities of geniuses, see them as necessary, and as a rule, the greater the genius, the greater should be their unsoundness. James explained that mystical experiences are real, they "carry an enormous sense of inner authority and illumination . . . but they come seldom, and they do not come to everyone." Consequently, the other aspects of life tend to contradict rather than confirm mystical experiences. According to James, some people choose to embrace and follow these voices of the moment, while those who do not experience them tend to seek the average—the banality of life—and thus there exists in the world the "sad discordancy of so many of the spiritual judgments of human beings."<sup>159</sup>

Many people dismiss religion as fantasy, but the residents of Lynwood Park are deeply committed to religion. Congregants see evidence of God's hand everywhere in the world and their lives, and describe events in a spiritual language. For example, before his conversion experience, John Jett was in a legal battle for many years with his ex-wife over ownership of his café in Lynwood Park:

*God woke me up one morning and He said . . . "Go to Decatur." I heard a voice tell me to go to Decatur . . . And what I went to Decatur for . . . He had placed an angel in . . . the tax office window. I went and checked on some property that I had been over there several times checking on. And I never could get the right paper . . . Every time I go over there it was a woman that served me . . . But when I got there that morning there was a little man sitting in the window. I said, "I want to check on some property, and I want to find out who owned it from the beginning" . . . He hit the computer and then but one piece of paper come out . . . I wasn't looking for that piece of paper. But he showed me where*

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<sup>159</sup> James, *The Varieties*, 16-20.

*wrong had been done . . . and my daughter got that piece of property back . . . It was God, the voice of God that sent me.*<sup>160</sup>

Whereas someone with a secular sensibility would have thought of this as a fortunate coincidence, Jett saw it as a spiritual event and related it with a spiritual vocabulary.

Similarly, John Chatman needed a kidney transplant and was on a waiting list for a kidney, and saw his eventually getting one was as a direct result of being blessed by God:

*In 1999 God blessed me with a kidney. And ever since 1999 I have been enjoying good health . . . that kidney is still working and I haven't had any problems.*<sup>161</sup>

\* \* \*

C.L. Franklin, charismatic minister, called by God to the pulpit, stressed the necessity of singing to his congregation, as an antidote to pain, and as a way to “develop a vision of the possible that countered the debilitating limits others imposed.”<sup>162</sup> Singing is an important aspect of all of Lynwood Park’s churches, complete with live bands, always with drums and organ, sometimes with the addition of saxophone and piano. Church music and voices lifted in song fills the air of Lynwood Park on Wednesday and Friday nights, and on Sunday mornings. China Grove held its eighty-seventh anniversary in March 2008. The church celebrated every night for the entire week of March 24. The members of Lynwood Park’s other churches attended, their various pastors conducted services on the different nights of the week. In addition, the anniversary celebration was a homecoming for the Lynwood Park fragments and their families who moved of their own volition over the years, and those who were forced out by the forces of gentrification. They came to visit and celebrate, to thank God for their opportunities, and to share memories of growing up in, and coming from, Lynwood Park. Every night for an entire

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<sup>160</sup> Jett, 11 March 2007, 31-3.

<sup>161</sup> Chatman, 21 March 2008, 15.

<sup>162</sup> Salvatore, *Singing in a Strange Land*, 305. C.L. is the father of singer Aretha Franklin.



week they came together to celebrate the church, the community, and their blessings, lifting their voices in song to praise a generous God. And every night that week the newest residents of Lynwood Park—the white gentrifiers—called the police and reported the church as a nuisance.<sup>163</sup>

In contemplating the future of Christianity, Gayraud Wilmore wrote that at some point “the work of African American theologians will be understood as illuminating the essentials of the Christian faith.”<sup>164</sup> The white outsider Michael Englehaupt found something of great value in a Lynwood Park church, which could possibly also add an extra dimension to the life experience of Lynwood Park’s white gentrifiers, if only they could have a friendly engagement with difference.<sup>165</sup> The white historian Paul Hudson, who lived on Wimberly Road, across the color line from Lynwood Park’s dangerous boundary from 1955 to 1966 could not engage with Lynwood Park and later regretted the missed opportunity to add a unique dimension to the variety of his life. Hudson recalled that he would climb a tree on the southwestern corner of House and Osborne Roads—the white side—and see across the intersection to Lynwood Park—the black side. Hudson looked back on the black enclave in 2004 with regret for an opportunity lost when he said:

*I was just so impressed with the joy that they had. And now I have regrets, and maybe I wish I hadn’t been so afraid. But, I mean, it was just the culture that I was in. But had I gone back there, I would have seen a very rich life, and maybe met black friends, and so forth. I mean—and I heard about the juke joints and stuff, and I would have loved that as a teenager.*<sup>166</sup>

Similarly, the white gentrifiers of Lynwood Park are missing an opportunity to interact with another interpretation of Protestantism, to realize that a spiritual cosmos in which God and man live in a symbiotic relationship is possible. And then again, perhaps

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<sup>163</sup> Pastor Brian Macon, from the pulpit, China Grove Missionary Baptist Church, 30 March 2008.

<sup>164</sup> Wilmore, *Black Religion*, 277.

<sup>165</sup> Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, 98.

<sup>166</sup> Hudson, 21 May 2004, 10-1.

the non-elite black community is correct in its belief system: that God cares about the downtrodden, that Jesus came for the poor, the helpless, the subordinated, and against the rich and powerful. And perhaps that is why the people of Lynwood Park experience miracles, hear the voice of God, and feel His presence, because He communicates with His chosen people and intervenes in their lives on a regular basis.

## Chapter 6: Illegality: From Survival Strategy to Career of Choice

Lynwood Park developed into a tapestry of overlapping and interwoven biological family networks, which made it a community similar to European villages whose social histories have been reconstructed by historians such as Eugen Weber and David Sabeau. In examining the endogamous pre-modern villages of rural France, Weber noted a strong localism among the villagers who “accepted their local madmen and beggars,” while stubbornly resisting outsiders. Weber’s villages were similar to Lynwood Park: economies of scarcity, worlds of “small possessions and great need,” whose residents employed illegality as a survival strategy, because they were the “[b]attalions of the famished.” Like the people of Lynwood Park, the French villagers suffered from the “lack of money, and the paucity of choice,” and survived by “manipulating life.” And Sabeau noted that pre-modern German villagers resented and resisted government intervention into the private sphere of the family—namely the villagers’ ability to discipline their children. The similarity between Weber and Sabeau’s pre-modern villages and Lynwood Park underscores that it is the dominant sectors of a nation—the political and economic, for example—that creates and perpetuates an underclass, and that the illegality of Lynwood Park cannot be blamed solely on blackness.<sup>1</sup>

Historian Andrew Miller claimed that African American families and communities are not simply solid and healthy, but are rather “under tremendous pressure and attack,

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<sup>1</sup> Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870-1914* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1976), x-65, 179, 183; David Warren Sabeau, *Property, Production, and Family in Neckarhausen, 1700-1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 34, 323. In the case of the United States, many scholars maintain that capitalism plays a significant role in the creation and perpetuation of the underclass.

both social and economic.”<sup>2</sup> Miller held that racism and discrimination have been the main sources of the social and economic position of blacks throughout American history, and he wrote that “[i]n a social sense and in public spheres of labor and the marketplace, African Americans have been constantly insulted, overlooked, and disrespected.”<sup>3</sup>

Segregation and lack of access to education and opportunity, coupled with structural and institutional racism after the civil rights gains, continually engendered a sense of nobodiness across a wide swath of the African American community. Martin Luther King, Jr. explained in his *Letter from a Birmingham Jail* that the “stinging barbs of segregation” created a sense of nobodiness in African Americans, and kept the majority of blacks in America “in an airtight cage of poverty in the midst of an affluent society . . . forever fighting a degenerating sense of “nobodiness,” and thus “[t]here comes a time when the cup of endurance runs over, and men are no longer willing to be plunged into the abyss of despair.”<sup>4</sup>

Legal scholar Derrick Bell explained that creating and maintaining an underclass is essential to the exploitative capitalist system of the United States, because white wage workers will not object to their exploitation and diminution of benefits because they feel fortunate, secure, and wealthy—although losing ground economically—by observing the plight of the underclass. Similarly, Mark Stern argued that the mainstream population is reassured in the knowledge that “there was a class at the bottom of society worse off than

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<sup>2</sup> Andrew T. Miller, “Social Science, Social Policy, and the Heritage of African-American Families,” in Michael B. Katz, ed. *The Underclass Debate: Views from History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), 284.

<sup>3</sup> Miller, “Social Science” in *The Underclass Debate*, 280, 287.

<sup>4</sup> Martin Luther King, Jr. *Letter from a Birmingham Jail*, 16 April 1963 (Philadelphia: African Studies Center, University of Pennsylvania), 2-3.

the rest of us; a class whose vices made us look virtuous; a class whose poverty made us seem well off; a class whose family life made ours look stable.<sup>5</sup>

Black underclass communities are essentially Third World enclaves in the First World United States, a parallel existence to mainstream society. These pockets of poverty serve a critical social and economic function in a capitalist system, and their existence is proof of the structural and institutional racism of the nation. Chalmers Johnson pointed out the ways in which the United States made economic giants from what were essentially Third World Japan, Taiwan, and South Korea after WWII, as part of its policy to contain communism. The plan was designed to show other free nations that democracy and the American capitalist system was superior to that of Soviet socialism and Chinese communism. Therefore, one can extrapolate from Johnson's argument that the United States is equally able to eliminate its internal Third World pockets, but has failed to do so because these are critical to the *laissez-faire* capitalism under which the United States is organized.<sup>6</sup>

In examining the devolvment of a black underclass community into drug trafficking and vice, Elijah Anderson romanticized the historical black ghetto when he wrote that older residents recalled "better days when life was more orderly and civilized, when crime and drugs were almost unknown, when young people respected their elders, and when the men worked in good jobs and took care of their families."<sup>7</sup> However, Mark Stern explained that "there was never a golden age of the ghetto: it had always been dominated by joblessness and poverty." Anderson and Stern are speaking about the

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<sup>5</sup> Derrick Bell, "Revised Opinions in *Brown v. Board of Education*," in Jack M. Balkin, ed. *What Brown v. Board of Education Should Have Said* (New York: New York University Press, 2001), 191; Mark J. Stern, "Poverty and Family Composition since 1940," in Michael B. Katz, ed. *The Underclass Debate: Views from History*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), 253.

<sup>6</sup> This claim is made by Hal Foster in his essay "Postmodernism in Parallax," in *October* 63 (1993): 3-20, 15; Chalmers Johnson, *Blowback: The Costs and Consequences of American Empire* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2000), 20-7, 59-60, 97-8, 123.

<sup>7</sup> Elijah Anderson, *Streetwise: Race, Class, and Change in an Urban Community* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 2.

underclass black community before the 1960s civil rights gains, and do not address that the ghetto in this period could also have been characterized by tensions, divisions, and conflict, as the evidence of Lynwood Park suggests.<sup>8</sup>

Raymond Jackson, who lived in Lynwood Park for sixty-five years, recalled the hard times in the 1930s, during the ghetto's presumed golden age. His mother worked in the kitchen of Oglethorpe University, then cooked for the university's grounds overseer's family every day:

*His wife would say . . . "Willie, what we had for dinner today, take it home for your children." And mama gets the food from there, and that's how she fed us . . . Let me tell you—back in '32 and '33 it was bad. Folks didn't have no food, or nothing to eat. Many, many a day, on a Sunday, you know what we had? Cornbread and buttermilk. Didn't have no kind of meat in the house at all.*<sup>9</sup>

Willie Jackson worked two steady jobs and still could not feed her family, which supports Stern's point that the golden age of the black ghetto is a myth that "suffers from a lack of an accurate historical foundation." In fact, the Southern black poverty rate from the 1930s to the 1950s for laborers was fifty-six percent, and eighty-three percent for domestics, while only forty-five percent of black households had full-time employment.<sup>10</sup> Social commentator Joel Garreau claimed that in 1950 "less than one percent of all black people had a median income equal to that of white people in white collar jobs," and that as recently as twenty-five years ago, "to be black was to be poor."<sup>11</sup>

Karen Ferguson explained that most of Atlanta's black laboring class did not benefit from the 1930s New Deal programs. Historian Ronald Bayor added that they also did not benefit from the 1940s post-war boom. In actuality, there was a lack of jobs for blacks during this period. Atlanta's laboring blacks also did not participate in the later

<sup>8</sup> Stern "Poverty," in *The Underclass Debate*, 252.

<sup>9</sup> Raymond Jackson, 7 October 2005, 151.

<sup>10</sup> Stern. "Poverty," in *The Underclass Debate*, 222-34.

<sup>11</sup> Joel Garreau, *Edge City: Life on the New Frontier* (New York: Anchor Books, 1991), 147-8.

Sunbelt success, which ensured that an enclave like Lynwood Park would be steeped in a poverty akin to the Third World throughout its entire existence.<sup>12</sup>

Sociologist Delores Aldridge wrote that the New South has been an illusion for blacks, because the “progressive” South of the 1970s and 1980s continued its white racism and institutional discrimination that “created and maintained a dual society—black and white, separate and unequal.” In the same volume, sociologist Robert Bullard wrote: “The new prosperity in the South heightened status differences between blacks and whites.” Interestingly, the dedication of the book is “To the struggling Third World people in America,” and Bullard claimed that during the 1980s “black workers in the Atlanta metropolitan area [were] unemployed at a rate from two and a half to three times greater than their white counterparts.”<sup>13</sup> So while Raymond Jackson could speak of the difficult economic times that blacks faced during Jim Crow segregation, other studies confirmed that the plight of blacks in the South did not measurably improve after the passage of civil rights legislation, or during the economic boom of the 1970s and 1980s New South.

Prior to the 1960s, segregation forced blacks of varying economic levels to live together, but even the well-off families of Lynwood Park were poor relative to the wider white society. Narvie Jordan Harris, a member of the black elite, was hired in 1944 as Jeanes Supervisor to oversee the black schools in DeKalb County. Harris maintained that there were no professional blacks in DeKalb County when she began her work there:

NH: *[T]here were no blacks in DeKalb doing a professional job, none. So you were doing pretty good if you worked at the mill in Scottdale. Women did domestic work . . .*

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<sup>12</sup> Karen Ferguson, *Black Politics in New Deal Atlanta* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 191; Ronald H. Bayor, *Race and the Shaping of Twentieth-Century Atlanta* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 108, 117; Stern, “Poverty,” in *The Underclass Debate*, 234.

<sup>13</sup> Ferguson, *Black Politics*, 191; Bayor, *Race*, 108, 117; Stern, “Poverty,” in *The Underclass Debate*, 234; Robert D. Bullard, ed. *In Search of the New South: The Black Urban Experience in the 1970s and 1980s* (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1989), ix-x, 2, 80-90.

- VMH: *So are you saying that in '44 in Lynwood Park there was nobody who had a professional job?*
- NJH: *None. Not just in Lynwood, in no community where black people lived. There were . . . no professional blacks in DeKalb County in '44 . . . I know God will sanction it, because that's a fact.*<sup>14</sup>

And Bishop Cornelius Sawyer, who has lived in Lynwood Park since the 1930s, said in 2007 about financial support for the church he founded, that “not many black peoples a few years ago could afford a hundred dollars,” which means that Lynwood Park was always a community of relatively poor people.<sup>15</sup>

Patricia Martin's grandparents were among the few “wealthy” founders of Lynwood Park. They lived on Lynwood Drive, where Peter Scott said residents with old money lived.<sup>16</sup> Martin's grandfather worked as a yardman for a white family, farmed and raised hogs in Lynwood Park, and used a mule and wagon for transportation. Martin's grandmother was a midwife, and a minister in her Holiness chapel. She also took in washing and made her own soap, sewed Martin's everyday clothes from chicken-feed and flour sacks, and worked as a domestic in New York during the summers when she visited her brother.<sup>17</sup> Peter Scott's father was a sharecropper, then a cook when he moved to the city, and his mother worked as a cook in DeKalb County schools, despite having fifteen children. In effect, Scott's mother was required to work and contribute to the household economy.<sup>18</sup> Similarly, Pee Wee Jackson's father was a custodian at a school, and his mother worked as a domestic.

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<sup>14</sup> Narvie J. Harris, interview by author, 2 July 2008, transcript, 9-10; Anna T. Jeanes, a wealthy Philadelphia philanthropist, endowed a program in 1906 to improve the education of black children in the South, Walter R. Harris, “The Provision of an Adequate Education: Race, Modernization and Education in DeKalb County, Georgia, 1946-55,” (M.A. thesis, Georgia State University, 2003), 66.

<sup>15</sup> Sawyer, 9 February 2007, 36. Bishop Sawyer is the founder of Saint Peter's True Holiness Church in Lynwood Park.

<sup>16</sup> Scott, 4 May 2005, 32.

<sup>17</sup> Martin, 13 October 2004, 4-5, 8; Martin, 10 February 2007, 7.

<sup>18</sup> Scott, 4 May 2005, 2, 4.



Those who owned land were considered wealthy to Lynwood Park's residents, regardless of the amount of their day-to-day income. For example, the Allens were considered extremely wealthy because they owned a large parcel of land, but Theodore Allen, elder son of the patriarch Bose, made and sold charcoal in his backyard, and ploughed the gardens in Lynwood Park with his mule. John Wright, born in 1964, explained the types of employment that people in Lynwood Park traditionally held:

*No one really had great jobs. You did side work, or the women of the neighborhood had to do, you know, maid work—going to the white people's homes and doing work like that, or some type of labor work. My father, he was a laborer . . . My mother—she just went out and did side work—cleaned the houses—going into people's homes and doing the linen, washing clothes. So that's how it was. It was very difficult.*<sup>19</sup>

In other words, wealth in Lynwood Park was always relative, and its wealthiest residents were only at the top of the black underclass stratum of American society. Most of the people of Lynwood Park were the “hewers of wood and drawers of water”—the performers of menial tasks. They grew vegetables and raised chickens and animals, which provided for their subsistence needs, as John Chatman, born in 1945, recalled:

*We had our own garden. And we had chickens and pigs, so I guess that was a part of our wealth, and getting us to survive, 'cause we were spending everything we pretty much had. But mostly we only had to go and buy the flour, the sugar, the milk. But the eggs and the meat and the vegetables—we had that. We grew all that.*<sup>20</sup>

Atlanta's laboring blacks were often thought of as “shiftless and fun-loving” “mudsills” by members of the black elite that excluded them from New Deal programs in the 1930s.<sup>21</sup> They came from the slums, and “constituted the striving poor,” a laboring caste of those socialized to hard work routines. As a consequence, they were steeped in poverty, and their struggle for subsistence required a set of priorities and moral

<sup>19</sup> Wright, 20 November 2004, 11; Pee Wee Jackson, 17 September 2006, 1.

<sup>20</sup> Chatman, 21 March 2008, 16; Joshua 9:21, *The Holy Bible: Old and New Testaments in the King James Version*, (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1976), 370.

<sup>21</sup> Ferguson, *Black Politics*, 6-9.

imperatives that diverged from that of middle-class society. Historian Lawrence Levine wrote that slaves were forced to maneuver from a position of weakness and handed down strategies for negotiating the white world, since “White folks do as they please, and the darkies do as they can.” Slaves stole, which then necessitated lying to cover up wrongdoing. Slaves then argued that masters stole first—blacks from Africa—and said that they had to steal in order to survive. Slaves also said, “Those white folks made us lie. We had to lie to live.” Levine pointed out that stealing and lying were survival strategies because “slaves were forced by their situation to create their own practical set of values and norms of behavior.”<sup>22</sup>

Kai Erikson found that deviance is not inherent to human behavior, but is conferred upon behavior by a group that finds the behavior outside what it considers as normal. Therefore, when many poverty-stricken blacks in modern times engaged in illegality for survival—because of limited black access to education and wealth-making strategies before the 1960s—the black community considered the behavior as normal, since practically everyone was doing the same thing to survive, while the white community conferred deviance on black enclaves. Yet the mentality towards illegality changed among Lynwood Park’s residents over time. Many in the community bootlegged corn liquor—moonshine—in the early decades to supplement low wages. Then the community’s youths entered the marijuana trade as a survival strategy in the 1970s, due to an increase in the high-school dropout rate after DeKalb County’s school system desegregated in 1969. And

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<sup>22</sup> Lawrence W. Levine, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro-American Folk Thought from Slavery to Freedom* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 121-3.

by the mid-1980s entering the crack cocaine industry was a career of choice for many of Lynwood Park's residents.<sup>23</sup>

In his study of Chicago's Maquis Park, Sudhir Venkatesh concluded that most residents of an underclass community engage in both illegal *licit* activity and criminal *illicit* activity. Illegal licit activity constitutes exchanging services, such as childcare and tax preparation, and offering goods and services out of homes, such as running restaurants, barber shops, convenience stores, and bars. It also includes working within the cash-only economy of *homework* performed by domestics, laundresses, and child-care givers, with the income going unreported to the government, all of which constitute "clandestine entrepreneurial schemes."<sup>24</sup>

John Chatman explained that he was good at mathematics, and prepared income tax returns for his family and other residents at no charge. Chatman's "service" constitutes illegal licit activity, similar to the cash-only businesses run out of homes, which Chatman confirmed was commonplace in Lynwood Park:

- VMH: *[T]here were a lot of businesses in these homes . . .*  
 JC: *Yes, the candy lady, the ice cream lady . . . they had their little businesses within their own home . . . And hair-doers, haircuts, all of that was done in homes . . . There was the bootleggers, yeah. Peoples used to go to different homes, especially on Sundays, when nothing was really open. And they'd just sit there, and they'd drink, and play checkers, and stuff like that . . .*  
 VMH: *[D]o you think they declared that income on their taxes?*  
 JC: *No . . . It was cash business there . . . [o]ff the books.*<sup>25</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Ferguson, *Black Politics*, 3-36, 219; Kai T. Erikson, *Wayward Puritans: A Study in the Sociology of Deviance* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1966), 6.

<sup>24</sup> Sudhir Alladi Venkatesh, *Off the Books: The Underground Economy of the Urban Poor* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 8-11; Anthropologist Carol Stack maintained that bartering, and exchanging goods and services across a kinship network is the predominant manner in which the members of an underclass black community survive the exigencies of everyday life, Carol Stack, *All Our Kin* (New York: Basic Books, 1974), 32-49.

<sup>25</sup> Chatman, 28 March 2008, 16-7, 19-20.

Some of Lynwood Park's residents were especially imaginative at earning money.

Mamie Lee Mathis, born in 1920, said of Nona Young, who had a television set:

*My children used to go [there] . . . I'd give them a dime and . . . they used to line up there. They'd go up there and watch TV for ten cents a head, all them little kids.*<sup>26</sup>

Helen Miller, the Jewish storeowner, said that some residents had soft-drink machines on their porches, and Mamie Lee Mathis explained that there were other money-making schemes inside the houses:

MLM: *People had piccolos [jukeboxes] sometimes in their houses . . . you choose your record, and then you could dance . . . and if you didn't want to dance, you could sit down and enjoy it . . .*

VMH: *And what if you needed a few little things for the house . . .*

MLM: *Some little stores was in houses . . . Some of the houses, you know, you can get food in. . . . drinking machines on people's porches.*<sup>27</sup>

Belinda Marshall, born in 1932, offered that there were also nightclubs in houses:

*J.B. Truitt lived right there on the corner of Victoria Street and Osborne Road . . . they had the whole basement fixed up like a club.*<sup>28</sup>

And Minnie Lee Weddie Thompson, born in 1944, operated what was essentially a restaurant in her house, only one activity she engaged in over the years as a survival strategy:

MLT: *When I had my own place I had a lot of fish frys and chitlin suppers. Chitlins, coleslaw, and bread, that was like five dollars a plate . . .*

VMH: *And how much did you charge for the fish fry?*

MLT: *Three dollars a plate . . .*

VMH: *[W]ere you selling alcohol as well?*

MLT: *Yes, I'd sell beer, liquor. But it'll be government . . . legal for the store, not for me to be selling it.*<sup>29</sup>

The evidence suggests that many Lynwood Park residents were involved in illegal

licit activity. Illicit activity constitutes dealing in stolen goods, gambling, bootlegging,

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<sup>26</sup> Mathis, 1 April 2008, 48.

<sup>27</sup> Mathis, 1 April 2008, 46-7.

<sup>28</sup> Marshall, 10 September 2005, 31-2.

<sup>29</sup> Thompson, 11 August 2005, 31-2.

prostitution, and drug trafficking, among other vices. Venkatesh explained that the underclass move between licit and illicit activities, and operate within both sectors concurrently to supplement their incomes, to put food on the table, and to survive, because “dollars are scarce, times are hard, and compromises must be made if life is to go on.”<sup>30</sup>

Both Sudhir Venkatesh and Carol Stack conducted fieldwork by embedding themselves in poverty-ridden black communities. Both scholars found that exchanging and sharing in the underclass community is a form of insurance across the kinship network. One gives with the expectation that others will come to one’s aid in a time of need, which links the community in a network of need, obligation, and reciprocity.<sup>31</sup> However, sociologists Natalia Sarkisian and Naomi Gerstel concluded that underclass actors only share goods and services at the lowest economic level, and that if a steady flow of money is secured, individuals then contribute cash rather than time, and thus former communal actors transition into individualists.<sup>32</sup> It is problematic and misleading to generalize about the black underclass community, because some of the evidence in Lynwood Park contradicts the claims of Venkatesh and Stack that helping those in the kinship network guarantees obligation and its attendant reciprocity. In Lynwood Park there existed in the same individuals, under different circumstances, mutuality and reciprocity, and individualism—the idea of me-first. For example, Michelle Cleckley made a lot of money in drug trafficking in the 1980s and 1990s. By her account, she helped family and friends unconditionally, yet now finds herself homeless in Lynwood Park and largely deserted by those who once benefited from her resources and largesse:

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<sup>30</sup> Venkatesh, *Off the Books*, 8.

<sup>31</sup> Stack, *All Our Kin*, 34-43.

<sup>32</sup> Natalie Sarkisian and Naomi Gerstel, “Kin Support among Blacks and Whites: Race and Family Organization,” *American Sociological Review* 69, 6 (2004): 812 -837. See especially page 817.

- VMH: *So when you had all that money from selling drugs you were helping all your family?*
- MC: *Family, friends, girlfriends . . . My mother, my sisters, my brother, my aunts. Just people in the neighborhood. . . . And then when . . . I get down I have nobody . . . if I need them [they say]: “I ain’t going to support you,” or “you need to do this,” and “you need to do that.” So, excuse me? I’m going to say it just like this: I don’t kiss nobody’s ass. You know, it’s as simple as that. If I don’t kiss my parents’ ass, I’m not going to kiss nobody else’s ass on the street. I don’t need them.<sup>33</sup>*

In Lynwood Park, numerous family members and extended kinfolk were packed into most households and their buying pattern suggests that they did not share everything as widely as Stack claimed. Helen Miller, the storeowner on the community’s boundary, explained that the residents would rather pay more for an item on a per-piece basis than saving money by buying sale items in bulk. They advised Miller that excess goods would be consumed by others as the reason for this purchasing habit, the logic of which Miller could not comprehend:

*They would buy a little bit at a time. And we would throw a sale paper every weekend. And we would have Coca-Colas, six for nineteen cents. They would come in and buy one Coca-Cola for a nickel. I’d say, “For nineteen cents you get six.” “But if I take them home, somebody else would drink them” . . . I would try to say, “You know, you can get this for this much and it would be the same thing . . . And they didn’t want to change, you know. If onions were fifteen cents a pound, they still would just buy one onion.<sup>34</sup>*

Sudhir Venkatesh pointed out that the underground economy is a necessary survival strategy in enclaves such as Lynwood Park and operates under the radar of government scrutiny. The community develops its own set of rules, and becomes a parallel world, in which *everyone* is involved in some form of illegality. Venkatesh’s finding contradicts the claims of scholars such as Elijah Anderson who wrote that black underclass communities are populated by two generally discrete groups—those who are

<sup>33</sup> Cleckley, 25 July 2005, 27-8, 38-9.

<sup>34</sup> Miller, 19 February 2008, 5, 28.

“decent” and those of the “street.”<sup>35</sup> For example, Patricia Martin said of Lynwood Park’s drug trade: “[E]verybody, every family in here had somebody dealing with drugs.”<sup>36</sup>

In Lynwood Park’s early era, many residents combined steady jobs for menial pay with the shady opportunities of the underground economy in order to survive. According to Venkatesh, illegality in the underclass community is largely born of poverty and desperation, and exists “because of the neglect of outside actors,” local and national politicians, and businesses all of whom refuse to allocate enough resources to engender the economic security of the black underclass.<sup>37</sup> Venkatesh’s position suggests that underclass illegality is reactive. Yet success in Lynwood Park’s illegal industry, and the consumption of its products, also brought happiness and pleasure to the enclave’s residents.

The wealth derived from Lynwood Park illegality was instrumental in creating a sense of somebodiness in those relegated to the bottom of American society. Illegal wealth also enabled men to construct masculinity, since they could purchase the prestige consumer items of middle-class society. Illegally-procured wealth also made Lynwood Park’s men into heroes that the enclave’s youth would want to emulate when they financed community projects and assisted the residents with an expansive largesse. Success also gave illegal actors a sense of accomplishment and independence, which then engendered self-confidence. For example, Willie Jackson could not support her household with two jobs for menial pay in the 1930s. But John Jett had an illegal moonshine business at age twelve, and explained of his illegal entrepreneurship: “It was that I was surviving . . . it made me feel good that I could do for myself.”<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> For more on this topic see Anderson, *Streetwise*, 56-76.

<sup>36</sup> Martin, 17 May 2005, 43.

<sup>37</sup> Venkatesh, *Off the Books*, xv-xix.

<sup>38</sup> Jett, 13 November 2005, 20-1.

As an adult Jett made twenty-five thousand dollars in his first week of crack cocaine dealing, and said that he became a junkie to the trade, so successful illegality made him an addict while he was addicting others with his product.<sup>39</sup> Therefore, not all black underclass illegality is reactive, as Venkatesh implied. Kai Erikson pointed out that it is not evident that “all acts considered deviant in society are in fact (or even in principle) harmful to group life.” Moreover, people in every corner of the world, and throughout time—as the work of Eugen Weber and David Sabean demonstrate—have survived handsomely “while engaged in practices which their neighbors regard as extremely abhorrent.”<sup>40</sup> Lynwood Park’s illegality fostered pride, independence, and self-assurance in those who were successful as illegal licit and illicit businessmen. And illegal activity gave pleasure to consumers, whether it was through the consumption of moonshine, bootlegged government liquor, and drugs, or enjoying prostitution and gambling. In underclass communities, illegality is accepted as a necessary aspect of life, and many who become affluent from illegality then give help to the community and its residents. The residents then consider them as entrepreneurs, respect and admire them, even when their industry, such as dealing crack cocaine, has the potential of destroying the community.

Venkatesh pointed out that the illegal community is an economic subculture, a web of interactions and exchanges that weaves together residents, families, and businesses, even politicians and police, in a network of collusion, cooperation, and compromise. Nearly everyone lives underground in the underclass black community. Some may just dip and dabble, not all are criminals, and not all activities are heinous. But life is

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<sup>39</sup> Jett, 13 November 2005, 34.

<sup>40</sup> Erikson, *Wayward Puritans*, 8.



dangerous, and residents generally find ways to create an alternate moral universe around illegal exchange.<sup>41</sup>

Police officers also profited from Lynwood Park's illegality. For example, Gertrude Booker, born in 1918, said that Detective Harold Spruill would surprise and run off the enclave's men who gambled under the trees, and then pocket their money.<sup>42</sup> But Pee Wee Jackson, born in 1950, offered that this dynamic was actually a deliberate strategy to buy off the police:

*Everybody knew Detective Spruill . . . [he] and Cigar were people that used law enforcement as a tool to really hold us back, because they were crooks. They took handouts and kickbacks from the bootleggers. They protected the bootleggers. These guys got rich off of Bookie and all the other bootleggers in Lynwood Park . . . [Spruill] did used to break up the dice games . . . [but] it was like a staged performance. They knew at a certain time he was going to make some noise, and they'd run off. Once [Spruill] got the money . . . he disappeared and they'd continue the game . . . They were leaving him enough to where they knew he wasn't gonna come back for another two or three weeks . . . Spruill was the one that tapped into the benefits of getting to know these guys . . . I was told that Spruill owned one of the biggest houses in DeKalb County.<sup>43</sup>*

Yet Patricia Jones, born in 1949, the daughter of Mary Baby Chick Carter, remembered that Harold Spruill was also a compassionate man. Baby Chick had five children that she dragged from one rental property to another in Lynwood Park because she was an alcoholic who was continually evicted. Sometimes Baby Chick and her brood lived with Baby Chick's mother, Kate Carter, a domestic worker who had twelve children, and they all lived together in a one-bedroom apartment of a duplex property. Patricia Jones explained that when she was five and a half years old, she, her sister, and one of her brothers were taken in and raised by Laura "Aunt City" Patrick, a domestic worker with no

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<sup>41</sup> Venkatesh, *Off the Books*, 12, 14-23. The author argues that the unreported licit activities of the underclass cost local and national governments tens of billions of dollars annually in tax revenues. He estimates that illicit activities generate income in the hundreds of billions of dollars annually. He also claims that four out of five Americans purchase something in the informal economy every year.

<sup>42</sup> Booker, 17 August 2005, 53-4.

<sup>43</sup> Pee Wee Jackson, 17 September 2006, 16, 21-2. The residents only knew Cigar by his nickname, which they gave him because he always chewed a Cuban cigar. No one in Lynwood Park knew his real name.

children, who already was raising her older brother Charles. Jones explained that Aunt City, who was illiterate, worked three jobs, had a garden, raised chicken and hogs, and bootlegged moonshine, in order to raise four children not her own:

*[P]eople in the community just loved [Aunt City] . . . if you would have came to [our] little one-bedroom duplex house . . . we kept it so beautiful and clean you would have thought that it was a little house . . . My brothers slept on a rollaway bed in the kitchen, and me and my sister slept on a layout sofa in the living room . . . And I will never forget the first night I went to Aunt City and laid on those clean sheets. I just took a deep breath and said, "Thank you, Lord," you know, 'cause I knew there was a God somewhere.*

*And she had a little mini-farm in the back, and she had someone to build a meat house on the back of that porch . . . where they salt down . . . the meat. . . . to preserve it. . . . [W]e had chickens, we had hogs, and we had a garden out there. . . . She would can stuff in the summertime to put it up for the winter months, and kill hogs so we had meat to eat in the winter months.*

*And, you know, it was amazing how hard she worked . . . She had no blood whatsoever in her for us, but she had the love in her heart that she knowed that there was a need and she took us in. And she worked three jobs and bootlegging on the side in order to do it, and I'm so glad that she did . . . she wouldn't allow us [girls] to sell [moonshine] to nobody but the ladies and the boys would have to sell to the mens.<sup>44</sup>*

Aunt City barred her door with a two-by-four to delay the police entrance, in the event that they came to arrest her for selling moonshine. And Patricia Jones recalled the night that Spruill revealed his compassion:

*[Spruill] broke in. She had a two-by-four on the door . . . [so] it took them a while to get in . . . she [told] us if the police was ever to come, you holler and let me know so we can pour the liquor out. When they got in, we had busted all the liquor, and the only thing that was there was the jars . . . But, you know, Detective Spruill had a good heart . . . Let me tell you what he could have did. He could have took us from Aunt City. But the man had a good heart.*

*And I remember he busted in this time, and I was so upset. And I was thinking that Aunt City was going to be taken away from us [and] what are we going to do now. We don't have nobody to take care of us now. So I was crying . . . And I was trying to fight him . . . he was putting the handcuffs on her, and I said, "You leave Aunt City alone." I said, "Don't you put your hands on Aunt City." I said, "You leave her alone. You leave*

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<sup>44</sup> Jones, 26 June 2008, 2, 6-8, 12, 17-18, 28, 33. Aunt City had taken in Jones's older brother Charles Carter when he was six months old. Charles had a different father from the four younger children. When Charles—at age fourteen—told Aunt City that he would drop out of school if she would take in Patricia, Aunt City took the three additional children in and engaged in illegality to raise the four and keep Charles in school. Aunt City then persuaded her brother to raise Baby Chick's youngest child and son. Jones eventually taught Aunt City to recognize and write her name.

*her alone!” And I just got to hollering. And I was trying to fight him . . . I guess I was about seven years old . . .*

*[T]he more you think back on that, you think it would have been his job to take us from her. And she told him “That’s why I’m selling this bootleg.” Aunt City had a way of getting to you . . . I know for a fact she told him “I’m selling this bootleg to raise these children. They don’t have nobody to take care of them.” And he let her out. She didn’t have no more trouble . . . She didn’t go to prison . . . He never raided her again.<sup>45</sup>*

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Lynwood Park falls within the models that Eugen Weber and Sudhir Venkatesh describe: economies of scarcity steeped in illegality. Weber pointed out that every village in rural France was like a clan, a sort of state with its own loyalties, an enclave that was “morally and psychically independent.” The French villagers resorted to crime for survival, and “everyday life carried everyday reminders of past scarcity and present need.”<sup>46</sup> Social commentator Richard Rodriguez, who was raised in an underclass Hispanic enclave in Sacramento, California, explained that romantics praise the working class for its capacity for human closeness, its passion and spontaneity, that others supposedly only experience in their earliest youth. And thus the dominant society interprets the working class as childlike. But Rodriguez points out that working-class life is an *adult* way of life, with adult needs and problems requiring adult inventiveness, creativity, and solutions, albeit sometimes shady, ones. Similarly, Venkatesh pointed out that people in the underground community possess extraordinary human capital and craftsmanship.<sup>47</sup> This is certainly applicable to the people of Lynwood Park, who were living adult lives filled with life-crippling and soul-numbing struggles.

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<sup>45</sup> Jones, 26 June 2008, 21-2.

<sup>46</sup> Weber, *Peasants*, 48, 131.

<sup>47</sup> Richard Rodriguez, *Hunger for Memory: The Education of Richard Rodriguez* (New York: Bantam Books, 1983), 49; Venkatesh, *Off the Books*, 92.

Tera Hunter held that “Life conditions had always demanded that blacks act as a collective,” but, like Elijah Anderson, this perspective also romanticized the black ghetto.<sup>48</sup> It is a myth that the people of Lynwood Park interacted as one body. Raymond Jackson, born in 1930, reported that residents stuck together when it came to illegal activity, but this claim is problematic. Having lived in Lynwood Park for more than six decades, Jackson said that he would never report anyone in Lynwood Park to the police, even if that person were destroying the community:

- BRJ: *Oh, no, you're not gonna tell on them—no. You're not gonna do that.*  
 VMH: *Even if they're destroying your community?*  
 BRJ: *They still ain't going to do that. They're going to stick together. They don't have nothing else to do . . . you got to stick together. He ain't gon' go and tell So-and-So I selling drugs, and stuff like that, because, no, what good is that going do me, 'cause [the police] don't think a bit more of me for telling them, or nothing. You know what I mean? I put forward myself, you know, when I tells on someone else out there.*  
 VMH: *So, in a way, you're not going to call the cops . . . because you're afraid of what will happen to you.*  
 BRJ: *Well, you got to stick together . . . and everybody got something bad about them. I say, “Well, you told on me, I'm gon' tell on you” . . .*  
 VMH: *[Y]ou wouldn't call the cops on Rodney?*  
 BRJ: *No, I'll just tell him “Man, you better be careful. They going to get you, and that's going to be it.” I'll just warn him and go head on . . . I wouldn't call the police on nobody. I'm not that kind of a person.”*<sup>49</sup>

While romantics praise the underclass community for sticking together, Jackson was really suggesting that it was the widespread practice of illegality, and the fear of reprisals, in large part, that kept residents from informing on each other, rather than community cohesiveness, which was later romanticized by both the residents and scholars. The people of Lynwood Park determined who would be allowed to succeed, and residents were not loath to report those it blacklisted, as Patricia Martin confirmed of the drug dealers:

<sup>48</sup> Tera W. Hunter, *To 'Joy My Freedom: Southern Black Women's Lives and Labors After the Civil War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 39.

<sup>49</sup> Raymond Jackson, 7 October 2005, 116-7.

*[T]hey're territorial. So if I sell drugs on this corner, you come up with your drugs, I'm going to call the police on you, and report you—okay? The police is going to chase you. Sooner or later they're going to get you, because I targeted you, because they're watching you. But here I am over here . . . and I did it because you were infringing on me. This is my livelihood. This is my corner, okay?*<sup>50</sup>

According to Venkatesh, illegality cannot thrive without the consent of the local residents, even if that consent constitutes “turning the other way when illegal activity takes place.”<sup>51</sup> Illegality was practiced by a wide range of Lynwood Park’s residents and included both men and women, young and old, and even the God-fearing, regular churchgoers. Gertrude Booker was born in 1918 into a sharecropping family in Bonaire, Georgia, and began picking cotton at age five. She recounted that her family lived in a shack with holes in the roof, and that as a child she would awaken to snow on her bed. Her family moved into The Camps—the Camp Gordon barrack—then settled in Lynwood Park after they were displaced in 1940.<sup>52</sup> As a single mother of two, Booker worked as a short-order cook and domestic. Sociologist Kathryn Neckerman pointed out that the very poor had “only a tenuous grasp on a household of their own,” and were always at risk of losing it, which is borne out by Gertrude Booker’s example.<sup>53</sup>

Booker purchased a home in Lynwood Park, but lost her investment because she could not manage the financial demands of homeownership. In order to acquire her second home in Lynwood Park, which cost \$8,000 when she purchased it in 1968, Booker worked a second job at night, cleaning office buildings. She was thus able to accumulate a fifty-percent down payment of \$4,000, despite also supporting an elderly mother and supplementing the finances of her adult daughter who was a single parent with several

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<sup>50</sup> Martin, 27 October 2004, 31.

<sup>51</sup> Venkatesh, *Off the Books*, 71.

<sup>52</sup> Booker, 11 November 2005, 21.

<sup>53</sup> Kathryn M. Neckerman, “The Emergence of “Underclass” Family Patterns, 1900-1940,” in Michael B. Katz, ed. *The Underclass Debate, Views from History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), 204.

children.<sup>54</sup> Booker then decided to bootleg government liquor to pay for her house in full. Her older brother Napoleon lived with her and bootlegged out of the back door of the house during the day while Booker was at work. And Booker bootlegged in the evenings and on weekends, except Sunday, which was reserved for church. A devout Christian, Booker made a pact with God, which they both kept, since she was never caught:

*I said, "If I get this house paid for, I would never, never sell another drop." The day I got this house paid for [in 1972] it was over."*<sup>55</sup>

Bootlegging was always widespread in Lynwood Park. In the community's early decades moonshine was made with stills in the woods around Lynwood Park, and many of the community's residents, both men and women, were bootleggers who sold both corn liquor—white lightning—and government liquor. And whites also were implicated in, and profited from, Lynwood Park's moonshine industry, as Pee Wee Jackson explained:

*[O]ne of the reasons that bootlegging and stuff was tolerated by the white establishments was that if you kept one of them guys drunk, one of these bullies, one of these bad guys . . . you kept them passive. Now if he sobered up, guess where he was going to raise Hell at? He was going to Brookhaven. So let's keep him out of Brookhaven, 'cause if they wanted to stop the flow of alcohol in Lynwood Park . . . they could stop it just like that [snapping fingers] . . . [and] guess what . . . where are they gonna buy the hops, the barley, and the corn, and stuff, to make the liquor? . . . if I go in there and buy a hundred pounds of corn . . . they knew he was going to make moonshine.*<sup>56</sup>

Social scientists Douglas Massey and Nancy Denton claimed that coping means that "ghetto dwellers evolve a set of behaviors, attitudes, and expectations that are sharply

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<sup>54</sup> To put earnings in perspective, John Jett worked as a cook for the Frito-Lay Company in the 1960s at a pay of ninety-seven cents an hour. Jett, 13 November 2005, 26. If Booker made the same rate, working four hours per night, five days a week, and paying no taxes, it would have taken her more than four years to accumulate the down payment of \$4,000. It took her much longer, as she was also contributing to the domestic economy of her mother and daughter.

<sup>55</sup> Booker, 11 November 2005, 35. Bootlegging constitutes selling both moonshine and what the residents call government or corked liquor, which is someone purchasing alcohol and reselling it on a per shot basis.

<sup>56</sup> Pee Wee Jackson, 17 September 2006, 15-17. Today bootleg houses in Lynwood Park sell "government" beer, wine, and liquor to residents who have no transportation, and who wish to purchase alcohol late at night and on Sundays. See Kucera, 23 April 2005, 38.

at variance with those common in the rest of American society.”<sup>57</sup> Bootleggers have always thrived in Lynwood Park because alcoholism is widespread in the community, and is accepted as a family trait, as Maudina Peaches Horton explained:

- VMH: *Alcoholism is pretty widespread in the community.*  
 MH: *Yes. . . .*  
 VMH: *People in Lynwood Park are very tolerant.*  
 MH: *Yes, they are . . . because we know the history. You knew . . . Peaches . . . whatever her problems, whatever she came from, whatever her circumstances were. So when you look at a person and you know their circumstances, that makes a difference . . .*  
 VMH: *So if you turned out to be an alcoholic or a drug user, people understand.*  
 MH: *Yes. You’re like “Well, you know, it really doesn’t matter.”*<sup>58</sup>

Horton said her father was a star baseball player who would get drunk after the games, and that the community treated him as a hero. Similarly, Patricia Martin, born in 1932, recounted that her grandfather Lewis drank, and that her minister grandmother, Georgia Clement, tolerated it:

*My grandfather was a stone-weekend drunkard. He was a party man (laughter) . . . And my grandmother let him . . . they’d bring him home—and he’s so drunk—in the wheelbarrow. And she’s “Bring him on in here. Just bring Lewis home in here” . . . sometimes he would be coming down the path hollering “Georgia, Georgia.” And she’d say, “Oh, that’s Lewis. Oh, that man, that man. Come on Lewis. Just come in the house” . . . she’d put him on the bed and that was the end of that.*<sup>59</sup>

Scholars such as Neckerman presented alcoholism among blacks as uniquely male, which is inaccurate for Lynwood Park, where alcoholism has always been widespread among women, and is openly prevalent during their teenage years.<sup>60</sup> Carrie Julian, born in 1933, explained that drinking was a regular activity for her:

- VMH: *Now you and your husband, you said you were both drinkers . . .*  
 CJ: *[T]he places we would go, that was the name of the game: “Have a drink.”*

<sup>57</sup> Douglas S. Massey and Nancy A. Denton. *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 13, 167.

<sup>58</sup> Jett, 13 November 2005, 47; Williams, 14 April 2005, 14-5; Horton, 17 September 2005, 84.

<sup>59</sup> Martin, 10 February 2007, 20-2.

<sup>60</sup> Neckerman. “The Emergence of Underclass Family Patterns,” in *The Underclass Debate*, 210-13; Fields, 24 July 2005, 12-3.

VMH: *But a lot of people in the community drink.*  
 CJ: *Yes . . .*  
 VMH: *A lot of people say they all drank: their parents drank, their grandparents drank . . . Now did your mother drink?*  
 CJ: *Yes. And her husband.*<sup>61</sup>

Tera Hunter wrote that racial paranoia after the 1906 race riot made Atlanta's whites fantasize "a biological disposition for inebriation based on race," but Massey and Denton explained that alcoholism is prevalent in underclass communities because poor blacks hold mainstream American ideals and their failure to achieve these creates a psychological need to seek gratification through other means, such as intoxication.<sup>62</sup> Contrary to Massey and Denton, in Lynwood Park, residents drank to socialize. Men sat under the trees every day and drank with their friends to pass the time. Drinking for pleasure was widespread within the community, no one spoke of drinking because they could not advance, which was borne out by Andrew Horton, who preferred the fun of living, drinking, playing ball, and the acceptance and hero worship in his community, rather than recognition on Coca-Cola's baseball team. Jim Crow segregation limited the movement of blacks who spent much of their leisure time in their enclaves. In addition, underclass blacks had limited access to transportation. Therefore, it was inevitable that there would be a high demand for alcohol in Lynwood Park, and that there would naturally emerge its suppliers—of both moonshine and government liquor.

Sociologists John Logan and Harvey Molotch maintained that the black neighborhood is not disorganized, but rather organized differently from middle-class white society because black entrepreneurs consistently lacked access to credit.<sup>63</sup> And Raymond

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<sup>61</sup> Julian, 29 December 2005, 20-2.

<sup>62</sup> Hunter, *To 'Joy My Freedom*, 164; Massey and Denton, *American Apartheid*, 171.

<sup>63</sup> John R. Logan and Harvey L. Molotch. *Urban Fortunes: The Political Economy of Place* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 127-8.



Breton pointed out that “the dominant social institutions [of the ghetto are] churches and liquor stores,” and Lynwood Park was no exception to this rule, since it has always boasted numerous bootleg liquor houses and churches, as Minnie Lee Weddie Thompson, born in 1944, remembered:<sup>64</sup>

*[W]hen I was coming up we had bootleggers but . . . [that] sold government liquor. Like on Sundays or Saturday nights after the liquor store closed . . . You could go get you a six-pack, a twelve-pack, case, whatever you want . . . we had a lot of liquor houses. Like on Sunday sometimes we went from house to house . . . We'll go spend some money with you, and then we would go spend some money with the next person.*<sup>65</sup>

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Lynwood Park's moonshine kingpin was Herman Ouisley, who was described as *the* man, the “president” of Lynwood Park “back in the day.”<sup>66</sup> Herman worked as a yardman for the Forty Eight Veterans Hospital in Brookhaven as a young adult. He got around by mule and wagon and supplemented the household income by farming along the northeastern edge of Windsor Parkway between Lynwood Park and Roswell Road. Herman also raised hogs and chickens. Herman then exchanged his produce for household goods.<sup>67</sup> Horace Ouisley said that his father was an excellent provider who was always finding new ways to make a living. The elder Ouisley once partnered with Harvey Parker, a white builder, to build houses for sale in Lynwood Park. However, black entrepreneurship consistently lacked access to credit, and the venture was not successful because banks redlined African American communities, and would not issue mortgages to blacks, nor provide construction loans for building in black neighborhoods.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Raymond Breton, “Institutional Completeness of Ethnic Communities and the Personal Relations of Immigrants,” *American Journal of Sociology* 70-2 (1964): 193-205.

<sup>65</sup> Thompson, 11 August 2005, 29-31.

<sup>66</sup> Horton, 17 September 2005, 63.

<sup>67</sup> Horace Ouisley, 1 November 2004, 2-3.

<sup>68</sup> Martin, 17 May 2005, 12; Horace Ouisley, 28 March 2005; “Lynwood Park: Application for Historic Designation,” 1999, DeKalb Historical Society, Decatur, Georgia; Gilbert Osofsky, *Harlem: The Making of*

Undaunted, Herman dug and operated Herman Lake on the northwestern boundary of Lynwood Park, on land he leased from the Allens. He charged a fee for fishing, and since the lake was adjacent to the community's Horseshoe Bend baseball field, residents would attend ball games, then visit Herman's shack over the lake for food, music, and moonshine.<sup>69</sup> Herman also built housing along Madison and Cates Avenues that he rented.<sup>70</sup> Through entrepreneurship mainly in illegal activity, Herman Ouisley became very wealthy, and well connected with the police and white authorities in DeKalb County. Herman then used this influence in official circles to help the community's residents, as Minnie Lee Weddie Thompson:

*He could get things done in Decatur . . . If you go to Mr. Herman and you tell him so-and-so, and if he liked you and was okay with him, he'd call out and tell these people "Sell him a bond, I'll bring the money down there tomorrow," or whatever needed to be done . . . he could call down there and get things—he didn't have to go.*<sup>71</sup>

Herman's son, Horace, who was born in 1932, said that white policemen enjoyed Christmas dinner at their home, and were given moonshine as Christmas presents:

VMH: *Did you see police coming in through Lynwood Park?*  
 HO: *Yes, ma'am. They were nice . . . They'd come and eat down there, and drink with you, at Christmas. We were all like a big, happy family . . . At Christmastime . . . they wanted some white lightning—I made arrangements to get it to them . . .*  
 VMH: *And they would pay you for it?*  
 HO: *No, ma'am . . . That was a Christmas gift.*<sup>72</sup>

Horace explained that the police were friends of his family, such that they would allow him to "save" Horace's friends from being locked up:

*When I was a kid . . . I had friends that would get drunk, and the police would put them in the car, and gon' lock them up. And I would go ask them could I carry them home, and*

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*a Ghetto* (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), 102.

<sup>69</sup> Minnie Lee Thompson, 29 July 2005, 12; Scott, 4 May 2005, 12-3. Patricia Martin recalled that she was around eighteen years old when Herman Ouisley dug Herman Lake, which would have been around 1950.

<sup>70</sup> Horace Ouisley, 1 November 2004, 51-62; Thompson, 11 August 2005, 11.

<sup>71</sup> Thompson, 11 August 2005, 12.

<sup>72</sup> Horace Ouisley, 1 November 2004, 58-9.

*they'd say, "Yeah." And I'd get them out of the car and carry them home. And that's how they was towards me 'cause, like I said, they were my friends.*<sup>73</sup>

Horace Ouisley claimed that his father was a wholesale moonshine distributor who only sold the liquor by the case. Herman bought stock from white producers in Buford and Cumming, Georgia, and from as far away as North Carolina, to supplement what he made on his stills in the woods around Lynwood Park.<sup>74</sup> Herman used his two grandsons, Tyrone Peeples, and Bobby Jones—known as Bookie Ouisley—the sons of Herman's two daughters, Roxie Mae Peeples, and Onie May Crutchfield, to haul his moonshine into Lynwood Park. The younger Ouisley said that his father always outsmarted the police and that is why he was never locked up. Mamie Lee Mathis, born in 1920, whose daughter Betty was married to Bookie Ouisley, shared another reason why Herman Ouisley was never caught:

*Bookie worked for him . . . He was carrying his liquor. You see, Herman never did go to jail. He was smart . . . he was doing all this, but he had these peoples working for him. Herman ain't never been to jail in his life, and he died an old man . . . he knew how to stay out of it . . . See, this is the way Herman was, see. See, they was his grandchildren . . . he made them handle that whiskey, but he didn't make Horace handle it. That's his son. Horace didn't put his hands on it.*<sup>75</sup>

John Jett usually accompanied Tyrone Peeples, one of Herman Ouisley's grandsons, to Buford, to make pickups from white producers:

*Tyrone and I used to go up there in those jacked-up cars. We would go get the liquor, and when they put it in the trunk, it would smooth the car out. And him and I used to bring it back down . . . Tyrone was the driver . . . I was the shotgun man . . . He'd be coming down the highway and his hand was just shaking, 'cause we were little 'ole kids . . . we would change out cars. We'd drive the empty car, and then we'd get another car that's already loaded, and bring it back.*<sup>76</sup>

Although Horace claimed that the elder Ouisley worked at a legitimate job as a butler to Judge Hubert Candler, the brother of Coca-Cola founder Asa Candler, other

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<sup>73</sup> Horace Ouisley, 1 November 2004, 61-2.

<sup>74</sup> Fieldnotes of Lynwood Park Day, 7 May 2005.

<sup>75</sup> Mathis, 1 April 2008, 22-3. Tyrone Peeples died as the result of an automobile accident in 2007, and Bookie Ouisley also died in 2007, of cancer and diabetes, after having both legs amputated.

<sup>76</sup> Jett, 13 November 2005, 65.

residents, such as Raymond Jackson, who was born in 1930, said that Herman Ouisley never had any legitimate employment:

- BRJ: *That's how he bought all that land up there in Lynwood Park, them houses, all of that stuff. He owned a whole block in there—all that stuff he had . . .*  
 VMH: *A lot of it was bought with bootlegging money.*  
 BRJ: *All of it was bought with it. I ain't never known Herman to work nowhere but sell liquor . . . And I been knowing him all my life.*<sup>77</sup>

John Jett, born in 1943, knew Herman Ouisley well and concurred with Jackson:

- JCJ: *Herman Ouisley was a BAD man. He's a man that had stuff . . . houses, cars. He owned that big lake down there with all that property and all that stuff. He was a pioneer in this town . . . Herman Ouisley was THE man.*  
 VMH: *Do you remember him working?*  
 JCJ: *No. I never knowed of him to have a job.*  
 VMH: *Just bootlegging?*  
 JCJ: *Yes . . . A full-time job.*<sup>78</sup>

Residents of the community patronized Herman's shack after ball games, and John Jett said that Herman also had another use for his shack, which extended over the water: "[T]he shack was where he hid the liquor . . . He stored a lot of liquor in that lake."<sup>79</sup>

Pee Wee Jackson offered that Herman was greatly admired for his business acumen and his way of achieving the American Dream of wealth acquisition during the Jim Crow era:

*[I]f he had had the same opportunities of other men in America, he would have been a billionaire. He's the only man that owned his own private lake. He figured out a way that he could sell fishing licenses to make money. He could sell bait. He learned the value of owning real estate. And he bought a lot of land in Lynwood Park. But now how did he buy that land? From his enterprise, which was selling liquor.*<sup>80</sup>

Maudina Peaches Horton, who grew up across the street from the Ouisleys, recalled the excitement surrounding the elder Ouisley and his bootleg running:

*[W]e were on Cates Avenue, 'cause [the Ouisleys] lived there. And we were little . . . and we'd look, and we'd say, "Get out of the way! Here they come! Here they come!" And*

<sup>77</sup> Raymond Jackson, 7 October 2005, 143-4; John Jett, 13 November 2005, 69; Thompson, 11 August 2005, 12. Horace Ouisley is the only interviewee who claimed that Herman Ouisley had a legitimate job.

<sup>78</sup> Jett, 13 November 2005, 69; Horton, 17 September 2005, 62-3.

<sup>79</sup> Jett, 13 November 2005, 67. To the people of Lynwood Park, a café is called a shack.

<sup>80</sup> Pee Wee Jackson, 17 September 2006, 14-5.

*the police would be trying to catch them. And they would come down Cates Avenue—I mean wide open—shoonkt! Because they knew they had to get in that yard . . . the police at that time couldn't come on private property . . . Mr. Herman kept them souped-up cars . . . and they was running that liquor back and forth . . . we would be outside playing . . . and we had to run and get out of the road . . . and all you could see was . . . a big cloud of dust coming . . . And it was exciting to us, because "Wow, he's out running." At the time, you know, you're a child. You go: "Wow, look at him! He's flying! The police can't catch him!" So we're kinda like standing on the side: "Go Bookie! Go Tyrone!" . . . so it was real exciting for us at the time . . . Honey, he was rich . . . He owned everything . . . He was very powerful in this community . . . People would say, "Look, Mr. Herman Ouisley." "Ooh, Herman, Herman" . . . it was like wow, the president is in town.<sup>81</sup>*

Sudhir Venkatesh found that residents of an underclass community are empathetic towards those who break the law. They overcome ethical dilemmas by recognizing that illegality supports households and spills over to benefiting the wider community.<sup>82</sup> But Herman Ouisley also set an example that crime was not only exciting, but that it paid extremely well, and that very young people could be involved. Moreover, the residents' admiration of him and their awe at his financial success demonstrates that the community held a moral compass that accepted illegality, and that the residents developed a high tolerance for illegality and its attendant criminality because, as Mamie Lee Mathis pointed out, it takes very little for an underclass black person to become homeless.<sup>83</sup>

Sociologist William Julius Wilson theorized that individuals are more likely to pursue illegal activity in communities where it is overtly practiced and tolerated by their neighbors, who are also struggling to survive economically. Wilson held that widespread illegality facilitates role modeling and is culturally transmitted by precept to the young in communities where it is frequently encountered.<sup>84</sup> In addition, sociologists Philip Moss and Chris Tilly reported that behaviors are perpetuated in the ghetto through the contagion

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<sup>81</sup> Horton, 17 September 2005, 28, 63.

<sup>82</sup> Venkatesh, *Off the Books*, 74.

<sup>83</sup> Mathis, 1 April 2008, 40.

<sup>84</sup> William Julius Wilson, *When Work Disappears: The World of the Urban Poor* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1996), 70-1.

effect: behaviors feed one another within a neighborhood; joblessness produces youths reluctant to work, and “[t]he results are similar for criminal behavior, drug use, and alcohol use.”<sup>85</sup> John Jett, who was born and raised in Lynwood Park, pointed out that this was the case with the community’s youths. One could see the broad contours of the ways in which the group reproduced itself over time in Lynwood Park. In other words, in communities like Lynwood Park, there will always exist a tension between blacks wanting the accoutrements of wealth, and the collective weight of the community’s past of acquiring the objects of these desires illegally, a practice that only a very few can escape in an enclave where illegality is widely practiced.

Historian Carl Nightingale agreed with Martin Luther King, Jr. that Jim Crow segregation created a sense of inferiority in blacks. Nightingale then found that in the 1960s and 1970s, after the majority of poor households had access to televisions, the mass-communicated culture of material abundance inundated underclass communities. Consumption culture then gave poor blacks “a seductive means to compensate for their feelings of failure.” In effect, television repositioned the value system of underclass blacks to that of middle-class material culture. Nightingale found that blacks then became more interested than whites in buying name brands and prestige items, as compensatory status symbols for their sense of inferiority. And underclass blacks were found to be more fashion conscious than middle-class whites.<sup>86</sup> Interestingly, this repositioning of black desire coincided with school desegregation in DeKalb County.

Mercer Sullivan claimed that illegality is caused by “a social structure of restricted opportunity,” and pointed out that attending school not only imbues productive skills, but

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<sup>85</sup> Philip Moss and Chris Tilly, *Why Black Men are Doing Worse in the Labor Market: A Review of Supply-Side and Demand-Side Explanations* (New York: Social Science Research Council, 1991), 126.

<sup>86</sup> Carl Husemoller Nightingale, *On the Edge: A History of Poor Black Children and Their American Dreams* (New York: HarperCollins, 1993), 135, 139.

also shapes attitudes towards authority and helps children adapt to life in organizations.<sup>87</sup>

Therefore, lack of school attendance for underclass blacks often results in the combination of delinquency, lack of respect for authority, and the later inability to find a place in a business structure. When DeKalb County's schools were desegregated in 1969, Lynwood Park's residents were accustomed to widespread illegality, and had already developed a desire for name-brand consumer goods as a way of building a sense of self-confidence and somebodiness. The community's youths began dropping out of school, in large part, because of the racism they encountered at Cross Keys High School. And because of the community's history of illegality, Lynwood Park's residents were accepting of the high-school dropouts selling marijuana on the corner, since it produced income and did not hurt the community. Similarly, Nightingale found that the black youths in his Philadelphia study saw corner drug dealing as a way to make the fast cash that "made it possible for many people to get the items that appear on billboards and TV." In both Philadelphia and Lynwood Park, successful drug dealers were flashy, and became the role models for young boys, who "would do anything to dress like a drug dealer." Steve Daniel, born in 1956, agreed:

*One thing about a black person, he'll spend his last money on some clothes. He's not gonna be ragged . . . he might be looking good, but dumb as Hell. Well, smelly and probably can't count, but he's got on some nice clothes.*<sup>88</sup>

Lynwood Park's historic dangerous boundary had a four-way stop sign, and after school desegregation, this corner of Windsor Parkway and Osborne Road became famous for drive-by, nickel bag, marijuana sales. Lynwood Park then became known to whites as a "stop and cop" site—stop at the corner, and cop a bag of pot. And regardless of the

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<sup>87</sup> Mercer L Sullivan, *"Getting Paid": Youth Crime and Work in the Inner City* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989), 30.

<sup>88</sup> Nightingale, *On the Edge*, 164; Daniel, 6 May 2007, 43-4.

efforts of the police, nothing could stop the Lynwood Park marijuana trade.<sup>89</sup> Soon afterward marijuana plots sprang up in the community where the moonshine stills once were and, before long, the community's children were dropping out of school *to sell* marijuana on the corner.

Thomas and Mary Edsall found that the successes of the civil rights movement did little for less-educated blacks, because they were poorly positioned to take advantage of newly-created opportunities.<sup>90</sup> Economist David Sjoquist wrote that Atlanta's mean real family income grew 20.6 percent compared with 10.7 percent for the country as a whole between 1969 and 1989, yet "Atlanta's dramatic growth has missed parts of the region where poor blacks are concentrated."<sup>91</sup> Sociologist Robert Bullard also pointed out that although Atlanta as a metropolitan area has seen unprecedented economic growth beginning in the 1970s, "[b]lack workers continue[d] to be concentrated in . . . low-paying service jobs."

While Nightingale and Bullard's arguments are valid for the plight of the black underclass, an additional dynamic informed Lynwood Park illegality. Lynwood Park was hidden away in the deep woods of DeKalb County and was largely ignored by the white outside before the 1960s. Affluent suburbs began surrounding the community after WWII and LaTrelle Lockwood, born in 1955, pointed out that Lynwood Park was on the rich side of the railroad tracks, and that there were enclaves with whites poorer than they on the other side of Peachtree Road:

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<sup>89</sup> Roy H. Benifield, interview by author, 23 March 2005, transcript, 6-7, 35; Orville Gaines, "Lynwood Park Rising Above Once Bad Image," *The Atlanta Journal/DeKalb Extra*, 7 June 1984; Kucera, 23 April 2005, 42.

<sup>90</sup> Thomas Byrne Edsall and Mary D. Edsall, *Chain Reaction: The Impact of Race, Rights, and Taxes on American Politics* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1992), 92-187.

<sup>91</sup> David L. Sjoquist, ed. *The Atlanta Paradox: A Multi-City Study of Urban Inequality* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2000), 1, 56.



*[O]ur neighborhood was privileged to be on the rich side of the railroad track . . . I never knew [it] until you saw the poor side of the railroad tracks, where whites lived . . . It's called Apple Valley . . . down Dresden Drive, behind where there's now the Brookhaven Library . . . It was poorer than our neighborhood . . . It was po' . . . They looked like people from Appalachia. They were poor. And I never knew they were in back there 'til our bus ride went through there sometimes.<sup>92</sup>*

Before the mid-1960s most blacks did not wander far afield. They socialized mainly within their neighborhoods, and only traveled from one black community to another. Steve Daniel, Mamie Lee Mathis's grandson, was born in 1956. He remembered his shock, after desegregation, at the affluence in Brittany Estates, a stone's throw to the east of Lynwood Park. Daniel was the first black to join the under-twelve baseball team at Murphy Candler Park, and went to the homes of his white teammates for cookouts. These visits gave Daniel an opportunity to experience firsthand what he and his boys running group had only peeked at through the woods between Lynwood Park and Brittany Estates:

*[M]ost of the people on our team lived in Brittany . . . And they had swimming pools in the backyards. And they had this, and they had that. And I lived so close to them, yet so far away . . . There's a fence on Silver Lake Drive that divided the properties, but it was like a world away . . . I could see the way they was living by just looking at the back . . . there was woods over in that way so we used to always walk the woods, and we'd say, "Look! Look at them! Look at them! Man, they got big 'ole houses. I bet you there's about ten bedrooms in that house. I bet everybody got a bedroom. I bet they don't sleep with they sisters. And look at all that room. Man, they got three cars. Man, it was like—it was something that you dreamed about."<sup>93</sup>*

Living on the rich side of the railroad tracks, surrounded by affluence, and aware of poorer whites, made some young residents of Lynwood Park in the 1970s more committed to taking the fast track to acquiring the accoutrements of wealth—the material goods that could project a sense of somebodiness onto them, and make them more like their white neighbors. Like bootlegging in the early decades of the community's history,

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<sup>92</sup> Lockwood, 19 May 2008, 7-8.

<sup>93</sup> Daniel, 6 May 2007, 19-20. Daniel was Bookie Ouisley's stepson, and was privileged in Lynwood Park. He said that most children in Lynwood Park could not join the baseball team because it required a fee to join, uniforms, and transportation to get to the park, and not many in Lynwood Park could afford these luxuries.

the marijuana trade was tolerated by the residents because they saw it as just as benign as bootlegging—illegality that did not destroy community.

LaTrelle Lockwood was born in 1955 and was among a handful of Lynwood Park residents who attended Oglethorpe University. He shared that he, too, sold marijuana:

- VMH: *[W]ere you involved in the 1970s drug culture?*  
 LL: *Pretty much, yes.*  
 VMH: *Using, selling?*  
 LL: *A little bit of both.*  
 VMH: *The marijuana trade at the corner was big business in Lynwood Park . . .*  
 LL: *Yes, but I was bringing it from Oglethorpe . . . they were going to Miami on the weekends, and bringing back . . . suitcases full of pot . . . they're talking about us, but here it is, they're bringing it all in . . . My Oglethorpe friends sold by the pound. I could go get a pound, and come on back and, you know, do what I had to do. I did that for a long time.*  
 VMH: *So you were buying it from kids at Oglethorpe, bringing it into Lynwood Park, and selling it? Like nickel bags?*  
 LL: *No, I just did pounds.*  
 VMH: *You were like a wholesaler?*  
 LL: *Yeah . . . Come over there, and get it, come over here, and I would distribute it . . .*  
 VMH: *I heard that it used to be grown down on Nancy Creek, and over by Herman Lake as well.*  
 LL: *Oh, yeah. Everybody had a little patch.<sup>94</sup>*

Mercer Sullivan claimed that a young person's decision to enter into illegality was in large part determined by the lack of economic resources of his family.<sup>95</sup> The Lynwood Park community tolerated this new illegality in their youth because, as Patricia Martin explained, the young drug sellers were providing for the household economy and giving their families the material goods that affluent white households enjoyed, although there was a risk:

*Sooner or later something happens to them and they go to jail . . . By the same token, a one-parent family that's struggling, the boy brings home money. They eat good. They have nice clothes. They look like everybody else. It pulls up their self-esteem.<sup>96</sup>*

<sup>94</sup> Lockwood, 9 August 2005, 25, 41-2, 73.

<sup>95</sup> Sullivan, *Getting Paid*, 20.

<sup>96</sup> Martin, 27 October 2004, 30-1.

Carl Nightingale argued that underclass blacks acquired prestige consumer goods to compensate for the deep hurt, sense of inferiority, and their embarrassment about their poverty while surrounded by white affluence, which segregation imposed upon them. Furthermore, television and its mass-advertising campaigns in semiotics suggested that owning prestige consumer goods displayed success, while a lack of them indicated failure. Consequently, poor black children “quickly grasp[ed] the insult implied in the advertisement of status symbols: that those who cannot afford prestigious commodities are inferior.” Unable to secure an education, in part due to racism after desegregation, many of Lynwood Park’s youths chose to “hustle” on the corner, since working for minimum wage did not pay enough to acquire prestige goods. Historian Robin D.G. Kelly argued that dating back to slavery, dressing up for blacks was a way of shedding degradation and a lower status distinction, which is one factor in the “human agency on the part of the poor.” The conjunction of an historical need for dressing up converged with television advertising portraying that owning and wearing prestige goods projected success, and a lot of high-school dropouts after the late-1960s. This combination left the youths of Lynwood Park little choice but to sell drugs on the corner.<sup>97</sup>

By the time the crack cocaine epidemic began sweeping across the nation in the mid-1980s, the residents of Lynwood Park were well-accustomed to tolerating, and benefiting from, drug trafficking. Crack gave the “stop and cop” sellers of Lynwood Park a shot at really big earnings, and Patricia Martin explained that everyone in Lynwood Park then became involved in the drug industry.<sup>98</sup> Belinda Marshall, born in 1932, maintained that the community’s residents were already genetically predisposed to alcoholism, and so

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<sup>97</sup> Nightingale, *On the Edge*, 135-160; Robin D.G. Kelly, “The Black Poor and the Politics of Opposition in a New South City,” in Michael B. Katz, ed. *The Underclass Debate: View from History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), 293-4.

<sup>98</sup> Martin, 17 May 2005, 44.

it was a relatively simple leap to crack cocaine addiction, and that there are now senior citizens in Lynwood Park who are crack addicts:

*They are the ones that was young when I was there . . . I'm seventy-three years old. And they was alcoholics. Then the drugs come in. They decided they want to do that. And they just keep on, so they're there, when they should have made up in their mind that this is not what I need to do.*<sup>99</sup>

Many respondents held that crack cocaine destroyed Lynwood Park, because residents lost their jobs and homes, began living in the streets, and engaging in illegal activity to support their habits. David Sutton recounted that crack cocaine messed up everything in Lynwood Park. Both older and younger residents became addicts and dealers, and “people started stealing, robbing and stuff . . . had jobs, lose their jobs . . . lose their houses . . . on account of that stuff.”<sup>100</sup> Residents point to crack cocaine as the destroyer of Lynwood Park, but Dennie Jones Wesley, born in 1940, claimed that it was marijuana, because it established a drug tolerance that later escalated with crack cocaine:

*Marijuana was the worst thing for Lynwood Park. It used to be a respectable neighborhood. And then things started changing. It got a little bit bolder every time. A little bit more and a little bit more, and then it really just—like wildfire—just all over . . . like the bomb on Hiroshima. That's what happened to it—boom—just tore it up.*<sup>101</sup>

However, Gary McDaniel explained that crack cocaine was only one aspect of Lynwood Park's historic underworld culture:

GLM: *Lynwood Park was a mess.*  
 VMH: *Yes, but . . . when crack cocaine hit Lynwood Park so many of the residents got addicted.*  
 GLM: *They did.*  
 VMH: *People who had good jobs.*  
 GLM: *Did.*  
 VMH: *People who had houses.*  
 GLM: *Yes.*  
 VMH: *They lost everything. They sold their houses.*

<sup>99</sup> Marshall, 10 September 2005, 85; Jett, 13 November 2005, 48. See also Jett, 13 November 2005, 48-9, and McDaniel, 8 June 2005, 61-2.

<sup>100</sup> Sutton, 1 May 2005, 19-20.

<sup>101</sup> Wesley, 19 October 2005, 66.

GLM: *Yes.*  
 VMH: *And they started hanging out on the street. And it wasn't all young kids.*  
 GLM: *Right. I seen that happen . . . I was right in that gap. I seen that.*  
 VMH: *And that's what made Lynwood Park a mess, you think?*  
 GLM: *No, it didn't make Lynwood Park a mess. Lynwood Park been Lynwood Park all my life. And not only crack cocaine. You had alcohol, you had the streets, gambling . . . bootlegging. That still goes on . . . ho-mongering.*<sup>102</sup>

Anne Jackson Ouisley, born in 1916, said that many Lynwood Park residents sold their homes for a mere pittance to buy crack cocaine, while Officer M.W. Williams added that they then were forced into becoming drug dealers to support their habits after the money ran out. And like the youths who worked for Herman Ouisley in his bootlegging business, Williams also maintained that the drug sellers were Lynwood Park residents, mostly youths who sold for older dealers who stayed in the background.<sup>103</sup>

Massey and Denton reported that from 1930 to 1960 ghetto residents still clung to the basic values of American society—the work ethic, and succeeding through diligent effort. However, from 1960 to 1990, ghetto attitudes, ideals, and values became progressively less connected to those of mainstream society, as underclass blacks realized that the structural and institutional racism inherent in the American system would not allow them to succeed through legitimate means. Massey and Denton concluded that the ghetto “has [now] become an entity unto itself,” and that “[t]he new culture of the ghetto increasingly rejects the values of American society as a farce and a sham.”<sup>104</sup>

Elijah Anderson found that the old heads in the ghetto once served as the locus of cultural transmission: as role models, they transmitted to black youths the value of morals and a work ethic. Anderson then claimed that there was a breakdown in the relationship between the old heads and young boys who, when gainful employment and its rewards are

<sup>102</sup> McDaniel, 8 June 2005, 61-2.

<sup>103</sup> Anne Jackson Ouisley, 15 November 2004, 72-97; Williams, 14 April 2005, 3-5.

<sup>104</sup> Massey and Denton, *American Apartheid*, 172.

not forthcoming, easily conclude that the moral lessons of the old heads concerning the work ethic, punctuality, and honesty do not fit their own circumstances. Anderson claimed that the drug culture and its economy causes street-smart young people to not be interested in traditional mores that “assign value to steady work, family life, the church, and respect for others.” Consequently, the elders have disengaged from youth mentoring and are hesitant to become involved, saying, “The young boys have changed,” or “I can’t take the chance.”<sup>105</sup>

There are several points about Lynwood Park that to some degree contradict Anderson’s claims about the black ghetto. Lynwood Park’s old heads report that they have always had a close relationship with those community’s youths who are in the drug industry since, in most cases, they are their kinfolk through blood or by marriage. And the elders reported that they do try to talk them out of a life of drug selling and addiction. For example, Horace Ouisley is a devout Christian and respected member of his church. He recounted that he regularly spoke to even the community’s drug kingpin Timothy “Timbo” Walker—one of the FBI’s ten most wanted, listed as the leader of a metro Atlanta drug organization—about the destructive nature of drugs.<sup>106</sup>

HO: *I talked to him. I talked to all of them about the Bible and all that stuff, but they still did what they wanted to. They had respect for me when I come around them, and if they didn’t like what I was saying, they’d all leave . . . some would stay, and some would leave . . .*

VMH: *What about Timbo?*

HO: *He was a nice person as far as I know. Whatever he did, it didn’t change him towards me, ’cause I still talk to him whenever I see him.*<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> Elijah Anderson, *Streetwise: Race, Class, and Change in an Urban Community* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990) 72, 77, 173.

<sup>106</sup> “Me and Courts: Most Wanted,” *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, 20 December 1992, Benifield Papers.

<sup>107</sup> Horace Ouisley, 28 March 2005, 41.

Moreover, as Anderson claimed, it is not a lack of jobs that has forced Lynwood Park's residents to enter the drug economy. In fact, Raymond Jackson reported that he regularly saw Lynwood Park men turning down jobs paying eight to ten dollars an hour:

- VMH: *So you're saying that the people now are selling drugs because it's a quick buck.*
- BRJ: *It is. It's quick money. It's fast money . . . They won't work nowhere . . . they don't go to school, they won't work. People come by up there on that corner . . . "Look, we've got so-and-so to do." And they go, "How much you paying?" "Well, I pay eight dollars, ten dollars." "No, go ahead on." "No. I'll pay you that much to get out of my way."*
- VMH: *They won't work for eight or ten dollars an hour?*
- BRJ: *No, they won't do it. I've seen it.*
- VMH: *Because they can make more money selling drugs?"*
- BRJ: *That's right. That's right.*<sup>108</sup>

In 1989 Philip Moss and Chris Tilly conducted a poll in Boston at a time of widespread employment, and found that a three-to-one majority of black youths said that they could make more on the street than in a mainstream job. The authors learned that dealing drugs yielded thirty dollars an hour, and concluded that drugs were so widespread that they lure blacks away from legitimate jobs. Therefore, chronic joblessness among black youths could be related not to a shortage of jobs, but rather to the lucrative nature of drug dealing—the relative returns from selling drugs compared to legitimate work. So what Raymond Jackson encountered in Lynwood Park was a reluctance to work at a traditional job that paid less per hour than at a career dealing drugs.<sup>109</sup>

Edsall and Edsall wrote that the official poverty level in the United States in the late-1980s was \$7,886 per year, or \$152 per week. However, they found that the poverty level for black families in the bottom quintile in 1987, including housing assistance and food stamps, “was \$5,112, or \$98.30 a week—56 percent of the official poverty level”

<sup>108</sup> Raymond Jackson, 7 October 2005, 41.

<sup>109</sup> Moss and Tilly, *Why Black Men are Doing Worse*, 3-7, 88-94.

(emphasis in original).<sup>110</sup> It is therefore not surprising that Lynwood Park's residents would engage in the drug industry. John Jett, once a successful drug dealer, pointed out that the earnings potential in a drug-trafficking career is practically unlimited. He explained the *modus operandi* of Lynwood Park's dropouts after school desegregation:

*They come back and get up some drugs, get up some marijuana. Or get them a fifty-dollar piece of cocaine and chop it up . . . and they would make two to three hundred dollars profit . . . A kilo of cocaine would cost you about \$20,000 to \$25,000 . . . and if you break it down into nothing but dimes, you could make you \$50,000 profit off of that. So what sense does it make for me to go work for McDonald's . . . or to stay in school?*<sup>111</sup>

Edsall and Edsall pointed out that if the 1970s was a hard decade for young black men with high school educations or less, "then the 1980s were disastrous." Beginning in the 1970s "the job market began to place an increasingly higher value on education," while blacks between the ages of eighteen and twenty-four going on to college and getting a degree began to fall.<sup>112</sup> Moss and Tilly found that joblessness among black men climbed from the 1960s through the 1980s, not only because labor demand shifted toward jobs requiring more education, but because employers also began questioning "the relative quality of the education received by many blacks." In other words, labor's message to black youths was that pursuing education for financial success was futile.<sup>113</sup>

In their 1989 Boston poll, Moss and Tilly found that black youths were knowledgeable about the risks of arrest, incarceration, violence, and death that accompany drug trafficking. The respondents believed the rewards were worth the risk, which John

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<sup>110</sup> Edsall and Edsall, *Chain Reaction*, 232.

<sup>111</sup> Jett, 13 November 2005, 100.

<sup>112</sup> Edsall and Edsall, *Chain Reaction*, 245-9.

<sup>113</sup> Moss and Tilly, *Why Black Men are Doing Worse*, 3-5; see also William A. Darity, Jr. and Samuel L. Myers, Jr., *Persistent Disparity: Race and Economic Inequality in the United States since 1945* (Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar Publishing, 1998), 17-21, 43-58. The authors found that the black poor began getting poorer through a combination of discrimination, racism, and other institutional factors after the US anti-discrimination effort was nearly dismantled in the 1980s.



Jett confirmed. Jett explained that many young black men view selling drugs as a career and see themselves as entrepreneurs:

*It's a career . . . it is a good business. . . . if you got sense, if you got some goals . . . It's a few smart guys that I know that got into it: "Well I'm gonna sell this stuff for about five years, and I'm not gonna sleep. I'm just gonna sell. Just sell, sell, sell, sell, sell" . . . And stack his money up. And not get caught. And you can do it for that long and not get caught if you're smart. But you've got to stay on the move. And it's a lot of guys that does that . . . you'll notice black businesses is flurrying now. And you know why . . . Somebody done made their sacrifice . . . if I make the money, I can give money to somebody else, and they open up a business. And I just lay back and reap the benefits then . . . That's attractive, especially to the black male. The black male—he can go to college and come out and can't get a job . . . That's why you got these little guys standing up on the corner. They don't have no education. And you think they're gonna go stand in McDonald's and make five, six dollars an hour, where I can go buy me a fifty-dollar piece of cocaine and make what I'm gonna make at McDonald's [in a week] in one day. And half of that day I'm at home. I done made me two to three hundred dollars . . . that's the logic in it.<sup>114</sup>*

Moss and Tilly also found that black men with gainful and legitimate employment of above minimum wage salaries still sell drugs to supplement their incomes.<sup>115</sup> John Jett explained how the drug industry lures black men away from legitimate employment at places where they could net \$400 to \$500 per week. Their involvement in the drug industry is based on a desire to share in the values of conspicuous consumption:

VMH: *So you're saying even the black man with a legitimate job still needs to do something on the side.*  
 JCJ: *Yes. He can't have no bling bling . . .*  
 VMH: *He can't live to his salary.*  
 JCJ: *For the simple reason his wife wants bling bling too. So you can't work on a job and both of them have bling bling. So most of them continue to do something else. And then after a while when he get to seeing that the hustling is overweighing the job, he gonna let the job go, and put full time on that.<sup>116</sup>*

<sup>114</sup> Moss and Tilly, *Why Black Men are Doing Worse*, 91; Jett, 13 November 2005, 102-4.

<sup>115</sup> Moss and Tilly, *Why Black Men are Doing Worse*, 91.

<sup>116</sup> Jett, 13 November 2005, 105.

And this is one of the reasons why Moss and Tilly concluded, contrary to Elijah Anderson's claim, that there is not a shortage of jobs for black men, but that "lucrative drug dealing [is] competing away available . . . youth labor."<sup>117</sup>

The people of Lynwood Park supported, protected, and defended their drug dealers, claiming that they were "giving back" to the community. Gary McDaniel, a staunch community and church leader in Lynwood Park, maintained that Timothy Timbo Walker, Atlanta crack cocaine kingpin, was a successful entrepreneur who was a modern-day Robin Hood who took from the rich and gave to the poor. Federal agents recovered more than \$700,000 in cash from a closet in his house when they arrested Timbo, and it was rumored that the walls of his main residence, which was outside Lynwood Park, were insulated with money.

Lieutenant Roy Benifield reported that at the time of his arrest Timbo owned six cars, including a Lamborghini, and twenty-four houses in Lynwood Park. The people of Lynwood Park admired Timbo, and thought that he was a Lynwood Park youth who had become *somebody*, just like Herman Ouisley. It did not matter that it had all been achieved through illegal activity, or that Timbo's industry was destroying the community and its residents. The young boys of Lynwood Park told Benifield, "When I grow up I'm gonna be like Timbo, 'cause he has the cars, the jewelry, and the girls, and he don't have to work." Moreover, they were unfazed when the lieutenant told them that he was going to put Timbo in jail.<sup>118</sup> No one in the community wanted to see Timbo Walker arrested, and the community threw him a welcome-home party after he was released from prison.<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> Moss and Tilly, *Why Black Men are Doing Worse*, 92.

<sup>118</sup> Benifield, 23 March 2005, 37; Letter to Mel Pender from Lt. Roy Benifield, 28 December 1992, Roy H. Benifield Papers.

<sup>119</sup> McDaniel, 8 June 2005, 69-70; Williams, 14 April 2005, 62; Roy H. Benifield, interview by author, 31 March 2005, transcript, 11-12; Horton, 17 September 2005, 72.

Michelle Cleckley explained that Timbo visited his relatives in Lynwood Park nearly every day, and that he would hand out money to the residents. Consequently, people would gather on the corner to wait for Timbo:

- MC: *He put it back into the community . . . He bought houses and stuff, and he gave people places to live. He gave people jobs . . . people that needed money, he'd take them and go get them something to eat, maybe would buy them some clothes . . . he helped his people . . . we used to be up there on the corner at the light waiting for Timbo . . . "Where Bo at?"*
- VMH: *Who would be waiting at the corner for Timbo?*
- MC: *All of us . . . kids, grownups, whatever . . . because, you know, he was so free hearted, so kind . . . He had moved. I don't know exactly where he was staying at. I ain't never been to any one of his houses—his big houses . . . but I heard about them on the news . . . his mother and his grandmother and his brothers and all of them stayed here . . . his sisters . . . they all stayed here. So he was here practically every day.<sup>120</sup>*

Gary McDaniel fiercely defended Timbo Walker and all that he did for Lynwood Park:

- GLM: *He did a lot for a whole lot of individuals, period. He was just like Robin Hood. He was an entrepreneur . . . He's the best I know. I'm talking about he's real good—real, real good . . . You couldn't find a better person than Timbo. Shoot, nobody wanted him to go to jail. He was free-for-all . . . He'd give that money away. He took care of everybody. If you wanted that money he'll give it to you . . .*
- VMH: *He did a lot of things in Lynwood Park?*
- GLM: *He did a lot of things in life, period . . . he was like Robin Hood. He gave to the poor. So, as for Timbo, he was one of my heroes . . .*
- VMH: *People in here really admired Timbo.*
- GLM: *Peoples not just in here—everywhere. He was just somebody.<sup>121</sup>*

LaTrelle Lockwood, born in 1955, was a lifeguard at the Lynwood Park pool as a teenager, and taught a young Timbo to swim. Lockwood said that Timbo Walker was akin to a godfather to the people of Lynwood Park. Timbo became even more of a hero *because* he turned himself in when it was announced on national television—on *America's Most Wanted*—that he was wanted “dead or alive,” as LaTrelle Lockwood recounted:

<sup>120</sup> Cleckley, 25 July 2005, 15-7.

<sup>121</sup> McDaniel, 8 June 2005, 69-70.

*[T]he young boys idolized him . . . everybody else treated him like a godfather . . . He was a very, very giving person. . . if I was walking by, and I saw him, and I wanted to speak to him, I had to wait my turn . . . We knew [prison] was coming . . . And he knew it was coming . . . he knew that the Feds was after him. And on that television interview where the Feds were talking, they said he knew, but he just didn't run . . . he could've ran, but he didn't. He could've left the country, but he didn't. He made his time.<sup>122</sup>*

Like any good citizen who knows that society's fabric will unravel if everyone breaks laws, Timbo Walker showed fidelity to the Rule of Law, turned himself in, and did his time. To the people of Lynwood Park Timbo Walker added upstanding citizen to his list of positive attributes, which included good and generous person, and successful businessman.<sup>123</sup>

Officer M.W. Williams maintained that everything that was positive in Lynwood Park was financed by drug money. For example, the Vincent twins, Van and Jan, supported the community's softball team. They bought all the equipment and uniforms, and even a bus, so that the team could travel to its games. Everyone in the community knew that the money was coming from drugs, yet still accepted their help.<sup>124</sup> There seemed to be a sense of loyalty, a sense of giving back, to the community, even for those drug dealers like the Vincent twins who McDaniel claimed were not kingpins:

*[T]he Vincent twins come in the nineties . . . They weren't no kingpins . . . Jan and Van were two very good kids that just got caught up selling crack cocaine. They was just little bitty sellers, they weren't big sellers. They wasn't no big dealers.<sup>125</sup>*

Sudhir Venkatesh found the same types of justification for drug dealers in Maquis Park who supported community projects and helped its residents. One resident described Maquis Park's kingpin, Big Cat, as "not a bad young man . . . Somewhat led astray by

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<sup>122</sup> Lockwood, 9 August 2005, 44-6.

<sup>123</sup> Timbo Walker's grandmother Gertrude Booker accompanied him when he turned himself in to the authorities. She said Timbo discussed his decision to turn himself in with her first when he learned through the television show that he was wanted "Dead or Alive." For her account, see Booker, 17 August 2005, 45.

<sup>124</sup> Williams, 14 April 2005, 31.

<sup>125</sup> McDaniel, 8 June 2005, 40, 69.

temptation, a little bit guilty, wants to be there for the community. Like many of us.”<sup>126</sup>

Yet Steven Levitt and Stephen Dubner held that drug dealers are obliged to put money back into a community that they are exploiting and destroying. Drug dealers who help residents frame the argument in language that draws upon a sense of community and mutuality, such as “their families is our families. We can’t just leave ’em out. We been knowing these folks our whole lives, man.” This surface language disguises that the drug dealer actually fears community backlash and is, in actuality, buying “some goodwill for a few hundred dollars here and there.”<sup>127</sup>

Elijah Anderson explained that neighbors know about the crack houses, which operate in the same way as a “speakeasy” where “not only drugs but also liquor, food, and sex may be for sale.”<sup>128</sup> Barbara Fair, longtime resident of Lynwood Park who was born in 1940, knew all the drug dens on her street, but maintained that her ethos is to leave others alone. And hers is a view shared by many of the residents of the community.<sup>129</sup> Maudina Peaches Horton explained that illegality, addiction, and criminality are tolerated in the enclave because of an intimate knowledge of all the residents:

*[W]e know the history . . . You knew if they lost a mother early. You knew if their parent gave them away. You knew if you’d been molested as a young girl . . . people understand. You’re like “Well, you know.” It really doesn’t matter . . . One of my play-sisters, Minnie Lee Thompson—Weddie— [drugs] had her so bad . . . We still let her be. She’s like our sister. She has a sister and brother, and I still kept her, even with the drugs and all. She would be as high as a kite, whatever: “Come on, Weddie.” Treated her good.*<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> Venkatesh, *Off the Books*, 86.

<sup>127</sup> Steven D. Levitt and Stephen J. Dubner, *Freakonomics: A Rogue Economist Explores the Hidden Side of Everything* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2005), 101-2. Steven Levitt and Sukhir Venkatesh met at Harvard’s Society of Fellows, and Venkatesh shared six spiral notebooks outlining the organizational structure and bookkeeping records of the drug gang in which Venkatesh was embedded for six years. Levitt analyzed these and reported his findings about the gang’s economics and community dynamics in *Freakonomics*, 90-114.

<sup>128</sup> Anderson, *Streetwise*, 85.

<sup>129</sup> Fair, 3 September 2005, 39.

<sup>130</sup> Horton, 17 September 2005, 64, 93-4.

Moss and Tilly pointed out that an individual's probability of criminal activity is "related to the activities of their friends, acquaintances, and others in the immediate neighborhood," and Timbo Walker and John Jett are two case studies for Lynwood Park illegality, and the fact that illegality in Lynwood Park kept reproducing itself in subsequent generations.<sup>131</sup> Jett, born in 1943, came from an alcoholic family, was deserted by his mother, and was raised by his grandmother, whom he claimed was the hustler in the family. She bootlegged moonshine to supplement the household income, for which she was imprisoned.<sup>132</sup> Jett grew up hustling on the streets of Lynwood Park, and recounted that he began bootlegging in the community at age twelve:

*I would go and buy me maybe a half a pint and I would sell a dime or fifteen cents. Whatever money you had, you could buy—you could get a shot of liquor from me from it. As a child I used to stand up on the corner . . . It was a big tree right there . . . and I used to sit right there and I'd sell it, 'cause I could see the police coming from three directions. So I could sit there all day and sell my little liquor and make money.*<sup>133</sup>

Jett explained that he had to give his earnings to his grandmother, and shared that she always expected him to work and contribute to the household economy:

*I had to give it all to her—all that I didn't hide down in the woods. If I didn't hide it down in the woods she'd take it all . . . So I used to hide me maybe fifty cents or something down in woods so when I'd go to school I could have ice cream and stuff like that.*<sup>134</sup>

Yet when he was older and began working, Jett said that he could not stop engaging in illegality:

*I started working, but I still couldn't stop hustling, because hustling was something that I loved to do, because there was excitement in it . . . I got a rush from it.*<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> Moss and Tilly, *Why Black Men are Doing Worse*, 144.

<sup>132</sup> Jett, 13 November 2005, 22.

<sup>133</sup> Jett, 13 November 2005, 19-20.

<sup>134</sup> Jett, 21 January 2007, 10-1.

<sup>135</sup> Jett, 13 November 2005, 21.

In effect, Jett found somebodiness in illegality because the amount of money he could earn at it offered empowerment and engendered self-confidence in an underclass black male with a limited education.<sup>136</sup>

John Jett sold marijuana although he had steady employment. While working for ninety-seven cents an hour frying chips at Frito-Lay, Jett would buy a pound of marijuana for two hundred dollars and sell it for six hundred dollars. He said that he had no shortage of customers and could sell as much as he wanted. But when crack cocaine hit the streets in the 1980s his marijuana business dwindled from selling one hundred pounds a week to less than two.<sup>137</sup> Working for General Motors and earning twenty dollars an hour at this time, Jett resolved not to sell crack cocaine:

*I wouldn't sell no crack cocaine, because I always knew that that was a devil drug, and I'd seen it destroying families through my reefer selling . . . I was God-raised, and I knew that that was just destroying people's life, messing up children, and doing all kind of crazy stuff, and I didn't want to be a part of that, because I feared God.*<sup>138</sup>

Jett took a lump-sum retirement settlement from General Motors and opened a shack—a café called “Jett Stop”—in Lynwood Park. He recalled that on a good day he cleared twenty-five dollars, while his shack provided a venue for a crack cocaine seller who was making \$5,000 to \$6,000 a day in front of his door. After repeated calls to the police failed to stop the seller, Jett decided to get into the crack cocaine trade:

*I went against what I've always believed in, that that was a bad drug. But I got a business here that the police allowing a man to stand in front of my door and sell drugs all day long, and here I am making twenty-five dollars a day . . . So I ran him off. I stopped him from selling the drug in front of my door and then I started selling it. Man, that first week that I started selling it—do you know that I made \$25,000—in one week? You know I was hooked then . . . that got me into selling the hard stuff. I ended up going to prison for it.*<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> Jett shared that he did not graduate from high school and had a full-time as a jelly cooker at age sixteen, Jett, 13 November 2005, 22.

<sup>137</sup> Jett, 13 November 2005, 30.

<sup>138</sup> Jett, 13 November 2005, 31.

<sup>139</sup> Jett, 13 November 2005, 33-4.

Jett's refusal to sell crack cocaine in Lynwood Park actually supports Levitt and Dubner's claim that the drug dealer who shares his largesse is actually not promoting community, but rather purchasing its compliance. Jett made a lot of money *outside* Lynwood Park, and thus felt no need to become a godfather, or Robin Hood, to the people of Lynwood Park, as Timbo Walker did, *because* Jett was successful without exploiting and destroying Lynwood Park and its residents. Jett shared that his refusal to sell in Lynwood Park actually was the reason he was caught by the police:

JJ: *My next door neighbor . . . was a drug addict and . . . he put an informer, locked him onto me, you know, because I wouldn't sell no drugs in this community . . . but he would come over and work on my car.*

VMH: *And he knew you were selling drugs.*

JJ: *Yeah . . . He set me up for the police.*<sup>140</sup>

As a devout Christian, Jett claimed that he could not escalate his business to the kingpin level because his upbringing would not allow him to operate in that zone of illegality:

*The reason I did it just so far out there, I had God in my heart as a child. And I knew it was just so far I could go before I go across the line, because in the drug business you end up—if you get too big—you go to killing people, you go to mistreating people. And I didn't have that kind of heart, because I knew that God was gonna hold me in accountable for my actions. I always knew that.*<sup>141</sup>

But there were no such constraints on Timothy Timbo Walker, the grandson of Gertrude Booker. Booker and her brother Napoleon had bootlegged out of her house. Booker's only son, Ozzie, became a career criminal who, at age sixty-four, has spent most of his life behind bars since the age of twenty-two. Considered a violent face-to-face robber, Booker says that Ozzie's motivation was a drug habit.<sup>142</sup> Of Booker's seven grandchildren, three have been imprisoned on drug charges, and Timbo became a drug kingpin without the self-restraint of John Jett.

Booker maintained that Timbo was a sweet child who was "always into devilment," and Venkatesh referred to this period in a criminal's life as the *petit*

<sup>140</sup> Jett, 13 November 2005, 36-7.

<sup>141</sup> Jett, 13 November 2005, 40-1.

<sup>142</sup> Booker, 11 November 2005, 31.



*delinquent*, while becoming successful and wealthy enough to offer services to the community and its residents is criminality advanced to the *corporate* stage.<sup>143</sup> Timbo's running group of boys—which included Minnie Lee Weddie Thompson's son Rodney—began its hustling by stealing dogs, scanning the newspapers, and then collecting reward money from the dogs' owners after they advertised to recover their “lost” pets. By age ten Timbo and his gang began stealing cars, would joyride in the vehicles, and then park them around the enclave, as Thompson recounted:

*Every time Rodney got busted it was for stealing cars. He'd have a hundred cars parked in Lynwood Park. He'd ride them, and go park them. Go get another one and ride them and park them, you know. He got that roguish side from his daddy . . . 'cause Gene did things like this all his life, but his family had money, and “Now we've got to send Gene to Miami,” to Miss Hood's sister until they clear things up. And then he'd come right back. Rodney didn't have that kind of money . . . He did exactly what Gene did. And you'd talk to him, and he'd say, “Okay.” He'd go make ten years. He come back, and you talk to him, and talk to him, you know. Rodney is thirty-seven, you know. Like I tell him, I'm not gonna spend the rest of my life running up and down the street to these people's prison, you know. I'm too old for it now anyway.*<sup>144</sup>

Gertrude Booker recalled that her church community was very tolerant, patient, and supportive of Timbo's budding criminality after the boys stole the congregants' cars:

*And they'd go into church, steal the cars, drive it around . . . And they would call and come to see us and say, “Don't stop coming to church because Timothy did this, 'cause he's a child. He got to grow up.”*<sup>145</sup>

After growing up Timbo began working the marijuana trade on the corner, and then graduated to the big time. But Booker, although she claimed that she did not approve of Timbo's involvement in the drug industry, nevertheless adopted a position that Elijah

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<sup>143</sup> Venkatesh, *Off the Books*, 66.

<sup>144</sup> Thompson, 29 July 2005, 115-6. Gene Hood was one of the men that Dennie Jones Wesley said had one of the fastest drag racing cars in Lynwood Park. At age thirty-seven he was shot sixteen times and killed in 1967 by John Willy Colbert and his son Punchy. The two men accused Hood of having an affair with Punchy's wife. The elder Colbert served three years, and the younger one longer, for the crime. Minnie Lee Weddie Thompson and Gene Hood had been living together for six years at that time. She said that Hood died in a car on the way to the hospital. See Thompson, 29 July 2007, 87-9.

<sup>145</sup> Booker, 11 November 2005, 40.

Anderson termed “see” and “don’t see,” and Venkatesh claimed is the community’s inability and failure to identify one of its children as the enemy within.<sup>146</sup>

*I know they said people were selling it for him here. And quite naturally they would be, because he had lots of friends here . . . I didn’t see it, and I didn’t look for it, because it wasn’t none of my business, and I was trying to make it myself at that time.*<sup>147</sup>

Jett claimed that Timbo’s drug activities were in the dangerous kingpin zone:

*Timbo . . . yes, he was big time . . . he was rich . . . You have to have people around you that’s dangerous, you know, when you get to that level.*<sup>148</sup>

Sudhir Venkatesh’s findings of his drug gang’s organizational structure were analyzed by Steven Levitt and reported in *Freakonomics*. Using the financial ledgers of Venkatesh’s gang, Levitt concluded that a drug gang is organized on a pyramid model identical to a large corporation, such as McDonald’s, and that only those at the very top actually become wealthy. Venkatesh’s gang was part of a larger Black Disciples organization, which had a board of directors. The gang’s leader was college-educated J.T., who reported to the board of directors, to which J.T. aspired, because the directors became wealthy from dues and commissions paid by all the gangs in the Black Disciples organization. J.T. managed the gang, its foot soldiers—those selling on street corners—and its security staff. J.T. also collected taxes from businesses that operated on the gang’s turf, and from those who operated other illegal businesses, such as pimps, gypsy cabs, people selling stolen goods—within the gang’s territory. J.T. also was in charge of payouts to government officials, Christmas bonuses to his “staff”, and largesse to the community it was exploiting, which was simply another business expense, duly noted in

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<sup>146</sup> Anderson, *Streetwise*, 87; Venkatesh, *Off the Books*, 68.

<sup>147</sup> Booker, 11 November 2005, 69.

<sup>148</sup> Jett, 13 November 2005, 1.2.225.

J.T.'s ledger. Levitt wrote that "[t]he Black Disciples worked hard to be seen as a pillar rather than a scourge of the . . . community."<sup>149</sup>

After analyzing J.T.'s ledgers, Levitt concluded that the crack industry operates much like a capitalist enterprise and that one has to be near the top of the pyramid to make a big wage. The gang's records indicated that J.T. earned \$8,500 per month, an hourly wage of sixty-six dollars, while he paid *all* others in his organization a combined total of \$8,500 per month, with foot soldiers earning only three dollars and thirty cents an hour—much less than a burger-flipper at McDonald's.<sup>150</sup>

Levitt's conclusion seems to indicate that successful drug dealers belong to larger organizations with a corporate structure, that middle-level dealers, such as J.T., do not make much money, and that foot soldiers on the corner are actually being exploited economically, while facing the greatest danger. The evidence of the Lynwood Park crack cocaine trade does not support these findings. Timbo Walker was one of the biggest crack cocaine kingpins in the United States. He did not belong to a corporate structure, and did not establish, or belong to, an organizational pyramid. And John Jett—known by the nickname Bay Bro—made huge amounts of money selling crack cocaine, and was always a one-man operation, as Pee Wee Jackson explained:

PW: *Bay Bro was another one of these guys like Gary McDaniel—brilliant individual that was . . . a good criminal. Rather than him using his brain to go and learn the Queen's English and mathematics, he learned how to be a good criminal . . . The same thing with Gary.*

VMH: *They were controlling their lives in a certain way.*

PW: *Yeah. . . . That was something that they actually had control over. And nobody else could tell them what to do because they were the boss. They were the CEO. They were the Chief Operating Officer. They was the executive in charge. They was the accountant. They were the bookkeepers, and they were the recipient of what they did. So you had all of this money*

<sup>149</sup> Levitt and Dubner, *Freakonomics*, 99-102.

<sup>150</sup> Levitt and Dubner, *Freakonomics*, 103.

*self-contained in one organization . . . If you really look at it, it had an organizational structure to it. It was run just like a business.*  
 VMH: *But John Jett went big time though.*  
 PW: *Very big time . . . I would say that John Jett is one of the few men I know that has ever made a million dollars more than once and lost it.<sup>151</sup>*

Lynwood Park had its young sellers on the corner, the foot soldiers for dealers like Timbo, who were in the background, as Officer M.W. Williams confirmed. Patricia Martin had shared in 2004 that every family in Lynwood Park was involved in the drug industry, and Dennie Jones Wesley explained that adult men openly sold crack cocaine in Lynwood Park. Back in the day the second-tier men of the community, the ones with the steady jobs, would drink with their friends under the trees behind the holes-in-the-wall. In the crack cocaine era, the older sellers set up shop in that area, and it soon became known as The Crack, as Dennie Jones Wesley recounted in 2005:

*[A]s you pass that church [Saint Peter's], they sit back off the street in The Crack . . . And every morning they'd go up there and build fires in these big barrels when it's cold. And they'd all sit around. And in the summertime you'd think they were on the beach. They have all these lounge chairs up off the street. And that's where they are all day . . . [and] you see these nice cars come across the corner, turn down in there, and the guy who happened to be selling drugs, the car would slow up, and he'd run up to the car, stick his hand in there, and they stick their hand out—made a sale . . . It happens today.<sup>152</sup>*

These were the drug dealers whose swift trade held up Mark Kucera the white gentrifier, in a Lynwood Park traffic jam. These are the men who would wave him on after they got to know him as a resident of the community. The evidence of Lynwood Park demonstrates that large amounts of money can be made through selling drugs in a variety of ways, with no corporate structure: with lone dealers, with boys on the corner, and men under the trees. The residents of Lynwood Park were always adept at diversity and adaptability, and developed ways in which a wide range of residents could profit from the

<sup>151</sup> Pee Wee Jackson, 17 September 2006, 44-5. Jett demurred when asked what was the largest amount of money he made in one week from dealing crack cocaine. See Jett, 13 November 2005, 45.

<sup>152</sup> Wesley, 19 October 2005, 90.

drug industry, although those who sold within the community, such as Timbo Walker, did contribute to its destruction.

Lieutenant Roy Benifield began patrolling Lynwood Park in 1991 and confirmed what Steven Levitt found—that those drug dealers who distribute their largesse within the community they are exploiting do not really care about the community. Benifield said that Lynwood Park had a lot of “bad, mean, vicious people that didn’t give a flip about the community. They were after money, and they didn’t care who got killed, or who they had to kill.”<sup>153</sup> And Michelle Cleckley recounted the *modus operandi* of the drug kingpin:

*I was out there with kingpins, with the best of the best . . . I’ve seen where they made a brother take their other brother, chain him up, block him up, and drop him in the river . . . because that’s what the big man told him to do. And when he goes to try to save his brother, he got shot down . . . I’m saying what I’ve been through, what I’ve seen.*<sup>154</sup>

According to John Jett, the drug industry negatively changes even the successful drug dealers, and making a lot of money is part of the problem:

*After he get to making money, stack his money up. You see, money worry you to death when you get it stacked up. And you looking at all this money, and you turn around: “Who’s seeing me hide it?” You’re scared somebody’s gonna steal it from you.*<sup>155</sup>

But more than this, Jett discussed what being a drug dealer does to the psyche:

JJ: *You go to losing your soul. You get cold as far as your feelings. You know, you begin to lose your feeling for people. You begin to be suspicious of everybody.*  
 VMH: *So it changes who you are.*  
 JJ: *Yes, it does.*  
 VMH: *And it changes your ability to relate to other people?*  
 JJ: *Right. Yes, it does . . .*  
 VMH: *So selling drugs and making all that money takes a lot out of you.*  
 JJ: *It takes a lot. It strips your soul.*<sup>156</sup>

<sup>153</sup> Benifield, 23 March 2005, 45.

<sup>154</sup> Cleckley, 12 November 2005, 45.

<sup>155</sup> Jett, 13 November 2005, 103.

<sup>156</sup> Jett, 13 November 2005, 38-40.

Maudina Peaches Horton shared that Timbo Walker could not trust many people, and that her nephew Andrew, a long-time friend of Timbo's older brother, who was also a drug dealer, became Timbo's driver. Horton said of Timbo: "He felt safe with Andrew driving him around, because he couldn't trust everyone."<sup>157</sup> After leaving prison Jett worked in the home-remodeling business, never missed church, and hopes to become a minister. He held that going to prison for five years changed him:

*When I went to prison that was the best thing that happened to me. My experience in prison was . . . an enjoyable time for me, because I had a chance to wash off all that garbage and all that suspicious, and all of that looking behind me, watching everybody. It was just a relief to me . . . for the first three years I didn't do nothing but sleep, because I was so tired . . . selling drugs strips your soul eventually. But that's if you've got God in your heart from the beginning.*<sup>158</sup>

Jett's experience suggests that the black underclass in general and the people of Lynwood Park in particular were always working, and/or hustling, and dabbling in illegality. They were so caught up in survival and becoming somebody that they did not have enough time to think about their lives and their choices. They did not have the luxury of leisure, and the distance from a community steeped in illegality, which was necessary for the contemplation of their actions, its dangers, and other consequences, to the extent that they could rehabilitate themselves. In other words, prison offered some of them the opportunity to evaluate their lives for the first time, which enabled at least some of them to attempt to chart different futures.

Gary McDaniel, community leader today, former vice president of the LPCP, deacon-in-training at his church, and committed parent of four children in college, went to prison for armed bank robbery, and Maudina Peaches Horton said of him:

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<sup>157</sup> Horton, 17 September 2005, 88.

<sup>158</sup> Jett, 13 November 2005, 41.

*You know, I'm truly proud of Gary McDaniel . . . Honey, he was a rough character. He spent a lot of time in jail too . . . he was so on the street . . . He has done it all.*<sup>159</sup>

Jett shared that McDaniel was in his youth running group:

*Gary McDaniel used to be my partner in crime . . . I am surprised to see him living . . . he was a fool . . . his is a story . . . he was a little violent also . . . when you walk into a bank it's to kill or be killed. Any time you go to rob somebody, that's to kill or be killed. You put your life on the line, so that's a dangerous person that would give up his life. For me to walk into a bank, and knowing that there's a gun in there too, and I go in there with my gun—that's a violent act . . . you takes a risk, you takes a risk.*<sup>160</sup>

McDaniel claimed that Lynwood Park has always been Lynwood Park, and vices such as “alcoholism, gambling, the street, bootlegging, prostitution and ho-mongering” have always existed in Lynwood Park, alongside law-abiding, church-going residents. But McDaniel also holds that every criminal in Lynwood Park is also a Christian, and knows “how to fall down on their knees and ask God for forgiveness.”<sup>161</sup>

According to Jett and McDaniel, a Christian upbringing is an important catalyst for turning one's life around from criminality to law-abiding citizenry. Philosopher and historian Michel Foucault claimed that time for contemplation is an effective strategy for reforming criminals, because it allows the prisoner “to go into himself and rediscover in the depths of his conscience the voice of the good.”<sup>162</sup> Raised in the church, this technique of contemplation was effective in Timbo's rehabilitation, as his grandmother Booker attested:

*When he was in prison he said, “I have time to think. When I go to bed . . . I think about things, that what you all said, and what I should have done, and I didn't do” . . . he says that now he knows that drugs hurt a lot of people.*<sup>163</sup>

McDaniel confirmed that prison was a major catalyst for Timbo's turnaround:

*He's a rehabilitated man . . . He's the type who you really couldn't even tell he had been to prison. He's one of them that went to prison and got it . . . He straightened all the way*

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<sup>159</sup> Horton, 17 September 2005, 81.

<sup>160</sup> Jett, 11 November 2005, 108.

<sup>161</sup> McDaniel, 8 June 2005, 63.

<sup>162</sup> Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 122.

<sup>163</sup> Booker, 11 November 2005, 62, 70.

*out . . . He got kids. He's raising them like a real family man . . . a Christian man, and he might be a preacher.*<sup>164</sup>

But Foucault also pointed out that prison also creates repeat offenders, and largely guarantees recidivism, because first offenders are taught the techniques of more seasoned criminals, to which they must resort once they are freed, since their criminal records make it impossible for them to find legitimate employment.<sup>165</sup> Similarly, sociologist Kai Erikson found that prisons gather marginal people into tightly segregated groups, which gives them “an opportunity to teach one another the skills and attitudes of a deviant career.” John Jett concurred that prison is a “barracks of crime” for many young offenders:

*They pick up new bad habits, and then they come back to the street and use them, and end up back in prison. I've seen guys get out of prison one day and are back the next day . . . they learn tricks in prison.*<sup>166</sup>

Jett went further than Foucault, and maintained that the prison system is an industry that *wants* recidivism in order to support itself and, as such, is not interested in rehabilitation.

*They don't try to teach them anything. It's just a place where the police—the officers—support their families and their children. They send their children to college off of our children's hardship . . . the guys that go to prison, they sit in those dumps that they be in. They don't do nothing . . . they just passing time . . . they're just warehousing our kids . . . there's no education system . . . They don't try to rehabilitate, because if you don't come back, then they out of a job. That's the way it's set up.*<sup>167</sup>

Jett claimed that he was moved to a different prison after guards overheard him on the telephone speaking about the ethos of the modern prison system lacking rehabilitation and wanting recidivism:

<sup>164</sup> McDaniel, 8 June 2005, 39-40, 70.

<sup>165</sup> Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 255, 265-7.

<sup>166</sup> Kai T. Erikson, *Wayward Puritans: A Study in the Sociology of Deviance* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1966), 14; Jett, 13 November 2005, 89.

<sup>167</sup> Jett, 13 November 2005, 90. Erikson similarly argued that “recidivism is very high among convicts and that the atmosphere of the prison itself contributes importantly to that process.” Erikson further claimed that prisons are a necessary institution of modern society, and that if all present crime were eliminated, then other presently-acceptable behaviors would then become criminalized, Erikson, *Wayward Puritans*, 11-18, 205.



*They transferred me to a place where I could see two or three guys working. But that's in one or two prisons. They got just one or two where they can take politicians to see them working in the fields . . . but they got fifty other places where they do nothing but just sit there all day.*<sup>168</sup>

In his 2006 study of sentencing disparities for powder and crack cocaine possession in Washington, D.C., legal scholar Donald Braman found that ninety percent of blacks in the poorest neighborhoods can expect to be incarcerated at some point in their lives, and that this finding also applies to other cities. Braman also explained that the prison system is a forty-billion-dollar a year industry in America, and that law-enforcement officials—especially those seeking publicity, promotions, and salary increases—target black underclass communities for drug stings because drug trafficking is conducted in public there, while white drug trafficking is conducted in private. Therefore, black underclass communities are disproportionately targeted for criminality.<sup>169</sup> Braman exposed the racial component in sentencing disparities, with the 100:1 ratio between crack and powder cocaine possession that unfairly incarcerates African Americans. For example, for first-time offenders, possession of *any* quantity of powder cocaine constitutes a misdemeanor carrying no more than one year in prison, while possession of any quantity of crack cocaine is a felony carrying a mandatory five-year sentence. And possession of 500 grams of powder and 5 grams of crack cocaine both carry a mandatory five-year sentence. Possession of five kilos, *eleven pounds*, of powder and fifty grams of crack, *less than two ounces*, carries a mandatory ten-year sentence. Braman pointed out that blacks account for eighty percent of offenders sentenced for the possession and sale of crack cocaine, *yet* studies show that more whites than blacks use crack cocaine.

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<sup>168</sup> Jett, 13 November 2005, 90.

<sup>169</sup> See also Sullivan, *Getting Paid*, 5-6. Sullivan found that although surveys *consistently* found high rates of self-reported delinquency in *both* middle-class and poor neighborhoods, arrest rates were higher in poor neighborhoods, which led Sullivan to suggest that “the criminal justice system was engaging in massive discrimination against inner-city youths.”

Braman then demonstrated how incarceration spreads hardship across the black kinship network, by imposing a burden on already-impoverished family members—grandparents especially—with childcare. Limited financial resources are spent on collect telephone calls to keep children in contact with their parents in prisons. In addition, grandparents and the black kinship network must finance prison visits, which require transportation, meals, and hotel stays. Braman wrote that the sentencing disparity is a hidden tax on the underclass black community, which leads to more criminality, and the maintenance of the stereotype that blacks are dangerous and inferior. Braman claimed that “the criminal justice system has arguably become the principal generator of racial inequality in our society.” Braman’s work suggests—as John Jett claimed—that the massive prison industry needs an ever-increasing supply of prisoners, and promotes recidivism, in order to maintain itself and expand, and that authorities unfairly target black communities like Lynwood Park.<sup>170</sup>

Minnie Lee Weddie Thompson’s experience with her son suggests that other county agencies—perhaps unwittingly—also assist in the production of black criminals. For example, Thompson’s son Rodney has been in prison his entire adult life, and has spent only a few months out of prison since the age of seventeen. Labeled a fighter, his file follows him with every sentence. Thompson, his mother, also said that the reluctance of government social services to intervene in the life of a child going astray actually feeds the prison system. Thompson sought help for Rodney on numerous occasions before age seventeen, the age at which a young person could be sent to prison:

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<sup>170</sup> Donald Braman, “Modern Crime Control Mechanisms: Criminal Law and the Pursuit of Equality,” *Texas Law Review* 84 (2006): 2097-2130, 2097-2110. After Braman’s study was published, Congress investigated and reversed the disparity in sentencing in 2007, made the new fair-sentencing rule retroactive, and released thousands of prisoners. Quote is on page 2103.

- MLT: *Rodney moved up to the ninth grade. Played hooky every day . . . I tried to get the state to help me get him in school. Then they told me he would have to commit a crime for them to help me. They don't bother kids with going to school or not going to school. When we were coming up, we had a truant officer. We went to school. And when I was trying to get them to help me keep Rodney in school . . . to get involved and make him go to school, they said the only way they could get involved is that he get involved with the law—he break the law.*
- VMH: *And what happened when he did break the law. Did they help him with his schooling?*
- MLT: *No, they did not . . .*
- VMH: *And they never helped him with his education or anything?*
- MLT: *No, never. Never.*<sup>171</sup>

Thompson maintained that Rodney has been plagued by fighting in prison, which ensures that he remains there, since he is unable to get out early for good behavior:

*Rodney says . . . that once you get this on your record—that you fight—he says that the prison guards pick, jugs. Other people that the prison guards talk to, they jugg . . . these prisons you go to, your record follows you. And these people are looking at your record. They don't know whether you done changed, or what. They're just looking at your record. And they, right off the bat, start treating you differently . . . as a troublemaker . . . so you've got this record that's following you . . . All they do is go by your record.*<sup>172</sup>

John Jett, who knows Rodney well, maintained that Rodney is doomed to always having to fight in prison:

*They send him to those type of places where the guys [who] love to fight go. So therefore he got to fight to be able to keep his manhood. He got to fight on every turn. They got those types of prisons where they send the violent people. They put them all together, so that's the reason he's got to fight, 'cause he's [labeled] a fighter.*<sup>173</sup>

Michelle Cleckley shared that the prison system also maintains its high occupancy rate by issuing loitering tickets in underclass communities such as Lynwood Park:

- MC: *[T]hey have those loitering tickets . . .*
- VMH: *When they come and they see you squatting in a house?*
- MC: *No, standing around . . . Just standing . . .*

<sup>171</sup> Thompson, 11 August 2005, 51. For more on the relationship between lack of school attendance and criminality for underclass youths, see Sullivan, *Getting Paid*, 30, 56-7.

<sup>172</sup> Thompson, 11 August 2005, 52. Jugging represents doing little things to constantly aggravate, to keep a person in an agitated state, which eventually leads to an explosion of anger and violence in Rodney's case.

<sup>173</sup> Jett, 13 November 2005, 91.

- VMH: *Does that mean that all the guys who hang out on the corner, if they were homeless, they get tickets . . .*
- MC: *[N]owadays it doesn't matter who it is . . . I can be standing in front of my house where I live at. I walk out to the mailbox. Say, for instance, somebody's walking down the street, and they turn, and you holler at them and say, "Hey." And you might be talking from a distance, you know. They might be down there, and you might be up there, and you just talking. The police come over the hill, or up the street, and you got a ticket.*
- VMH: *You and the other person?*
- MC: *Yes.*
- VMH: *For being by the mailbox?*
- MC: *Yes.*
- VMH: *Talking to each other across the road?*
- MC: *Or just standing in one spot. I mean, it doesn't make any sense . . .*
- VMH: *Now what happens when you get a ticket for loitering? Do you have to pay a fine?*
- MC: *Yes. You have to pay cash money. It used to be like \$500. Now it's almost like \$800 . . .*
- VMH: *For loitering?*
- MC: *Yes, \$750—something like that. Then by the time you get through paying jail fee, court cost, it's about \$800.*
- VMH: *How did you feel about that?*
- MC: *I didn't never pay no money. I just went in and did my time.*
- VMH: *How much time did you have to do?*
- MC: *It all depends on what the judge give you. You can do anywhere from twenty to sixty. It depends on how many tickets you got . . . For one ticket it's supposed to be sixty days. You'd do forty-five days. That's what it's supposed to be, but the judge can give you twenty days or whatever. It all depends on what the judge want you to do. It's a mess.<sup>174</sup>*

Many people in Lynwood Park have no automobiles, nor money for public transportation, and strolling the community and visiting with others on the street is a form of relaxation. Minnie Lee Weddie Thompson said she would challenge the police:

- VMH: *Don't you think that's unfair . . . to give people tickets for loitering in their own community?*
- MLT: *That's right. That's one reason I hated it so bad when Lieutenant Benifield left, because Lieutenant Benifield would get on them [police officers] about that. Like the police say, "You go home. I'm a give you a ticket for loitering" . . . I say, "Look, where you want me to go walking? Over there in Dunwoody? This is my community."*
- VMH: *So the police doing that was also responsible for the good law-abiding people in the community to stay at home?*

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<sup>174</sup> Cleckley, 25 July 2005, 24-5.

MLT: *That's right.*  
 VMH: *Because they were afraid of being caught up in the net?*  
 MLT: *That's right.*<sup>175</sup>

Moreover, the people of Lynwood Park maintained that they and their youths are placed in a disadvantaged position because they are criminalized, while the police allow white drug buyers to go free. Anne Jackson Ouisley, born in 1916, said of the Lynwood Park drug buyers that she could see from her porch:

*I've been telling that to the chief of police. I say, "You come in here and you arrest them, but you don't arrest the person that come in and buy from them." I said, "Well, now, I can sit on my porch and see sales going on. But they selling to peoples that's in a Rolls Royce, BMW, Mercedes—big fine cars."*<sup>176</sup>

John Jett also argued that there would be no Lynwood Park drug industry had it not been for white customers:

*[T]he white peoples come through the community—that's why the community is out of control . . . they weren't selling to the black people. They sold it to the white people . . . [T]he black peoples ain't gonna buy it from you, 'cause they can go get they own and smoke it. But it is the white people that cause this community to spin out of control on the drug selling. They'd ride through here and get it.*<sup>177</sup>

Jett's claim that white appetite for drugs destroyed Lynwood Park is only one perspective. It could be argued that the residents' addiction to crack cocaine equally is responsible. In addition, Sandra Fields, the black executive formerly from Los Angeles, clearly demonstrated that black elite appetite for cocaine by the mid-1990s also fueled the drug trade in Lynwood Park and was also a contributing factor in the community's demise. Yet Donald Braman did find that more whites than blacks use crack cocaine, so it might be argued that white appetite for crack cocaine, plus the residents' addiction to the drug, were the main causes of the destruction of Lynwood Park.

<sup>175</sup> Thompson, 11 August 2005, 26-7.

<sup>176</sup> Anne Jackson Ouisley, 15 November 2004, 86-7.

<sup>177</sup> Jett, 13 November 2005, 24, 100.

Many respondents suggested that in communities like Lynwood Park there will always be an endless supply of children who roam the streets and get into trouble because of laws that criminalize parental discipline. Richard Rodriguez wrote that secular institutions do not recognize a difference between public and private life, and therefore totalitarian governments “intrude into a family’s life.”<sup>178</sup> And historian David Sabean found the same to be true in his study of the pre-modern German village of Neckarhausen, where discipline was initially marked by matriarchal authority, then switched as “state institutions intervened directly into internal family affairs.” The authority of the parents of Neckarhausen was undermined by the state, to the extent that parents began to question “whether the children belonged to them or to the state.”<sup>179</sup> The older residents of Lynwood Park claimed that a system that arrests parents for disciplining their children only guarantees a never-ending supply of “tiny dogs” who sell drugs and carry pistols. They reported that Lynwood Park’s children are street-smart, know the law, and openly declare to their elders that they can do whatever they want, which is to not attend school, to run in the streets, and to join the community’s drug industry, as Michelle Cleckley explained:

- MC: *You got nine-year-olds nowadays walking around with a lot of money . . . nine, ten . . . carrying guns, the thug life. A lot of it has to do with this new law . . . the parents try to chastise them, and the parents are gonna get locked up, so they’re going to be loose . . . You got young kids, fourteen or fifteen years old walking around like they forty or fifty, talking, smoking reefer, and not going to school, selling drugs . . .*
- VMH: *Do you tell the kids . . . “Listen, I’ve been there?”*
- MC: *Oh yeah. But you know what they say? “You just a dope-head. You don’t know what you’re talking about.” . . .*
- VMH: *[D]o you think that today the parents don’t have any control over the kids?*

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<sup>178</sup> Richard Rodriguez, *Hunger for Memory: The Education of Richard Rodriguez* (New York: Bantam Books, 1983), 109.

<sup>179</sup> David Warren Sabean, *Property, Production, and Family in Neckarhausen, 1700-1870*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 34, 323.

MC: *Not really, not with this new law . . . You hit one of your kids—you can just push one of your kids—push them, or pop them—they call the police, and you’re going to jail for child abuse. Okay? And I am a witness to that.*<sup>180</sup>

Carl Nightingale argued that after the mass-advertising television campaigns of prestige goods molded the desires of young underclass blacks, these children lost faith in, and respect for, their parents, who could not provide these items. Black underclass children then refused to attend school if they did not have the appropriate clothing, and preferred selling drugs on the corner to acquire prestige goods for themselves. Barbara Fair, born in 1940, is the step-daughter of Odell Niles. She confirmed that Lynwood Park’s children inordinately care about appearance:

BF: *Society brought this on because . . . they tell ‘em . . . “You don’t have to go to school.” What are they going to do [but] hang out on the street . . . That’s fast money . . . children of today . . . want fine clothes. They want bling bling, cars—you know, showcasing . . .*  
 VMH: *But surely they understand that they can be arrested or get killed.*  
 BF: *They take that chance.*<sup>181</sup>

John Jett argued that Lynwood Park’s children are lost without a firm hand:

VMH: *A lot of people have been telling me that the laws are different now and people can’t really discipline their children . . .*  
 JJ: *[T]hat’s the most awfulest thing to ever happen to society, where you cannot discipline your child. If you whoop your child and she go to school, or he go to school, “I got a bruise right here,” police gonna lock you up . . . [a]nd take your kids away from you.*  
 VMH: *But the people are telling me that that’s used now by the children . . .*  
 JJ: *“I’m gonna call 911” . . .*  
 VMH: *And they said that that’s been really bad for the kids of Lynwood Park.*  
 JJ: *Real bad. Real bad, because these kids in Lynwood Park ain’t like other kids . . . These kids here is more mature about wrongness . . . They’ve grown up with it. So now they know that 911 will get you locked up. Then you can’t do nothing . . . children nowadays is in a bad predicament . . . especially Lynwood Park’s children.*<sup>182</sup>

<sup>180</sup> Cleckley, 12 November 2005, 15-6.

<sup>181</sup> Nightingale, *On the Edge*, 147, 164; Fair, 3 September 2005, 13-4.

<sup>182</sup> Jett, 13 November 2005, 95-6.

The Lynwood Park residents who grew up during the era of moonshine illegality speak of the stern discipline of their parents, and look back at their methods as having been necessary. Patricia Martin, born in 1932, said her mother and grandmother would “tear her up.” Dennie Jones Wesley, born in 1940, whose brother Columbus graduated from college, said that her parents were disciplinarians:

- VMH: *Your parents were very strict?*  
 DJW: *Oh, yeah, but only when they had to be, 'cause they didn't allow any fooling around. You had to go to school and you had to go to church. If you didn't, you had to be dead. If you didn't go, you better be dead.*  
 VMH: *And who did the punishing in the family . . .*  
 DJW: *They both did. We'd get one whipping from mama, and when daddy come home we get another one.*  
 VMH: *And what did your mother whip you with? A belt? A switch?*  
 DJW: *We had to go out to the peach tree in the backyard and get the switches and bring them back to her. If they were too little she'd send us back, until we got what she wanted. She'd get three, and braid them together, and leave the leaves on the end of them, so that when she hit them the leaves would hurt. And we'd have welts on us, and she'd whip us until she got tired. Then when he got home, she'd tell daddy, and daddy would get us. And daddy used his belt, but never to the point of breaking the skin, and bleeding . . . it was all done really in love. We never did forget those whippings, so we never did that again. So it was a learning experiment, believe me . . . [it was] nowhere near child abuse. As soon as they whip you they say, "You hear what I said? You're gon' do it again?" "No." "Okay." And that was the end of it. You didn't do it anymore.<sup>183</sup>*

Maudina Peaches Horton, born in the early 1950s, said that her neighbor, Miss Boyd, a domestic worker, was widowed at a young age. Boyd raised her fifteen children alone, and regularly tore them up with switches from a dogwood tree:

*Miss Boyd was a single mom, with all her children . . . She was as strong as they could get . . . she'd tell them, "Go get me a dogwood switch." She wouldn't whoop with anything but those dogwood switches . . . If you brought back anything but the dogwood switches, you got a whooping with that, then you had to go back and go get the dogwood. And you got a whooping with that when you got back. She didn't play anything . . . and to this day I am telling you . . . they are all some strong children from her rearing. Clean as a pin.<sup>184</sup>*

<sup>183</sup> Wesley, 19 October 2005, 15-6.

<sup>184</sup> Horton, 17 September 2005, 22-3.



The accounts of discipline “back in the day” suggest that a child’s memory of a whipping acted as an effective deterrent from wrongdoing in Lynwood Park’s children. The community’s residents are also suggesting that a law that is meant to protect all children from physical abuse actually can destroy children in underclass communities where they are already on the edge of criminality. And if such a law were to be passed, then authorities also have to support parents and communities with truancy officers and other programs to keep children from joining street crime. In addition, there has to be a conscientious effort to rehabilitate children when they commit petty crimes—such as Rodney Thompson before seventeen—which is not the case in DeKalb County. As Minnie Lee Weddie Thompson indicated, the county does not help parents with school truancy, which is one important way to give the children of Lynwood Park, and underclass communities in general, an opportunity to have a life free of illegality. Since there are no mechanisms in place for ensuring that black underclass children stay in school, and for rehabilitating the *petit delinquents*, plus Braman’s argument that the black community is unfairly targeted in drug stings, the people of Lynwood Park believe that their children have been unfairly targeted for criminalization.<sup>185</sup>

Ronald Bayor pointed out that even into the 1990s, federal government programs “came too late and provided too little, particularly to low-income blacks.”<sup>186</sup> Therefore, outside forces—not enforcing school truancy, sentencing disparities, lack of rehabilitation, for example—appear to have conspired to make the practice of illegal activity widespread within Lynwood Park, while endogamy ensured that it would be perpetuated. Sudhir Venkatesh found that residents in Maquis Park moved between socially legitimate and

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<sup>185</sup> One of Elijah Anderson’s respondents calls the youngest drug dealers, usually around age ten, the tiny dogs, *Streetwise*, 84.

<sup>186</sup> Ronald H. Bayor, *Race and the Shaping of Twentieth-Century Atlanta* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press), 1996, 123.

illegal venues in order to survive, and this was also the case in Lynwood Park. Minnie Lee Weddie Thompson worked at a number of legitimate jobs: as a folder in a commercial laundry, then as a packer at Frito-Lay. She also sold food and alcohol out of her house, and bartended at Reuben “Buckhead” Johnson’s hole-in-the-wall on Windsor Parkway. After she developed a crack cocaine habit, she moved between legitimate labor and cooking crack cocaine for the community’s drug dealers, for which she went to prison, and then became unemployable.<sup>187</sup> Michelle Cleckley is now homeless in Lynwood Park and explained how she acquires the means to survive:

*I’ll knock on somebody’s door in a heartbeat. All these people that’s doing construction? I’ll walk up there and practically demand me some kind of work . . . every now and then I get me some work with the builders and all that . . . I clean up behind them . . . when they first started building I was getting a lot of work with them. But, see, I got in a little trouble. I went to jail . . . [and] they was like shying off of me . . . And I couldn’t just go in there and get me more work like I used to . . . I just do what I got to do to survive . . . But at least I’m not in no cardboard box under no bridge digging out of garbage cans . . . I might have disgraced myself a couple of times, you know . . . sell my body . . . I mean there’s shame, but there’s no shame. You know what I’m saying? Because I’m not out there robbing, stealing, flexing, killing . . . it’s a means of me getting something to eat . . . You know you can’t really get nothing for free all the time. I can keep a little money to pay somebody when I need to take me a bath, or I want to cook me something to eat. You know, stuff like that.*<sup>188</sup>

Prostitution is accepted in an underclass community, as Venkatesh learned in Maquis Park, where sex work is understood to be a form of work, as important as other labor in the community, because it is “instrumental in supporting households.”<sup>189</sup>

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<sup>187</sup> Thompson, 29 July 2005, 83-5, 58, 103-5. Reuben Johnson and his brother Luther were both known as Buckhead, because they hailed from Johnsontown, which was in Buckhead. Reuben was further delineated as Bubba in Lynwood Park, but today, when the people of the community refer to Buckhead they mean Reuben. Reuben Buckhead no longer lives in Lynwood Park but can be found there most afternoons, sitting in front of the house across from The Crack—where the second-tier men used to drink under the trees—shooting the breeze with the local drunks.

<sup>188</sup> Cleckley, 25 July 2005, 28-31. Flexing is running a scam on someone: for example, selling them drugs of inferior quality to the price charged. Cleckley presently lives in abandoned buildings in Lynwood Park and picks up odd jobs in the community, such as helping to plant flowers outside the various churches.

<sup>189</sup> Venkatesh, *Off the Books*, 73.

The black ghetto has suffered centuries of discrimination by governments, and William Julius Wilson referred to the black underclass community as a portrait of social isolation, because of its physical and social remove from the societal mainstream.<sup>190</sup> Moreover, Eliot Liebow, in his study of men on the corner of a black underclass community, found that the black ghetto male is oriented to a different future. He rarely thinks of legitimate employment as a “stepping stone to something better. It is a dead end.” Black underclass males have few prospects for stable employment, and see themselves facing the similarly bleak prospects of their fathers and grandfathers before them.<sup>191</sup> And thus African American youths choose the drug economy, regardless of its risks of prison and possible death, because they cannot find steady employment in mainstream society that is not low-paying, and because they are unfairly criminalized—according to Braman—and are thus rendered un-hirable at a young age. Wilson and Anderson held that the success of the civil rights movement made black youths reject the “Negro jobs” that the people of Lynwood Park traditionally filled, but many traditional Negro jobs have been eliminated. And for some blacks with adequate qualifications, John Jett pointed out that legitimate jobs are ignored because the drug industry represents the only way that some black laboring-class men can achieve the American “get rich” dream.

Illegality has been widespread in Lynwood Park since it was settled, and the fates of the community’s residents have been shaped in large part by the white society’s structures and institutions that discriminated against, and limited the options of, underclass blacks. In the early decades, Jim Crow segregation, being trapped in “Negro jobs,” and being left out of New Deal programs, among other mechanisms, in a sense justified

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<sup>190</sup> William Julius Wilson, *The Truly Disadvantaged: The Inner City, the Underclass and Public Policy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).

<sup>191</sup> Eliot Liebow, *Tally’s Corner* (London: Little Brown, 1972), 63.

illegality as a survival strategy for the black laboring class. After the passage of the Fair Housing Act in 1968, those residents who could chose to purchase homes outside Lynwood Park and left, but kept their family homes in Lynwood Park, which they rented to poorer relatives and kinfolk of other Lynwood Park residents. There followed an influx of renters, drug users, and sellers into the community, prompting one resident to say, when he was asked why he used drugs:

*We learn from our un-educated, illiterate and unreasonable environment that we are raised in. We need our distinguished and educated peers to come back here and help us. We need hope, which will happen when our peers who left us and went on to college quit separating from us . . . Our peers are the only ones who can show us a way out of this mess.*<sup>192</sup>

But the educated did not return, and those who remained looked the other way, inured by decades of tolerating illegality, and benefiting from the proceeds of the industry. The desegregation of DeKalb County's school system in 1969 presented another crisis point for the community. Facing overt racism at Cross Keys High School, many of Lynwood Park's youths dropped out of school in the 1960s and 1970s. They chose selling marijuana over working at unskilled jobs and made Lynwood Park known as a center for drugs. In addition, the unfair criminalizing of the community's residents further ensured that Lynwood Park's youths would more than likely become career criminals, and that the community would continue to be impoverished, thus maintaining the vicious cycle of poverty leading to illegality. Furthermore, government agencies would not help parents keep their children in school, and were not interested in rehabilitating them once they ran afoul of the law. In fact, as John Jett pointed out, the modern prison system is an industry whose *raison d'être* is criminality and recidivism. And it would seem that a lack of

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<sup>192</sup> "Lynwood: A Pre-Civil War Community," *The Brookhaven Buzz*, Vol. 2, No. 2, (February 1992), Roy H. Benifield Papers.

response by social service departments to prevent black youths from falling into a life of crime is intended to feed the prison industry.

For those residents able to complete college, the devaluation of a college degree earned by an African American sends a message to black youths that staying in school is not worthwhile, while the enormous sums of money that can be made in the drug industry makes them feel that they are successful entrepreneurs. In addition, the culture of Lynwood Park, which admires those who “make” it, whether legally or not, ensures that many of the community’s youths will join the underground drug industry, for Herman Ouisley was seen as a pioneer, and Timbo Walker was romantically cast as a modern-day Robin Hood.

Patricia Martin shared that the community is tolerant of the illegal activity of its residents because illegality improves the lives of both individuals and the community. In other words, the residents privately empathize with the illegality that individuals and households must engage in for survival.<sup>193</sup> Elijah Anderson maintained that drugs “promise money and the material “good life” where for many there is little hope,” and Venkatesh pointed out that if the activity generates income, “any ethical dilemmas it creates must also be judged in terms of how the activity supports a household and even the wider community.”<sup>194</sup> Furthermore, Officer Williams reported that Lynwood Park was crime-tolerant because the entire community was interrelated in a family network.<sup>195</sup>

The evidence of Lynwood Park question the finding of Elijah Anderson that the relationship between the old heads and the youths of the ghetto broke down after crack cocaine emerged in the mid-1980s. Anderson found in his early study (1976) that ghetto

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<sup>193</sup> Martin, 27 October 2004, 32.

<sup>194</sup> Anderson, *Streetwise*, 109; Venkatesh, *Off the Books*, 74.

<sup>195</sup> Williams, 14 April 2005, 27.

youths, although beginning to depart from the values of the older generation, nevertheless still respected, protected, and watched out for the elders in the community.<sup>196</sup> In his later study (1990) Anderson found that the youths and the old heads in the ghetto had nothing in common and had ceased to interact with each other. This was clearly not the case in Lynwood Park. The old heads, male and female, reported that they have close relationships with all the people of the street, including the drug dealers, having known them from their births. The street people and drug dealers call the elderly women “Auntie” or “Mother” and are very respectful both to them and the older men in the community, although they perhaps no longer share the same value system.

Lynwood Park is not a homogeneous community, but is rather one that is variegated and multifaceted. Illegality in Lynwood Park is only one aspect of the community’s life and history. In Lynwood Park, the *mentalité* toward crime changed over time: from an acceptance of bootlegging as a strategy to supplement low incomes, to looking the other way when its youths began joining the marijuana trade as a career in the 1970s, to accepting the crack cocaine industry as an inevitable part of the community’s life, and a demonstration of entrepreneurship.

From the time it was settled, illegality—both illegal licit and illicit—was widespread in the community. Alcohol and marijuana usage were relatively benign and enabled the community to profit from their trade. However, crack cocaine was highly destructive, became naturalized throughout Lynwood Park, increased the danger in the community, destroyed lives, and contributed to the COP crackdown, the low-income housing strategy, and the eventual displacement of most of the traditional residents of the

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<sup>196</sup> Elijah Anderson, *A Place on the Corner* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976), 181.

community. The people of Lynwood Park adopted a “see” and “don’t see” attitude toward illegality, and accepted the largess of the community’s most successful members, regardless of whether or not their “business” activity was legal or illegal. But they were ambushed by crack cocaine. They never realized that the drug would be so destructive, nor that their threshold for tolerating and benefiting from illegality would eventually lead to the eradication of the Lynwood Park they had established and known.

## Chapter 7: Schools and Education

Educating their children was important to African Americans in general, and to Lynwood Park's founders in particular. Schooling was of tantamount importance because many blacks believed that education was the only true avenue to long-term success. Mel Pender said his grandfather placed a premium on education. And Peter Scott explained that before the 1960s the black community drummed into its children that they could have everything taken away—including their lives—but no one could take away their education, “So that’s the kind of thinking that we were guided by . . . [d]uring our segregated system.”<sup>1</sup>

Lynwood Park grew, and residents wanted a school by the 1940s. Mel Lynn, the white real estate agent selling lots in the enclave, donated the usage of a parcel of land fifty feet wide by one hundred and fifty feet deep on Mae Avenue for a schoolhouse. The community established a Board of Trustees—primarily comprised of church deacons—to oversee this property and the building of the school. Founders, such as Luke Holsey and John Jackson—father of Anne Jackson Ouisley—and many others, provided the materials, money, and labor to build the community’s one-room schoolhouse, which fostered bonds of ownership and communal ties. With Reverend J. J. Newberry, an Episcopal minister from Decatur, as its principal, the school opened its doors in 1942, with an enrollment of one hundred and twenty-five students.<sup>2</sup>

The NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund conducted a legal campaign against segregated schools that began in 1935. After a series of victories led by Charles Hamilton Houston, the baton was passed to Houston’s protégé Thurgood Marshall in

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<sup>1</sup> Pender, 27 April 2005, 11-2; Scott, 4 May 2005, 42.

<sup>2</sup> The community’s trustees also included Robert Butler, G. D. Hughley, Raymond Akins, John Akins, Luther Radford, Will Johnson, John “Hunkie” Brown, Shelly Truitt, and Clifford Sanford Sr., husband of Christine Allen. Luke Holsey also recalled that “Bob Worthy and John Jackson were active back then, too,” Scott, *The Atlanta Journal and Constitution*, 17 June 1993; Undated “Chronology of Lynwood Park School,” Patricia Jones Papers, Atlanta, Georgia.



1939.<sup>3</sup> DeKalb County and Lynwood Park then became enmeshed in the national debate about segregated and unequal education for blacks in the South, where Jim Crow laws kept blacks subordinate, which was widely-believed to foster a sense of black inferiority and white superiority among both blacks and whites. At the state and local levels in Georgia, government officials were aware of the NAACP's challenges to segregated education, and DeKalb County officials made steady improvements in its dual school system long before the 1952 challenge of *Brown v. Board of Education*, in an effort to maintain its segregated educational system.<sup>4</sup>

Narvie Jordan Harris, a member of the black elite, was hired as DeKalb County's Jeanes supervisor in 1944, and she assisted DeKalb County officials in instituting a program to improve black education in the county.<sup>5</sup> But in 1944 Harris was not given many funds for black schools.<sup>6</sup> Then, in the climate of the NAACP's successes against segregated education, the DeKalb County Grand Jury found that Negro education in the county was a disgrace in 1945, evidenced by decrepit buildings and overcrowding, an

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<sup>3</sup> Jack Balkin, "The History of the *Brown* Litigation," in Jack M. Balkin, ed. *What Brown v. Board of Education Should Have Said: The Nation's Top Legal Experts Rewrite America's Landmark Civil Rights Decision* (New York: New York University Press, 2001), 29. Jack Balkin is Knight Professor of Constitutional Law and the First Amendment at Yale Law School. In 2000 he gathered eight constitutional scholars, and the nine rewrote *Brown* using only materials and information available as of May 17, 1954. The point was to "rethink the meaning of America's constitutional commitment to equality . . . [and] the law of race relations in the United States and the role that courts play in promoting racial equality." The nine opinions are invaluable for their insights on constitutional interpretation, and their analysis of *Brown* and the exigencies it served.

<sup>4</sup> *Brown v. Board of Education* was first argued in 1952, with the ruling that segregated schools was unconstitutional occurring in 1954. The remedy was handed down in 1955, and a third case *Boling v. Sharpe*, found it unconstitutional to maintain segregated schools in the District of Columbia, and made school segregation unconstitutional across the nation. The 1954 ruling is commonly referred to as *Brown I*, the 1955 remedy as *Brown II*, *Boling* established that the *Brown I* ruling also applied to the federal government, which made laws for the District of Columbia. The three rulings *in toto* are referred to as *Brown*. See Jack Balkin, "Preface," Balkin, *What Brown*, ix-xi.

<sup>5</sup> Anna T. Jeanes, a wealthy Philadelphia philanthropist, endowed a program in 1906 to improve the education of black children in the south. The endowment supplemented the salaries of black school supervisors across the region. Walter R. Harris, "The Provision of an Adequate Education: Race, Modernization and Education in DeKalb County, Georgia, 1946-55" (M.A. thesis, Georgia State University, 2003), 66.

<sup>6</sup> Narvie J. Harris, interviewed by Kathryn L. Nasstrom, 11 June 1992, transcript, Georgia Government Documentation Project, Georgia State University, Atlanta, Georgia, 23.

inequitable distribution of supplies, and low teachers' pay, which led to the black schools receiving supplies and improvements. And after Jim Cherry took over the duties of DeKalb County school superintendent in 1947, he launched a program to make good schools available to black children—in order to maintain a dual school system.<sup>7</sup>

As Jeanes supervisor, Narvie Harris was responsible for the county's seventeen black schools, with their 1,500 students and thirty-six teachers, who were housed in dilapidated buildings with no services. Black schools—and all other socially segregated facilities—were supposed to be “separate but equal” after the Supreme Court's 1896 ruling in *Plessy v. Ferguson*. But Harris said that nothing about DeKalb County's black school system was equal, since “[y]ou can't be equal when I'm in a shanty, and I'm getting books you've already used.”<sup>8</sup> DeKalb County's black schools were generally one-teacher rooms located in communities without facilities, such as running water, sewers, and electricity. And Lynwood Park's one-room schoolhouse made a vivid impression on Narvie Harris, which she recalled nearly sixty-five years later:

NJH:            *Lynwood Park was in a stinking little building . . .*  
 VMH:           *What did it stink of?*  
 NJH:           *Body odors. They didn't have bathrooms.*<sup>9</sup>

In DeKalb County's black enclaves students chopped wood for the stoves that heated the classrooms, and fetched water from the wells, and Harris said of one black school: “you could study botany through the floorboards, astronomy through the roof and the weather through the walls.” Old books and classroom equipment were handed down

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<sup>7</sup> Jim Cherry performed the duties of school superintendent from July 1, 1947, when he was hired by DeKalb County as a consultant. He was officially elected as superintendent in 1949, and served in that capacity until 1972; Narvie J. Harris and Dee Taylor, *African-American Education in DeKalb County* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 1999). 52.

<sup>8</sup> Nasstrom, 30.

<sup>9</sup> Narvie Harris, 2 July 2008, 6.

from white schools, Harris said, “So the children were always aware of the message sent to them saying that they were second best.”<sup>10</sup>

Even Narvie Harris was treated as second best by DeKalb County’s white administration. Harris was not allowed to share offices with her white counterparts, and was housed in space located above Cox Funeral Home in Decatur. It was there that Harris held interviews, and conducted teacher-training workshops.<sup>11</sup> And Harris said of her second-class status: “For years and years, they [whites] had administrative meetings in which we [blacks] were left out.”<sup>12</sup> Rosa Beatles-Sowell, teacher at the Lynwood Park School, explained that Narvie Harris was a hidden militant embedded in a white educational system, who always found ways to bring to black students everything that was available to white ones:

*They thought they had her in her place . . . when they gave her the office in the black funeral home [while] all the other supervisors were in the main office . . . Everything they were doing she was gonna make sure we got it . . . if they were buying them for the white schools, then Narvie would think of some way we could use that same technique in the black schools . . . even if we had to make our equation scale or our abacus.<sup>13</sup>*

Harris organized a PTA council in 1945, and required all the black school principals and teachers to be members, and to attend PTA meetings in the communities in which they taught.<sup>14</sup> Narvie Harris is generally credited for successfully connecting the schools, the homes, and the churches in the underclass African American communities that

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<sup>10</sup> Scott Henry, “Segregated Again: Brown v. Board of Education Hasn’t Delivered Integrated Schools, But That Doesn’t Mean It Failed,” *Creative Loafing*, Atlanta, 13 May 2004; Harris and Taylor, *African-American Education*, 23.

<sup>11</sup> Narvie Harris interviewed candidates and made recommendations to Jim Cherry who actually hired the teachers. Elizabeth Braynon, interview by author, 14 September 2006, transcript, 4.

<sup>12</sup> Harris and Taylor, *African-American Education*, 18; Nasstrom, 28.

<sup>13</sup> Rosa Beatles-Sowell, interview by author, 1 September 2006, transcript, 39-40. Rosa Beatles was mentored by Narvie Harris’s sister Annie Pearl Jordan Scott, who went to college in England, and who was Beatles’s high school teacher. Scott mentored a number of young girls. It was customary for them to gather at Scott’s home, and they essentially became friends with Scott and her family, which included Narvie Jordan Harris. Beatles-Sowell claimed that the two Jordan sisters were surrogate mothers to her, and credits them with teaching her everything she knows.

<sup>14</sup> Beatles-Sowell, 1 September 2006, 35; Harris and Taylor, *African-American Education*, 30-31, 45-46.

she served.<sup>15</sup> However, Lynwood Park's founders had already functioned in this role long before Narvie Harris became the Jeanes supervisor. For example, Annie Truitt was a community and church leader at Hard Rock in the 1930s, and Luke Holsey was founding and organizing associations long before Narvie Harris entered Lynwood Park. Both Annie Truitt and Luke Holsey were instrumental in founding the DeKalb chapter of the NAACP, where Holsey served as vice-president under the chapter's first president, Gus Shank. Patricia Jones recalled Annie Truitt telling her that Truitt and Holsey held clandestine meetings in various homes in Lynwood Park in an effort to acquire members for the NAACP.<sup>16</sup> In other words, the residents of third-wheel Lynwood Park employed *phronēsis* and *praxis*—their native intelligence, wisdom, and action—to establish and lead their enclave since 1928, and did not need a member of the black elite—the second wheel—which had turned its back on the “mudsills” during the New Deal era, to organize and lead them and their community in the mid-1940s.<sup>17</sup>

Soon after taking over the duties of school superintendent in 1947 Jim Cherry realized that the county needed to combine the black schools to shorten the students' commuting time to the county's only three existing black high schools. And after acquiring two school buses for black children in 1948, Cherry consolidated the seventeen schools into eight by 1949.<sup>18</sup> Historian Walter Harris claimed that “a strong sentiment existed in the black community to maintain control of their schools,” and Luke Holsey said that after “they” wanted to move Lynwood Park's elementary school to the town of

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<sup>15</sup> Nasstrom, 12-4.

<sup>16</sup> Patricia Jones, 1 July 2008, Fieldnotes. Patricia Jones was born and raised in Lynwood Park and served as president of the DeKalb Chapter of the NAACP from 1987 to 1992.

<sup>17</sup> Peter Scott, 17 June 1993; Obituary, “Mrs. Annie Belle Truitt, a community leader in Lynwood Park, at 105,” 30 January 1990; <sup>17</sup> Karen Ferguson, *Black Politics in New Deal Atlanta* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 6-9, 191; Ronald H. Bayor, *Race and the Shaping of Twentieth-Century Atlanta* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 108, 117.

<sup>18</sup> Narvie Harris gathered the data on black schools for Cherry and he decided the number and location of the consolidated schools. See Narvie Harris, 2 July 2008, 6-7.

Chamblee, “we bought the property and it stayed.”<sup>19</sup> Through the efforts of Lynwood Park’s Twelve Ladies Sewing Club and other residents, the community purchased approximately four acres of land at the far north of the enclave from the Allen family, on the western side of Osborne Road, for the sum of one thousand, five hundred dollars. The community then successfully lobbied to have one of the consolidated schools located in the enclave, and deeded the parcel to the Board of Education as the site for a new school.<sup>20</sup>

DeKalb County built the nine-room Lynwood Park High and Elementary School on the donated land in 1949. The new school’s enrollment was two hundred and forty-seven, with the additional elementary and high-school students coming from Doraville and Chamblee.<sup>21</sup> Annie Truitt, church and community leader, mother of eight children, worked indefatigably for education in Lynwood Park, and spearheaded the effort to have the consolidated school located in the community, as John Chatman recalled:

*Miss Annie Truitt, she was active in helping to get the school built. She helped raise the money . . . she’s the one that kind of pulled the people together with DeKalb County to have a school built down here on this ground. They bought the ground, but DeKalb County put the school on it.*<sup>22</sup>

Annie Truitt, a largely illiterate black woman born in 1898 in rural Georgia, was the go-between who brokered Lynwood Park’s relationship with DeKalb County—most

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<sup>19</sup> Harris, “The Provision of an Adequate Education,” 66; Scott, *The Atlanta Journal and Constitution*, 17 June 1993. Holsey was speaking about the one-room schoolhouse on Mae Avenue, and “they” must have meant Jim Cherry. Chamblee already had a small “colored” high school, held at the Chamblee Baptist Church, so Cherry more than likely wanted to locate a consolidated high and elementary school in Chamblee, and bus Lynwood Park’s students there. Wallace Fox Jones, Patricia Martin, and many other Lynwood Park residents graduated from Chamblee, which is designated on their diplomas as the “Chamblee High School for Negroes.” Wesley, 19 October 2005, 10; Martin, 13 October 2004, 33-4.

<sup>20</sup> “Chronology of Lynwood Park School,” undated. Originally made up of twelve Lynwood Park women, the Twelve Ladies Sewing Club expanded to thirty-six ladies, who combined socializing with raising money. The women got together, sewed dresses, then held a fashion show once a year where they sold their products. The proceeds financed the installation of telephone and electric service, and streetlights, the purchasing of land for the community’s elementary and high schools, and the enclave’s daycare center, which the ladies of the club staffed and operated. Numerous respondents also spoke of the community raising the money to purchase the land parcel through holding barbecues and fish fries; Harris and Taylor, *African-American Education*, 29-31.

<sup>21</sup> “Chronology of Lynwood Park School,” undated.

<sup>22</sup> Chatman, 21 March 2008, 18.

likely Jim Cherry—in getting the county to locate the new school in the enclave. Alexis de Tocqueville wrote in the 1830s that there was a relationship between civil and political association. In effect, ordinary citizens working for the improvement of community learn the necessary skills to agitate for change. Tocqueville held that civil institutions provide the arenas in which ordinary citizens, such as Annie Truitt, could become comfortable questioning and challenging government officials—white ones in Truitt’s case. Truitt could then bolster her skills as community leader through relaying information to the other residents, which enabled her to develop more sophisticated public-speaking skills. And thus basically illiterate members of a black community could develop leadership skills, become politically active, and like Luke Holsey, develop the self-confidence to later run for public office. Tocqueville concluded that working in associations for the common good “may strengthen the state in the end,” because it fosters a democracy for the people by the people working together for the common good.<sup>23</sup>

Although greatly improved from the one-room schoolhouse, the new Lynwood Park School was still inferior compared to the county’s white schools. The new school had no running water or cafeteria, and John Jett recalled that it also had dirt floors.<sup>24</sup> And despite Narvie Harris’s efforts on behalf of blacks, Lynwood Park’s students received few supplies, and Minnie Lee Weddie Thompson recalled that Idell Jones—Columbus Jones’s mother—who was especially focused on education, sold food to furnish the students with critical materials:

*Ms. Idell came to the school every day and cooked hotdogs on the charcoal bucket . . . to raise money for supplies and different things we didn’t have . . . [if] children needed*

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<sup>23</sup> Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (New York: Vintage Books 1990), 115-120. It was Jim Cherry’s decision to locate one of the consolidated schools in Lynwood Park. And since there was already a colored high school in Chamblee, Lynwood Park’s leaders—and especially Annie Truitt—must be credited with persuading Cherry.

<sup>24</sup> Jett, 13 November 2005, 115-120.

*tablets, she bought them . . . [and] pencils . . . things for school that the children couldn't afford . . . she helped with the books and things.*<sup>25</sup>

Dennie Jones Wesley said that her mother's legendary hotdogs also helped to pay off the community's debt for the school's land purchase:

*[I]n the new school there was no cafeteria, no place to eat. My mom would . . . bring her hot plate, her pots, and whatever pans she needed. She'd make coleslaw at home . . . she'd put those hotdogs in a pot of water and put it on a hot plate, and when they started cooking you could smell them all up and down the hall, and it would come in every room . . . they would take orders for hotdogs . . . this one wanted two hotdogs, one with slaw and one without slaw. But everybody'd eat that coleslaw . . . you could smell the onions, the mustard, and the ketchup . . . Everybody knew Ms. Idell Jones's hotdogs . . . And all this stuff was donated to the school from different companies. . . . [The proceeds] was for the school, to help buy instruments for the band . . . 'cause we got no help from Narvie Harris . . . and DeKalb County. Money was raised to help pay for the property, which did not belong to the county at that time. It belonged to the community. We had to pay for it.*<sup>26</sup>

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The Supreme Court's 1896 ruling in *Plessy v. Ferguson* established the constitutionality of "separate but equal" social spheres for blacks and whites, which in practice meant inequality for blacks in the South, and Jim Crow laws separated children by race in the assignment of public school, which was strictly enforced. Black communities generally took responsibility for their children's education, with relatively little assistance from local governments. At the national level, Thurgood Marshall and the NAACP were challenging *de jure* segregation through unequal education for blacks.<sup>27</sup> The strategy was to challenge segregated education at the graduate and professional levels—where inequality was blatant—then move downward to the high school and elementary levels. After Marshall's 1950 Supreme Court victory in *Sweatt v. Painter*, Marshall began

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<sup>25</sup> Thompson, 29 July 2005, 71.

<sup>26</sup> Wesley, 19 October 2005, 23-4, 26.

<sup>27</sup> The *Plessy* ruling only applied to railroad cars in the city of New Orleans, but the precedent naturalized segregation across the South, after the Supreme Court ruled that segregation was constitutional. Similarly, Marshall and the NAACP decided to dismantle segregation with landmark cases focusing on education, which would then bring all the walls of social segregation tumbling down.

searching the South for lower-school potential plaintiffs whose cases he could argue and win before the Supreme Court. Journalist Richard Kluger wrote that Marshall and the NAACP were exploring test cases in Atlanta, and Lynwood Park was one community that Marshall considered, as Peter Scott remembered:

*Thurgood Marshall and members of the team that was seeking desegregation came to Lynwood Park . . . They were trying to find a school or a community that demonstrated what would be a good example to use in the Brown v. Board of Desegregation lawsuit. And I think they privately met with people in the community, including Miss Truitt . . . they came in, you know, in the dark of night, just basically meeting with people.*<sup>28</sup>

Belinda Marshall, born in 1932, knew Annie Truitt all her life, and confirmed that Truitt was involved with the NAACP's search:

*Mother Truitt was the president of the PTA for years. And she went with the NAACP to Washington to talk about things that the community needed. She was a real big worker in the school.*<sup>29</sup>

On behalf of blacks wanting to study law, the NAACP won two landmark cases before the Supreme Court in *Gaines v. Missouri* in 1938, and *Sweatt v. Painter* in 1950.<sup>30</sup> Southern governments were observing these landmark cases, and some began taking steps to head off similar challenges. DeKalb County did not exist in a vacuum and its officials' decisions about black education were informed by lawsuits challenging segregated and unequal schools outside the state of Georgia. A white elementary school was located on Hermance Drive, between House and Peachtree Roads, within walking distance of Lynwood

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<sup>28</sup> Richard Kluger, *Simple Justice: The History of Brown v. Board of Education and Black America's Struggle for Equality* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1976), 396; Scott, 4 May 2005, 44-5.

<sup>29</sup> Marshall, 10 September 2005, 48.

<sup>30</sup> In *Gaines*, the University of Missouri was required to pay out-of-state tuition for Lloyd Gaines to attend law school, since it did not offer one for blacks. In *Sweatt*, after the law school at the University of Texas was ordered to provide schooling for the black student, the university hurriedly established a "law school" for Heman Sweatt in a corner of the basement. This "law school" was then challenged before the Supreme Court as unequal to the one the university provided for its white students. The NAACP rightly assumed that at the graduate and professional levels, schools would find it easier to accept black students rather than establish separate and equal facilities for blacks, a situation decidedly different from the already separate and unequal schools in existence at the elementary and high school levels. Kluger, *Simple Justice*, 396; Jack Balkin, "Rewriting *Brown*: A Guide to the Opinions," in Balkin, *What Brown*, 30.



Park. Therefore, by locating the consolidated school in Lynwood Park in 1949, Jim Cherry and DeKalb County effectively defused any potential argument the NAACP could make about unequal education, since the children of the enclave were provided with an elementary and high school *within* their community, despite having facilities unequal to that of whites.

The NAACP argued *Brown v. Board of Education* before the Supreme Court in December 1952, and the high court asked the NAACP to re-argue the case one year later. The 1868 Fourteenth Amendment guaranteed blacks equal rights, but not that blacks be provided with equal schooling to that of whites. The Court wanted the NAACP's legal team to research whether the framers in 1868 *intended* that the Supreme Court outlaw state-supported racial segregation, since it had already ruled that segregation was constitutional with *Plessy*. Moreover, the Constitution guaranteed states' rights with the Tenth Amendment, so states technically had the right to pass Jim Crow laws.<sup>31</sup>

According to constitutional scholar Jack Balkin, the framers of the Fourteenth Amendment wanted to maintain white supremacy and devised a tripartite theory of equality, namely civil, political, and social. The Fourteenth Amendment gave blacks civil and political equality: the right to enter into contracts, to sue and be sued, to testify in court and make wills, to own and convey property, and the right to vote, and hold public office, for example. However, "the framers and ratifiers wished to ensure that blacks remained inferior for all time," and many of them "were uncomfortable with recognizing the Negro as a full equal in every respect." Therefore, the framers maintained that the social hierarchy was determined by members of a society and should be "the result of patterns of free private choice

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<sup>31</sup> In his final appearance to argue *Brown I*, Marshall pointed out that school segregation was a continuation of the Black Codes that Southern legislatures passed after the Civil War to subordinate blacks, which the Fourteenth Amendment was intended, in part, to rectify. Marshall said that segregation could only be upheld by the Supreme Court in 1953 if it were able to find "that for some reason Negroes are inferior to all other human beings." Kluger, *Simple Justice*, 538; Jack Balkin, "The History of the *Brown* Litigation," in Balkin, *What Brown*, 33-7; Jack Balkin, "*Brown* as Icon," in Balkin, *What Brown*, 18.

and voluntary associations with which law should not interfere.” This loophole was later exploited by the South to establish Jim Crow laws to keep blacks in a subordinate social position. According to Balkin, the appropriate challenge to the Fourteenth Amendment in 1952 was that the Constitution is a living, rather than static, document. Therefore, the 1868 framers’ intent no longer applied to the social circumstances of the United States in the 1950s.<sup>32</sup>

During the *Brown* interim—1952 to 1954—there was a flurry of construction to improve the black schools in DeKalb County, as a means to maintain segregation. Ironically, the Supreme Court’s 1954 *Brown I* ruling, which declared segregation unconstitutional, coincided with groundbreaking ceremonies for a new black school in DeKalb County. In his address to those gathered, school superintendent Jim Cherry maintained that DeKalb County would continue with segregated education and treat the *Brown I* ruling as an abstraction.<sup>33</sup> In contrast, Thurgood Marshall predicted that “school segregation in America would be entirely stamped out in no more than five years,” even while “white-supremacists of the South were swift and shrill in their outcry,” especially Georgia governor Herman Talmadge. Talmadge said, “there aren’t enough troops in the whole United States to make the white people of this state send their children to school with colored children.” Yet Talmadge also saw to it that black teachers’ salaries were made equal to those of whites, one measure among many that Georgia would take to maintain separate schools for blacks.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Jack Balkin, “Rewriting *Brown*: A Guide to the Opinions,” in Balkin, *What Brown*, 54; Jack Balkin, “Revised Opinions in *Brown v. Board of Education*,” in Balkin, *What Brown*, 78-9.

<sup>33</sup> Walter Harris, “The Provision of an Adequate Education,” 8, 30. Chief Justice Earl Warren wanted a unanimous decision from the High Court on *Brown I*, and especially did not want a dissent from a southern Justice. Warren brokered a deal with the Justices, whereby if they unanimously agreed with the landmark ruling in *Brown I* in 1954 that segregated schools were unconstitutional, the Court would rule one year later in *Brown II* about its remedy. The delay would give the Justices one year to debate and agree upon a remedy and the South one year to adjust to the *Brown I* ruling. Jack Balkin, “The History of the *Brown* Litigation,” in Balkin, *What Brown*, 35-8.

<sup>34</sup> Kluger, *Simple Justice*, 711, 714; Adam Clymer, “Herman Talmadge, Georgia Senator and Governor, Dies at 88,” *New York Times*, March 22, 2002.

While the South could accept blacks into white graduate programs after the success of *Sweatt*, “Southerners were much more upset about racial mixing in elementary and secondary education.” Southerners believed that once they became adults they had a clear idea of appropriate black/white social roles, but believed that “young children were particularly impressionable and might get inappropriate ideas if they were integrated with other races.” In other words, Southern resistance to *Brown I* was, in large part, based on an historic white fear of miscegenation.<sup>35</sup> After the *Brown I* ruling, Georgia “erected a posture of “massive resistance” to school desegregation,” and passed laws that “included a plan for private schools and the closing of public ones, rather than desegregate them.”<sup>36</sup>

In 1954 the Lynwood Park School was vacated for two years for renovation and expansion, part of DeKalb County’s program to maintain segregation through making black schools more equal to those of its white ones. Classes were held in the various churches in the enclave, and especially in the basement of Mount Mary Church—directly across Osborne Road from the school site—while the county renovated the old school and added seven classrooms, a library, an office, and a cafeteria. In 1956 students moved back into the new school, and Idell Jones retired her pots, pans, and charcoal bucket, and went to work in the new cafeteria. Her daughter Dennie Jones Wesley, born in 1940, had begun her schooling in the one-room schoolhouse on Mae Avenue, and said of her graduation in 1956: “ We were the first graduating class in the new cafetorium then. It had just been completed.”<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Jack Balkin, “The History of the *Brown* Litigation,” in Balkin, *What Brown*, 30, 39. For details on black/white social etiquette and mixing in the South, see Bertram Wilbur Doyle, *The Etiquette of Race Relations in the South: A Study in Social Control* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press,) 1937, xvii-xx, 160-171.

<sup>36</sup> Paul E. Mertz, “Mind Changing Time All Over Georgia: HOPE, Inc. and School Desegregation, 1958-1961,” *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 77 (1993): 41-61, 42; Alton Hornsby, Jr., “Black Public Education in Atlanta, Georgia, 1954-1973: From Segregation to Segregation,” *The Journal of Negro History* 76, 1-4 (1991): 21-47, 22.

<sup>37</sup> Wesley, 19 October 2005, 16.

DeKalb County continued its program to equalize facilities after the mid-1950s, and four laboratory rooms: for home economics, science, general shop, and mechanical drawing were added to the Lynwood Park School.<sup>38</sup> By the end of the 1950s, DeKalb County's eight black schools were consolidated further into six, all of which enjoyed amenities such as cafeterias and flush toilets, while the students were used to outhouses at home. Narvie Harris said that these six state-of-the-art schools meant that there were "no schools for blacks as we had known them in the past. The curriculum, the enrichment courses, the extracurricular activities, and every facet of school changed." The curriculum now included home economics, band and choral music, dramatics, career clinics, health, physical education and athletics, homemaking and industrial arts, and hobby development to promote enrichment and aesthetic appreciation.<sup>39</sup>

By the 1960s Narvie Harris was well-known in DeKalb County and served in official roles outside the Department of Education. She was a director of Headstart, and on the search committee of the YWCA. She also served on several boards of directors, such as the DeKalb and Metropolitan Red Cross. Narvie Harris—from W.E.B. Du Bois's second wheel—claimed that she became the liaison between the underclass black community—the third wheel—and the county's various agencies, groups, and organizations—the first wheel. Harris explained that she was the person that county agencies called first when they wanted access to the black communities. To her teaching staff, Narvie Harris was an efficient and organized leader who demanded that they put their students first and do whatever was necessary to bring each child along. Harris reformulated Booker T. Washington's trope that you drop your bucket where you are into

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<sup>38</sup> "Chronology of Lynwood Park School," undated, 1.

<sup>39</sup> Walter Harris, "The Provision of an Adequate Education," 77-122; Harris and Taylor, *African-American Education*, 18-56, 68; Herman "Skip" Mason, Jr., *African-American Life in DeKalb County, 1823-1970* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 1998), 67, 105.

you “take these students where they are . . . and work with them, and mold them,” such that no black child would be left behind.<sup>40</sup>

Lynwood Park teacher and Narvie Harris protégé Rosa Beatles-Sowell explained that whites during segregation thought that many blacks were destined for manual labor, which made black educators more dedicated to working harder with their students:

*[T]o show that black schools were achieving . . . [This] has always been the thing in the back of the supervisors’ or the principals’ mind. Even though we know that our schools are inferior in a sense, we can show you that we do have black students who can achieve . . . the way [whites] thought back there . . . that sometimes we didn’t need this because we didn’t care, you know. Like they still say that black parents don’t care. And then [whites] didn’t have high expectations of us . . . [they thought] the ones that didn’t finish high school would drop out and go do, you know, common labor. So that’s kind of the way they treated all of the black schools.<sup>41</sup>*

In saying “we know that our schools are inferior,” Beatles-Sowell, born in 1935, hinted at a central premise of the NAACP and the Supreme Court itself in the *Brown* decision: that segregated schools themselves engendered in black children a sense of inferiority.<sup>42</sup> However, Vanessa Siddle Walker, in her study of a black high school in rural North Carolina, concluded that segregated schools, although lacking the funds and facilities of white schools, nevertheless engendered a caring community of parents, teachers, and churches, that communicated high expectations, designed a demanding curriculum, and pushed, prodded, developed, and nurtured all students to reach their highest potential.<sup>43</sup> Walker examined the Caswell County Training School (CCTS) from 1933 to 1969. Both the NAACP claim and the *Brown I* decision were based on the premise that

<sup>40</sup> Nasstrom, 16-19; Harris and Taylor, *African-American Education*, 30; Beatles-Sowell, 1 September 2006, 46.

<sup>41</sup> Beatles-Sowell, 1 September 2006, 22.

<sup>42</sup> See Hornsby, “Black Public Education,” 39. See also legal scholar Derrick Bell’s argument that white racism is written into the grammar of the United States and is not a “bad weed” that can be extirpated with the *Brown I* ruling. Bell wrote that “the Court majority’s pronouncement can be seen as more a racial provocation than a remedy.” Derrick Bell, “Revised Opinions in *Brown v. Board of Education*,” in Balkin, *What Brown*, 190.

<sup>43</sup> Vanessa Siddle Walker, *Their Highest Potential: An African American School Community in the Segregated South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 3-4, 158, 202-210.

integration was crucial for the educational success of blacks. And this opinion among the Justices of the Supreme Court was based on the “scientific” findings, in large part, of a doll study conducted by Kenneth and Mamie Clark, whose conclusion was included in Footnote 11 of the *Brown I* ruling, arguably one of the most famous footnotes in U. S. history.<sup>44</sup>

Scholars such as Gunnar Myrdal studied segregated schools and held that they had a negative impact on the psyches of black children. Social philosopher and education reformer John Dewey wrote in 1950 that the black child needed “an opportunity to escape from the limitations of the social group in which he was born, and to come into living contact with a broader environment.” Some social scientists also claimed that the black household added to the problem, because it was overcrowded and noisy. They claimed that black parents were blamable for the low educational level of their children, since they were fatigued with heavy physical labor and beaten down by ghetto life, and were also too impoverished to provide children with the prerequisite materials, such as books, “which serve to stimulate the learning process.” Therefore, the home environment of the underclass black child was responsible for “trapping the Negro.”<sup>45</sup> The stories of Lynwood Park contradict these various social science findings. Although the residents were poor, they found ways to pool resources and raise funds, not only to build a school in the enclave, but also to supply students with the necessary day-to-day school materials, as demonstrated by the efforts of the Twelve Ladies Sewing Club, and Idell Jones with her hotdog sales.

The Clark doll study—a limited sampling of three- to seven-year-old black children in both the North and the South—found that segregation engendered nobodiness,

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<sup>44</sup> Jack Balkin, “*Brown* as Icon,” in Balkin, *What Brown*, 4; Jack Balkin, “Rewriting *Brown*: A Guide to the Opinions,” in Balkin, *What Brown*, 50-1. The Clark doll study was attacked as bad social science and was “the source of considerable derision . . . unlikely to sway the Justices,” yet Warren cited the study in Footnote 11 as the “modern authority” that proved that segregation caused irreparable psychological damage to black children. Kluger, *Simple Justice*, 321.

<sup>45</sup> Kluger, *Simple Justice*, 320.

self-loathing, and race hatred in blacks from an early age, and that this could be rectified through exposing black children to whites from a young age.<sup>46</sup> Thurgood Marshall included the Clark finding in the *Brown* petition, which the Supreme Court also used in arriving at its *Brown I* decision.<sup>47</sup> Chief Justice Earl Warren pointed out that segregation negatively affected black children psychologically, caused them to internalize a sense of inferiority, and thus it is not surprising that the Supreme Court ruled that school segregation was unconstitutional.<sup>48</sup>

However, left out of consideration was that the Clark study found that *black children in the North were more likely than those in the South to choose the white doll over the black one*. In other words, the study actually suggested that being raised within the cocoon of a black enclave in the segregated South—such as Lynwood Park—could give a black child a greater sense of somebodiness and self-worth than a black child born and raised in the un-segregated North.<sup>49</sup> For example, although Patricia Jones was raised by an illiterate domestic worker and bootlegger, Aunt City nevertheless engendered in Jones a sense of somebodiness:

*I would hear [Aunt City's] people coming over telling her . . . when I was seven and a half years old . . . that she is wasting her time by raising us, that we would never amount to anything, and that we would grow up and be just like our families . . . 'cause most of our families were alcoholics at the time and wasn't trying to do anything with their lives.*

*And I can remember listening to those conversations, and after they leave Aunt City knew I was in there listening. She would come in there, and I would have my head down, and she would take my chin and push it up. And I would look up at her, because she was about five seven at the time.*

*And she said, "I don't care what you hear them say, about you ain't gonna amount to nothing, you gonna be like your mama." She said, "You can be anything you want to*

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<sup>46</sup> Kluger, *Simple Justice*, 320-1.

<sup>47</sup> Kluger, *Simple Justice*, 317-9, 21.

<sup>48</sup> Earl Warren, 17 May 1954, Opinion: *Brown v. Board of Education*, 347 U.S. 483 (1954) (USSC+).

<sup>49</sup> Jack Balkin, "Rewriting *Brown*: A Guide to the Opinions," in Balkin, *What Brown*, 50-1. See also David J. Armor, *Forced Justice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 63. *Brown I* was criticized by both its supporters and legal scholars for its heavy reliance on social science literature.

*be. The only thing you got to do is put God first and work hard at it, because if you don't do nothing but work and keep a roof over your head, you would have did something, and done it honestly." She said, "Don't you listen to nobody telling you you not gonna amount to anything, because you don't have to be like you see your family be."*

*And she was so sincere about that . . . and she knew I was listening. She would make sure that she instilled it in me that you can be anything you want to be and you can make something out of yourself. You just have to work hard at it. And that stuck with me. And I really wish that she could have lived to see some of the things that I accomplished. And every time I do receive an award I think about her. When I received that Fannie Lou Hamer award, matter of fact I told her, "This one is for you Aunt City and all of your hard work that you instilled in me." And I can just see her smiling and shaking her head and saying, "You did well. You have done well. You can hold your head up because you have done well." She was truly a special kind of woman.<sup>50</sup>*

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According to Jack Balkin, *Brown I* was evidence of the high moral ground of the country, but *Brown II*, the remedy, demonstrated the impotence of the High Court. *Brown II*'s language of "all deliberate speed" reflected the Supreme Court's desire to appease the South, given that "massive resistance was soon to follow." *Brown II* also demonstrated the Court's "lack of genuine commitment to civil rights for blacks . . . gave southern school districts a distinct strategic advantage [and] made it easier for the South to do nothing." Historian Jeff Roche maintained that "white southerners viewed school segregation as a critical symbol of southern distinctiveness . . . they resisted any challenge to the system of white supremacy, believing that change could undermine the entire structure of their society." In 1956 southern senators and congressmen issued a Southern Manifesto denouncing *Brown* as a "clear abuse of judicial power." The Supreme Court's intervention into southern politics infuriated white southerners, crystallized white resistance, and gave renewed political power to racists like Bull Connor and George Wallace of Alabama.<sup>51</sup>

<sup>50</sup> Jones, 26 June 2008, 85-6. Jones became the first female president of the DeKalb Chapter of the NAACP.

<sup>51</sup> Jeff Roche, *Restructured Resistance: The Sibley Commission and the Politics of Desegregation in Georgia* (Athens: University of Georgia, 1998), xii; Jack Balkin, "Brown as Icon," in Balkin, *What Brown*, 4, 22, 40-1, 23.



After the 1954 *Brown I* ruling Georgia had passed laws to block school desegregation and to close all schools that the state was forced to desegregate. S. Ernest Vandiver, the more “moderate” of two segregationist candidates, was elected governor of Georgia in 1958 on a campaign to “preserve segregation forever.” Vandiver had promised that “no, not one” black would enter a white school in Georgia. The NAACP filed its first legal attack of non-compliance with *Brown II* against Atlanta’s public school system in 1958 with *Calhoun v. Latimer*, arguing that education for the city’s blacks was inferior to that for whites, despite the school system’s “accelerated efforts in the 1950s to increase and improve black schools.” Federal judge Frank Hooper then ordered the Atlanta school board “to prepare a desegregation plan by December 1959.” In February 1960 the Georgia legislature created what is commonly known as the Sibley Commission to poll the state’s ten congressional districts to ascertain whether or not Georgians wanted the state’s policy modified to allow desegregation. In April 1960 the Sibley Commission recommended the “discontinuation of school closing policies, but it also advocated the pursuit of every presumably legal means to minimize integration.”<sup>52</sup> DeKalb County’s school superintendent Jim Cherry testified before the Sibley Commission in 1960 when it held hearings in Atlanta. Cherry recommended that Georgia’s laws be changed to keep public

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Legal scholar Derrick Bell argued that *Brown* is another aspect of the “interest convergence thesis”: that the Supreme Court typically acts to protect the interests of blacks and other racial minorities only when these interests converge with those of whites. For example, segregated schools was singled out for attack in the United Nations and used by the Soviet Union as proof of the hollowness of American promises of liberty and equality, and the bankruptcy of the American way of life, which Secretary of State Dean Acheson claimed “remains a source of constant embarrassment . . . in the day-to-day conduct of foreign relations . . . it jeopardizes the effective maintenance of our moral leadership of the free and democratic nations of the world.” Therefore, *Brown I* was designed to recover the reputation of the United States in the international community, and to serve a Cold War exigency, and thus *Brown II*’s language of “all deliberate speed” was designed to allow states to maintain the *status quo*. Jack Balkin, “*Brown* as Icon,” in Balkin, *What Brown*, 19, 21-2; Derrick Bell, “Revised Opinions in *Brown v. Board of Education*,” in Balkin, *What Brown*, 195.  
<sup>52</sup> Mertz, “Mind Changing Time,” 43, 52-6. See also David N. Plank and Marcia Turner, “Changing Patterns in Black School Politics: Atlanta, 1872-1973,” *American Journal of Education* 95, 4 (1987): 584-608, 596.

schools open, and endorsed the local option plan, whereby white parents could choose private schools in the case of federally-mandated desegregation.<sup>53</sup>

In 1958 the Atlanta Urban League confirmed that Atlanta's black schools lacked "[s]uch essentials as libraries, assembly rooms, cafeterias, and gymnasiums," which were considered as luxuries by black children and their parents.<sup>54</sup> DeKalb County added a wing that housed a gymnasium and additional science labs to the Lynwood Park School in 1961. The county also established a football field at this time. Yet many aspects of black education in DeKalb County were far from equal to that of whites.<sup>55</sup> For example, Patricia Martin worked at the Lynwood Park School as a secretary in the mid-1960s, and she remembered that the materials sent there were substandard:

*My children had raggedy books. Whatever was left over, that's what we got in our schools . . . when I was coming up . . . I don't remember having that raggedy of book . . . But when my children come along, the books were just frightening—all written-over, backs coming off . . . [my] children had gone to private [Catholic] school. Well, when my oldest son got into the seventh grade, we decided to put him in public school, and that's when I really began to see the difference—the raggedy books . . . and it disturbed me.<sup>56</sup>*

Rachel Harris explained that the textbooks sent to the Lynwood Park School would have pages missing and that the teachers took several copies of the same textbook, amassed all the pages, and produced complete copies for the students:

*[W]hen I was in high school . . . they sent us the tore up books. So Miss Guy, our typing teacher . . . She took the top ten typists in our class . . . and we made books, so that*

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<sup>53</sup> Roche, *Restructured Resistance*, 147-8.

<sup>54</sup> Hornsby, "Black Public Education," 22. Governor S. Ernest Vandiver signed into law the "open schools package," on January 31, 1961, keeping federally mandated desegregated schools open, yet there was limited desegregation of Atlanta's schools. Atlanta mayoral candidate Lester Maddox, a die-hard segregationist, framed his protest to the open schools package in terms of miscegenation. Maddox said in 1961, "After a few years . . . stories about young white girls being found in negro hotels will not even make the newspapers." Maddox lost two Atlanta mayoral bids, but became Governor of Georgia in 1967, thus demonstrating that while the city of Atlanta was liberal, the state of Georgia—mostly rural—supported maintaining segregated schools and social spheres. Hornsby, "Black Public Education," 25-8. See also Roche, *Restructured Resistance*, xvi-xvii.

<sup>55</sup> "Chronology of Lynwood Park School," undated, 2; Jones, 26 June 2008, 3.

<sup>56</sup> Martin, 13 October 2004, 41-2. Martin's older son Victor was born in 1952, and entered the seventh grade at the Lynwood Park School in 1965.

*everybody could have a whole textbook. We called it the “paper room.” . . . We actually typed the books. And we run them up on the Ditto [copying] machine . . . and then we would take thread, heavy—like nylon thread—and we punched holes . . . and we made books . . . so that the students would have a whole textbook . . . we did it for our class, and then she had another group that did it for the other classes, and that’s the way it was, yes. And we didn’t have good desks . . . they sent us the old raggedy desks . . . and Mr. O’Neill would take those old desks . . . to the shop, and he would make us new desks.<sup>57</sup>*

It is not necessarily the case that the raggedy books and desks that Lynwood Park received came from DeKalb County’s white schools. They also could have come from other black schools. Narvie Harris was responsible for allocating materials to the various black schools. And it is the perception of many Lynwood Park residents that the community’s school was the stepchild of the county’s black educational system. Dennie Jones Wesley expressed the widespread sentiment of Lynwood Park’s residents when she explained why Narvie Harris did not care for the enclave’s school:

*[S]he always put Lynwood Park last out of all the schools she was over as supervisor. She always put Lynwood Park down. Her favorite was Avondale High School, and Bruce Street Elementary . . . And every time we would have some kind of event for all the schools to participate in, we were always put down by her, but we always . . . came out first in any competition: sports, athletics, first in the spring musicals, spring festivals, first in anything. And she didn’t like that. [Ours] was one school she didn’t like, ’cause nobody bowed down to her like the rest of them did . . . A lot of parents didn’t like her, and they told her that. So that’s why she didn’t care much for Lynwood Park. She hated to come out to Lynwood Park . . . We stood up to her, and that’s why she didn’t like us . . . she didn’t like the neighborhood, ’cause she said nothing good about Lynwood Park people—that they would never go anywhere. [She said] nothing good ever came out of Lynwood Park. But she was wrong. My brother [Columbus Jones] came out of Lynwood Park.<sup>58</sup>*

The black social scientist Jacquelyn Mitchell was sent into “The Flats,” a *suburban* underclass black community north of New York City, to design a curriculum for teaching black children in the 1960s. The Flats was similar to Lynwood Park, and was characterized by storefront churches, bars, barking dogs, and horn blasts from impatient

<sup>57</sup> Rachel Harris, 27 July 2005, 108-110. Harris was born in 1948, so if she was typing textbooks at age sixteen, the Lynwood Park School was receiving substandard materials in the mid-1960s, which confirms Martin’s claim. Shop was the “classroom” where woodworking and other mechanical skills were taught. Respondents mentioned that some new desks and books were occasionally sent to the Lynwood Park School.

<sup>58</sup> Wesley, 19 October 2005, 17-18, 25-6.

drivers. Mitchell found that her education, professional attire, and speech pattern also instilled distrust in the residents, who saw her as an uppity and insensitive school teacher “who had made her way out of the ghetto, who had returned to “help and save,” [them] and who would leave before dark.”<sup>59</sup> Members of Atlanta’s black elite had denied underclass blacks access to New Deal programs in the 1930s and had colluded with white politicians to displace their communities.<sup>60</sup> Lynwood Park had collected many of the displaced fragments and was an enclave known for its recalcitrance. Moreover, Lynwood Park was an empowered community with a strong identity for independence and toughness. The enclave had historically organized in self-help institutions and had proven that it could come together to push for change long before Narvie Harris appeared on the scene. Pee Wee Jackson confirmed that Lynwood Park’s residents had an ambivalent relationship with Narvie Harris, which she exacerbated with her elite bias against the people of the enclave:

*A lot of people put Narvie Harris on a pedestal. Narvie Harris did a lot of good for the black schools in DeKalb County—quote, unquote—but Narvie Harris could have done a lot more for Lynwood Park than what she did. And I’m gonna give you an example . . . They had a countywide meeting for African American schools, and Narvie Harris was one of the facilitators. One of the things that came up was the distribution of equipment: books, resources, and stuff like that. Narvie Harris stood up in that meeting and said the only good thing that ever came out of Lynwood Park was Peter Scott . . .*

*And do you know where all the new resources went? To Bruce Street and Hamilton High School . . . the reason we got the rejected stuff was because of Narvie Harris. Now, everybody wants to kiss Narvie Harris’s butt, but I refuse to do so . . . she became a victim of the status quo.*

*She thought because she was going to the main offices in DeKalb County—where she was segregated—she had to go in the back door at the main offices at DeKalb County public schools—she was driving a new car, and she was getting paid well, in that she had arrived. And so she did the classic thing and she kicked us to the curb . . . The only time you saw Narvie Harris is when she thought she had a photo opportunity, or an opportunity to get some publicity. If neither one of those existed, you didn’t see Narvie Harris. Now, when she came, she would harass the teachers and the students.<sup>61</sup>*

<sup>59</sup> Jacquelyn Mitchell, “Reflections of a Black Social Scientist: Some Struggles, Some Doubts, Some Hopes,” in Nitza M. Hidalgo, Ceasar L. McDowell, and Emilie V. Siddle, eds. *Facing Racism in Education* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Educational Review, 1990), 121-2.

<sup>60</sup> Ferguson, *Black Politics*, 6-9, 191; Bayor, *Race*, 108, 117.

<sup>61</sup> Pee Wee Jackson, 2 September 2006, 20-3.

Rosa Beatles-Sowell, a Narvie Harris protégé, explained that Harris designed the lesson plan for each week's teaching for every class in the black schools. Harris expected her teachers to cover all the assigned material within the week, and to have updated bulletin boards in their classrooms with the outline of the week's focus:

*[I]f you were not following that plan, Narvie Harris was not tactful . . . I never got that . . . And, then, see, the other thing, she would try to make her rounds of the schools once a month. And if you were ordered to show sine numbers last month, and if you had gone on to maybe the distance formula, when she walked in your room, and you still had a bulletin board with the sine numbers . . . she'd tear that down . . . And she would make a comment: "Aren't you onto distance? Why don't I see something reflecting that?" And, see, that's the reason some teachers didn't like her.<sup>62</sup>*

Beatles-Sowell claimed that Narvie Harris demanded excellence of her teachers. But Beatles-Sowell also hinted that Harris humiliated teachers in front of their students, and Pee Wee Jackson suggested that this was not an isolated occurrence.

Jim Cherry hired all the teachers and principals for the black schools, without input from Harris about candidates for principal.<sup>63</sup> Lynwood Park's consolidated school had two principals from 1949 to 1969. L. A. Robinson served as principal from 1949 to 1957, and first-grade teacher Elizabeth Braynon said that both Robinson and the teachers were loved by both the parents and students of Lynwood Park. All of the community's residents valued education, but Braynon explained that the people of the enclave worked very hard, and only a core group of the community's women regularly attended PTA meetings:

*[Robinson] had a real good working relationship with the community. . . . The school was their outlet, and I'm so glad that I worked at a time when children were pleased and happy to be and do what the teacher wanted them to do. They just loved their teachers, and they loved Mr. Robinson . . . the parents were working parents . . . those people that came to the PTA . . . You have a core of persons who will participate . . . in terms of the Lynwood*

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<sup>62</sup> Beatles-Sowell, 1 September 2006, 30.

<sup>63</sup> Harris interviewed candidates for teachers and made recommendations to Cherry. Elizabeth Braynon, 14 September 2006, 4; Narvie Harris, 2 July 2008, 16-7. Braynon graduated from Morris Brown and earned her Masters at NYU. She went to the Lynwood Park School in 1950, where she taught first grade.

*Park parents . . . the women were the ones that we would see representing their families most often.*<sup>64</sup>

Braynon explained that residents had teachers to dinner on the nights that they stayed behind in the community for PTA meetings. Braynon also said that Lynwood Park's residents were extremely impoverished and could not raise the necessary funds for their children's school materials, and that she and the other teachers generally purchased teaching materials from their salaries. The efforts of Idell Jones and her hotdog sales, and the fundraisers by groups such as the Twelve Ladies Sewing Club contradict Braynon's claim, and Patricia Jones said that the PTA raised money to purchase band equipment and new uniforms. Pee Wee Jackson explained that members of the Lynwood Park PTA were competitive in their fundraising efforts for the school:

*The PTA was so active we used to have teas once a year to raise money like for miscellaneous stuff. They raised so much money from teas it was like a competition. All the parents were involved.*

It is more than likely that teachers did supplement county supplies with teaching aids that they purchased, and that the community's residents raised funds for materials for the students, and that both groups worked to ensure that the educational system worked for Lynwood Park's children.<sup>65</sup>

Rosa Beatles-Sowell suggested that black teachers generally "adopted" students with potential and worked with them on an individual basis—as Narvie Harris's sister had done with her—in an effort to present an upstanding black student to the white gaze:

RS: *Mrs. Harris was always there, giving us things. They would give us clothes or whatever the case . . . I was Low Fulton [very poor] and I'm ninth of ten kids. So, they helped us in a lot of respects, yes.*

VMH: *And they had . . . a different lifestyle.*

RS: *Oh definitely . . . when I was the belle of the class, my English teacher*

<sup>64</sup> Braynon, 14 September 2006, 9-11.

<sup>65</sup> Braynon, 14 September 2006, 52, 57, 17-8; Jones, 26 June 2008, 46; Pee Wee Jackson, 2 September 2006, 27.

*. . . took me home for a week to make sure that I didn't talk flat like a Low Fulton black would talk. And I said my speech over and over every night because, at the graduation exercises, all the people from the school board were coming. And those were the whites . . . So she had to make sure that my speech was up to par. So she got permission from my mother and I stayed with her the week before.*

VMH: *So she coached you in elocution.*

RS: *Yes . . . Even how to walk on a stage . . . to show that black schools were achieving. See, that was always the thing.<sup>66</sup>*

Harvey Coleman replaced L. A. Robinson at the Lynwood Park School, and served as principal from 1957 until 1967, when the high school closed because of desegregation.

Narvie Harris held unrefined blacks in disdain, and was not loath to describe them in derogatory terms. For example, in 2008 Harris offered the following description of two young students at her Bainbridge, Georgia school, where she taught before becoming Jeanes supervisor: "Those two boys looked like baboons; they was the ugliest little boys."<sup>67</sup> Appearance, and the display of refinement in blacks in leadership positions were of tantamount importance to Narvie Harris, and the residents claimed that Harris disliked both of Lynwood Park's principals, into whose hiring she had no input.

According to Narvie Harris, L. A. Robinson stepped down as principal and was transferred as a teacher to another school in the system. Harris further maintained in 2008 that hiring Harvey Coleman was the worst decision that Jim Cherry ever made as school superintendent.<sup>68</sup> Narvie Harris was a member of the black elite, and Rosa Beatles-Sowell shared that Harvey Coleman offended Harris's sensibilities:

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<sup>66</sup> Beatles-Sowell, 1 September 2006, 21-2. Mrs. Harris refers to Narvie Harris and her sister, Anna Pearl Jordan Scott. When Beatles-Sowell refers to Mrs. Harris "giving us things," she means the group of students that Scott had "adopted" as mentees. Beatles-Sowell is suggesting with her testimony that her week's training was only necessary because whites from the school board would attend her graduation ceremony.

<sup>67</sup> Narvie Harris, 2 July 2008, 4. For more on black intragroup tension and the disdain that southern, college-educated, middle-class blacks held for lower-class blacks, see Lawrence W. Levine, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro-American Folk Thought from Slavery to Freedom* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 339.

<sup>68</sup> Harris's comments about Lynwood Park principal Harvey Coleman are too offensive to be included in this work. See Narvie Harris, 2 July 2008, 16-7, 19-20.

- RS: *Mr. Coleman was really country . . . flat talking, backwoods taught. That was just his tone. And she didn't like that . . . he came through the white folks, so they don't care. I mean . . . they probably said that's the way they talk where was he from—Valdosta, Georgia—so why not [hire] him . . . [for] the black schools . . . He just wasn't polished . . .*
- VMH: *That was important for her?*
- RS: *Very. Very, very important.<sup>69</sup>*

LaTrelle Lockwood attended the Lynwood Park School under Harvey Coleman, knew Coleman as a family friend, and had a different opinion of the educator:

*[T]he thing about Mr. Coleman . . . he was a very educated man . . . during that time educated blacks were—for lack of a better word—they were elite. They were people you looked up to . . . He handled the school very well.<sup>70</sup>*

And Pee Wee Jackson explained why Narvie Harris liked neither of the two principals:

- PW: *It's familiarity. Most of the teachers that went to Hamilton and Bruce Street, Narvie Harris and them went to college together . . . See, there's a phenomenon in the black community that white folk don't really know about, and that phenomenon is called croneyism. Now, there was croneyism actually going on in [the] white neighborhood, but in the black neighborhood it is used differently. See, Narvie Harris was the kind of person that loved folk—and excuse my French—that kissed her ass. L. A. Robinson and Harvey B. Coleman would not kiss Narvie Harris's butt. So, guess what? They were on her shit list.*
- VMH: *Did she kind of get rid of Mr. Robinson?*
- PW: *It was an orchestrated, arrogant process in which she did.*
- VMH: *And I heard that Mr. Coleman kind of came from the country and talked like a country person.*
- PW: *Now, who told you that crap . . . Harvey B. Coleman was a Ivy League-school-educated individual . . . Very articulate, very intelligent. We all were from the country. Now, whoever told you that was an ignorant individual. Because, see, it goes back into that black stereotypical bull. That's bull. She didn't like Harvey Coleman because Harvey Coleman would stand up to her. That was why she didn't like him. It had nothing to do with his, you know, expressions and appearances.<sup>71</sup>*

It is the impression of some of the people of Lynwood Park that the community's school was penalized by Narvie Harris because the residents of the enclave and the school's two principals did not extend to Harris the required amount of deference. Minnie

<sup>69</sup> Beatles-Sowell, 1 September 2006, 38-9.

<sup>70</sup> Lockwood, 19 May 2008, 2.

<sup>71</sup> Pee Wee Jackson, 2 September 2006, 23. Harvey Coleman earned a Masters from Columbia University.



Lee Weddie Thompson recalled that even as a child she was aware of a different atmosphere at the school whenever Narvie Harris was expected:

- MLT: *[W]e would have great lunches that week, when Miss Harris was coming . . . We never had fried chicken. But we would have fried chicken when Miss Harris come. We'd love to see her coming, 'cause we was gonna have great meals in the lunchroom [chuckles] . . .*
- VMH: *And so everybody liked Miss Harris?*
- MLT: *Not especially . . . but we just knew when she was coming, 'cause everybody was running around like broke-neck chickens: "Miss Harris is coming. Narvie J. Harris is coming." You know, big deal.<sup>72</sup>*

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Regardless of the poor quality of their materials, many Lynwood Park students were able to get at least a decent education—similar to the students of the Caswell County Training School, as reported by Vanessa Siddle Walker—because of dedicated teachers, churches, and parents, *and* both teachers and the community setting high standards and working together to ensure that children could strive academically. Pee Wee Jackson remembered that Lynwood Park's residents and teachers went the extra distance for their students:

*[Even] the drinkers and the loudmouths knew what we needed . . . because, see, they worked as a community—to be successful. They knew what it took for us to get an education. They knew the importance of an education. Not only did they know these things, they made an effort for us to achieve those goals . . .*

*[W]hen I was in school, there was no such things as dropouts. Donald [Trick] Carter, which was mildly retarded . . . the teachers . . . and the people in the neighborhood were so skillful that Donald learned how to read, he learned how to do basic computations, and he knew how to clean his body, he knew how to dress. So he wasn't kicked to the side. And people didn't say, "Well, you know, he's retarded, so we'll put him in special ed. and we'll stigmatize him for the rest of his life."*

*[I]t was a stigma when I was growing up to be dumb . . . to not be on the top. And the people that were on top were rewarded. Like when they went to school, and stuff, the community helped take care of those children, as far as the little money they had in their pocket, food—they sent them care packages, stuff like that . . . they dealt with us out of true compassion, love, and caring . . .*

*[T]he greatest teacher to don the doors of Lynwood Park school—elementary and high school—was Willie Mae Hutchins, because Willie Mae had influence on everybody's*

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<sup>72</sup> Thompson, 29 July 2005, 74-5.

*life that went through that door. Whether they went through her class or not she still had influence on them. That's how powerful she was, because she was a no-nonsense teacher that demanded excellence. She would not take mediocrity. She didn't tolerate it. And if you were mediocre she would kick your butt to bring you up to the next level.*<sup>73</sup>

Willie Mae Hutchins left a deep impression on her students, as Minnie Lee Weddie Thompson, born in 1944, remembered:

*She was a real old teacher. Everybody that ever been through school in Lynwood Park—from the oldest to the youngest—knew Miss Hutchins, up until she died . . . And if you didn't mind anything else that anybody else taught you, you gonna learn something by Miss Hutchins's classroom . . . She was a good teacher. She didn't take no junk . . . She said, "I'm your momma. And you're gonna do what your momma say, or I'm gonna wear your back out."*<sup>74</sup>

LaTrelle Lockwood, born in 1955, spoke fondly of Hutchins:

*She was a very good teacher, but very strict . . . I got whooped by her one time, and I never forgot it. And she never had to worry about me again . . . it took the foolishness right out of me . . . she ran a tight ship. But everybody loved her . . . and respected her, and she always got Christmas presents from everybody.*<sup>75</sup>

And Patricia Jones vividly remembered Hutchins's *modus operandi*. Jones explained that children in Lynwood Park needed a firm hand, and the fortunate ones got it in school:

*Mrs. Hutchins was the disciplinarian that every child needed . . . but they would lock her up for child abuse today. Do you hear what I said? They would lock Mrs. Hutchins up for child abuse . . . When she whoop you she be like: "And you know better, and you better not do it no more. And if I have to whoop you again, I'm gonna whoop you even longer." And she didn't stop. And she didn't stop talking up until she stopped whooping you . . . But I thank God for her. I really do, 'cause it was a blessing to me . . . that love attention . . . all of the teachers whooped you back then . . . if you went to the principal, man he had a leather belt . . . so it would put you in check right there at the school.*<sup>76</sup>

Peter Scott said that Lynwood Park's teachers, churches, and parents worked in concert to ensure that children were well educated. Scott graduated in 1961 and explained that while the Lynwood Park students got much more than the children at the other black schools, blacks in general received a quality education in their segregated schools:

<sup>73</sup> Pee Wee Jackson, 2 September 2006, 13-4, 23-4.

<sup>74</sup> Thompson, 29 July 2005, 76.

<sup>75</sup> Lockwood, 9 August 2005, 19.

<sup>76</sup> Narvie Harris, 2 July 2008, 5; Jones, 26 June 2008, 41-2.

*In a segregated system, there seems to be a greater concern for the welfare of the child and what we were going to do as a youngster growing up. I was always told that you got to do your stuff twice as good as people who are white, you know, in order to succeed. That has stuck with me from the time I was in school, to the time I attended Tuskegee, to the time I was in the Army, to the time I worked at the Washington Star, and now at the Atlanta Journal-Constitution. I mean that was just some principles and things that got embedded in you.*

*We were also encouraged to work hard . . . [and] not to expect people to give us anything—that we should work for it . . . we were told that education is something nobody can take from you. They can take everything, including your life, but they can't take what you have in your head, and what you know. So that's the kind of thinking that we were guided by . . .*

*During our segregated system . . . the churches augmented the schools well because there were a number of programs that we could participate in that allowed us to engage in public speaking, to work in Sunday School, and work on our reading. We had Sunday school teachers who obviously knew how to read and write and . . . these were people who gave you an opportunity to express yourself and encouraged you to do that. There were a number of programs in churches and in the community where you were just sort of encouraged to be a part of them. Our parents were very active in school stuff. There was no way they would miss a PTA meeting or some event that kids were in.*

*[A]mong schools that were segregated, we were reasonably in good shape. We had fairly sharp teachers who cared, and a lot of times teachers in our system were doing things that kids at other segregated schools were not. They just took it upon themselves to do it. If they knew you were going to college, they would work in something on Chemistry or Physics . . . so you wouldn't go [to college] lost.<sup>77</sup>*

Pee Wee Jackson confirmed that Lynwood Park's teachers were dedicated, and went out of their way to ensure that their students received an adequate education:

*Lynwood Park was the only place that I had a teacher that when I was sick that brought my work to my house. And if I needed help, after they got off work, [they] came by the house and tutored me to make sure I kept up. I missed some days, but I never missed any information.<sup>78</sup>*

Patricia Jones—Mary Baby Chick Carter's daughter—explained that her second-grade teacher Miss Minnie Douglas singled her out because she was pretty, and ensured that she could have an opportunity to participate in education:

*Miss Minnie, she was my favorite teacher. I got put back because when I was staying with my mother she didn't send me to school for that time. And I could remember dressing my little self, trying to go to school. And when I would get to school people*

<sup>77</sup> Scott, 4 May 2005, 41-6.

<sup>78</sup> Pee Wee Jackson, 2 September 2006, 26-7.

would make fun of me. And what I would do was just act out, you know. I would be so mean and fight all the time.

So I never will forget one day Miss Minnie asked me, she said, “Pat, why are you so bad? . . . You’re such a pretty girl. You don’t have to be bad.” . . . I said, “Because the children pick at me, and they talk about my clothes and my hair,” because I would go months without getting my hair combed, and I looked like a sheep’s head . . . [Mama] was an alcoholic, so cleanliness—that’s not who she was. She was my mother, but that’s not who she was . . .

So [Miss Minnie] said, “I’ll tell you what I’m going to do. I’m going to bring some clothes, and I’m going to take you into the bathroom and brush your hair, and show you how to wash yourself off. And you gonna look just as pretty as the other girls.” . . . She bought me a brand new dress, shoes, and took me to the bathroom. She said, “But you got to be here at seven o’clock.” I didn’t know when seven o’clock was, but I knew when it start getting daylight it was time for me to get up out that bed and go to school . . .

She would take me in the bathroom and show me how to wash myself out. And she would brush my hair. And I would get dressed, and I would have to leave those clothes there that evening . . . she would take them home and wash them. She would bring them back, and I would have clean clothes to put on . . . It made me feel like a brand new person. I never will forget the first time she did it, and she said, “Now look in the mirror and see how pretty you look.” . . . She said, “Now you won’t have to worry.” And after then they stopped picking on me, because they knew Miss Minnie wasn’t going to have that . . . so from that day on I loved to go to school . . . I wanted to learn.<sup>79</sup>

From all appearances, DeKalb County and Lynwood Park had achieved a formula to improve student success by the early 1960s. In 1963 the county added four high school classrooms and two elementary ones, which were necessary “to accommodate an increase in enrollment, *due to a decline in the drop-out problems*” (emphasis added), suggesting that the county’s equalization program might have contributed, in part, to a positive impact on black education in Lynwood Park.<sup>80</sup> Many accounts of Lynwood Park’s educational system before school desegregation confirm Vanessa Siddle Walker’s findings about North Carolina’s Caswell County Training School. These memories of black education during segregation fit comfortably within the golden-age-of-the-ghetto paradigm, in which

<sup>79</sup> Jones, 26 June 2008, 39-40. This “adoption” by her teacher occurred when Jones was living with her mother, Mary Baby Chick Carter.

<sup>80</sup> “Chronology of Lynwood Park School,” undated, 2.

institutional caring sent a dominant message to children that “You can succeed, and we will help you succeed.”<sup>81</sup>

Sociologist Sudhir Venkatesh pointed out that *all* underclass black communities engage in illegality, where most residents dip and dabble in both illegal licit and illicit activity.<sup>82</sup> Lynwood Park was especially steeped in illegality. Therefore, the enclave offered its youth competing career paths, and many chose illegality as an alternative to pursuing education. David Sutton shared that those youngsters who wanted to “stay straight” were the ones who stayed in the church, where they received community support to do well:

*Some of them [the community] could do something with. Some of them . . . weren't so wild like that. Some of them want to be straight going in, you know, have a life, and stuff. And a lot of them done made it, you know, gone on and made it. Grown up to be real nice peoples.*<sup>83</sup>

In Lynwood Park, youngsters could choose education or the street, and those with a hunger for learning generally received the support of their teachers, and all members of the community, including the bullies and drunks on the dangerous boundary. For example, John Wright, born in 1964, recalled that residents in the community censored his behavior, and said “Thou shalt not” to him at every turn:

*They expected more out of me. I couldn't do wrong. If I did wrong, I got punished big time, because they had those expectations, as a future leader . . . they knew who John was—a smart person . . . So the community had a high expectation of me, where I couldn't do no wrong. There was no exception: “You can't do wrong. You can't go to the bootlegger's house. You can't be out doing drugs. You can't go out and steal. No, no, no, you can't go out cursing.” If they hear me doing it, “What you doing cursing? No, no, no, you cannot. Thou shalt not do this. You are not allowed.”*

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<sup>81</sup> Walker, *Their Highest Potential*, 205.

<sup>82</sup> Sudhir Alladi Venkatesh, *Off the Books: The Underground Economy of the Urban Poor* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 32-49.

<sup>83</sup> Sutton, 1 May 2005, 34. Sutton's grandparents were Lynwood Park founders. Sutton dropped out of high school after desegregation, and is now a homeless crack-addict in the enclave.

Just as they had always been willing to help Bishop Sawyer with his church on the dangerous boundary, Wright shared that the community's drunks and drug addicts on the corner were also invested in his future:

*[They'd say] "Go to college. Get your education, where you can do better . . . You need to go to college." "Well, I ain't got no money to catch the bus." "Here's two dollars. Get on to college. Get your education. . . . We're already doomed. It's no hope for us, but it's still hope for you. You is a leader. Don't do this. Don't let this take control of you."*

And even after graduating from college, the community would not allow Wright to fall along the wayside, to engage in illegal activity, or to be around drugs and addicts:

*If they see me do something, like "You know better than doing that. You're much better than that. You went to college. You got an education. No, don't go out and do that. You need to go. You don't need to see me doing this."*

Wright claimed that several of his boyhood friends died from crack cocaine and, unfortunately, the community could not save his twin brothers, Ronny and Donny, who started out as alcoholics, and became crack addicts.<sup>84</sup> Lynwood Park demonstrates that even when all segments of a community are committed to organizing around its children's schooling, it is still possible that some will choose not to pursue education. In other words, regardless of a community's focus, the desire for education must also exist within the child in an underclass black community, since residents are offered other widely-accepted career paths that do not require much schooling.<sup>85</sup>

Vanessa Siddle Walker's work was largely based on memory, whose nostalgic backward glance exaggerates positives and filters out negative aspects of experience when

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<sup>84</sup> Wright, 20 November 2004, 82-88. Wright's family focused on church and education. His older brother Paul graduated valedictorian in 1968, served in Vietnam and died in 1999 from a rare illness—only eight cases in the world—caused by a chemical agent in Vietnam similar to Agent Orange. As part of pastor Brian Macon's outreach program into the community, Wright's brother Donald has conquered his crack cocaine addiction, has become a member of China Grove Church, and sings in the choir.

<sup>85</sup> While bullying—even of children—was commonplace in Lynwood Park, establishing a reputation for being seriously focused on education, or helping others in the community, gave some residents a "free pass" and the cooperation of, and help from, all members of the community, even the bullies on the corner. See especially McDaniel, 8 June 2005, 36-7.

a community has been changed. In other words, Walker's work suggested that no child was left behind in the Caswell County Training School, and hinted that blacks in general received a better education before school desegregation. However, Lynwood Park demonstrates that it is hazardous to generalize about any aspect of the black underclass community, and education is no exception. For example, John Jett, in the class of 1961, does not hold a rosy view of the community's high school, nor its focus on education:

*Lynwood Park High School was a joke . . . If your parents came to PTA, [if] your parents was known by the teachers—you might get a little something. But if a little child come in that they don't know his parents, the parents don't show up to PTA, they push him over in the corner . . . didn't get any attention, didn't get nothing, and . . . he [moved up] every year, and he couldn't even read his name . . .*

*[T]his right here is the key to it: if you don't have educated parents, your chance of making it is very slim . . . Mel Pender had an educated mother that stayed with him all the way. Columbus Jones had an intelligent mother. It take intelligent parents . . . If you don't have an educated person in your life . . . you will fall through the cracks.<sup>86</sup>*

Belinda Marshall, born in 1932, claimed that the children of Lynwood Park received a good education before desegregation. But Marshall was a member of the PTA, and said that that was necessary, in order to demonstrate that you cared about your child's schooling. Similarly, LaTrelle Lockwood, born in 1955, claimed that he received a good education in Lynwood Park, *but* his mother served as president of the PTA:

*I grew up in a good school right here. This school was a segregated school, but it was one of the best schools that I have ever been to, because back then, teachers in the black community carried a lot of clout, a lot of weight. They were highly esteemed, and they were very good at what they did. They cared about you, and growing up in that atmosphere—when we did integrate, there was no gap in the learning, because this school was just as good as [the] white schools.<sup>87</sup>*

In other words, it seems that a parent focused on education, or alternatively, a teacher “adopting” a student—such as in the case of Patricia Jones and Rosa Beatles-Sowell—was a necessary component to receiving a good education during the time of segregated

<sup>86</sup> Jett, 13 November 2005, 97, 111-2.

<sup>87</sup> Marshall, 10 September 2005, 47-9; Lockwood, 9 September 2005, 12.

schools. And Pee Wee Jackson, who claimed that teachers went out of their way to ensure that engaged students succeeded, also said that Lynwood Park's teachers "helped all the kids that wanted to be helped . . . they didn't force themselves on you. But they was available if you wanted the help."<sup>88</sup>

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There was a convergence of black/white issues other than school desegregation in the 1960s that would affect the underclass black community nationally in general, and Lynwood Park in particular. African Americans around the nation began making demands for better conditions and opportunities in their residential and work spheres in the 1960s. They had been pushing for desegregation and equal rights since the 1940s, and they were ready to reap the harvest. The civil rights movement had nourished high expectations that its success would translate into equal rights and opportunities for all blacks. However, the 1964 Civil Rights Act came at a time when de-industrialization was affecting the nation with its attendant loss in blue-collar jobs.<sup>89</sup>

The bifurcation in the black community between the haves and have-nots worsened after the 1960s. The split widened further after the passage of the Civil Rights Act. In effect, the 1960s was also the pickaxe that released a wellspring of pent-up black ambition and drive, at the same time that the economy was producing mostly white-collar, middle-class jobs. Those blacks who had gone to college in the 1950s and early 1960s took advantage of the successes of the civil rights movement, such as the outlawing of discrimination and the establishment of affirmative action, and they moved into higher education and professional and managerial employment.

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<sup>88</sup> Pee Wee Jackson, 2 September 2006, 26.

<sup>89</sup> Douglas S. Massey and Nancy A. Denton. *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 182.



Joblessness among the black underclass, in combination with a growing assertiveness, and abdication of the formerly entrenched black/white social etiquette, led many black youths to identify with the militancy of the Black Power movement that began in the mid-1960s. Historian Robin D.G. Kelley explained that the Black Power movement was born because the civil rights movement had no solution for urban poverty. Black Power was a revolutionary black nationalism with a new attitude that eclipsed Martin Luther King's call for freedom through non-violence, and it increased black youth bravado, and exacerbated white fears in the 1960s.<sup>90</sup> For underclass blacks, the pent-up frustration and intense grievances caused by segregation and racism, exacerbated by loss of employment, created a combustible mixture that found expression in violence, and led to a series of devastating ghetto rebellions and riots across the nation during the latter half of the 1960s.<sup>91</sup>

Also in the mid-1960s social scientists began denigrating African American culture. For example, in 1963 sociologist Nathan Glazer and Daniel Patrick Moynihan launched an attack on black culture, and argued that "the Negro . . . has no values and culture to guard and protect." And in 1965 Moynihan would publish his famous "Moynihan Report" stigmatizing the black family as the force promoting and perpetuating a "tangle of pathology," and "the principal source of the aberrant, inadequate, or antisocial behavior that . . . serves to perpetuate the cycle of poverty and deprivation."<sup>92</sup>

In the 1960s young African Americans around the nation were departing from the ways of the past, and becoming more assertive and militant, and less acquiescent. This

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<sup>90</sup> Robin D.G. Kelley, *Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination* (Boston, Beacon Press, 2002), 61; See also Thomas Byrne Edsall, with Mary D. Edsall, *Chain Reaction: The Impact of Race, Rights, and Taxes on American Politics* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1992), 58-59.

<sup>91</sup> Gayraud S. Wilmore, *Black Religion and Black Radicalism: An Interpretation of the Religious History of African Americans* (New York: Orbis Books, 2002), 211; Earl Lewis, *In Their Own Interests: Race, Class, and Power in Twentieth-Century Norfolk, Virginia*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 204.

<sup>92</sup> N. Glazer and D. P. Moynihan, *Beyond the Melting Pot: The Negroes, Puerto Ricans, Jews, Italians, and Irish in New York City* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1963), 53; D. P. Moynihan, *The Negro family: A case for national action* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1965), 76.

new assertiveness coincided with a surge in welfare applicants, intensified demands by blacks for jobs, an unprecedented rise in crime committed by blacks, and rising illegitimacy. The new black attitude, along with federal programs, evoked a backlash among many whites, who were also possibly being influenced by the 1960s social science claims of black degeneracy, thus building upon an already existent resistance to African American gains in the Atlanta area and elsewhere around the nation. Although blue-collar jobs were disappearing across the nation in the 1960s, historian Mark Stern found that many whites believed that it was federal help to blacks that was encouraging them to abdicate the work ethic and social responsibility.<sup>93</sup>

Official government reports helped fan the flames of white intolerance of blacks in the 1960s. For example, the Justice Department reported that from 1960 to 1966 crime grew more than 60 percent, and that a disproportionate share of the increase was committed by blacks, particularly crimes of violence. In addition, in the same period, the percentage of illegitimate births began to rise in the black community. Historian Carl Nightingale explained that across the nation “during the late 1960s and early 1970s, issues of crime and violence as related to race began to grow in importance,” leading to an increasing national negrophobia. Statistics on black crime and illegitimacy led, in part, to white disenchantment with the black revolution spreading across the country after the mid-1960s, and even affected prominent liberal intellectuals, such as Norman Mailer, who said that he “was getting tired of Negroes and their rights.”<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> Mark J. Stern, “Poverty and Family Composition,” in Michael B. Katz, ed. *The Underclass Debate: Views from History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), 221, 230; see also Charles Marsh, *God’s Long Summer: Stories of Faith and Civil Rights* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), 82-115.

<sup>94</sup> Carl Husemoller Nightingale, *On the Edge: A History of Poor Black Children and Their American Dreams* (New York: HarperCollins, 1993), 123; Statistics are from Edsall and Edsall, *Chain Reaction*, 52; Quote cited in Joel Garreau, *Edge City: Life on the New Frontier*, (New York: Anchor Books, 1991), 73.

The nationwide black/white debates and climate had a combustible effect on the people of Lynwood Park, a black underclass enclave surrounded by white middle-class housing, when school desegregation could no longer be avoided. Before the 1960s, *de jure* segregation and white racism had kept blacks in DeKalb County socially and economically subordinate, and the people of Lynwood Park had constructed strategies with which to negotiate the white world. The residents of the enclave were kept in their place through practicing the politics of racial etiquette when interacting with whites, *along with* the fear of white reprisal for violating social boundaries. For example, Steve Daniel, born in 1956, recalled his mother's censor in the early 1960s when he unknowingly violated southern social etiquette:

*[W]e used to always go to Lenox . . . It was an open air . . . shopping center . . . they had this little—what my grandmama called a five and dime—store . . . They had . . . a long counter with red bar stools, like twenty or thirty of 'em, and you could sit there and order and you can like spin 'em around. I used to always see these white kids sitting on a bar stool, eating a hot dog, and spinning around. And I wanted to do that so bad, but I didn't know . . . about segregation. That was like when I was like five or six . . .*

*[W]e used to always go buy our food but we could never eat it there . . . But one day my mom ordered. Her order got mixed up and they had to do it over. They gave me mine, so while she was reordering and talking to them, I opened the hot dog up and bit it and spin around in the chair. And she looked back at me and saw that I had opened it up and ate it, which was a no-no, and she knocked me off the stool. And I was like "Why can't I eat?" . . . I looked at some white kids: "He's over there eating; why can't I eat mine?" "Shut up. You don't know. You gonna get us locked up." And I was just crying. And then she grabbed me by the arm and just snatched me up and just took me out, and I couldn't understand what was going on . . .*

*Also, I think it might have been the same day . . . riding the trolley bus . . . they had a bubble-gum machine in front of the bus, I wanted to put a penny in the bubble gum machine and sit right across from the bus driver and watch him drive. That's all I want to do, and chew on my bubble gum, but my mom [said], "No, come on back here. Come on back. You can't sit up there." I couldn't understand it, the coloreds in the back."<sup>95</sup>*

Sociologist Bertram Doyle maintained that social etiquette between blacks and whites was an index of the stability of southern society. Therefore, any non-compliance by any black person with any white rule was evidence that the whole structure of social life in

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<sup>95</sup> Bayor, *Race*, 194-205; Daniel, 6 May 2007, 12-3.

the South was crumbling. Whites had historically found blacks acceptable as long as they stayed “in their place,” a position enforced by white expectation, and black compliance. And all around the nation, blacks were refusing to stay in their place in the 1960s, and neglect of the proscribed race etiquette not only threatened the social organization, but also aroused resentment in many whites. Therefore, while the Civil Rights Act could go into effect, “a shift in policy did not always produce a change in behavior or social practices.”<sup>96</sup>

The people of Lynwood Park—like blacks around the nation—began pushing into formerly-segregated spaces after the mid-1960s. Rachel Harris, born in 1948, explained the contrast in black behavior between the two eras, the former based on acquiescence and black fear of white reprisal, and the latter based on black exercise of rights:

*[T]he S.S. Kresge's had like a little place where you could buy hotdogs and hamburgers and ice cream . . . the white people would sit out in the chairs . . . we would go and buy our hotdog, and . . . we had to stand at the counter. You didn't face the white people . . . You faced the window . . . [Daddy said] “Obey the law. Or else you'll get in trouble.” And if you get in trouble, he was not able to get you out . . .*

*[And] when we rode the bus, Daddy took us to the back of the bus, and we sat back there . . . we were coming from church one night . . . and dad had brought me a pack of crackers, and . . . I dropped mine in the door. [The bus was moving] and every time my daddy would step down to pick up the crackers, the door would open . . . the bus driver was opening the door, and they were making a joke out of it—the white people that were sitting up in the front . . . there was a lot of white people that were mean . . .*

*[Now] I never sit in the back of a bus . . . that was one of the things that came out of me. And another thing that I did is: I made it my business to go into a restaurant and go through the front doors and sit down and have a bite to eat.”<sup>97</sup>*

The school desegregation debate was raging in Atlanta in the 1960s. In addition, there was a growing national climate of black militancy and white debates about black violence, and family degeneracy. Therefore, it is no surprise that Lynwood Park would be caught up in the vortex of these swirling social and political flows of the 1960s, and that the community's residents would become the victims of racism—the white backlash against

<sup>96</sup> Bertram Wilbur Doyle, *The Etiquette of Race Relations in the South: A Study in Social Control* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1937), 6-10, 160-171; Lewis, *In Their Own Interests*, 1991, 203.

<sup>97</sup> Rachel Harris, 27 July 2005, 96-8, 108.

blacks who now no longer had to stay in their place. Rachel Harris explained that it became dangerous to be outside Lynwood Park in the 1960s:

*My brother played for the Pattersonaires . . . a gospel singing group. And he would have to walk from Oglethorpe a lot of nights home . . . And I would just lay in my bed and pray 'til he got into the door . . . another friend of ours . . . Bryson Bailey, he would do the same thing. And a lot of times Bryson'd be drunk. And he remembered [whites] running him. . . . [and] we was standing out in front of the church one night, and a bunch of white kids drove by and threw Clorox on us . . . they just dashed Clorox out on everybody that was out there.<sup>98</sup>*

After the 1961 passage of Georgia's open school law, Atlanta had had only a piecemeal dismantling of its segregated school system. In February 1965, the U. S. District Court in Atlanta "ordered the desegregation of all grades in the Atlanta public schools by the 1967-68 school year."<sup>99</sup> DeKalb County officials realized that desegregation would soon sweep across the state, and first-grade teacher Elizabeth Braynon said Narvie Harris began preparing her teachers for the change:

*[S]he knew also that integration is coming. She told us that . . . She wanted us to be ready because it is coming . . . [she did] the kind of things [that] would be helpful to make the transition . . . prepare the teachers for teaching in an integrated system.<sup>100</sup>*

At the beginning of the 1966-67 school year seventeen Lynwood Park high school students were transferred to Cross Keys High School, and several of the younger children were sent to Jim Cherry Elementary School, which was within walking distance of Lynwood Park.<sup>101</sup> In the beginning of the 1967-68 school year Lynwood Park's high school was closed without notice, and more than one hundred students joined the initial seventeen at Cross Keys.<sup>102</sup> Historian Earl Lewis wrote that black school children in Norfolk,

<sup>98</sup> Rachel Harris, 27 July 2005, 94-5. "Running him" means chasing him down the street in the dark. The Clorox incident occurred in the 1960s, since Harris is speaking about Marshall Carter's church, and Carter first went to Lynwood Park in 1959.

<sup>99</sup> Hornsby, "Black Public Education," 30-1.

<sup>100</sup> Bayor, *Race*, 199-212; Braynon, 14 September 2006, 55.

<sup>101</sup> McDaniel, 8 June 2005, 24; Lockwood, 9 August 2005, 13.

<sup>102</sup> Martin, 27 October 2004, 8-9; Martin, 10 November 2004, 3.

Virginia trained for sixteen weeks “as agents of social change” before they entered their formerly-segregated white schools. And Alton Hornsby explained that the Atlanta Council on Human Relations worked with Atlanta’s black transfer students “helping to prepare them for the social and psychological traumas of desegregation.”<sup>103</sup> Conversely, not even Narvie Harris was advised that the Lynwood Park High School would be closed in 1967. Harris recalled that the school’s closing was handled in a shocking and callous manner:

*So here’s what they did one morning . . . they went out there one day with a bus and loaded all the kids from Lynwood Park and took them to Cross Keys. The children were hollering and screaming. They just took them like a bunch of cows and horses . . . On the news that afternoon you saw the children just crying. And, oh, they were like a bunch of cattle, just pushing them in there. Then you saw the bus pulling up at Cross Keys. I don’t think they knew they were coming. It was chaos, it was terrible . . . I get it on the news like everybody else, and I’m shocked . . . the children were raving and screaming . . . and we had people fighting them too from that school . . . [I]t was such a shock to all of us.<sup>104</sup>*

According to Patricia Martin, the administration and teachers at Cross Keys should have been prepared in advance of their students’ arrival:

*I don’t think they were ready for the impact of what it said to them, because a lot of whites to this day are afraid of [black] males . . . especially some of your older people . . . They don’t have to say a word, because we have been so programmed to be aware . . . that any black person can tell you who’s got issues. They can tell right off . . . And just because the United States said, “We’re going to have integration” does not mean that people had an integrated heart, or integrated understanding . . . I would certainly had worked with all the administrative heads and the teachers, with some sessions about what was expected, and dealt with their emotions, and the students that are coming in, because children pick up that<sup>105</sup>*

However, Martin did not entertain that Lynwood Park’s children might also require counseling about interacting with whites. The community’s elders had been so successful at protecting their children from the negative aspects of segregation that being raised in the cocoon of the enclave also meant that the community’s children were shielded from close contact and interaction with whites until they were old enough to work outside Lynwood Park.

<sup>103</sup> Lewis, *In Their Own Interests*, 1991, 203; Hornsby, “Black Public Education,” 28.

<sup>104</sup> Narvie Harris, 2 July 2008, 21-3.

<sup>105</sup> Martin, 27 October 2004, 13-14.

First-grade teacher Elizabeth Braynon explained that the children of Lynwood Park interacted almost exclusively with friends and family within black enclaves, and more than likely never saw a white and colored water fountain side by side. For example, Priscilla Jackson, born in 1948, advised that she was almost completely sheltered from whites:

*Growing up I really had no contact with white America, only except as a doctor or perhaps seeing them going downtown, but those experiences were so strange . . . I really had very little contact with the outside world.<sup>106</sup>*

Steve Daniel, born in 1956, was among the first group of elementary students sent to Jim Cherry School in 1966. Daniel said that he had not interacted with whites before that time:

VMH: *How did they treat you at Jim Cherry . . .*

SD: *At first, they didn't never seen black and we ain't never seen white. I mean we had seen 'em but we had never been with 'em.<sup>107</sup>*

In other words, blacks and whites had lived side-by-side to each other in parallel worlds in northwestern DeKalb County and, to a large extent, each group had *socially* dismissed the other, and could “see” yet “not see” each other.

The Lynwood Park High School class of '68 mustered the courage to petition Jim Cherry to keep the community's high school open until the end of the 1967-68 school year. The thirty students had gone to school together since the first grade and wanted to end their high school careers in Lynwood Park. Patricia Jones was selected as the class's spokesperson and recounted her meeting with Cherry:

*[T]hey chose me to be the spokesperson [and] I'm thinking my words stumble sometimes and I can't get them out . . . but I know what I want to say . . . I told Aunt City, I said, "Aunt City, they want me to go talk to this white man, and I don't know what to say." And she would always tell me "Just put God first, and just ask him to put the right words in your mouth to say, and everything will be all right." . . . I was so nervous that day, I never will forget it. . . .*

<sup>106</sup> Braynon, 27 April 2005, 42-3; Priscilla Jackson, interview by author, 4 January 2006, transcript, 5.

<sup>107</sup> Daniel, 6 May 2007, 39.

*Mr. Cherry met me at the door, and he said, "Come on in Pat, and have a seat . . . I hear y'all don't want to go to the white school." "Pat," he said, "you know it's a part of the desegregation plan." I said, "I know that Mr. Cherry, but that still don't make it right." I said, "You know this is our senior year, and you remember when you graduated when you was a senior? . . . you remember how excited you was?" He said, "Yes, I do." And so I said we was excited about Lynwood Park High School . . . and we think it's not fair that we have to use our last year to go to another school. I said, "It just not right Mr. Cherry." And he said, "Well, Pat, I know how y'all feel." He said, "Let me think about it . . . and see what I can do. I can't imagine how y'all must feel." . . .*

*[T]hat next week the principal . . . said, "Well, Mr. Cherry decided . . . he gon' let y'all stay down there. But you're going to have to have one white teacher, and one black teacher, and you're gonna have to have a Cross Keys diploma. We can't give you a Lynwood Park diploma 'cause the school is no more."*

*Boy, we jumped for joy. We really thought that we had did something . . . but we had that whole big school by ourself . . . Only the senior class . . . we started out with thirty but we wound up with only having fifteen . . . because the kids—some of them could not deal with having that whole big school . . . [t]o themselves, and the fact that you had nothing to do, no activities.<sup>108</sup>*

Gary McDaniel was among the first seventeen to attend Cross Keys in the 1966-67 school year. Born in 1951, McDaniel recalled that after 1967, walking down Osborne Road—which connected Windsor Parkway and Peachtree Road—was akin to running the gauntlet for Lynwood Park's residents. McDaniel said that whites would "throw bottles and whoop you upside the head, or they would just stop you and jump on you," and Rachel Harris—who had had Clorox thrown on her—confirmed that whites threw bottles at the Lynwood Park residents.<sup>109</sup>

Sociologist William Julius Wilson wrote that Jim Crow institutions were obliterated after the civil rights gains, that job discrimination was on the wane, and that there was unmistakable evidence of the "declining significance of race in the perpetuation of poverty

<sup>108</sup> Jones, 26 June 2008, 49-50. It is interesting that the class never considered petitioning Narvie Harris, which underscores both Harris's lack of power in making critical decisions for the black schools, and her lack of regard among the people of Lynwood Park. It is because of this one class that it is generally claimed that the high school closed in 1968, when it actually closed in 1967. Those who were left behind never had a prom, and the entire class of 1968 came together with their Lynwood Park teachers in a Lost Prom in 2006.

<sup>109</sup> McDaniel, 8 June 2005, 28-9; Rachel Harris, 27 July 2005, 95.



and the increasing problems of black underclass communities.<sup>110</sup> However, ethnographer Jonathan Rieder and journalist Anthony Lukas wrote “powerful accounts that racist attitudes in white working-class communities not only persisted after the civil rights movement but were strengthened in response to it.”<sup>111</sup> School desegregation caused racial tensions in many cities across the country. Carl Nightingale wrote that the combination of efforts to desegregate northern urban school districts, and the social programs to help the black poor in the 1960s and 1970s “sparked concerted movements of hatred against blacks,” and white students in a recently desegregated Philadelphia school scheduled “nigger days” when black students “were open targets of harassment and violence.”<sup>112</sup>

While there was a lot of tension between blacks and whites at Cross Keys High School during the 1966-67 school year, the original seventeen Lynwood Park students restrained themselves for that year, but violence between blacks and whites erupted after 1967, when the Lynwood Park High School was closed and more than one hundred additional students from the enclave entered Cross Keys.<sup>113</sup> Two other events in 1968 affected the community’s youths, and made many of them even more aggressive: the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in the spring, and the Olympics in Mexico City in the fall.<sup>114</sup>

When Dr. King was assassinated on April 4, 1968 the Lynwood Park students rioted at Cross Keys High School, as Maudina Peaches Horton, class of 1969, remembered:

*I remember when Martin Luther King was killed . . . it was a mess there, and we all tore it up . . . [t]he bathrooms, pulling down things, screaming, and going on . . . Tore everything up . . . angry . . . hurt . . . And that’s when they sent us all out, sent us home.*<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> William Julius Wilson, *The Truly Disadvantaged: the Inner City, the Underclass, and Public Policy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 11.

<sup>111</sup> As reported in Nightingale, *On the Edge*, 111.

<sup>112</sup> Nightingale, *On the Edge*, 115-6.

<sup>113</sup> McDaniel, 8 June 2005, 28.

<sup>114</sup> Although known as the Summer Olympics, the games in Mexico City were actually held in October 1968.

<sup>115</sup> Horton, 17 September 2005, 84-5.

Gary McDaniel explained that the Lynwood Park students were not willing to walk away from confrontations with whites in the 1960s, which was a new era of empowerment for black youths, and that they were willing to act out violently in white spaces:

*The black kids can make it with the hostility that was at Cross Keys. That wasn't a problem with the blacks kids, 'cause they brought the hostility with them. They went there with an attitude . . . can you imagine when Dr. King got killed that day, April the Fourth? . . . we just got to fighting that day . . . all hell just broke loose there at Cross Keys then. . . we were fighting each other. The police was there . . . it was just a mess.*<sup>116</sup>

Helen Miller, the Jewish storeowner on the dangerous boundary, said that the air shifted in Lynwood Park after the King assassination:

*They were a little more hostile after King was killed, and it was just not a good atmosphere to stay under . . . You could just see that there was a change in the atmosphere . . . so [my husband] decided to go ahead and rent [the store].*<sup>117</sup>

The Millers left Lynwood Park because the community was no longer willing to practice the racial politics of the past. In addition, the enclave's youth became more militant and empowered in the summer of 1968 when Mel Pender won an Olympic gold medal in Mexico City. Bursting with pride at the achievement of one of Lynwood Park's sons, many of the enclave's youths interpreted the Black Power salute of Tommie Smith and John Carlos on the Olympic medal podium—the giving up of personal glory for black nationalism—as emblematic of the new sense of power and militancy blacks were feeling around the nation, and a willingness to sacrifice the goals of the self for the betterment of the black community.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> McDaniel, 8 June 2005, 27.

<sup>117</sup> Miller, 19 February 2008, 11.

<sup>118</sup> Tommie Smith and John Carlos, who won gold and bronze medals respectively in the 200-meter race, were shoeless but wearing black socks on the podium, as a symbol of black poverty. Smith wore a black scarf representing black pride, and Carlos wore beads, to share his honor with blacks who had been lynched, blacks who had been thrown off boats during the Middle Passage, and blacks who had been buried without a prayer. The Black Power salute was a non-violent statement that the civil rights gains had not solved the problem of black injustice in America. Smith and Carlos were suspended from the national team, not allowed to compete in other events, and banned from the Olympic village. Whites in 1968 interpreted their

Gary McDaniel was one of the leaders of Lynwood Park's militant bloc at Cross Keys High School, and he said that the community's students were deeply affected by the 1960s and events at the Olympics, and that it empowered them as black youths to also become agents for change. McDaniel explained that the blacks turned the tables on the whites at Cross Keys, because times had changed and blacks were now liberated and wanted to avenge some of the wrongs done to blacks in the past:

*When I was going to Cross Keys High School . . . I was so hostile because I know what done happened to the peoples that was coming up before me, and that's why I was so hostile. See, coming in my days things was changing. Where they was used to jumping on us, it came to where we started jumping on them . . . [we] were real aggressive.<sup>119</sup>*

According to John Jett, who was born in 1943, Lynwood Park's students were acting out at Cross Keys because of racial prejudice:

*[T]hey terrorized that school . . . we wasn't used to intermingling with white people. We didn't never been with white peoples in this community for the simple reason that we didn't go out of the community. You stayed in this community. And when they started going to the white school they had already heard about the racial thing. And when they got to the white school they acted out.<sup>120</sup>*

In reality, Gary McDaniel, born in 1951, represented the new black man that came of age in the 1960s, and was a reflection of the era's combination of black rights and militancy. McDaniel claimed that he and his cohort felt more powerful and proud to be black because of the Black Power movement and the riots across the nation. McDaniel explained that after 1968, the bad blacks of Lynwood Park met the bad whites of Brookhaven at Cross Keys High School.<sup>121</sup> But the white school administration was ready for them and punished the Lynwood Park students for minor infractions, as McDaniel recalled:

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statement before the world as unpatriotic, but blacks—and especially black youths—saw Smith and Carlos as heroes brave enough to call the world's attention to black injustice in America.

<sup>119</sup> McDaniel, 8 June 2005, 29.

<sup>120</sup> Jett, 13 November 2005, 97.

<sup>121</sup> McDaniel, 8 June 2005, 24.

*I remember we was in Assembly, and that's when they . . . [r]aising the fist . . . at the 1968 Olympics . . . so we was in the Assembly and a group of us raised our fist like that. We could never attend another Assembly . . . yeah, we got suspended for it.<sup>122</sup>*

Patricia Martin suggested that Lynwood Park's children were singled out because of an historic white fear of blacks:

*[A] lot of whites to this day are afraid of [black] males. They become very disturbed with males, and if they're dressed a certain way, they're very nervous. And it's not about the young man, it's about his appearance, or how he's moving and carrying himself.<sup>123</sup>*

Pee Wee Jackson, Cross Keys graduate in 1968, shared one example of white racism at the school, and confirmed that black students were singled out unfairly for punishment:

*The worst problem we had was with this teacher that taught shop at Cross Keys. He was a true Ku Klan racist from Brookhaven . . . he taught woodwork shop at Cross Keys in 1967 and '68. This man was so racist to where he would go into the bathrooms in the mornings . . . we got there almost an hour before classes started. So we'd malingering in the halls and stuff like that. And the kids would go in the bathrooms and smoke. This man would go in the bathroom where the kids were smoking . . . but you know what he would do? He would let the white kids out and send the black kids to the office . . . Everybody in there at that time was smoking . . . White and black.<sup>124</sup>*

Horace Ouisley, born in 1932, recognized that white acceptance of blacks could not be instantaneously effected through legislation. While many blacks were able to take advantage of the successes of the civil rights movement, Ouisley also maintained that the movement's gains gave many blacks a false sense of power:

*[T]hey thought they was really free, when they weren't free. You still had peoples disliking you . . . they didn't want you there . . . You can look at people and tell when they don't want you in a place. They're being forced by the government. The government shouldn't have had nothing to do with that.<sup>125</sup>*

Patricia Martin described the prejudice that the Cross Keys principal harbored towards the Lynwood Park students. In a meeting with Martin, the principal's denigrating opinion about Lynwood Park was framed in a description that was deeply hurtful to many of the

<sup>122</sup> McDaniel, 8 June 2005, 29-30.

<sup>123</sup> McDaniel, 8 June 2005, 26; Martin, 27 October 2004, 13.

<sup>124</sup> Pee Wee Jackson, 2 September 2006, 16-7.

<sup>125</sup> Horace Ouisley, 1 November 2004, 113.

community's residents, as evidenced by the comments of Dennie Jones Wesley, Pee Wee Jackson, and now Martin:

*[I]t took me years to get over it . . . my son [Victor] was . . . in trouble, as they saw it . . . [my] child was very smart, but he was very outspoken . . . And so I went to school, and I'm sitting there talking to the principal who says to me "Nothing good comes out of Lynwood Park anyway."*

*Now, I'm sitting there as a parent, but I am a student at Emory University, in the School of Nursing . . . and you are telling me that nothing good comes out of Lynwood Park? Where does that fit in this picture with me and my son, and this situation? It doesn't fit.*

*So what that said to me was "You have branded all of the children in Lynwood Park". . . He was angry because he had black children in his school. They were messing up his school with their attitudes, and they were creating problems . . .*

*What that said to me also is that I've got to be on my toes now, because I've got to be one of those parents that says to you [the principal]: "Where does [my son] go next? Show it to me in writing. What classes are he supposed to take? I want to see it. And where will this lead him? Will he be able to go to college with this?" And I've got to pay attention, and I've got to tell my neighbors the same thing: that they'd best come over here prepared to ask some questions . . . So that really started me thinking.<sup>126</sup>*

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On July 5, 1968, Civil Action No. 11946 was filed in U. S. District Court against Jim Cherry, Dr. James Hinson, the president of DeKalb Junior College, and the DeKalb County Board of Education. The lawsuit argued that the three defendants had not desegregated DeKalb County's schools in compliance with the Fourteenth Amendment of the Constitution guaranteeing equality to all citizens.<sup>127</sup> Later famous as *Pitts v. Cherry*, the class-action suit was brought by several parents on behalf of their fifteen minor children, all students in DeKalb County. Of the fifteen, five students were white, and belonged to two families. Five black students were siblings, and the other three—Willie Eugene Pitts, Victor Martin, and Cecilia Searcy—were children from Lynwood Park, with Victor being Patricia Martin's elder son. The suit's main demands were for a unitary

<sup>126</sup> Martin, 27 October 2004, 19-22. See also Wesley, 19 October 2005, 18; Pee Wee Jackson, 2 September 2006, 20-1.

<sup>127</sup> The lawsuit had to be based on the equality guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment and not on *Brown*, because DeKalb County was in compliance with the 1955 *Brown II* remedy to desegregate "with all deliberate speed."

school system, and a higher percentage of black teachers and principals. Interestingly,

Complaint 13 of the suit read as follows:

Negro pupils who attend integrated schools in the DeKalb County system are subject to academic, disciplinary, and physical harassment by the white faculty and students of said schools. As a result of such treatment, Negro pupils attending said integrated schools are frequently suspended and cannot, accordingly, fully benefit from their integrated schooling.<sup>128</sup>

In answering the complaint, Jim Cherry and the other two defendants claimed that the all-black Lynwood Park School had nineteen black faculty members (in its still-open elementary school), and one white teacher (for the lone high-school class of fifteen), but these qualifications were not included in the answer to the suit. Furthermore, the answer stated categorically: “The allegations of Paragraph Thirteen (13) are denied.”<sup>129</sup>

The evidence demonstrates that the allegations of Complaint 13 in *Pitts v. Cherry* were true for the Lynwood Park students at both Cross Keys and Jim Cherry Elementary School, which severely limited the future options of many students, even while desegregation and the civil rights gains promised blacks equality and access to the full range of avenues for success in America. Patricia Martin explained that the whites at Cross Keys High School wanted passive black students and that the white teachers labeled many of Lynwood Park youths as obstreperous for merely asking questions:

*[As a teacher] I give you what I want you to learn . . . if you can give it back to me, and you don't question me, and you don't challenge me, then you're an A student, with a wonderful attitude, and an excellent achiever. But if you give it back to me, and you say, "Yeah, but this doesn't make sense. And where does this fit in the pattern? What does this have to do with this?" . . . then things are not going to go good for you*<sup>130</sup>

Martin also explained that a negative teacher evaluation was entered into a student's file and followed the student from year to year in the white school, in the same

<sup>128</sup> *Pitts v. Cherry*, Civil Action No. 11946, 5 July 1968, Atlanta Division, United States District Court for the Northeastern District of Georgia, 6.

<sup>129</sup> *Pitts v. Cherry*, 5 July 1968, 14, 16.

<sup>130</sup> Martin, 27 October 2004, 17-8.

manner that Minnie Lee Weddie Thompson claimed that her son Rodney's prison record labeled him a fighter regardless of any reformed behavior. Therefore, white teachers were prejudiced against black students because of negative student evaluations. Martin advised that at Cross Keys High School the students from Lynwood Park "were being expelled . . . for minor reasons, harassed, and called names." Her son Victor was expelled as a behavioral problem, and Martin illegally placed both her sons in Chamblee High School. After being found out, Martin had to pay a \$1,400 fine for having illegally crossed the school district line, money that she and her husband had to borrow from a bank.<sup>131</sup>

United States District Judge Newell Edenfield ruled on *Pitts v. Cherry* on June 12, 1969, and ordered all DeKalb County schools to be fully integrated by the 1969-70 school year, and that all black schools were to be closed. In addition, Judge Edenfield required DeKalb County school officials, beginning in 1970, to submit annual proof of compliance with his order. Failure to desegregate would result in a loss of 2.3 million dollars in federal funding, approximately eight percent of DeKalb County's annual school budget.<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> Martin, 27 October 2004, 18, 22-3; Martin, 10 November 2004, 2. Victor Martin graduated from Chamblee High School, and Lanny Martin, the younger son, graduated from St. Pius Catholic High School.

<sup>132</sup> *Pitts v. Cherry*, 24, 28. On October 29, 1969 the Supreme Court ordered the abolishment of dual schools across the nation by the 1970-71 school year. Bill Goodwin, "No Place to Hide: All Deliberate Speed Buried Forever in the South," *Atlanta Journal and Constitution*, 30 October 1969; See also David Nordan, "Integrate at Once, High Court Orders," *Atlanta Journal and Constitution*, 30 October 1969. In 1986 Robert R. Freeman, DeKalb County school superintendent, petitioned to have the county's school system dismissed from annual judicial supervision in *Freeman v. Pitts*. The petition argued that *de facto* segregation made a unitary school system impossible. After blacks had moved from the inner city of Atlanta into DeKalb County, the county's whites fled to predominantly-white counties when desegregated schools reached a tipping point of thirty percent black. The petition became one of the landmark cases to end busing after demographic shifts resulted in resegregated schools. The Supreme Court found unanimously in DeKalb County's favor in 1992, with Justice Kennedy noting "it is beyond the authority and beyond the practical ability of the federal courts to try to counteract these kinds of continuous and massive demographic shifts," Application of writ of certiorari, *Freeman v. Pitts*, 12 February 1990; *Freeman v. Pitts*, 118 L. Ed. 2d 108 (1992); See also Armor, *Forced Justice*, 53; David M. Smith, "Inequality in Atlanta, Georgia, 1960-1980" (Ph.D. diss., Queen Mary's College, 1985), 25.

Narvie Harris confirmed that desegregation had a negative impact on DeKalb County's black children and their communities. Harris wrote that the students missed the activities of their all-black schools. Moreover, the black parents did not feel welcomed at the predominantly white schools, which was a blow to those Lynwood Park parents who had been very closely involved with their children's education. Black parents reported long waits to see white administrators, felt that their concerns were being trivialized, and that they were "talked down to" in a demeaning manner. In addition, Lynwood Park's residents were not invited to join the PTA at Cross Keys and Jim Cherry, and were not advised of PTA meetings. LaTrelle Lockwood, whose mother was president of the PTA in 1968, said that Lynwood Park's parents were left out of involvement with their children's education after desegregation.<sup>133</sup>

Pee Wee Jackson, class of 1968, was an outstanding football player at Cross Keys. Jackson explained that sporting events was the only time black parents were welcomed at Cross Keys, and that while the whites at Cross Keys were racist toward Lynwood Park students, they nevertheless wanted them on their sports teams, and essentially treated them as gladiators:

*[W]hen integration came, the parents . . . didn't have a connection to Sequoia, Chamblee, Cross Keys—these other schools that we were dispersed to, because they were not received at these schools . . . the only time you ever saw a parent at those integrated schools was during a cotton-picking sporting event, when they were out there making spectacles of us . . . like a gladiator spectacle.*<sup>134</sup>

Patricia Jones was a star basketball player in Lynwood Park and confirmed that although she had persuaded Jim Cherry to allow the senior class to finish the school year in Lynwood Park, and although those who stayed behind had foresworn sports, the Cross Keys women's basketball coach nevertheless tried to recruit her for his team:

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<sup>133</sup> Harris and Taylor, *African American Education*, 33; Braynon, 14 September 2006, 34; Lockwood, 9 August 2005, 40.

<sup>134</sup> Pee Wee Jackson, 2 September 2006, 27.



*The basketball coach . . . had heard how good I played basketball and he wanted me to come to Cross Keys, to just see if I liked it, and to play basketball. I never will forget my brother Marcus said, "They just using you. They just want you over there to play basketball." . . . I went over there, I played basketball, I stayed a week . . . I wasn't gon' go over there and make their basketball team no championship, especially after I found out that they really did need somebody to play. My brother didn't lie about it . . . the week I was over there they treated me nice. Everybody was nice to me, but I know for a fact some of the kids had problems.*<sup>135</sup>

Although blacks and whites came together to play on the same sports teams, Raymond Jackson, born in 1930, said that racial tensions nevertheless erupted during the games:

- RJ: *Cross Keys had football games. They had a lot of blacks on the team. They'd even get to fighting. They going to school there together, and they'd even get to fighting right there on the field. That was bad . . .*
- VMH: *Because of the race issue?*
- RJ: *Right. That's right. That's right. And that was wrong . . . I couldn't understand that . . .*
- VMH: *So the white kids at Cross Keys didn't like the black children?*
- RJ: *No, they didn't. They definitely didn't. No, they didn't. No, they didn't.*<sup>136</sup>

LaTrelle Lockwood described Apple Valley, a nearby community of whites who lived on the poor side of the railroad tracks, as akin to Appalachia. Steve Daniel, born in 1956, explained that these were the aggressive whites that the Lynwood Park students had to fight—both at Jim Cherry Elementary and Cross Keys High School—and that these poor whites were determined fighters. Daniel explained that fighting in their desegregated schools was *de rigueur* for the Lynwood Park students, who not only had to maintain their local reputation for toughness, but also had to confirm the widely-held stereotype that a black person could best a white person in a fight—anywhere in the world:

*[S]ome of these [white] guys over there were harder than we were. They had lived a rougher life than we had . . . they was poor and they was living rough . . . another thing is . . . we dressed nice. And . . . you got some [whites] who didn't . . . those was the ones . . . that was from Apple Valley, because they was like a disgrace to their race . . . we was just black, but a poor white person was like they was just the bottom of the barrel . . . one thing about a black person: he'll spend his last money on some clothes. He's not gonna be*

<sup>135</sup> Jones, 26 June 2008, 52-3.

<sup>136</sup> Raymond Jackson, 7 October 2005, 75-6.

*ragged. I mean he might be looking good but dumb as Hell. Well, smelly and probably can't count but he's got on some nice clothes.*

*Those people from over there, Apple Valley, they be coming [to school] looking like Huckleberry Finn and . . . was talking like worse than we would have, worse grammar than we had . . . So these white people that was unfortunate they became real bitter. And, man, if you get to fighting one of those kids . . . some of 'em can beat. We always thought that look, man, anywhere in the world, a white person can't beat me. I don't care what, it just can't happen, it's not gonna happen. I don't care if he is in the sixth grade [and] I'm in the fourth, he can't beat me, and he's not gonna beat me. Because they the ones that didn't know how to fight. We always grew up fighting you know, [and] they was timid.*

*But the ones over there, they was rougher than we were. They had to fight for everything they getting. You get to fighting one of them, they something to beat. Break your arm. Or if you broke his nose and bloodied him up, he still wasn't giving up, still gonna want more: "Alright, by God, I got my nose broke, come on, you want some more?" "Man, go ahead on, I don't want to fight you no more. I done beat you." No. They gonna fight you tomorrow, the next day, and it's like, man, every day . . .*

*[I]f I walk away, and if you whoop me, everybody gonna laugh at me: "You let a white boy beat you. What is wrong with you, man?" . . . [so] you got to win . . . No choice . . . or else you gonna get it from your own people . . . they talk about you so bad and you just be alienated. So you seen it happen to somebody else, and it can happen to you."<sup>137</sup>*

Steve Daniel said that by the time he attended Cross Keys High School the black students had devised a strategy to keep from fighting during school hours:

*Once I got in high school . . . we banded together . . . Weren't but 150 black people over there against 2,200 white . . . If somebody get in a fight, everybody fought . . . [if] I'm by myself, them white boys catch me down there, they beat me to death, man. I wouldn't have a chance . . . whether you wanted to be or not, everybody was together . . . I wasn't following nobody but I was not going nowhere by myself . . .*

*[In] the morning we used to get to school like forty-five minutes before the class start. Everybody gathered up in one place and sit down and wait for the time to pass . . . we'd be at the radiator, which is the main hall at Cross Keys . . . and that's where we'd stay, right there . . . we herd around each other like we buffalo . . . [f]or safety. There is safety in numbers . . .*

*You had forty-five minutes before the class start, and you know you just can't be walking around and get caught down there by yourself . . . it was dangerous. And some of them guys that get caught, man . . . these [white] seniors beat up this little [black] freshman. And there we go! We got to find him. We got to ask him what happened. Or sometime they don't even ask what happened—they just go whip a [white] guy . . . Whether you want to fight or not, you got to . . . [y]ou got to stay with your crew."<sup>138</sup>*

<sup>137</sup> Daniel, 6 May 2007, 43-5.

<sup>138</sup> Daniel, 6 May 2007, 45-8.

David Lee Sutton, born in 1958, claimed that he stayed away from school on days that he sensed that there would be confrontations between the two groups. Sutton dropped out of Cross Keys in the eleventh grade, in part, because of the amount of fighting that occurred there, and the number of classes he missed because of his reticence about fighting. Patricia Martin confirmed that many Lynwood Park children with academic potential were derailed by the racial problems at Cross Keys:

*[T]hat has been the downfall of a lot of kids that dropped out of school that were once very, very smart kids in elementary, and get to high school and things just go haywire.*<sup>139</sup>

For those Lynwood Park children who could not cope with the racism and fighting at Cross Keys, and for those who were suspended frequently and could not keep up with their schoolwork, and for those who were expelled for minor infractions, the marijuana trade on the dangerous boundary offered a career paying more than a legitimate service-industry, minimum-wage job, one venue in which blacks without a high school diploma could find employment.

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There have been nearly fifty studies conducted of the effects of school desegregation on black self-esteem in the thirty years from 1965 to 1995. In a review of these, sociologists Morris Rosenberg and Roberts G. Simmons found that school desegregation did not benefit black self-esteem. And contrary to Kenneth and Mamie Clark's conclusion from their doll study, research conducted in the immediate post-*Brown* era indicated that in many cases segregated black students had higher self-esteem than white students at the time of *Brown*.<sup>140</sup> The Rosenberg and Simmons review found that

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<sup>139</sup> Martin, 27 October 2004, 18.

<sup>140</sup> Armor, *Forced Justice*, 63, 100-1. Armor also discusses that the data from the Clark study had more than likely been misinterpreted, and "segregated black students did not in fact have lower personal self-esteem than white students at the time of *Brown*."

“desegregation not only fails to improve black self-esteem but may in fact lower it,” and advanced three factors to explain its diminution: racial prejudice, black students finding themselves for the first time at an academic disadvantage, and the realization that they are economically disadvantaged relative to white students.<sup>141</sup>

The many stories of Lynwood Park confirmed that the children of the enclave were not exposed to middle-class lifestyles until the schools desegregated. And while the civil rights gains and the social desegregation that followed *Brown* suggested that blacks could participate as equals in the benefits of being American, the racism students encountered in their desegregated schools made many of them choose to not pursue education. Young underclass blacks in Lynwood Park could then find somebodiness by supporting themselves and their families through illegal enterprise, and the crack cocaine industry later offered them the earnings that enabled them to purchase the prestige items of middle-class society that they had been kept from acquiring legitimately, although they had been promised the opportunity to do so by the black gains of the 1960s.<sup>142</sup> By the mid-1980s, dealing crack cocaine became a career of choice for many of the enclave’s youths, who were modeling historic community behaviors, and idolizing Lynwood Park’s successful drug dealers, such as Timothy Timbo Walker, who became their role models.<sup>143</sup>

As in other aspects of Lynwood Park, generalizations are not appropriate for black/white relations at Cross Keys in the early days of desegregation, because not all Lynwood Park students experienced insurmountable difficulties, not all white teachers

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<sup>141</sup> Armor, *Forced Justice*, 101.

<sup>142</sup> For the relationship between acquiring prestige consumer goods and building black self-esteem, see Carl Husemoller Nightingale, *On the Edge: A History of Poor Black Children and Their American Dreams* (New York: HarperCollins, 1993), 135, 139.

<sup>143</sup> Numerous Lynwood Park residents charted the course of community destruction from school desegregation to white racism leading to dropouts, who then sold marijuana, then crack cocaine, which led to increased addiction, increased violence and danger in Lynwood Park, radiating crime into white enclaves surrounding the community, an exacerbation of black middle-class flight, and an increased focus by DeKalb County to “revitalize” the community.

were racist, and school officials did attempt to integrate the black students in activities other than sports at Cross Keys. For example, Maudina Peaches Horton, one of the original seventeen to attend Cross Keys, said that although all the Lynwood Park students encountered racism at Cross Keys, some of them found ways to negotiate the tensions, and were able to benefit from the education that the school offered:

*I'm not saying that we were well accepted. [The fighters] had no choice, and we just didn't back down . . . but I put myself on a different level . . . some of us, we did what we had to do. We kept our nose in our books . . . I was in the Homecoming Court. I did certain things . . . I was okay . . . [r]espected and accepted . . . I just didn't have that many problems.<sup>144</sup>*

And although Pee Wee Jackson spoke of one racist teacher that negatively targeted black students, he also spoke highly of Miss Griff, his white math teacher, and said that it was in Miss Griff's math class that he learned of his intellectual potential:

*Initially [Cross Keys] was a cultural shock because all of the beliefs and values I had dealing with white folk was so vivid and strong, to where we had been classically and operatively conditioned to believe that white folk were smarter than us . . . classical conditioning—what else you gonna believe? I mean, you been told it all your life. . . . And I was really afraid, because I said, "Well, I can't really make it here because I don't know enough." . . . But my first day in geometry I realized one thing: that I was probably one of the smartest kids in that class . . . that kicked me to another level . . . oh, I got brazen and bold . . .*

*Miss Griff . . . [s]he was a beautiful woman . . . when she realized that I could do everything they were doing, she pulled me to the side one day . . . she said, "You are really doing great in this class. . . . Are you planning to go to college?" I said, "Yes." She said, "Well, you need to take an advanced class." . . . So she put me in an advanced class mid-term. [By] special arrangement with my counselor . . . she put me in an accelerated program, to where all my classes were advanced.<sup>145</sup>*

In effect, white Miss Griff behaved similarly to any black Lynwood Park teacher who helped a student with potential, a teacher who ensured that a student headed for college was well prepared. And even Gary McDaniel, militant and aggressive leader of

<sup>144</sup> Horton, 17 September 2005, 83-84.

<sup>145</sup> Pee Wee Jackson, 2 September 2006, 16-8.

the Lynwood Park bloc at Cross Keys, remembered that at least one white teacher cared about the Lynwood Park students outside the classroom:

*[W]e had a sociology teacher named Miss Cheek, and she really tried to keep the blacks pretty straight. She had a nice attitude. She was a good person. She kind of really looked out for us, you know, when we was going down that rugged road. And we had went down that road.<sup>146</sup>*

Although he thrived at Cross Keys, Pee Wee Jackson, who graduated in 1968, nevertheless said that school desegregation was bad for blacks because the white school system did not care whether or not the black students were educated, and Jackson recounted the experience of one of Lynwood Park's brightest:

*[I]ntegration took us from a community, and a society of love, compassion, and caring, to a society of callous, uncaring, assuming, and arrogant people. They didn't give a damn about us. They didn't care whether you made it or not. And I know a girl that is bordering on genius. You know where they had her, because she was real quiet and she was not aggressive? You know where they had this child? They had her in the retarded class . . . That girl could do a calculus problem so fast—geometry—all this stuff. She was a genius at mathematics. She had a almost photographic memory. She was one of the few persons I ever seen could look at something, you could ask her about page twenty-three in this book that was written by So-and-So in 1924 [and] she could tell you every fact of that book. But they had her at Cross Keys High School in . . . special education . . . They never took the time to evaluate her. They just came to a pocketed conclusion, based on her appearance, and their lack of will to find out what was really wrong with her.<sup>147</sup>*

Moreover, Jackson claimed that Cross Keys was interested in those Lynwood Park youths who played sports for the school, but never cared about the athletes' academics:

*[Y]ou got this guy that can really play basketball, can shoot the ball. But guess what? The sucker can't read . . . But at Lynwood Park, in order to participate in sports, you had to have a C average. If you didn't have a C average, you didn't participate in sports. At Cross Keys you could have an F average and don't even come to school 'til football season and they still would let you play.<sup>148</sup>*

Gary McDaniel also claimed that the teachers and officials at Cross Keys did not care about whether or not the black students achieved academically:

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<sup>146</sup> McDaniel, 8 June 2005, 25.

<sup>147</sup> Pee Wee Jackson, 2 September 2006, 14-5.

<sup>148</sup> Pee Wee Jackson, 2 September 2006, 27.

*I know a friend . . . that graduated with me in 1969 . . . he played football with me . . . “When I was in the twelfth,” he said, “do you know they just put me out of school over at Cross Keys . . . I couldn’t even read.” . . . [Cross Keys] Graduated him.*<sup>149</sup>

The accounts of Pee Wee Jackson and Gary McDaniel were meant to demonstrate that black students were hurt academically by being sent to a white school with teachers and administrators who were uncaring about black academic achievement. However, their negative comments about Cross Keys graduating Lynwood Park students who could not read are also commentaries about the lack of academic quality at the Lynwood Park School. For example, Gary McDaniel attended Cross Keys from age sixteen, and Pee Wee Jackson transferred there when he was seventeen. Therefore, if members of their cohort—the Lynwood Park students who played sports with them, and who graduated with them—could not read, then that suggests that the Lynwood Park School, its administration, and teachers, and the entire Lynwood Park community did not extend its collective institutional caring to all of the community’s children. In effect, these students, who transferred to Cross Keys High School two or three years before graduation, were allowed to advance through grades in the Lynwood Park School without being able to read, which confirms the claim John Jett made that “Lynwood Park High School was a joke.”<sup>150</sup>

The Rosenberg and Simmons review of the impact of school desegregation on blacks from 1965 to 1995 also found that desegregation led to diminished black self-esteem because that is when black children learned of both their economic and academic disadvantage relative to whites. And the stories of many Lynwood Park residents confirm that after desegregation they discovered that the Lynwood Park school offered a substandard education, and that this realization made them feel inferior to their white

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<sup>149</sup> McDaniel, 8 June 2005, 26.

<sup>150</sup> Jett, 13 November 2005, 96.

classmates.<sup>151</sup> For example, Maudina Peaches Horton was one of the first seventeen who went to Cross Keys in the 1966-67 school year. Horton said it was at Cross Keys that she realized that Lynwood Park's curriculum and teachers operated at a lower standard:

MH: *[I]t was a rude awakening . . . I never did a book report here. I never did any of those things. It was murder—[in Lynwood Park] it was like one, two, three, you know, one, two, three . . .*

VMH: *So what happened at Cross Keys? What was the rude awakening?*

MH: *You know, the structure of the teaching. I mean, book reports, term papers, all kinds of things. As for the educational part . . . a little more concern of what you were learning, and how you were taking it in . . . I didn't feel like I had that here. No, I didn't, because some of my teachers here—and don't get me wrong—they were real nice, but I don't know if they had the education they needed to teach us.<sup>152</sup>*

Horton's account suggests that there were teachers at Cross Keys who cared about whether or not the black students were learning. And Horton's claim that teachers at Lynwood Park were not fastidious about whether or not their students were understanding the material contradicted accounts that black teachers in Lynwood Park went the extra distance to ensure that *all* students grasped the material. Horton spoke of the low educational standard of Lynwood Park's High School, and Steve Daniel explained that it was no better at the elementary level, which he realized once he entered Jim Cherry Elementary School at age twelve:

*[W]hen I first went to Jim Cherry we was behind. They was more advanced than we were . . . because in Lynwood Park you got all kinds of discipline problems. Teachers got to do this, they got to take time out with the bad kids. Some of the kids couldn't read. They couldn't write, but they was passing 'em on.*

*Get to Jim Cherry they knew how to do multiplication, and we still trying to figure out how to damn add . . . I didn't want to be left behind so I studied because they will laugh at you. You know kids are cruel. If you don't know it they make you go to the board and do this problem: fifteen divided by ten . . . and we couldn't do it. We hadn't got that far yet. We were still doing three times three. We weren't into multiplying double*

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<sup>151</sup> Armor, *Forced Justice*, 101. The research blamed a diminution of black self-esteem on three factors: white racism, and black children discovering for the first time that they were economically and academically disadvantaged relative to whites.

<sup>152</sup> Horton, 17 September 2005, 77-9.



*numbers . . . And we weren't into how to find a noun, a verb, and how to break a sentence down . . .*

*[T]he people that stayed in Lynwood, they were behind when they got to Cross Keys . . . the people that went to Jim Cherry, well, we were on cue. But the people that were from Lynwood, when they got to Cross Keys, they were behind like we [first] were at Jim Cherry . . . We had caught up, but they hadn't yet. And the work was getting harder. And you try to explain it to 'em and they couldn't [grasp it]. It had got harder. It's just like learning how to talk when you're ten years old as opposed to when you're two or three . . . I felt inferior . . . as far as the academics.<sup>153</sup>*

Vanessa Siddle Walker argued that the institutional caring of the black community before the 1960s ensured that black students attained their highest potential.<sup>154</sup> Many of Lynwood Park's residents spoke of the institutional caring that confirmed Walker's claims about the success black students achieved at the segregated Caswell County Training School. However, other Lynwood Park respondents spoke of many students being left behind, that the educational level in the Lynwood Park School was not up to the standard of white schools, and that those children without concerned parents or the potential to pique a teacher's attention, focus, and care, were simply left behind.

In other words, if Walker's claim were to be applied to Lynwood Park, the direction of her thesis would have to be reversed. Walker's point was that all segments of the black community worked in concert to enable its children to attain their highest potential. But in Lynwood Park it was the opposite: it was the latent potential in the Lynwood Park child that caused the community to rally around to help, to support, to challenge, and to articulate high expectations to that particular student. Pee Wee Jackson said that children who performed well in school were rewarded by the community, which suggests that Lynwood Park's institutional caring "adopted" only those students who displayed potential.<sup>155</sup> Lynwood Park children without a display of the necessary potential

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<sup>153</sup> Daniel, 6 May 2007, 40-2.

<sup>154</sup> Walker, *Their Highest Potential*, 66-91, 199-210.

<sup>155</sup> Pee Wee Jackson, 2 September 2006, 14.

were left to fend for themselves, and those who stayed in school were nevertheless advanced each year to the next grade—and graduated—although they could not read.

The Lynwood Park school produced many successful people, such as Patricia Martin, Peter Scott, Mel Pender, Pee Wee Jackson, Columbus Jones, and numerous others—men and women—who went on to earn college degrees. The community's school also produced high school graduates who did not go on to college, yet were successful, such as Horace Ouisley, Carrie Julian, and John and Leroy Chatman, who retired from jobs after more than two decades of service. Along the way there were some who were successful despite all the negative odds of coming from Lynwood Park *and* the lack of academic potential.

For example, Patricia Jones, truly a *miserable* of Lynwood Park, became one of its most successful children. Born of alcoholic Mary Baby Chick Carter, the unkempt waif was then raised by illiterate, bootlegging, domestic worker Aunt City, who worked too long and hard raising four children not her own to attend PTA meetings and school programs. Jones could not articulate her ideas clearly and knew she was not “college material” because she had to work “triple hard” to earn a C. Yet after Jones was singled out by her teacher Minnie Douglas, Jones wanted to attend school and learn. Jones was very active in high school, and was president of her graduating class. Jones braved approaching Jim Cherry, and persuaded him to keep the community's school open for her senior class, a promise Cherry honored although the class shrank to only fifteen. After graduating, Jones went to work for General Motors, from where she retired after twenty-nine years.

In 1976 Jones saw that Lynwood Park was becoming derelict, and she organized the residents to clean up the enclave and foster community pride. She invited speakers

from DeKalb County government to what became an annual event—Lynwood Park Day—organized voter registration drives, and began recruiting members for the NAACP among the community’s residents, in the tradition of Luke Holsey and Annie Truitt before her. These annual efforts led to Jones’s election in 1986 as the first female president of the DeKalb Chapter of the NAACP, which enabled Patricia Jones to represent her race, her community, and her county, locally, nationally, and internationally.<sup>156</sup>

Patricia Jones found academics difficult but was nevertheless given an opportunity to succeed because her prettiness caught a teacher’s eye. And while Aunt City could instill a sense of somebodiness in Jones at home, her “adoption” by Minnie Douglas inspired Jones to attend and stay in school. Jones then went on to graduate with honors. Jones served her community, and achieved her greatest potential, although she did not have the inherent academic gifts of a Peter Scott, Pee Wee Jackson, or Columbus Jones. And many other Lynwood Park students, equally capable of becoming somebodys, despite having lower academic acumen, more than likely fell through the cracks—as John Jett claimed—due to a lack of teacher and community focus in the Lynwood Park segregated school system. Those children who were ignored could then find a career in illegality or construct masculinity and a sense of somebodiness by becoming a bully and gatekeeper on the dangerous boundary. So it was never the case that all the children of Lynwood Park were equally afforded an opportunity by the community’s educators and residents to achieve their highest potential.<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>156</sup> Jones, 26 June 2008, 20, 34, 49, 51-3, 73-5. Lynwood Park Day still occurs every year in May. It is treated as a homecoming and is usually attended by residents and their kinfolk from around the country. The event is preceded by a beauty pageant the week before, in which Miss Lynwood Park and Little Miss Lynwood Park are crowned.

<sup>157</sup> Jones, 26 June 2008, 39-40; John Jett, 13 November 2005, 96-7.

Scholars have debated the effects of school desegregation since the three *Brown* rulings, framed within a “harm versus benefit” thesis, and the results have been inconclusive thus far. Twenty years after *Brown*, Richard Kluger claimed that not enough time had elapsed to render an objective opinion about whether school desegregation had benefited or hurt blacks. Blacks were largely unwelcome in formerly segregated social spaces, and school districts adopted “freedom of choice” plans to keep whites from sharing the same classrooms with blacks. Even the passage of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act in 1965, which offered sizable federal funds to school districts that desegregated could not provide enough incentive for complete desegregation in recalcitrant states such as Georgia, which had to be ordered to close all majority black schools in 1969.<sup>158</sup>

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Patricia Martin worked indefatigably for years for full school integration and followed *Pitts v. Cherry* all the way to the Supreme Court. Her children were targeted at Cross Keys High School, her son Victor was eventually expelled, and Martin said of school desegregation:

*I had fought like Rip for desegregated schools. A number of us parents here in the community fought [segregation] . . . [to] the Supreme Court . . . But after about fifteen or twenty years, I had to go back and apologize to my children . . .*

*[I]t wasn't desegregation so much as I wanted equalization, and I didn't understand it at that time . . . I had to apologize to [Victor] and my other son . . . that what I did, and the extent that I went to do it, I didn't feel that it accomplished all that it was supposed to have accomplished . . . what I really wanted was equalization. I wanted things to be equal [and] I felt like they may have been robbed.*

*[I]n all of the African American schools, your teachers were always trying to find ways to get you to advance. They took a pride in it, that if you advanced, it was like they had accomplished something. But with integration, it was like [black] students lost something. And even though you may come to class with me, and you may hear the same material, and get it, your choices—or your chances—are not as great as the other race. And I had to apologize to them.<sup>159</sup>*

<sup>158</sup> Kluger, *Simple Justice*, 748, 750. 759. Kluger is speaking of studies that measure overall harm or benefit to blacks. The 1965 to 1995 study measured only the effects of desegregation on black self-esteem.

<sup>159</sup> Martin, 13 October 2004, 40-1; Martin, 27 October 2004, 11.

Although she does not specifically mention it, one aspect of Patricia Martin's disappointment with desegregation is that equality did not extend to a curriculum in white schools that taught an appreciation of black history and culture, which black students had been taught in their enclave's school. And, in fact, Martin said that blacks were actually denigrated by white teachers:

*I remember my older son coming home in the eighth grade and he said that his teacher had said that no black person ever discovered anything or . . . invented anything . . . I said to him, "Take this [black encyclopedia] and show it to your teacher. She just doesn't know. I don't know where she came from, but she just doesn't know." And I went on to tell him . . . about the cotton gin.<sup>160</sup>*

What Martin sensed, but did not articulate, was that one aspect of her disappointment was the fact that school desegregation meant assimilation—that everyone has the same culture—for black schoolchildren, rather than inclusion—a friendly relationship with difference that respects black culture and teaches about the critical role of blacks in the establishment of the nation. Martin wanted true equality, one that was based on white respect for black culture, to the same extent that blacks had respected white culture since the founding of the republic. And Martin believed that black students received that critical combination of an adequate education, plus knowledge of their unique culture and history in their segregated, all-black schools. In addition, Martin was possibly also reacting to the attacks on black culture in the 1960s by thinkers such as Daniel Patrick Moynihan, who claimed that “the Negro . . . has no values and culture to guard and protect.”<sup>161</sup>

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<sup>160</sup> Martin, 27 October 2004, 6-7. Martin is referring to the fact that a black slave named Sam gave Eli Whitney the key idea for his cotton gin. Sam's father had developed a type of comb to remove seeds from cotton, and Whitney's patented “invention” simply mechanized this comb. See John H. Lienhard, *Black Inventors*, No. 127, <http://www.uh.edu/engines/epi127.htm>.

<sup>161</sup> Glazer and Moynihan, *Beyond the Melting Pot*, 53; Moynihan, *The Negro family*, 76.

It is problematic to generalize that black children during school segregation received a good education. Vanessa Siddle Walker claimed that black schools competently educated all their black students, *despite* a “blatant lack of school facilities and resources.”<sup>162</sup> However, this begs the question: is it new books and desks, equipment and facilities, that guarantee an educated child? After all, many of Lynwood Park’s children, including Patricia Martin, Peter Scott, and Columbus Jones, received their early years of education in the one-room schoolhouse on Mae Avenue, which had practically no services. The English poet John Milton argued in his famous treatise *Aeropagitica* that books are not idols to be revered and preserved, but are rather living things that need to be read over and over again—and trashed from being used.<sup>163</sup> In other words, the appeal for an adequate education should not be based on new versus used books, but should rather focus on the knowledge contained in the books, whether a balanced range of knowledge was made available to all students, and whether teachers were adequately trained to impart that knowledge to students. The evidence suggests that the Lynwood Park School did not meet these criteria, and neither did Cross Keys High School, since knowledge was not balanced there, and was only selectively meted out to black students in both places.

In a 1966 study of education, when most students attended segregated schools, social scientist James Coleman found that black schools “were not offering educational programs equal to white schools,” which supported the belief that segregation was harmful to black education.<sup>164</sup> The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) has been collecting academic achievement data on national samples since the early 1970s. By 1990 the NAEP found that educational gains for segregated black students—in all grade levels

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<sup>162</sup> Walker, *Their Highest Potential*, 2.

<sup>163</sup> John Milton, “Aeropagitica,” in *John Milton: A Critical Edition of the Major Works* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 239-40.

<sup>164</sup> Armor, *Forced Justice*, 36, 91.

nationwide—were as large *or larger* than for desegregated blacks, which suggests that “school desegregation [was] probably not a major explanation of the black achievement gains.” The NAEP found that black educational achievement since *Brown* was rather linked to the improved educational and economic conditions of the black family.<sup>165</sup>

The NAEP findings do not apply to communities like Lynwood Park, which are steeped in poverty. In their work on *high-poverty schools*, research scientists Robert Balfanz and Nettie Legters found that approximately forty-six percent of the nation’s African Americans attend high schools “in which graduation is not the norm” versus eleven percent of white students. This led Balfanz and Legters to conclude that “[s]eparate and unequal high schools are unfortunately alive and well in our nation.” Balfanz and Legters’s finding would suggest that black children from communities like Lynwood Park have little chance of graduating.<sup>166</sup>

White flight and *de facto* segregation has re-segregated many DeKalb County schools, and the all-black, high-poverty schools have experienced falling test scores. In a 1999 newspaper article by Bill Torpy, Harvey B. Coleman, former principal of the Lynwood Park school, attributed lower black test scores in these schools to “academic neglect” by parents and the underclass black community. Coleman said that things were better in segregated schools in general, and Lynwood Park in particular, “when he instilled discipline and demanded academic results.” Moreover, blacks responded in the same article that integration “was a waste of resources,” and that closing the black schools hurt students and their communities. For example, Danny Buggs attended the all-black Hamilton High School in Scottdale, and was transferred to Avondale after his school was

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<sup>165</sup> Armor, *Forced Justice*, 92, 95-6.

<sup>166</sup> Robert Balfanz and Nettie E. Legters, “Locating the Dropout Crisis: Which High Schools Produce the Nation’s Dropouts?” in Gary Orfield, ed. *Dropouts in America: Confronting the Graduation Rate Crisis* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press, 2004), 63.

closed. He was a football and track star at Avondale High, but said of Hamilton and his black Scottdale enclave: “When you look at a school, you look at a community, a village. You have sports, band, assembly programs. That’s where everyone is. It was our common denominator.”<sup>167</sup> This opinion was echoed by Pee Wee Jackson, who argued that desegregation destroyed Lynwood Park:

*[I]f you take the nucleus of a group, a church . . . do you think it’s going to perpetuate . . . [integration] gave the leaders a stage without an audience, because the people that were participating in the plays weren’t there anymore, because their allegiances went from Lynwood Park to Cross Keys. So all of the energy that used to go to Lynwood Park was now going to Shamrock, Sequoia, Chamblee. It just weakened it to where the kids would come back to the community [and] they didn’t have no allegiance to Lynwood Park. Their allegiance was to Cross Keys, Chamblee, places like that.*<sup>168</sup>

The opinions of Coleman, Buggs, and Pee Wee Jackson fit nicely within the golden-age-of-the-ghetto paradigm of scholars such as Vanessa Siddle Walker. But the entire premise of *Brown v. Board of Education* was that black educators and families knew—as Rosa Beatles-Sowell articulated when she said, “we know that our schools are inferior”—that black segregated schools were inferior academically to those of whites. Thurgood Marshall and the NAACP claimed in the 1950s that blacks were academically inferior to whites because they were disallowed from sitting in the same classroom as whites.<sup>169</sup> Danny Buggs commented in 1999 about the futility of school desegregation: “What makes you think if I sit next to a Caucasian kid that I’m going to be smarter?” In 1969 Buggs had led his black classmates in an unsuccessful protest to keep his segregated school from closing.<sup>170</sup>

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<sup>167</sup> Bill Torpy, “Raising the Grade: Beyond Desegregation,” *The Atlanta Journal and Constitution*, 30 September 1999, A-1.

<sup>168</sup> Pee Wee Jackson, 2 September 2006, 28-9.

<sup>169</sup> Beatles-Sowell, 1 September 2006, 22.

<sup>170</sup> Torpy, “Raising the Grade,” *The Atlanta Journal and Constitution*, 30 September 1999.



The evidence of Lynwood Park suggests that Danny Buggs was wrong, and that Thurgood Marshall and the NAACP were right: that sitting next to white students in the 1960s would give black students a better education—if they could negotiate around the racial tensions—*because* black students would be assured of receiving the same education as whites. Although Lynwood Park School reported a reduction in the dropout rate by the mid-1960s, possibly due in part to school equalization, the students nevertheless were receiving a substandard education relative to whites at the time of school desegregation, as evidenced by the stories of many of Lynwood Park’s former students. And the reason was more than likely not based on used materials or lack of facilities, but rather on a limited curriculum and inadequate teacher training.

While many Lynwood Park residents received an adequate education—both in the community’s school and at Cross Keys after desegregation—it was not the community or the black and white educators that were critical to their academic success. It was rather the child, such as Patricia Jones, who wanted to go to school after she was properly washed and dressed, and who could succeed regardless of the quality of materials and the availability of facilities. Maudina Peaches Horton underscored the point that the desire first had to come from within the individual:

- MH: *Kathy Wells. The Wells sisters. All of them was pretty smart.*  
 VMH: *So people who were smart came out of Lynwood Park School with a good education because they were smart.*  
 MH: *Thank you.*  
 VMH: *And they were going after it.*  
 MH: *Exactly, exactly, [it was] not what [the teachers] were pushing. And then, of course, some of the teachers, they had pets . . . Like Kathy was probably a pet. My cousin Linda was not only beautiful and smart—I mean smart—she was beautiful too. You know, she got skipped every other year, but it was in her. It was there . . .*  
 VMH: *So some people in Lynwood Park had it in them to succeed. Like you were not lost to the streets . . .*  
 MH: *Thank you.*

- VMH: *So you could survive in Lynwood Park and have a really good future and a really successful career . . .*
- MH: *You must have it. You must have a hunger for it. You must have something within your spirit and soul: I want better, I will do better, I don't want to be a part of that.*
- VMH: *I will not be made small by my environment.*
- MH: *Thank you.*<sup>171</sup>

The issue was never about getting equal facilities, nor new or used books and equipment. A student had to have a hunger for knowledge and the potential for success that staying in school promised, in order to have the community rally around her. For those who did not have academic potential, such as Patricia Jones, her prettiness caught the eye of her teacher, whose encouragement empowered her to pursue education, and eventually enabled her, in large part, to achieve her highest potential.

As Pee Wee Jackson explained, the black teachers in Lynwood Park did not force themselves upon the students, but they were there if the students turned to them.<sup>172</sup> Those children without the latent academic potential, or the good looks, or the ability in sports, to attract a teacher's attention, focus, and dedication, simply fell through the cracks of the Lynwood Park segregated educational system, and from all accounts, their numbers were many. Yet they, like Patricia Jones, more than likely had much potential that could have been coaxed and molded to create adults who could be successful without turning to illegality as a career.

While closing the Lynwood Park School promised a more adequate education for the enclave's children at Jim Cherry Elementary and Cross Keys High Schools, racism among the student body, teachers, and administration caused many of the community's children to be suspended and expelled, and others to drop out. Selling marijuana as a

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<sup>171</sup> Horton, 17 September 2005, 79-80.

<sup>172</sup> Pee Wee Jackson, 2 September 2006, 26.

survival strategy for the community's dropouts eventually led to a career in crack cocaine trafficking, which was so financially lucrative that many community youths foreswore education for the street life of Lynwood Park. The stories also suggest that not all whites at Cross Keys High School were racist, that there were some teachers who cared about the Lynwood Park students outside the classroom, and some who nurtured those students with academic potential. And the accounts also suggest that students who were serious about their education were able to negotiate the racial tensions at Cross Keys in the early days of desegregation, and were somewhat integrated in student life at their new school.

The Lynwood Park school was not simply a building where the enclave's children spent part of their day. Rather, the school was an important community institution, around which many parents focused their attention and effort, to enable as many of Lynwood Park's children as possible—those who wanted it—to get an adequate education. School desegregation, in theory, offered the children of Lynwood Park a better education. Desegregation also took the Lynwood Park students out of the community and exposed them to a wider world. But along with these gains for the students, there were also losses for the community. One of the unfortunate results of closing the Lynwood Park school is that the enclave's core group of parents were not welcomed at the white schools and thus Lynwood Park lost its institutional focus which had customarily rallied around its children's futures. And after the mid-1980s, trafficking in crack cocaine made Lynwood Park increasingly dangerous, caused residents to withdraw from community life, and led to the dereliction of the enclave. Throughout its history Lynwood Park had always tolerated a degree of illegality, but the community was ambushed by the destructive qualities of crack cocaine, as Officer M.W. Williams explained:

*[T]hose people didn't envision the way it got with crack cocaine. They wouldn't have wanted the community to be like that. . . . [Lynwood Park] turned into something real bad.*<sup>173</sup>

This statement begs the question: if the Lynwood Park school had remained open, could the community have balanced illegality in drug trafficking as it had with bootlegging and other forms of vice in its earlier era before the 1960s? Would school equalization have resulted in more graduates, less dropouts, the preservation of the enclave's institutions, and a smaller number of drug traffickers?

After the school closed, Lynwood Park's children were exposed to middle-class lifestyles, which engendered in them increased desires, which could then be satisfied through lucrative drug dealing after they were forced to leave school without an adequate education. So it could be argued that the destruction of Lynwood Park as a community could be traced back to school desegregation, the closing of the community's school, *and* the racism that affected both adults and children, which led to the dismantling of Lynwood Park's institutional life, which had historically rallied around its children to keep them safe, and to try to get them educated. And although Lynwood Park also had negative dynamics that prevented it from saving and educating all its children, it nevertheless achieved great success with many, which it was not allowed to continue after the closing of the community's school.

School desegregation, *in conjunction with* civil rights gains, irreparably hurt Lynwood Park and its residents, due to a high dropout rate for its youth—caused mainly by racism—and middle-class black flight from the enclave. These dynamics helped lead to a proliferation of illegality in drug trafficking, a devolvement of the community and the erasure of its institutions, and the county's eventual response to focus on the revitalization

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<sup>173</sup> Williams, 14 April 2005, 83.

of Lynwood Park, which eventually led to the displacement of its traditional black community through the various mechanisms of gentrification.

## Conclusion

The people of Lynwood Park—like all underclass blacks—were forced to build a life in the interstices of American racism. On this jagged ground informed by illiteracy, poverty, and lack of opportunity, the people of the enclave responded with *phronēsis* and *praxis*—their native intelligence and labor—and built a largely subsistence existence within the deep woods of rural DeKalb County, and kept themselves and their children safe from the white outside. Yet while the community established a vibrant cultural life behind the Jim Crow veil, the survival strategies the residents were forced to pursue also contained their self-destructive elements. Safety from white racism was secured for Lynwood Park’s residents after the community was dead-ended and its bullies established a reputation that kept outsiders out of the enclave. The golden-age-of-the-ghetto aspect of Lynwood Park’s narrative is that residents and community institutions worked in concert to educate all of their children, and engender in them a sense of somebodiness, to ameliorate the sense of inferiority imposed upon blacks by Jim Crow segregation. Yet while all residents desired safety, somebodiness, and education for their children, the enclave’s survival strategies also contained seeds that contributed to its eventual destruction.

Lynwood Park established an ethos for toughness, necessitated by a desire for safety from whites, and a territoriality that kept other black men from access to the community’s women. And thus Lynwood Park developed as an endogamous enclave wherein the majority of its residents were related and linked to each other across a kinship network. These close family ties engendered tolerance, patience, and assistance for those in need, and also enabled the people of Lynwood Park to “see” yet “not see” the later

aspects of illegality that in part led to the destruction of the community. And since the majority of the enclave's residents were steeped in poverty throughout its entire history, illegality was a necessary survival strategy that was tolerated and naturalized across the entire community. Lynwood Park illegality supplemented the household economy and added new products to its arsenal through time. And while widespread illegality established the ways in which many of Lynwood Park's children would be robbed of their fullest potential and futures, crack cocaine became the weapon that in large part ensured the enclave's demise.

Whites were also implicated in Lynwood Park's illegality, since they trained some of the residents in moonshine making in the enclave's founding era after whites employed the community's men as their helpers. Whites then profited from the sale of the product's raw materials after Lynwood Park residents established their own moonshine-making industry. In the community's marijuana era, both John Jett and LaTrelle Lockwood explained that they purchased their product from whites. And in the crack cocaine era, the residents of the enclave claimed that the majority of their customers were white. Therefore, throughout its entire history, whites have been intertwined with the many negative aspects of Lynwood Park's trajectory into displacement.

A 1962 newspaper article with the headline "Lynwood Slums Mar N. Atlanta: Slums Blighting Suburban City" featured six photographs of buildings in Lynwood Park, along with their outhouses. The article presented Lynwood Park as an enclave of litter-filled dirt streets with no public services, where wood-burning stoves "supply heat to these drafty hovels," while "washing is done in the front yard."<sup>1</sup> The article denigrated Lynwood Park, and focused on structures that were evident to the white gaze along

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<sup>1</sup> Staff, "Lynwood Slums Mar N. Atlanta," *North DeKalb Record and Tri-County Graphic*, 10 April 1962.

Windsor Parkway/House Road. It depicted Lynwood Park as a slum steeped in deprivation, which hardly did the enclave justice. While the physical structures were evidence of the limitations white society imposed upon poor blacks, in actuality Lynwood Park was a vibrant community, with a variegated life on the inside, hidden away from the gaze of the affluent whites who were surrounding it.

Segregation forced blacks to congregate in enclaves. And while many elite blacks mimicked whites, and cultivated European-derived customs, most working-class blacks in communities like Lynwood Park were actually keeping alive the folkways of traditional African American cultural practices in music, dances, dress, and worship. In Lynwood Park, people “jooked” at the juke joint, sat on their porches in aprons and headscarves, made soap and boiled clothes in their front yards, and clapped their hands, stomped, and danced in their churches.<sup>2</sup> As Officer M.W. Williams recounted, he was shocked to see that Lynwood Park was a throwback to a rural environment when he began patrolling there in 1986.

Within its physical boundaries, Lynwood Park’s residents created a parallel society largely outside the gaze and understanding of both the white mainstream and the black elite. With the dangerous boundary along House Road, and only one point of ingress and egress, Lynwood Park became a hub of black life that was virtually invisible to outsiders. And by virtue of living in houses on tiny lots, and with windows thrown open much of the year, life in Lynwood Park was theatre—all its aspects were on public display. The bullies on the corner patrolled, drank, gambled, and fought, while second-tier men drank under the trees behind the holes-in-the-wall on the boundary. Many residents hung out on stoops, porches, and

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<sup>2</sup> For more on African American culture, see Earl Lewis, *In Their Own Interests: Race, Class, and Power in Twentieth-Century Norfolk, Virginia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 148-66; Karen Ferguson, *Black Politics in New Deal Atlanta* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 25; Tera W. Hunter, *To ‘Joy My Freedom: Southern Black Women’s Lives and Labors After the Civil War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 151, 172.



windowsills, while children played in the woods, along the creeks, and at the lakes. Gospel music, and rhythm 'n blues wafted on the wind, punctuated by grunting pigs, clucking chickens, and honking horns, while speeding moonshine runners beating the cops into private yards dusted everything with the powder of red Georgia clay.

In its public spaces, individuals blended with the community. The household was not a self-contained and private place of residence, but rather flowed into the neighborhood. In other words, to be at home in Lynwood Park was synonymous with being in the community. Most of the people of Lynwood Park engaged in traditional Negro jobs: the dirtiest and most labor-intensive, for the lowest pay. And with few places to go during segregation, residents customarily found respite from their hard work in the enclave: baseball games at Horseshoe Bend, hanging out at Herman Lake, and drag racing on the corner, while Sunday was generally reserved for church.

But Lynwood Park was also a bundle of contradictions. *De jure* segregation forced underclass blacks of varying economic and educational levels to live together. And while black enclaves before the 1960s are usually portrayed as akin to one large family working in concert for black uplift, Lynwood Park was divided into four quadrants and contained intragroup tensions, which limited movement and freedom within the enclave. However, a reputation for academic potential nevertheless could and did rally the entire community behind promoting those children as successes of the entire enclave.

Lynwood Park was vibrant and bustling with activity. It was a community that was dangerous for some, and one where many of the women carried weapons. Lynwood Park was also a community where elders were respected, where women ministers were revered as saints, where kinship ties fused with spiritual *praxis* to help those in need, and treated with patience and tolerance all the enclave's various eccentrics, alcoholics, and addicts.

Lynwood Park was a community of teasing, fun, and laughter. It was a place where vice was enjoyed and embraced as pleasurable, and judgments were withheld, because all were tied in the day-to-day struggle for existence in a climate of widespread deprivation.

Lynwood Park was a place where parties, barbecues, and fish fries spilled onto yards. It was about hog killings, and hunting in the surrounding woods to supplement the diet. And Lynwood Park was a community with men like Arthur Calloway who “took no junk” and would shoot you for disrespecting them in their homes, and women like Rose Bussey, who could pull a pistol from her brassiere.

Lynwood Park was also a community that could come together to raise money to build churches, to buy land for a school, and to purchase school supplies for those of its children who wanted a future outside illegality. Lynwood Park was a community where safety from the outside could be ensured, yet negative dynamics within could destroy even its successes, such as Columbus Jones, while its positive dynamics could ensure that waif Patricia Jones would succeed.<sup>3</sup> Lynwood Park was a place where residents saw God’s hand intervening in their lives at every turn. And it was a place where Mother Nature cooperated with the Lynwood Park agenda, providing hills and hollows for safety, a stadium-like configuration at one end for entertainment, and various flat and isolated pockets where the thick woods provided the mantles of cover around the various stills of the community’s moonshine industry, and its later marijuana patches.

Over time, Lynwood Park’s pursuit of illegality fashioned a criminal mind in many of its youths, since they were modeling historic community behaviors by precept. For example, Rodney Thompson and his group were stealing dogs and collecting the rewards

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<sup>3</sup> Patricia Carter Jones married Woodrow “Johnnny” Jones of Lynwood Park, but he is not related to the family of Columbus Jones.

from the dogs' owners at age ten. Rodney then escalated to stealing cars and selling marijuana, and would be described by Lieutenant Roy Benifield as a "one-man crime statistic" for the number and frequency of his petty crimes.<sup>4</sup> Pee Wee Jackson explained that Lynwood Park peer pressure turned many intelligent youths, such as Gary McDaniel, into criminals:

*Gary always had that wild man criminal mentality from when he was a small kid. He always had that thing of "I can take a penny, grind it down to the size of a dime, put it in a soda machine and get a soda for a damaged penny." . . . [with] the innovative criminal ideas and stuff, Gary was among those guys that came up with all the new stuff: "Well, I can hotwire a car." . . . Gary always had that potential from a kid . . . [T]he other element of that is peer group influence. See, Gary didn't do that because that was Gary's character. Gary did that because Thomas Junior and them . . . had a great influence on Gary's life. So to be a part of the status establishment of that particular element, Gary had to participate, or he would have been labeled as a sissy or a punk . . . Gary was a smart guy in school, but it's just that . . . he got an education in criminology. Not as criminology in school, but in criminology practical.<sup>5</sup>*

John Jett explained that the children of Lynwood Park were "mature about wrongness," since illegality had been widely sanctioned as a survival strategy from the time of the enclave's founding. Jett agreed with many other residents that Lynwood Park was not a good place in which to raise children. Gertrude Booker, born in 1918, a bootlegger herself, has had several of her family members fall into criminality, with her grandson Timothy Timbo Walker being the most notorious. But because of Jim Crow segregation, blacks before the 1960s had little choice about where they could live, and many could not keep their family members from the lure of Lynwood Park's street, its illegality, and its hero worship of successful illegal actors, as Booker recalled:

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<sup>4</sup> Benifield, 31 March 2005, 12; see also Malcolm and Pat Douglas, "Brookhaven Security Patrol-DeKalb County: Community Involvement Pays Off," undated, Roy H. Benifield Papers.

<sup>5</sup> Pee Wee Jackson, 17 September 2006, 34-5.

*I never have liked Lynwood Park . . . 'cause I always thought it was a bad influence on children. . . . Now there's a lots of good peoples was over here, but they couldn't help what the children would do, just like I couldn't help what mine did.<sup>6</sup>*

Lynwood Park was also a deeply Christian community and a spiritual upbringing helped many residents—such as Gary McDaniel, and John Jett—to recover and refashion their identities from criminality into becoming upstanding citizens. And this Christian upbringing then inspired them, and many other residents, to then go out and help others. Maudina Peaches Horton is only one example of this ongoing spiritual *praxis* that Lynwood Park engendered. Horton is a staunch leader in China Grove Missionary Baptist Church. Her mother, a domestic worker who raised five daughters alone, opened her home to Lynwood Park's homeless and downtrodden. Horton is an extension of her mother's tradition, and now attempts to keep many of the community's youths in church and school, and regularly shuttles residents to doctors, and dentists, all at her own expense.

Lynwood Park, like every underclass black community, was able to rally around and ensure the success of some of its children—those who stayed in church, focused on education, wanted a future apart from illegality—those who made a commitment to separate themselves from the influence and illegality of the street. For example, although Pee Wee Jackson said that as a child he was paid to steal moonshine for his quadrant's drunks, at a certain point Jackson decided to focus on education rather than pursue illegality as a career:

*[T]here are periods in your life to where you exit a situation . . . there are two phenomenon: one of them is relating, one of them is tolerating. Now, the people that I don't have any dealings with now since I graduated from Cross Keys, from Bethune-Cookman, from New York University, the United States Army, or wherever, is because during those social experiences we were not relating to each other. We just tolerated each other for that period of time . . . I related to Gary at one time . . . [but] I had no interest in*

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<sup>6</sup> Booker, 11 November 2005, 45-6. Belinda Marshall also said that her house burning down in 1961 was a blessing because times were changing and she could relocate to a different community to save her children. Marshall, 10 September 2005, 3, 15-6.

*that criminal stuff, so I didn't know how to hotwire cars. I did not know how to jimmy a soda machine to where I could make it to just spit sodas out. I didn't know how to go to A&P and shoplift food, or go to Lenox Square and steal clothes. That was not something I was interested in.*<sup>7</sup>

In other words, those who rejected illegality separated themselves from former peers and merely tolerated the criminal aspect of Lynwood Park. Pee Wee Jackson excelled in the classroom, and the community rallied around to help him succeed and become one of its success stories. While Lynwood Park produced many successful and upstanding citizens, the enclave also contained various aspects that robbed many of its children of the opportunity of achieving their highest potential. And even some of its most successful, such as Columbus Jones, fell victim to the community's negative dynamics. Bishop Cornelius Sawyer, born in 1917, said he was thankful that he lived in the far western end of his quadrant, so he could keep his children safe:

*I thank God I live on this side, and not over on that side . . . the way we raise our kids is different . . . [and] some of 'em [over there] didn't make it through . . . we never did mix too much with peoples on that side over there.*<sup>8</sup>

Many of the stories of Lynwood Park contradict the thesis that the black ghetto kept its children safe before the 1960s. Lynwood Park was divided into four quadrants, children generally were not allowed to wander far afield, and had to negotiate intragroup tensions when they did. Many families had some children that “made it,” while losing others to the community's street life, and the critical difference between the two, as Maudina Peaches Horton pointed out, and Pee Wee Jackson confirmed, lay first in the commitment of the child to eschew the enclave's negative dynamics. In fact, Dennie

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<sup>7</sup> Pee Wee Jackson, 17 September 2006, 33-6. Gary McDaniel claimed that he has “done it all” and was fully out “in the street.” See McDaniel, 8 June 2005, 36. McDaniel is now in training to be a deacon at China Grove Church.

<sup>8</sup> Sawyer, 9 February 2007, 56-7.

Jones Wesley—the sister of Columbus Jones, who “made it” and then was shot and killed in Lynwood Park—claimed that the only hope for the enclave’s children was in escaping:

*One of my nephews, one of the smart ones . . . He was going to go to jail . . . but he ran from the cops . . . I told him, “Look, the best thing for you to do is to get out of Lynwood Park . . . Go see how somebody else lives on the other side of town sometimes.” . . . [T]hey would never leave Lynwood Park. . . . They thought they had to be thugs . . . It’s the only thing they saw, the only thing they knew . . . Monkey see, monkey did. And it was sad . . . [M]y nephew . . . listened . . . [a]nd ever since he’s been gone he’s been doing wonderful . . . only one that ever broke ranks . . . The boys end up in jail all their young adult life . . . all their young adult life [they’ve] always been hustlers and thugs.<sup>9</sup>*

Gary McDaniel, now a staunch community and church leader, said in 2005 that school desegregation was a positive change for Lynwood Park, because it exposed the community’s children to the wider world across the dangerous boundary. However, many of the enclave’s children who got expelled or dropped out in the 1960s and 1970s also became trapped in Lynwood Park because their options for “making it” in the world across the boundary were severely limited, while the community’s illegality in marijuana and later crack cocaine dealing offered them economic success without much education:

VMH: *[D]o you think that in your generation that the kids from Lynwood Park benefited from integration . . .*

GLM: *Yes, they benefited . . . you need a change . . . you got a lot of peoples . . . especially then—had never been across that blinking light [the boundary]. And that’s what [was] wrong with them . . . you got some now that went to school with me back then in 1967, and ’68 that went across that blinking light, but is still stuck back down here. See, some of them what they throwed out of school? They having problems right now today . . . It’s like the failed generation. They’re still living with their mamas.*

VMH: *Yes, and they came over here and started selling marijuana?*

GLM: *Marijuana, crack.<sup>10</sup>*

McDaniel saw desegregation as forcing the enclave’s children into a wider world, and John Jett said in 2005 that gentrification was serving a similar purpose. Jett claimed

<sup>9</sup> Wesley, 19 October 2005, 82-6. In over four thousand pages of testimony not one respondent said that their children would be better off today if they were able to grow up and be educated in the Lynwood Park before the 1960s.

<sup>10</sup> McDaniel, 8 June 2005, 31-2.

that the displacement of the enclave's traditional residents was the only way to now save the community's children, since the historic practice of illegality was destroying them:

- JJ: *I am glad that [gentrification] has happened, because of the children don't have a chance. I've seen four generations in this community that do the same thing . . . I've seen a lot of talented children in this community that never had a chance because . . . they repeating the pattern . . .*
- VMH: *So you're saying you think it's good for the young people that the community is being destroyed.*
- JJ: *Definitely, definitely. Best thing that could have ever happened to 'em.<sup>11</sup>*

Similarly, Officer M.W. Williams, who began patrolling Lynwood Park in 1986, explained that the destruction of Lynwood Park is the only way to save its youth:

*I'm just glad to see this change, and to me it can't help but be positive. It's going to be traumatic for a lot of the people who are having now to jump up and move, but the kids have got a better chance, and I think they will get it now . . . in Lynwood Park it's too much peer pressure to do the things that everybody was doing . . . It's easier than trying to go to school and trying to hunker down and stay there and get good grades. Plus that didn't endear you to your peers . . . [school] made you kind of be ostracized by your quote unquote supposed friends. You couldn't have friends who were out here hustling and doing all sorts of crime, and you going to school trying to get good grades, trying to make it. You have some kids do that, but they distance themselves from the people that they were growing up with . . .*

*[A]t least [with gentrification] they won't have this soil, they won't grow up in this field . . . They at least have to look at something different. Hopefully, it will be something positive, but it won't be half as violent, all the stuff that everybody—cousins, and uncles and aunts—we're all doing the same thing . . . naturally you're tied to whatever was current . . . it's going to take this to kind of break it all up and [have them] go somewhere and do something else in a different place.<sup>12</sup>*

The irony of Lynwood Park is that in its founding era, one of the main priorities for the residents was keeping their children safe from the white outside. And in the present, the displacement of the traditional community now represents the only possible way to save Lynwood Park's children from the negative dynamics of the inside, which several respondents maintained was destroying the children's lives and limiting their options. So while Martin Luther King, Jr. could write in 1963 that *de jure* segregation deformed the

<sup>11</sup> Jett, 13 November 2005, 49, 51.

<sup>12</sup> Williams, 14 April 2005, 79-83.

personality of the black child, in the twenty-first century many Lynwood Park residents claimed that it was their black enclave that was essentially stunting their children.<sup>13</sup>

Morality is a luxury afforded to those in a secure economic position, who can then look down in disdain and judge those less fortunate. The people of Lynwood Park did what they had to do to survive, and historically engaged in illegality that did not completely destroy the community, but only some of its members over time. The residents were then ambushed by the highly-addictive quality of crack cocaine, which contributed—along with deindustrialization—to addiction, escalating crime, black middle-class flight, and an influx of renters, addicts, and dealers, all negative dynamics that eventually contributed to the destruction of community life and folkways, the county’s crackdown, and the continuing displacement of the traditional community.

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According to Constitutional scholar Jack Balkin, the three Reconstruction amendments, the civil rights gains, and *Brown* are generally seen as evidence of the Great Progressive Narrative of the United States. These mechanisms guaranteeing rights and equality for African Americans suggest that the Constitution reflects that the deepest ideals of Americans are good, and that the nation has great political courage to reverse the injustices of the Constitution, such that every American could share equally in the country’s deep commitment to liberty and equality. *Brown* today is hallowed for overturning *Plessy*, ending social segregation, and guaranteeing equality. But while *Brown I* represents the ideals of the “good” Constitution, *Brown II* continued the tradition of the “bad” Constitution that sanctioned slavery when it was drafted, and later limited

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<sup>13</sup> Martin Luther King, Jr., *Letter from a Birmingham Jail*, 16 April 1963 (Philadelphia: African Studies Center, University of Pennsylvania), 5.



black equality with the 1868 Fourteenth Amendment. Balkin also argued that while the affirmative action policies of the civil rights era were meant to increase opportunities for blacks, once racial quotas are satisfied, affirmative action as presently employed actually “shields from scrutiny practices of subordination that cannot be explained as the result of direct . . . or hidden racial animus.” The result is that persistent black inequality is explained as the result of private choices, cultural differences, or black inferiority, rather than the structural and institutional racism that preserves social stratification and perpetuates the black underclass.<sup>14</sup> In addition, legal scholar Derrick Bell pointed out that throughout American history the promise of black gains were made possible only when they served white interests, and Bell wrote:

[T]he most serious injustices suffered by Negroes, including slavery, segregation, and patterns of murderous violence, are not sufficient to gain real relief from any branch of government. Rather, relief from racial discrimination, when it comes, requires that policy makers perceive that the relief will provide a clear benefit for the nation . . . self-interest is the apparent major motivant in racial remediation policies that are then abandoned when the nation’s interest has been served.<sup>15</sup>

Jack Balkin explained that the social limitations of the Fourteenth Amendment’s tripartite theory of equality was exploited by lawmakers to justify Jim Crow laws in the South, which ensured black illiteracy and politically limited underclass blacks. The civil rights acts recovered America’s international reputation and served the nation’s cold war requirements. *Brown* led to a resurgence of white hatred towards blacks, white flight, school resegregation, and falling test scores for underclass blacks in more-recently segregated schools. In addition, Supreme Court Justice William J. Brennan’s 1987 dissent in *McCleskey v. Kemp*, and Donald Braman’s 2006 study on sentencing disparities

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<sup>14</sup> Jack Balkin, “Brown as Icon,” in Jack M. Balkin, ed. *What Brown v. Board of Education Should Have Said: The Nation’s Top Legal Experts Rewrite America’s Landmark Civil Rights Decision* (New York: New York University Press, 2002), 5-8, 13.

<sup>15</sup> Derrick Bell, “Revised Opinions in *Brown v. Board of Education*,” in Balkin, *What Brown*, 193-4.

demonstrate that racism is still widespread across the structures and institutions of the nation.<sup>16</sup>

Social thinkers Gary Orfield and Carole Ashkinaze pointed out that in the Atlanta metropolitan area, and several other cities in America that have experienced economic booms since the 1960s, the educational and economic plight of underclass blacks have actually been going backward since the 1980s. Orfield and Ashkinaze explained the ways in which black underclass youths were blocked from attaining higher education, and demonstrated the myriad ways in which conservative social policies further sank the underclass into poverty. And while the plight of the underclass is generally blamed on personal choice since the civil rights gains of the 1960s, Orfield and Ashkinaze claimed that people's choices, while important, are "shaped and limited by large social and economic forces." Conservative government policies since the 1980s maintained that voting and the marketplace would help the underclass through the trickle-down effect. Consequently, government programs that helped the underclass were reduced, and more prisons were constructed to punish those who pursued illegality since the opportunity for a legitimate career path was presumably available to every American.<sup>17</sup>

It is therefore not surprising that the people of Lynwood Park would be affected by the declining opportunities for blacks in the 1980s. After a long history of illegality, and a thriving marijuana industry after racism in the desegregated schools led to a large number of dropouts, the people of Lynwood Park had little choice but to enter the crack cocaine epidemic that began sweeping across the nation in the mid-1980s, since they were

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<sup>16</sup> Paul Finkelman, *Dred Scott v. Sandford: A Brief History with Documents* (Boston: Bedford Books, 1997), 6; Donald Braman, "Modern Crime Control Mechanisms: Criminal Law and the Pursuit of Equality." *Texas Law Review* 84 (2006): 2097-2130, 2097-2110.

<sup>17</sup> Gary Orfield and Carole Ashkinaze, *The Closing Door: Conservative Policy and Black Opportunity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 28-44, 103-148.

increasingly shut out of educational and economic opportunities, and further impoverished by declining government assistance.

The people of Lynwood Park are the products and victims of the nation's long history of racism, and many of their stories open windows that afford glimpses onto the deep pain caused by racism in America. John Chatman, born in 1945, worked as a janitor at Sears and Roebuck after graduating from high school. He and several other Lynwood Park men were promised better jobs when they returned from Vietnam, which Chatman had to eventually demand. And being decorated for heroism had no impact on whites at Sears and Roebuck:

*[A]bout us living on a small scale coming up, and a lot of things, we just accepted as the way it's supposed to be . . . my year [in Vietnam] made me realize that I deserved more than what I was getting before I left Lynwood Park . . . after serving my country, I felt like I was just as equal as anybody else in the job-wise . . . when I came back I was still as a porter, and kind of a clean-up guy . . . that is what they was hiring back then, porters and cleanup—the blacks. But I felt that I was just as important as some of the whites that was coming through there, and they didn't never put them [on] as a porter, or cleanup guy. They always came in as a stock-keeper, and went forward. So I just felt like that's what I want to do. I want to be equal to what they're doing. . . .*

*I requested for a stock-keeping job. And at that time the manager had indicated that he had something special for . . . me, Lucius, and Larry, 'cause "you guys are special." So after six months after that, nothing came about, so I asked for a stock-keeping job. And he said, "You're sure that's what you want to do?" I said, "That's exactly what I want to do." So he gave me that job . . . They would have kept me down as long as they could have . . .*

*[O]nce I got into stock-keeping for about six months, and they see how well I was working in that area, I was moved . . . because they felt like I could get more done and be more productive in distribution . . . the manager over distribution, I felt like he was prejudiced, because my production was so great, so high above the other guys in the department, he pulled me and put me on merchandise that . . . we'd be shipping two pieces to a store, ten pieces to a store, fifteen pieces to a store, where in the past I was getting like a thousand pieces, two thousand pieces was being shipped at one time.*

*So when he put me off on those small orders, quite naturally my production dropped. And then his manager begin to look and see how my production began to drop. They wanted to know what's going on with John. So I told him what was happening. I said, "Well, you know, when you picking but two pieces here, ten pieces here, fifteen—all day long—you're not going to average that much a day." He said, "Do he keep you on that all the time?" I said, "Three times out of a week." And I said, "The other two times, the merchandise is not flowing like it normally does, with big quantities. So that's the*

reason the production went down.” . . . my supervisor told him, “It’s not that. John is just not working like he used to.”

*I felt that he was trying to get me fired . . . [b]ecause I was kind of . . . showing up the other guys up. They was all white guys, and that shouldn’t be. They’d be talking and carrying on while I’m working. And then they thought that they needed to put me somewhere else, to do something else, so they could look pretty good . . . So I asked for a transfer . . .*

*[I]n three months in flat distribution my production was way back up there. . . [The manager] said, “Well, I need to see you, and your supervisor, from the hanging distribution.” And we came into his office, and he said, “I looked at John’s production for the last three months, and it’s back up there.” He said, “He must have been right. It must have been a problem between you and him.” He said, “You owe him an apology for what you did.” So he did apologize to me . . . And not long after that I became a supervisor . . . [e]qual to him. And he didn’t like that either. So he was there for about another year and he quit . . . he didn’t want the blacks to be comparable to them.<sup>18</sup>*

The 1968 Summer Olympics was the moment when Lynwood Park native Mel Pender, born in 1937, gained international fame for winning a gold medal. Pender had already served two tours of duty in Vietnam and was decorated as a combat veteran. Yet these achievements made no difference in DeKalb County when Pender took his mother to a white doctor:

*I needed to take [my mother] to the doctor in Chamblee . . . [Once in the building] my mother said, “We have to go in this way” . . . in the back of the long hall into this little area . . . I said, “Mama, what is this for?” “This is where we have to sit.” I said, “Who is “we”?” She said, “Negroes.” . . . I said, “No.” I just got back from Vietnam [and] the Olympics . . . So I went up front to talk to the lady receptionist, and she says, “Can I help you,” and looked at me like “that” . . . I said, “My mother is here to see the doctor and I want to know why we have to sit back here in this little cubbyhole . . . She said, “Well, that’s where y’all supposed to sit.” . . . I said, “I don’t think it’s right to be treated this way. This is 1968. I thought the civil rights movement done past.” “Well if you don’t like it, Sir, you can leave.” So I said, “I want to see the doctor.” . . .*

*The doctor came. He says, “Boy, what is your problem?” . . . I said, “First thing, I’m not a boy, Sir.” I said, “I’m a man.” I said, “I’m a Captain in the United States Army, and I just recently got back from Vietnam, serving my country for you and people in America.” . . . He said, “Well, if you don’t like it, you can just damn leave.” I said, “Sir, I would appreciate it if you wouldn’t curse in front of my mother.” And I said, “I would appreciate it if you wouldn’t talk to me in that tone. The only thing I am asking you is why is it that black people have to sit here. I know they passed the civil rights law that there is no discrimination in America anymore.” “Well, I don’t care what law passed.” He said, “If y’all are coming here to see me, you’re going to sit back here.” I said, “Well, sir,*

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<sup>18</sup> Chatman, 28 March, 11-16. Chatman retired from Sears and Roebuck after thirty-two years.

*we're not going to sit there." "Well, you can just get your ass out of here. Get your ass out of here!" And I said, "Sir, I've asked you not to curse in front of my mother." And I said, "I would appreciate it if you lower your voice and speak to me with an intelligent tone." . . . I really didn't care when I got back. The way we were treated! I didn't care. I didn't care what happened to me. I just didn't care. I just didn't care. And so Mom started crying.*

*And so I got Mom in the car. We drove off, and she was crying. And I said, "Mom, I'm sorry, but you don't know what I just came from." I said, "You don't know where I've been, you don't know what I've been through, you don't know what I've seen, Mom. You don't know. I've seen a [black] young man get his legs blown off, get his arms blown off—one died in my arms, covered in blood." I said, "You don't understand why I feel the way I do about sitting in the back of this room."*

*And I hit the steering wheel and almost broke my hand, and I still have pain in my hand right now. When I hit the steering wheel I was crying so hard. I just lost it. And she was crying. And I just pulled over to the side, and she wept, and she hugged me. And she said, "I don't know, I don't know, I don't know. I don't know what you been through. I don't know."'<sup>19</sup>*

The stories of Lynwood Park expose the extreme hardship that many underclass blacks have suffered in America. Gertrude Booker, born in 1918, began picking cotton at age five, worked more than one job concurrently as an adult, bootlegged to purchase her house, retired at age eighty-five, and without taking vacations, was slated to die poor, if not for selling her Lynwood Park property.<sup>20</sup> And Laura Aunt City Patrick, despite working three jobs and bootlegging to supplement her household economy, still had to rummage for food in dumpsters in order to feed the four children she was raising, even though she gardened and raised chickens and hogs. The stories of Lynwood Park expose that mothers like Minnie Lee Weddie Thompson received no help from the county to keep

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<sup>19</sup> Pender, 27 April 2005, 72-4. Pender retired after twenty-one years in the Army. He was the first black head track coach at the United States Military Academy at West Point. Pender spoke of being penalized by the Army after returning from the 1968 Summer Olympics for his association with Tommie Smith and John Carlos's Black Power salute. Pender also recounted being a victim of racism at West Point.

<sup>20</sup> For more on the dynamics of black women's work in America, see Susan Williams McElroy, "Black + Woman = Work: Gender Dimensions of the African American Economic Experience," in Joe W. Trotter, Earl Lewis, and Tera W. Hunter, eds. *The African American Urban Experience: Perspectives from the Colonial Period to the Present* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004), 141-152.

her young son in school, or to assist her in helping him find alternatives to his delinquent stage of illegality.

In 1944 Gunnar Myrdal wrote “*what white people really want is to keep the Negroes in a lower status*” (emphasis in original). Myrdal nevertheless offered a positive prescription for the future of race relations in America. He claimed that racism would lessen and the American mind would undergo a steady cleansing as the “cultural level is raised” by research and education.<sup>21</sup> The racial dynamics that created, affected, and eventually destroyed Lynwood Park suggest that Myrdal’s prescription was overly optimistic. White flight and the resegregation of schools prove that racism still exists in the South, and legal measures that unfairly target and perpetuate the black underclass prove that structural and institutional racism is naturalized across the nation.

Racism against blacks in America did not end with the civil rights gains of the 1960s. Gary Orfield and Carole Ashkinaze documented the ways in which underclass blacks are kept from education and sink lower into poverty in cities experiencing economic booms, with their work focusing on Atlanta. Donald Braman exposed in 2006 that sentencing disparity targets underclass blacks, bars them from future legitimate employment, and spreads economic hardship across the black underclass kinship network. And John Jett learned firsthand that the prison system was another growth industry that wants recidivism, that offers no rehabilitation, and rather serves as a school for criminal methodology that perpetuates the vicious circle of black criminality, poverty, and subordination.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Gunnar Myrdal, *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1944), 591-2.

<sup>22</sup> For more on the boom in prison construction, lack of rehabilitation, and continuing recidivism in Georgia, see Orfield and Ashkinaze, *The Closing Door*, 151, 219-220.

The stories of Lynwood Park demonstrate that segregation did not provide a safe cocoon for all its residents, nor an adequate education for all its children. The accounts expose a community of strong Christian men and women who worked for community uplift and self-help, but who also had to compete with the seduction of the negative aspects of the street for their children's attention and futures. The stories also highlight women who unselfishly helped others, such as Maudine Horton, who opened her humble abode to the homeless, and Aunt City, who worked indefatigably to support four children not her own. The stories also expose a vibrant community life of honking cars, laughter, music, barbecues, hog killings, and Sundays spent in church, all existing comfortably alongside illegality, whose products evolved over time, and ambushed the community with crack cocaine, of which Officer M. W. Williams said:

*[T]hose people didn't envision the way it got with crack cocaine. They wouldn't have wanted the community to be like that . . . [Lynwood Park] turned into something real bad . . . it's the end of the community . . . That's good and bad.*<sup>23</sup>

The stories of Lynwood Park contain the ever-present echo of racism in their backgrounds. It is obvious that racism hurt Lynwood Park as a community and severely limited the options of many of its residents. The stories also reveal that racism deeply traumatized many individuals, such as Raymond Jackson, who was born in 1930:

*We are the bottom . . . Couldn't get no lower than what we are. . . . The black peoples haven't did anything to [whites]. We been their slaves . . . We did all the hard work. We built this country up and everything, and they do us like that . . .*

*[In the Army] I went to France. . . . When we got back to the States, them guys I was overseas with, they were white guys . . . They acted like they didn't know me . . . It just really hurts me . . . Even today. And that's been, what, fifty years ago . . . it hurts right to the day . . . I'll never get over it. It's always going to be in my heart . . .*

*You [have black] peoples walking around right here and their hearts are full. They choked up, but they can't say anything about it . . . you get to thinking about it: "Let's just don't say anything bad—just let it go." . . .*

*I love this country. I was born and raised right here in America . . . I did*

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<sup>23</sup> Williams, 14 April 2005, 83.

*everything [right]. I ain't been in prison. I ain't been locked up. But I had to be treated just like I was nobody.*

*God made all of us. We're all God's children . . . the race[s] of peoples are just like these flowers out here. You have red flowers, yellow flowers, a red rose—all kind of different things. People come in all colors. It take that to beautify the world . . . Can he help it 'cause he's black . . . God made us all . . . It take all different kinds of flowers to make a beautiful bouquet. Why would they sit up and don't like something God made?<sup>24</sup>*

Born in 1938, Wilmer Harris, a deacon of Little Zion Church, explained that it is impossible for a non-black person to comprehend what it means to be black in America:

*When you was a kid, you didn't think much of [racism]. But as you grow older you become aware of it. You become aware and you become bitter. You became mad. It makes you mad. It makes you want to whoop somebody. It makes you want to fight. [W]onder why people riot and things? Because they are angry . . .*

*[I]t's difficult for a white person to put himself in my shoes, 'cause you can't walk a mile in my shoes. Because it's like night and day. So it's difficult for you to put yourself in my shoes. You say, "I can imagine how you feel." No, you can't. You really can't. You think you can . . . I'm not talking about you. I'm talking about any white person.<sup>25</sup>*

American racism affected all blacks across the nation and kept the underclass in a subordinate position even after the gains of the 1960s. And while all blacks are victims of structural and institutional racism today, few elite blacks are able to grasp the injustice suffered by the people of third-wheel Lynwood Park, an underclass black community surrounded by white affluence. The existence of Lynwood Park, and all underclass communities, are proof of the failure of America's ethos of equality. Lynwood Park represents an ongoing American tragedy—the soiled petticoat that peeps out beneath America's shining and noble mantle of freedom, equality, and human rights rhetoric with which it attempts to blanket the world. Mamie Lee Mathis, born in 1920, said of whites in 2008 “they give us the hard way . . . [g]ive us the hard way to go.”<sup>26</sup> The totality of the stories of Lynwood Park, set within the conversation of America's long history of racism,

<sup>24</sup> Raymond Jackson, 7 October 2005, 130-6.

<sup>25</sup> Wilmer Harris, 3 January 2006, 32-3.

<sup>26</sup> Mathis, 1 April 2008, 42.



and its present mechanisms to perpetuate black subordination, should elicit sadness, horror, and reflection, in the conscience of every American.

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| David Lee Sutton (b. 1958)          | 1 May 2005        |
| David Lee Sutton                    | 23 July 2005      |
| Minnie Lee WeddieThompson (b. 1944) | 29 July 2005      |
| Minnie Lee WeddieThompson           | 11 August 2005    |
| Laura Ann Watson (b. 1926)          | 31 August 2005    |
| Dennie Jones Wesley (b. 1940)       | 19 October 2005   |
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