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FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

Miami, Florida

BLACK AND WHITE NOTES: SEGREGATION, URBAN RENEWAL, AND INTEGRATION THROUGH PITTSBURGH'S LOCALS 60 AND 471

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of

the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

HISTORY

by

Nathan Seeley

2019

To: Dean John F. stack,
Steven J. Green School of International and Public Affairs

This dissertation, written by Nathan Seeley, and entitled Black and White Notes: Segregation, Urban Renewal, and Integrat Through Pittsburgh's Locals 60 and 471, having been approved in respect to style and intellectual content, is referred to you judgment.

We have read this dissertation and recommend that it be approved.

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Florida International University, 2019

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedication to my wife, Samantha, and daughter, Kenleigh Jo, for their endless love, support, and encouragement.

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

BLACK AND WHITE NOTES: SEGREGATION, URBAN RENEWAL, AND INTEGRATION THROUGH PITTSBUGH'S LOCALS 60 AND 471

by

Nathan Seeley

Florida International University, 2019

Miami, Florida

Professor Kirsten Wood, Major Professor

This dissertation explores Pittsburgh's Locals 60, 471, and 60-471 of the American Federation of Musicians (AFM) from the late nineteenth century to the mid-1960s. Local 60 was founded in 1896 for white musicians and Local 471 in 1908 for black musicians. While other studies of the AFM take a top-down approach, this study examines these locals from the bottom-up. In doing so, it re-examines the causal relationship between music/musicians and the social, political, and economic conditions intersecting with them. This dissertation is built upon seventy-two interviews conducted between former Local 471 members in the 1990s, photographs from Teenie Harris Collection at the Carnegie Museum of Art, clippings from local newspapers such as the Pittsburgh Courier, and photographs and documents of the city of Pittsburgh.

Black musicians of Local 471 were constantly subjected to prejudice and discrimination from the AFM, white leaders of Local 60, city planners, and the general public. In effect, black musicians were systematically barred from the most lucrative jobs in Pittsburgh. This was largely the case until 1933, when Local 471 musicians

founded their own clubhouse, the Musicians' Clubhouse. Located at 1213 Wylie Avenue in the heart of Pittsburgh's Hill District, the Musicians' Clubhouse provided Pittsburgh's black musicians with a steady source of jobs, a chance to network and interact with nationally recognized musicians, and an open space for black musicians to practice their craft and experiment with music. The Musicians' Clubhouse stood until 1954, when city planners decimated Pittsburgh's Hill District in its urban renewal campaign. Despite its promises of new and better housing for African Americans, urban renewal fractured the black community. It left many black families without housing and ruined black businesses. As black businesses dried up, black musicians increasingly lost jobs. Local 471 musicians moved their headquarters multiple times over the next decade and its membership steadily declined. In 1966, the AFM forced Locals 60 and 471 to integrate following the Civil Rights Act, despite Local 471's opposition. But for a brief temporary period from 1966-1970 which black musicians negotiated during the merge, integration stripped black musicians of representation within the AFM.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

African American Jazz Preservation Society of Pittsburgh	AAJPSP
Afro- American Musical Association	AAMA
American Federation of Labor	AFL
American Federation of Musicians	AFM
American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers	ASCAP
Black Musicians of Pittsburgh	BMOP
Columbia Broadcasting Company	CBS
Congress of Racial Equality	CORE
Detroit Edison Company	DTE
Equal Employment Opportunity Commission	EEOC
Federal Housing Administration	FHA
Federal Music Project	FMP
Home Owners' Loan Corporation	HOLC
National Association for the Advancement of Colored People	NAACP
National Association of Broadcasters	NAB
National Broadcasting Company	NBC
National League of Musicians	NLM
Musicians Committee for Integration	MCI
Pittsburgh Housing Authority	PHA
Radio Corporation of America	RCA
Urban Redevelopment Authority	U

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

"You know it was more than just a union. Because, I can never remember going in there where I didn't feel as though I was richer, was not richer after going in there… I'd either learn something about music or something about life."[1]

- *Pianist Charles Cottrell, former member of Local 471*

Music has been a central part of American life for decades. Listeners enjoy music at concerts, at theaters and restaurants, and on the radio on their drive to work. Various genres have reigned supreme, such as jazz in the early twentieth century, rock and roll in the fifties, and the fad that was disco in the seventies. Yet the general public rarely considers how or why music is created, and they hardly ever reflect on the musicians themselves, or the context out of which music is born.

Working musicians, outside of the most famous and recognized, are just like most other workers in the sense that they too live paycheck to paycheck. While one person unwinds from his or her work week by listening to music, musicians are at work. Their work takes the form of practice, writing music, searching for and booking gigs, setting up, and sweating while playing a two-hour show. While their work takes a different form than most Americans, these musicians are subject to the same political, social, and economic forces that affect other Americans and shape communities.

[1] Charles Austin interview with Charles Cottrell, Jan. 29, 1997. University of Pittsburgh Digital Collections, African American Jazz Preservation Society of Pittsburgh Oral History Project Records and Recordings Collection, 1995-1999: Box 1, Folder 15. Henceforth AAJPSP Collection. Unless noted, all interviews were conducted by Charles Austin.

Background and Organization

This study examines Pittsburgh's Locals 60, 471, and 60-471 of the American Federation of Musicians (AFM) from the late nineteenth century to the mid-1960s. Local 60 was founded in 1896 for white musicians and Local 471 in 1908 for black musicians. Local 60 and Local 471 were just two of the many segregated locals established by the AFM throughout the country. The relationship between segregated locals was fraught with tension as white and black musicians battled for jobs. One of the primary ways in which white musicians protected their access to the best jobs was by drawing on racist tropes to demean black musicians. By presenting classical music as the white voice of the cultured while demeaning jazz and black musicians as unacademic counterpoints, white AFM musicians encouraged the broader public to financially support white musicians. Listeners, theater managers, record labels, and radio stations embraced white supremacist notions and used them to determine who had access to the most lucrative and steady jobs. Moreover, by persuading the broader public that classical music was more wholesome, white AFM musicians produced markers of race that shaped the way Americans understood the differences between white and black. In their efforts, AFM musicians were actors in the larger trajectory of U.S. racial politics.

For the first two decades of the twentieth century, white musicians dominated the music industry. They maintained a monopoly over nearly all jobs, especially the most lucrative and steady jobs in theater. To do so, they drew on racist tropes made popular by minstrelsy. The tide began to turn in the twenties as advancing technology threatened the jobs of white classical musicians and as jazz grew in popularity among the working class. Rather than accept genres made popular by black musicians, Local 60's leaders doubled

down on their attacks against jazz. Chapters II and III trace this story and show the persistent actions of white musicians to differentiate themselves from black musicians through the mid-twenties. Despite attempts by black classical musicians to prove they belonged in the ranks of the "civilized," a construct created by white upper-class Americans, black classical musicians could not penetrate the music industry. Black musicians of Local 471 took it upon themselves to change their circumstances, and in 1933, founded their own clubhouse.

Chapter IV investigates the Musicians' Clubhouse and how it benefited Local 471 musicians in a multitude of ways. Local 471 musicians founded the clubhouse when traditional labor organizing was not enough. At every turn, black musicians had been thwarted by white musicians, AFM leaders, and discriminatory business managers. The Clubhouse turned out to be a critical resource for multiple reasons. First and foremost, it supplied steady jobs. Local 471 musicians entertained nightly by playing in the clubhouse and it quickly became one of the best after hours clubs in the city. The clubhouse also became a space in which black musicians could network with other musicians and business owners to book gigs outside of the clubhouse. In addition, national headliners often frequented the clubhouse after playing a gig downtown. After hearing the talent inside the clubhouse, many national headliners hired Local 471 musicians to tour with them. Because of the clubhouse black musicians did not have to rely on recording or radio gigs. In addition, Chapter IV considers the Musician's Clubhouse and spaces like it (such as Minton's Clubhouse in New York City) and how they afforded black musicians an opportunity to play and practice free of the demands of

the market. The clubhouse counteracted decades of dominance by white musicians in the music industry.

Chapter V delves into the demise of the Musicians' Clubhouse. The Musicians' Clubhouse sat in Pittsburgh's Hill District, a neighborhood that was home to a large proportion of African American and other minority residents. By the 1950s, city planners decided to raze the Hill District in their grand plan of urban renewal. Urban renewal had extreme consequences for Pittsburgh's black musicians. It not only destroyed the clubhouse but fractured the black community, separating African American residents into several pockets throughout the city. In the aftermath, black families were left without housing and black businesses dried up which meant fewer available jobs for black musicians. Urban renewal crippled black musicians, but Local 471 remained.

Local 471 was never as strong as it was during the era of the Musicians' Clubhouse, but black musicians still enjoyed operating their own local and maintaining representation at the national level. The AFM began to bend to pressures from outside organizations to integrate in the early 1960s, as shown in Chapter VI. Despite a large majority of black musicians opposing integration, the AFM forced all locals to integrate in 1966. As a result, black musicians lost representation at the national and local levels, but for a few short temporary years as per merger agreements like Local 60-471's.

Sources and Methodology

This study examines the AFM and Locals 60 and 471 from the "bottom-up." I utilize several sets primary sources to do so. The core of this research builds on a collection of oral histories held at the University of Pittsburgh's African American Jazz Preservation Society of Pittsburgh (AAJPSP) Oral History Project Records and

Recordings. The collection contains seventy-two interviews conducted from 1995-1999 about which little has been written by historians. As scholars of historical memory have shown, oral histories are crucial sources to understand historical experiences.[2] This is especially the case in African American history, which was long neglected by historical societies, libraries, and universities since the days of slavery. Without oral histories, countless histories of slavery, grassroots movements, and important African American institutions and organizations would be lost.

To reconstruct the history of Locals 60, 471, and 60-471, I also use the Local 60-471 Collection held at the University of Pittsburgh. This collection contains membership cards, AFL and AFM by-laws, executive board meeting minutes, and Local 60's newsletters, dating back to the early twenties. The Maurice Levy Oral History of Music Project in Pittsburgh contains several more interviews that inform the Pittsburgh's music history. In addition, I draw on city planning and redevelopment records held in the University of Pittsburgh's Civil Unity Council Collection and American Panorama's "Mapping Inequality: Redlining in New Deal America," a digital set of maps created by the Home Owners' Loan Corporation from 1935-1940.[3] I also employ photographs held in the University of Pittsburgh's Pittsburgh City Photographer Collection and the

[2] For works on historical memory, see: Michael Honey, *Sharecroppers' Troubadour: John L. Handcox, the Southern Tenant Farmers' Union, and the African American Song Tradition* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the past: Power and the production of history* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995); David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001); Lynnell L. Thomas, *Desire and Disaster in New Orleans: Tourism, Race, and Historical Memory* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014). Some of the richest oral histories have been the Works Progress Administration's slave narratives.

[3] Digital archive: Robert K. Nelson, LaDale Winling, Richard Marciano, Nathan Connolly, et al., "Mapping Inequality," American Panorama, ed. Robert K. Nelson and Edward L. Ayers, accessed August 28, 2019, https://dsl.richmond.edu/panorama/redlining/#loc=12/40.44/-79.994&city=pittsburgh-pa.

Carnegie Museum of Art's Charles "Teenie" Harris Archive. These photographs reveal divergent perspectives of Pittsburgh's Hill District.

Local 471's membership records, meeting minutes, and other pertinent records were, according to Local 471 members, mysteriously misplaced or destroyed shortly after the merge. No records remain prior to 1966. In the AAJPSP interviews, former Local 471 members mention that Local 471 did in fact maintain records prior to 1966, but after Local 60 and Local 471 merged, the records were "mysteriously lost." This loss upset members and restricted them from drawing from their AFM pensions, since they could no longer prove their seniority in the union. Drummer Curtis Young suspected that former President Herb Osgood of Local 60-471 trashed the documents after he was voted out of office.[4] No matter the case, the lack of records prior to 1966 forced me to draw on other primary sources to reconstruct this history. Because of the lack of records, the AAJPSP interviews conducted by Charles Austin became critical to my research.

Theory

This work re-examines the causal relationship between music and the social, political, and economic conditions intersecting with it. Previous studies either highlight musicians' musical accomplishments or try to understand music as a creative outlet through which musicians raise awareness for societal issues. Most accounts view African American music as a tool for understanding African American life and identity. However, as historian Farah Jasmine Griffin writes, "A review of African American song

[4] Interview with Curtis Young, June 9, 1995.

lyrics, folk practices, and some fiction suggests that the quest for identity is most often the quest of literate African Americans or those who have biracial parentage. The question, 'Who Am I?' is not as prevalent in African American music."[5] Most musicians in twentieth-century Pittsburgh were more concerned about where the next gig would come from, paying bills, and feeding their families.

This observation calls into question the process of music creation and how musicians are impacted by social and cultural norms. Music creation can often be thought of as a complex interaction between the musician himself/herself and social space. Black musicians of Local 471 often had to adapt to social norms. This is seen in their style of play within white-owned venues versus black-owned venues. In white-owned venues, black musicians found the most success playing classical or a blend of classical and jazz in the early twentieth century. In black-owned clubs and venues, they often played more popular styles of music such as jazz and bebop.

Black musicians did not create jazz nor bebop in a vacuum. Black musicians created these genres in response to specific circumstances. Jazz was born in the late nineteenth century in New Orleans. It was a blend of Creole and African American music. Unlike classical music in which musicians played scripted tunes, jazz music contained elements of improvisation that are found in earlier forms of music such as blues and work songs. Bebop too was a result of specific circumstances. In the early 1940s, famous musicians in New York City such as Dizzy Gillespie enjoyed certain freedoms that most working musicians did not. While many had to tailor their music to

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[5] Farah Jasmine Griffin, "*Who Set You Flowin?" The African American Migration Narrative.* New York, Oxford University Press, 1995, 53.

the pleasure of white audiences to earn a living, Gillespie and others experimented during intimate jam sessions. They played fast, complex chord progressions with extended solos and took turns "battling" each other. As this dissertation will demonstrate, the process of music creation is complex and often depends on many social and economic factors.

At the same time, musical production itself should be understood as work. Like factory workers, musicians faced challenging working conditions and worked within a business they did not control. Lines were often drawn by race on the shop floors as well as in the city's clubs, bars, restaurants, and hotels. However, unlike factory workers, each musician had a certain amount of control over their product. They themselves fashioned a specific sound, one they thought would sell. For rank and file musicians, what often sold was conditioned by the social and cultural norms of their time.

Musicians also dealt with a specific economic reality and faced a market which dictated one's musical style. However, musicians also expressed their own preferences and skills when responding to these forces. For example, black musicians made choices of whether to pursue music for money or for love of the craft. For many, music was a secondary income, one that helped to sustain oneself and one's family while holding a low-wage job. To be profitable, black musicians had to fashion their own art in a way that met the needs of audiences and club owners. The various ways musicians resolved these contradictions accounts for the complexity of the jazz scene.

The music produced by Local 471 musicians changed over time in response to the particular challenges of the time. During the earliest stages of Local 471, when most members were of middle and upper-class standing, black musicians played classical music to be considered "civilized." As black musicians migrated North during the Great

Migration, so too did jazz music. Local 471 musicians converted to playing jazz music during Prohibition because popular cabarets and clubs were numerous.

While social norms, economic realities, and the marketplace often dictated to black musicians what they could and did play, examining the AFM from the "bottom-up" reveals African American agency. Black musicians of Local 471 did not stand idly by as white musicians dominated the industry. In fact, in the early 1900s, many black musicians organized in Pittsburgh to form the Afro-American Musical Association (AAMA), the precursor to Local 471. AAMA musicians' primary goal was to gain respect for black musicians and African Americans as a whole. They did so by playing classical music. Later, black musicians of Local 471 founded the Musicians' Clubhouse, which stood as a solid source for jobs for nearly two decades.

CHAPTER II: THE CANON OF CLASSICAL MUSIC

In November of 1906, a group of black musicians gathered in Pittsburgh to form the Afro-American Musical Association. Several musicians inked their names to the charter to the Allegheny County Court of Common Pleas: James E. Jenkins, J.H. Jenkins, R.W. Jenkins, E.H. Gordon, B.L. Gordon, Edward Robinson, Abraham Turner, John T. Williams, John Gray, and Isaac Howell. These black musicians believed that they could successfully campaign for civil rights by maintaining a respectable image. One of the primary ways was through playing classical music.

A complicated set of events led African Americans to believe that classical music could be used as a tool for the "advancement of their race."[6] From 1815- to 1856, a major wave of immigrants from Northern and Western Europe unsettled native-born white Americans. Native-born whites, along with the immigrants, struggled to cope with an industrializing nation and their place in society. They turned to minstrelsy as one coping mechanism among many. Minstrelsy, an American theatrical form founded on the comic enactment of racial stereotypes, was born in the early nineteenth century. White minstrel actors, with faces painted black, caricatured the singing and dancing of African Americans. Minstrelsy reached its zenith in the mid-1800s, as both native-born whites and recent European immigrants solidified a racial hierarchy with native-born whites at the top and African Americans at the bottom, and European immigrants in somewhere in between.

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[6] AAJPSP Collection: Box 4, Folder 14. Application of the AAMA to Allegheny County's Court of Common Pleas.

At the same time, America's white elite established a hierarchy of "culture" that functioned similarly to minstrelsy. America's elite after all, had descended from Europe. They brought with them an idea that European art and music idealized progress and moral improvement. In other words, there was a moral value to music beyond entertainment. Beginning in the late nineteenth century, the lines of what distinguished what was moral and ethical became hardened.[7] White leaders of the American Federation of Musicians (AFM) applied the hierarchy of culture to the world of music, connecting ideas of race to music in ways never done before. By the turn of the century an old guard of musicians successfully demonized black vernacular music styles such as ragtime, a syncopated music style for the piano that emerged in the late nineteenth century. In doing so, white AFM leaders and recording managers captured the newly founded record industry for themselves. For black musicians, the only genre left to play were minstrel and "coon" songs, which demeaned African Americans.

The Changing Nation

The nineteenth century was marked by unprecedented political, social, and economic change. During the early part of the century, an intense period of industrialization spawned factories in an industrial belt that included Pittsburgh. Men who had previously subsisted by farming or in other trades now earned wages in factories. Wage work turned their world upside-down. White wage workers found it

[7] Michael Broyles, *'Music of the Highest Class': Elitism and Populism in Antebellum Boston.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992.

difficult to reconcile their "manliness" with this new form of work.[8] Instead of producing their own means to survive, workers awaited a payment of wages. For white workers, dependence on wages and the wage system itself felt too close to slavery. In fact, white workers deemed wage labor as "wage slavery."[9]

America's "old settlers" also had to deal with a second wave of immigrants that came to the United States from roughly 1815-1865. New groups of immigrants hailing from central and southern Europe held held far different political and religious beliefs from America's native-born Anglo-Saxon Protestant population. The older settlers found it difficult to discard differences and often looked upon the new settlers as competitors for jobs.[10]

While the outright violence of white vigilante groups often steals attention, white Americans engaged in other methods to distinguish themselves from African Americans.[11] Minstrel shows, or minstrelsy, first became popular in the Northeast as the nation's first "American" theatrical style in the late 1820s. In what is now known as "blackface," white stage performers used burnt cork to paint their faces black. They

---

[8] Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996, 13; Jeanne Boydston, *Home and Work: Housework, Wages, and the Ideology of Labor in the Early Republic.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1990. Bederman contends that improved technology opened the way for a wage economy. However, to take a wage position went against everything men had been taught. That to be "manly," they needed to work hard and become economically independent.

[9] David Roediger, *Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class.* New York: Verso, 1991; Eric Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party Before the Civil War.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1995.

[10] David R. Roediger, *Working Toward Whiteness: How America's Immigrants Became White; The Strange Journey from Ellis Island to the Suburbs.* New York: Basic Books, 2005.
[11] Roediger, *Wages of Whiteness,* 53.

proceeded to act out skits, dance, and sing songs that mocked black people as shiftless, happy-go-lucky, and unintelligent.[12] Blackface actors claimed they represented "authentic" black culture, and many audience members believed them.[13]

One of the first minstrel performances was blackface actor Thomas Dartmouth Rice's character "Jim Crow." Rice based Jim Crow on the real performances of black street performers but twisted his performances into racist caricatures. Rice's Jim Crow character became popular because he so accurately captured what white passersby thought they observed when they passed black street performers. His stereotypical comedic style of dance and speech quickly gave rise to several impersonators, including George Washington Dixon and Bob Farrel, who each claimed to popularize a second minstrel character, the "Zip Coon." Zip Coon added another dimension to black stereotypes, the black "dandy." Sporting flashy attire, Dixon and Farrel pretended to be "ignorant black buffoons mimicking the manners of sophisticated white folks."[14] Minstrel shows built upon existing black stereotypes in the white mind and created further stereotypes. These stereotypes went unchecked, as African American performers who could have countered them were barred from the stage.

The old guard of white Americans also dealt with a second wave of immigrants that flooded the nation mid-century. While northern European immigrants from countries

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[12] Eric Lott, *Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993.

[13] David Roediger, *Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class.* New York: Verso, 1991, 13; 116; James H. Dormon, "Shaping the Popular Image of Post-Reconstruction American Blacks: The 'Coon Song' Phenomenon of the Gilded Age," *American Quarterly,* Vol. 40, no. 4 (Dec 1988), 451.

[14] Dormon, "Shaping the Popular Image of Post-Reconstruction American Blacks," 451.

such as England, the Netherlands, and Germany were typically accepted into the native white stock of Americans, other groups such as Irish, Jews, Italians, Greeks, Poles, and other southern and central Europeans were not immediately considered white. The latter group of immigrants felt a sense of "in-betweenness" after immigrating to the United States. They did not think of themselves as black and the old guard of white settlers did not consider them white. After arrival, immigrants absorbed local prejudices and found grounds for advancement through them. The most effective strategy immigrants used, ad historian David Roediger has shown, was to remake themselves in opposition to black folk.[15] Minstrel shows became a powerful, if difficult to understand, tool that immigrants used to assimilate in white America. In fact, new immigrants did not fully understand the entrenched racial codes and practices but followed them to elevate their own social status. Some German immigrants still found it difficult to understand racial codes and practices into the 1880s, when one German immigrant rhetorically asked whether "citizens of German origin had to attend Minstrel shows in order to be 'good Americans.'"[16] A memoirist in the same city later described the "taste for blackface as something that second-generation German Americans acquired only once they had assimilated."[17]

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[15] David Roediger, *Working Toward Whiteness: How America's Immigrants Became White; The Strange Journey from Ellis Island to the Suburbs.* New York, Basic Books, 2005.

[16] Alison Clark Efford, *German Immigrants, Race, and Citizenship in the Civil War Era.* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2013, 77-78.

[17] Efford, *German Immigrants,* 78; Marianne S. Wokeck, "German Settlements in British North American Colonies: A Paperwork of Cultural Assimilation and Persistence." In *Search of Peace and Prosperity: New German Settlements in Eighteenth-Century Europe and America.* Eds. Harmutt Lehmann, Hermann Wellenreuther, and Renate Wilson. University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000; Charles H. Glatfelter, "The Pennsylvania Germans: A Brief Account of their Influence on Pennsylvania." University Park, PA: Pennsylvania Historical Association, 1990; Bronner, Simon J. Pennsylvania Germans: An Interpretive Encyclopedia. Johns Hopkins University Press, 2017. Young Center Books in Anabaptist and Pietist Studies. EBSCOhost.

While many found it difficult to come to terms with white prejudices, they also saw minstrel shows as a powerful tool to forward their own goals.

Minstrelsy's peak in popularity coincided with increased waves of white vigilantism and violence. Following the Civil War, the thirteenth amendment abolished slavery and redrew the lines that clearly separated slave from free. Reconstruction was not simply a time of political and economic rehabilitation, but also a critical time in which individuals — men and women, black and white - contested and reconstructed their own identities. Freedpeople took advantage of their new access to legal marriage and took it upon themselves to learn to read and vote, activities they were forbidden from while enslaved. White supremacists too, took it upon themselves to redraw the color line. Vigilante groups attacked African Americans who attempted to vote, burned schools, and lynched African Americans.[18]

Among those who recognized the power of minstrelsy were music publishers, many of whom were recent immigrants themselves. [19] These music publishers, the nineteenth century version of today's record labels, sold minstrel show tunes to the American public. Publishers typically paid composers one flat fee for their compositions, then reaped all profits from the sale of reproductions. In the first quarter of the nineteenth century alone, ten thousand pieces of sheet music were sold by U.S.

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[18] James West Davidson, *"They Say:" Ida B. Wells and the Reconstruction of Race.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.

[19] Hans Lenneburg, *On the Publishing and Dissemination of Music, 1500-1850.* Hillsdale, Pendragon Press, 2003.

publishers, largely to white middle-class Americans.[20] Blackface minstrelsy played a central role in defining nineteenth-century American culture.

For a sense of minstrel songs themselves, one must look no further than Pittsburgh native, Stephen Foster, whom some consider America's first professional composer. Born on July 4, 1826 in Lawrenceville, a neighborhood northeast of downtown Pittsburgh, Stephen Foster grew up as part of a middle-class family and received private music lessons. His family owned black servants and it is rumored that one servant took Foster to black religious services. As a teen, Foster joined an all-male secret club called Knights of the Square Table that met in Foster's childhood home to sing. After moving for a time to Cincinnati from the age of eighteen to twenty-four, Foster moved back to Pittsburgh, married, and began his career as a professional composer.[21]

Foster soon realized that the minstrel stage could help him secure an audience for his songs. He circulated manuscript copies of simple melodies to various minstrel troupes. His first major piece became "Oh! Susanna" after the Christy Minstrels from Buffalo, New York, performed it on stage in 1848. "Oh! Susanna" became such a hit that more than two-dozen music publishing firms pirated the song. Though Foster only received a one-hundred-dollar payment from a Cincinnati publisher, his song was soon performed by minstrel actors across the country.

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[20] William Arms Fisher, *One Hundred and Fifty Years of Music Publishing in the United States, 1983-1933.* Boston, Oliver Ditson Company, Inc., 1933.

[21] Ken Emerson, *Doo-Dah!: Stephen Foster and the Rise of American Popular Culture.* New York: Simon and Schuster, 1997.

Like most minstrel songs in the mid-1800s, “Oh! Susanna” contained lyrics that demeaned black people. Written in exaggerated dialect, “Oh! Susanna” and many others depicted enslaved African Americans as simple and unintelligent. In the original manuscript version, held by the Library of Congress, one verse reads: “I jump’d aboard the telegraph and trabbled down the river; de lectrick fluid magnified, and kill’d five hundred Nigga; De bulgine bust, and de horse ran off, I really thought I’d die; I shut my eyes to hold my bref, Susanna don’t you cry.”[22]

Other scholars have concluded that fewer than twenty of Foster’s nearly two hundred songs fall in the “blackface” category. Foster himself supported the Union during the Civil War, and wrote other pieces sympathetic to enslaved African Americans. Songs such as “Nelly was a Lady” (1849) presented black people in a much more humanistic light. The lyrics read:

Nelly was a lady
Last night she died,
Toll de bell for the lubly Nell
My dark Virginny bride

Now I'm unhappy and I'm weeping,
Can't tote de cotton-wood no more;
Last night, while Nelly was a sleeping,
Death came a knockin at de door.

When I saw my Nelly in de morning,
Smile till she open'd up her eyes,
Seem'd like de light ob day a dawning,
Jist 'fore de sun begin to rise.

Close by de margin ob de water,
Whar de lone weeping willow grows,

[22] Foster, S. C. Susanna. W. C. Peters, Louisville, KY, monographic, 1848. Notated Music. https://www.loc.gov/item/sm1848.450780/.

Dar lib'd Virginny's lubly daughter;
Dar she in death may find repose.

Down in de meadow mong de clober,
Walk wid my Nelly by my side;
Now all dem happy days am ober,
Farewell my dark Virginny bride.

While this song also used a strong dialect to represent an African American slave, it is a far cry from many other minstrel songs, including Foster's earlier work. The power of "Nelly was a lady" hit an audience with the very first line, calling an African American slave a "lady." Many white Americans felt "lady" was a term reserved for white women only. For Foster to use this term is a sharp deviation from the typical characterization of African American. Soon Foster dropped dialect altogether from his texts and eventually referred to his songs as "American melodies."[23]

The very fact that Foster's later "American melodies" were not nearly as popular as his earliest blackface tunes demonstrates white desire to demean African Americans. White Americans commonly enjoyed minstrelsy because it put them atop the social hierarchy again.[24] The powerful minstrel stereotypes effectively influenced not just the social hierarchy but also the emerging music industry. Music publishers further cemented ideas of blackness and whiteness in the white mind by accompanying reproductions with minstrel-like images. One can trace a chronological progression of

[23] Center for American Music, Stephen Foster Memorial Museum: https://www.pitt.edu/~amerimus/FosterProfessionalcareer.asp

[24] The city of Pittsburgh dedicated a statue to Stephen Foster in 1900. The statue recently became the focal point of debates, as many despised the image of Foster sitting above a black banjo player with bare feet. The statue was removed from the front of the Carnegie Library on April 26, 2018.

minstrel misrepresentation of African Americans by examining 1830s sheet music, as literature expert Stephanie Dunson has.[25] Three sheet music covers offer a striking chronological progression of Thomas Rice's Jim Crow character (see Figure 2.1). The first and earliest-dated image shows a realistic depiction of Rice, a white man in black face paint and a wig, in his classic "Jim Crow" pose. The second cover represents him as a black man whose depicted features could not be fashioned with mere face paint. The third image pushes the stereotypes further as the depicted character becomes more cartoonish than human, with a distorted body and face. These images, a merge decade apart from the first to the last, demonstrate an important shift in the white public's perception of African Americans. According to Dunson, music publishers "first imitated, then co-opted, and ultimately evicted [black identity] for the entertainment and gratification of white audiences."[26]

[25] Stephanie Dunson, "Black Misrepresentation in Nineteenth-Century Sheet Music Illustration," in *Beyond Blackface: African Americans and the Creation of American Popular Culture, 1890-1930.* Durham, University of North Carolina Press, 2011.

[26] Dunson, "Black Misrepresentation," in *Beyond Blackface*, 50.

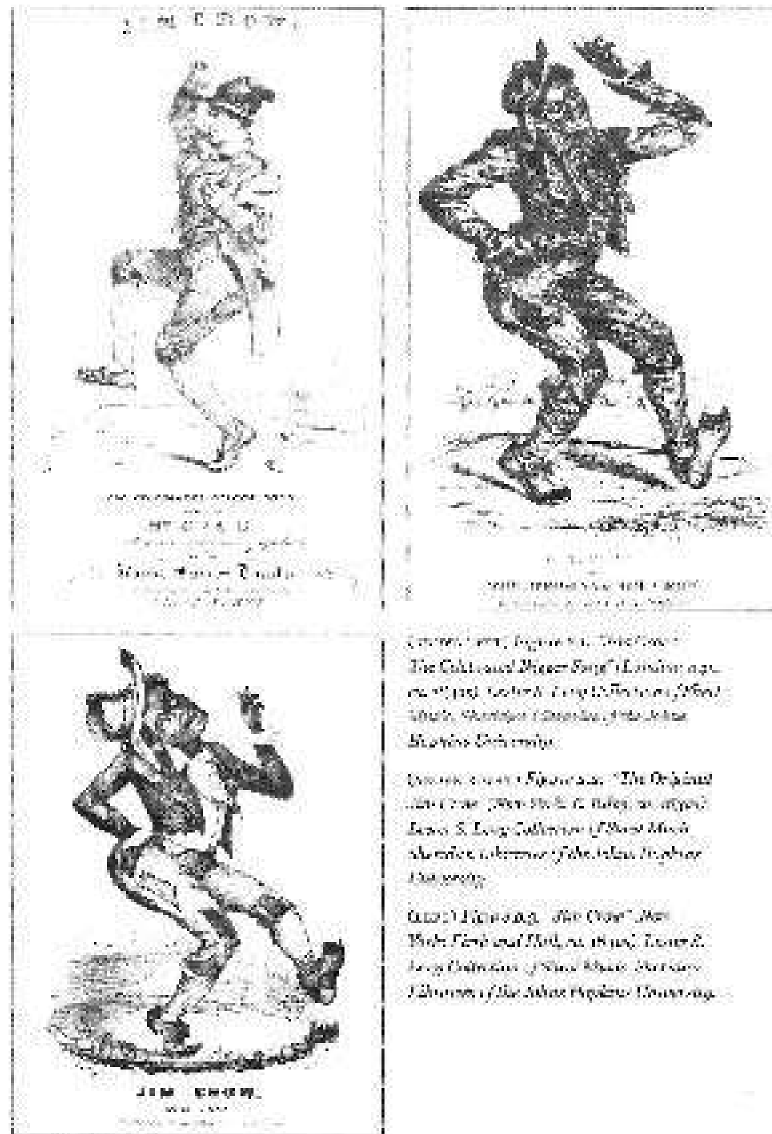

Figure 2.1: Jim Crow through the 1830s. From Stephanie Dunson, "Black Misrepresentation in Nineteenth-Century Sheet Music Illustration," in *Beyond Blackface: African Americans and the Creation of American Popular Culture, 1890-1930.* Durham, University of North Carolina Press, 2011.

The actions of music publishers were one part of a nation-wide complex of efforts — commercial, governmental, religious, etc. — to order society. Music publishers reacted to white desires (and recent immigrant desires) to demean African Americans and African American culture. Appealing to conservative white sensibilities not only

increased their own revenue but also assured recent immigrants and the larger public of their place in American society. In part because of the way classical music and black vernacular music were displayed by publishers and minstrel performers, Americans came to believe that racial division was both natural and necessary. They articulated this using terms as "highbrow," "lowbrow," and "popular" culture.

For mid nineteenth century Americans, "culture" and "civilization" were indistinguishable. The purpose of culture was to refine and morally elevate an individual. Civilized individuals learned how to carry themselves through a proper upbringing, one that relied on moral discipline. Culture meant polite manners, a code of personal conduct, and an appreciation of the arts. Those who possessed culture were thought to be civilized. Those who lacked it were often deemed "savages." For so-called cultured white Americans, the uncivilized included an assortment of people that they feared or disliked, including lower classes, non-Europeans, and people whose skin color was not white. Such people were to be scorned because their behavior could only degrade, not elevate. In an industrializing, urbanizing nation that absorbed millions of immigrants, the guardians of culture advocated certain standards and institutions intended to protect high culture from the "debasing influence of the uncouth lower orders."[27]

This was not by accident, as other "popular" styles of music had specific African origins. Many enslaved black people who were brought to the United States from West Africa or the Caribbean drew upon their musical roots from Africa. These descendants

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[27] W. Fitzhugh Brundage (editor), *Beyond Blackface: African Americans and the Creation of American Popular Culture, 1890-1930.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011, 7; Lawrence Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 224-225.

improvised, or spontaneously created, songs and styles that they passed down from generation to generation. Enslaved African Americans continued a tradition of improvisation in part because many slaveowners did not allow enslaved African Americans to learn how to read or write. In the eyes of slaveowners, if slaves learned how to read or write, they might be able to better organize and rebel against slaveowners. This led to many states to establish laws that prohibited enslaved African Americans from reading or writing. In 1740, South Carolina passed laws that prohibited teaching enslaved African Americans how to read or write. Many Southern states followed suit. White civilians caught teaching enslaved persons how to read or write could be punished severely. White vigilante groups also took it into their own hands to punish those who taught enslaved African Americans how to read or write, or to hang any slave caught with a book.[28]

Under the influence of certain laws that prohibited them from reading and writing, African Americans continued to develop improvised lyrics and rhythms. Enslaved African Americans often took part in work songs, which not only helped them to cope with the daily indignities that slavery brought, but also drew upon African music traditions. One such tradition featured in work songs is the call-and-response format, where a leader might sing a verse and the rest respond with a chorus. Work songs continued these traditions through the period of slavery, and elements of them are found in genres that emerged during the late nineteenth century, such as blues, gospel, and ragtime.[29]

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[28] Ted Gioia, *Work Songs.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2006.

[29] Tilford Brooks, *America's Black Musical Heritage.* New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1984.

Most white Americans, on the other hand, were steeped in a Eurocentric style of classical music. Musicians rooted in the classical tradition followed the likes of German composer Ludwig Van Beethoven, and composed music scores themselves. Classical songs were to be played as they were written, with no deviation. Classical musicians in the United States took pride in their compositions and their ability to play them. These compositions, they thought, were scholarly and artistic achievements to be taken seriously.

Miscegenation was of great concern to white racial purists, both before and after slavery. Purists idealized racial purity, believing that the 'races' had to remain separate for social order to be preserved. From this perspective, boundaries between cultures had to appear to be clear, fixed, and unbroken. Any art form associated with African Americans that also appealed to some white Americans, such as ragtime dancing, threatened racial purity, and thus the established racial hierarchy. To self-proclaimed "cultured" white Americans, the very fact that ragtime incorporated a Eurocentric classical style was problematic because it threatened the clear racial boundaries in society. Ragtime's mixed heritage and perceived blackness rendered it extremely problematic for an American public that valued homogeneity, white hegemony, and neat racial categories. Because of its association with African Americans, ragtime was nothing but "lowbrow" entertainment.[30]

Though classical and improvised music styles had particular ethnic roots, this itself did not determine who could play each style of music. In fact, before the advent of

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[30] David Suisman, "Co-Workers in the Kingdom of Culture: Black Swan Records and the Political Economy of African American Music," *The Journal of American History,* Vol. 90, No. 4 (Mar., 2004), 1295.

highbrow and lowbrow culture, classical and improvised music were not thought of as being specific to race. Not all black musicians improvised their music; some could and did afford classical training. At the same time, though white musicians may not have shared similar backgrounds with African Americans, they could still prefer improvised music. Similarly, there were white jazz musicians. There were no boundaries to who could play certain styles of music. There were of course certain trends, rooted in a complicated history of slavery and immigration, but to be a black classical musician was not necessarily looked down upon.

This began to change toward the end of the nineteenth century, as white musicians distanced themselves from black musicians and a new style of music that began to emerge toward the end of the nineteenth century: jazz. It is critical to note that "jazz," then and now, escapes easy definition.[31] At the end of the nineteenth century, jazz was more of a catch-all term for anything that was not "culture," including genres such as ragtime, blues, and gospel. Much like ideas of "whiteness" and "blackness," culture and jazz defined each other as antitheses.[32]

Many white Americans never considered jazz as "cultured" because African Americans created it. Standard accounts recall the birthplace of jazz music in New Orleans in the late nineteenth century. New Orleans had become home to Creoles, a

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[31] "Jazz" did also apply to a new form of music out of New Orleans, which makes it all the more confusing to the contemporary reader. The word jazz in this study pertains to the specific genre of music. When used in quotations, it refers to black vernacular music more widely.

[32] Lawrence Levine, "Jazz and American Culture," *The Journal of American Folklore* Vol. 102, No. 103, 6; Eric Porter, *What is This Thing Called Jazz?* Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002.

French and Spanish speaking black population originally from the West Indies and born to enslaved African Americans. Creoles rose to the highest levels of New Orleans society during the nineteenth century and lived east of Canal Street. Creole musicians, many of whom were formally trained in Paris, prided themselves on their knowledge of European music, precise technique and soft, delicate tones that characterized the upper class. West of Canal Street lived newly freed black people who were poor and informally educated. Black musicians on the west side of Canal Street were known for their roots in gospel music, blues, and work songs that they played mostly by ear. Memorization and improvisation characterized the west side bands, which differed from east side bands who played off written scores. In 1894, Louisiana legislature passed Code No. 111, recognizing anyone of "African ancestry" as "Negroes" and forcing Creoles to live with African Americans on the west side.[33] The two groups of recently freed enslaved African Americans and Creoles melded together, and blended their music styles together to form a new style of music that is now known as jazz.

In 1897, another ordinance established Storyville, New Orleans' red-light district, conveniently on the west side of Canal Street as well. City authorities believed that by allowing prostitution, gambling, and drinking in one specific area, they could more easily monitor it. In doing so, authorities facilitated a direct link between vice and jazz music. Visitors heard jazz throughout Storyville, in areas filled with activities such as prostitution, gambling, and drinking.[34]

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[33] Gioia, *The History of Jazz,* New York: Oxford University Press, 2011: 31.

[34] Gioia, *The History of Jazz,* 29-30.

Jazz quickly swept the country in a craze that worried many white musicians. White American classical composers found themselves confronted with an original and fascinating music that Europe itself regarded as the first true American art form. To the so-called civilized, jazz music contradicted everything that classical music was. Classical music was orderly, harmonious, complex, and exclusive, available only through intensive study and training. Jazz became the "devil's music."[35] It was described as raucous, spontaneous, associated with immoral behavior, and accessible to anybody. Classical music built boundaries that regulated the audience to a passive role, listening to, or looking at the creations of artists. Jazz was an open and interactive experience in which the line between the audience and performers was often obscured. Jazz music felt far different than anything white classical musicians knew. Much like the working world which had been so rapidly transformed by industrialization and urbanization, jazz's increasingly popularity threatened to destroy a world of music that had become all too comfortable for classically-trained white musicians.[36]

While some white musicians were drawn to jazz, those who attached great importance to the construction of "civilization" fought against jazz's increasing popularity. As technological innovations reshaped American life, music became a central part of life. New opportunities arose and more Americans pursued music as a career choice, rather than a spare-time hobby. The struggle between white classical musicians and African American jazz musicians realized itself with the American Federation of Musicians, an organization itself with a complicated history.

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[35] Gioia, *The History of Jazz,* 29-30.

[36] Gioia, *The History of Jazz,* 29-30.

Changing a Tune: Musicians as Workers

New and advancing technology in the late nineteenth century expanded leisure time for the working class, which meant more opportunities for musicians. Movie theaters, circuses, vaudeville acts, burlesque shows, hotels, restaurants, skating rinks, and dance halls all employed musicians on a regular basis. Some musicians found jobs seven days a week. Many had opportunities to travel for work, and still others found work close to home. Industrialists, believing that music could soothe workers' tensions and increase production, hired musicians to perform during working hours as they simultaneously cut factory-line workers.[37]

Jobs may have been plentiful but musicians found working conditions far from ideal. Some venues required a musician to perform two matinees and a nightly show six or seven days per week. In many ballrooms and dance halls, bands found themselves stuck in ill-ventilated galleries or lofts. One Chicago musicians remarked, "Fiddling or drumming or sawing a big brass [instrument] may not look like hard work when viewed from the comfortable balcony chair but it is hard work, monotonous as well, and exacting."[38] In addition, wages were so meager than most musicians worked two jobs.[39] So widespread were these conditions that musicians organized across the nation.

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[37] James P. Kraft, "Artists as Workers: Musicians and Trade Unionism in America, 1880-1917." *The Music Quarterly* 79, no. 3 (Autumn 1995): 512-514.

[38] James P. Kraft, *Stage to Studio: Musicians and the Sound Revolution, 1890-1950.* Baltimore: John-Hopkins University Press, 1996, 10.

[39] Kraft, "Artists as Workers," 515.

Unionization among American musicians dates back to the 1850s, when musicians in Baltimore and Chicago founded fraternal organizations to mutually assist fellow musicians. In 1860, New Yorkers established the Aschenbroedel Club. Soon after, musicians in Philadelphia, St. Louis, Boston, Cincinnati, and Milwaukee followed suit. These early unions functioned more or less as hiring halls or labor exchanges. Members met in union halls to try to pick up a gig. Some groups tried to provide health insurance and death benefits, though at very modest levels. Most importantly though, these unions attempted to control wages by setting prices for various types of work.[40]

Non-union musicians curbed the power of the earliest musicians' unions. Most musicians in fact were not affiliated with a union and set their own prices or contract terms. Unions combated this in multiple ways, with some success. First, union agents pro-actively reached out to local venues. They promised an extra level of security to owners by guaranteeing that a musician would show if hired. If one musician backed out, a replacement was always at hand. In return venues would only hire unionized musicians. Some restaurant and club owners were willing to pay for this added level of security. Second, union officials pressured their own members to only play with other union musicians. If a union member was caught playing with a non-member, the Local levied hefty fines. These not only discouraged union members from playing with non-union musicians, but also pressured non-union musicians into joining the union. As a result, by the late nineteenth century, most working musicians found it necessary to join a local union.[41]

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[40] Kraft, "Artists as Workers," 516-517; Kraft, *Stage to Studio,* 11-12.

[41] Kraft, *Stage to Studio,* 12-13.

The first call for a national organization of musicians came in November of 1870, when the Philadelphia Musical Association proposed to do so. Musicians from New York, Boston, Baltimore, and Chicago joined them in June of 1871 to formally establish the Musicians' National Protective Association. This federation was loosely governed and was crippled during the decade's depression.[42] In March of 1886, a second wave of unionization occurred. After receiving calls from a Cincinnati union, delegates from unions in New York, Boston, Philadelphia, Chicago, Detroit, and Milwaukee gathered at the Grand Hotel on New York City's Broadway street. Here they established the National League of Musicians (NLM). The NLM rapidly grew. In ten years time, the initial seven chapters branched out and grew to more than one hundred. However, the depression of the 1890s, competition from foreign and military orchestras, and non-union musicians drove down wages and compromised NLM price scales.

Internal differences also led to the decline of the NLM. Too small or too poor to send their own delegates to national conventions, newer chapters relinquished their votes to larger chapters. Other more established chapters such as New York's chapter rose to dominate NLM annual conventions and national policy. This became a contentious issue for the majority of NLM chapters whose members often held a second job or needed steady wages from playing to survive. New York members on the other hand, did not typically identify with the needs of the NLM's working musicians. In fact, they saw themselves as "artists, not workers."[43] Moreover, New Yorkers did not want the NLM to

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[42] Kraft, *Stage to Studio,* 20.

[43] Kraft, *Stage to Studio,* 22.

become a "trade union," likely because they feared adopting some of the strategies that trade unions of the Knights of Labor employed, such as strikes that often turned violent.

New Yorkers felt this fear was a legitimate concern. In fact, the 1880s was an intense decade of strife for the Knights of Labor. In 1886, the Knights coordinated 1,400 strikes involving over 600,000 workers. Immense pushback from local police and sometimes state and federal militias stifled many of the strikes, such as the Haymarket Affair in May of 1886. On May 4, workers initiated a peaceful march for an eight-hour workday and as a response to the killing of several workers the previous day by police. After one striker threw a firebomb, mayhem broke out. In the scuffle, seven police officers and four strikers were killed, and nearly sixty others injured. Police arrested eight individuals in the aftermath, and four were hanged. Police often raided labor activists' homes and ransacked union halls in the ensuing month. In the end, events such as this dealt a crippling blow to the Knights.[44]

As the Knights of Labor disintegrated, a group of craft union workers organized in December of 1886 in Columbus, Ohio. They formed the American Federation of Labor (AFL), and elected Samuel Gompers of the Cigar Makers' International Union as their president. Gompers focuses its attention on the issues of wages, hours, and working conditions rather than on large matters of social reform. In 1887, Gompers addressed musicians at the NLM National Convention, urging musicians to join the trade union movement. Despite a fair amount of interest, NLM leaders rejected the offer fearing that

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[44] Matthew Hild, *Greenbackers, Knights of Labor, and Populists: Farmer-Labor Insurgency in the Late Nineteenth Century South.* Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2007; Kim Voss, *The Making of American Exceptionalism: The Knights of Labor and Class Formation in the Nineteenth Century.* Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1993.

the AFL was following the path of the Knights of Labor. In their formal statement of rejection, they also claimed that "musicians were artists and not workers."[45] This was a signal, according to historian James P. Kraft, that East-coast NLM leaders viewed themselves as an elite group of artists that believed classical music was more culturally enriching than popular music performed in "less sanitized places." In other words, a self-validated elite proclaimed a hierarchy in musical culture that divided "refined classical musicians" from "folk, country, and black musicians" on the other.[46]

However, a new generation of working musicians felt differently. These working musicians composed a majority of NLM chapters nationwide. In contrast to the established elite, many young musicians had working-class backgrounds and depended on secondary wages as musicians to earn a living. Slowly more and more of these musicians began to gravitate toward the AFL's strategy, as wages were their primary concern. Finally, in 1896, Gompers officially announced to support a new union of musicians if the NLM refused to affiliate with the AFL. Officers at the NLM National Convention rejected his offer by a tie vote, so Gompers took it upon himself to schedule his own convention of musicians to meet in Indianapolis in October of 1896. Twenty-six locals sent three thousand delegates. The American Federation of Musicians (AFM) was born.[47]

Delegates structured the AFM like other AFL unions. At the local level, members voted in a President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer, as well as established

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[45] Kraft, "Artists as Workers," 524.

[46] Kraft, *Stage to Studio,* 23.

[47] Kraft, "Artists as Workers," 528.

business agent to run the day-to-day operations of the union. Ultimately, the authority rested at national conventions at which delegates from locals set national policy and elected national officers for one-year terms. Each local had one vote for every one hundred members but was capped at ten votes per local.[48]

Ragtime and the Battle for Cultural Legitimacy

Ironically, black musicians struggled as unionized musicians. When African American artists entered the cultural marketplace of the early twentieth century, they could not escape ongoing debates over the relative worth and respectability of popular culture. The nature of the cultural marketplace and the hierarchy of highbrow and lowbrow culture limited the black musicians' outlets for expression and employment. White leaders of the AFM molded themselves into white cultural arbitrators and used the AFM to influence the fledgling recording industry. From its founding, white leaders at the national and local levels distanced themselves from black musicians. White musicians separated themselves using three methods. First, they used examination boards to effectively bar non-classically trained black musicians. Second, they banned their members from playing or recording popular genres such as ragtime. Both of these policies favored white musicians of the AFM.

Before the founding of the AFM, musicians' unions did not enforce professional standards. When playing a gig, sight-reading aptitude was sometimes important, and other times improvisational skills were more so. Diverse and changing tastes in music

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[48] American Federation of Musicians, Local 60-471, Pittsburgh, Pa. Records, 1906-1996, Box 1, Folder 18. AIS.1997.41, Archives and Special Collections, University of Pittsburgh Library System. Taken from official booklet of AFM by-laws.

over time also made it difficult for smaller unions to justify any policy for exclusion. However, white musicians thought by harnessing the growing influence of the AFM, which grew to 114 chapters and ten thousand dues-paying members just four years after its founding, they might be able to dictate professional and proper standards.[49]

Its increasing numbers posed a dilemma for the AFM. If too many musicians flooded the market, the supply of potential musicians would exceed the market's demand for them. Thus, as is a strategy with many craft unions, unions often restricted membership is an effort to lower the supply of potential labor. This would theoretically increase demand, allowing the AFM to better bargain for higher compensation for its members. Local and national leaders of the AFM recognized this and enacted a method to limit the number of black members.

To limit the number of black musicians, local leaders established examination boards. Examination boards administered sight-playing tests to applicants. To pass, an applicant had to play a tune from a music sheet to the examination board's satisfaction. If they did not, they were denied admission. This practice was effective in denying black applicants' membership, just as literacy tests for voting in the Jim Crow South prevented African Americans from voting. The tests could have also been administered unfairly based on each board's preferences. Reading tests functioned in a way that indirectly discriminated against black musicians. Since black musicians were less likely to afford formal classical training, they were less likely to pass a reading test. Those that could

[49] Kraft, *Stage to Studio,* 24.

afford formal training could still be barred, if they didn't play a tune to the examination board's liking.

The question of an applicant's membership rested on a subjective decision from examination boards. Some classical white musicians harbored ill will toward black musicians. Many did not want black musicians as part of the union, let alone to have to work alongside them. Some black musicians of the day chalked up resentment to a deep-seated racism that permeated the AFM. William Everett Samuels, a black musician in Chicago, thought AFM President Joseph Weber to be a "bigoted German who was in general agreement with the color line."[50] African American musicians recognized the bigotry of AFM leadership, but without a platform, could do little to resist it.

Over time, the reading tests limited the number of black musicians in certain locals. Lower general membership numbers meant that few black delegates could represent their local at AFM National Conventions, where important matters of policy were determined. Not only did black members have a lesser constituency to voice their opinions, but black musicians had lesser voting power. The result was a union with white leadership at the helm that did not represent its black musicians.

In 1901, AFM leadership felt they had gathered enough strength to stem the tide that was the growing influence of popular music, complemented by new recording technology. Popular music such as ragtime and jazz threatened to put classical musicians out of a job. For the white working musicians in the AFM, recorded music felt like a machine-like dehumanization of modern culture. While increased and regimented leisure

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[50] Donald Spivey and William Everett Samuels, *Union and the Black Musician: The Narrative of William Everett Samuels and Chicago Local 208.* Lanham, University of Connecticut Press, 1984, 12.

time for the working class gave musicians jobs, advancing sound recording technology threatened to take them away. Thomas Edison first theorized that one could capture and reproduce sound by recording sound vibrations. In 1877, he created the phonograph, which became the first instrument to successfully recorded and reproduced sound using his phonograph. A stylus responded to sound vibrations by scratching notations in a vertical movement onto a cylinder wrapped in tin foil. In the ensuing decade, Alexander Graham Bell made several improvements and created the graphophone, which used wax cylinders and a horizontal method of inscription. In the 1890s, Emile Berliner initiated the transition from wax cylinders to flat discs. Berliner's Gramophone inscribed sound vibrations running around from the periphery of the disc to the center. The Gramophone became the primary sound recording and producing technology into the twentieth century. Its low cost, ease of use, and high sound quality helped the recording industry off the ground. However, the more records recorded, the less musicians were needed. Musicians felt as if they were being replaced.

Recording technology rapidly advanced at the same time that ragtime grew in popularity. Ragtime, a genre of musical composition for the piano, emerged as a synthesis of European classical music and African syncopation. While playing, a musician typically kept a steady beat with one hand, and with the other played syncopated melodies in a "ragged" fashion, hence the name ragtime. Musicians accentuated the beat, thereby inducing listeners to move to the music.

Ragtime was the product of African American innovation, and the main innovator was Scott Joplin. Joplin was born in Texas to recently freed African Americans just after the Civil War. He learned how to play piano from his parents and from various teachers,

including a German immigrant who exposed him to European classics. Joplin combined a Eurocentric classical style with his own unique style of improvisation, creating ragtime. After realizing that few professional opportunities existed in the South for a black pianist, he decided to take his talents north. In 1893, Joplin bent the ears of nearly 27 million visitors at Chicago's World Fair. Ragtime gradually became more popular over the years until it peaked around the turn of the century, symbolized by perhaps the most famous rag of all-time, Joplin's 1899 "Maple Leaf Rag."[51]

Ragtime became extremely popular in part for the new style of dancing it inspired. Ragtime dancing embodied an aesthetic of play, casualness, inventiveness, and abruptness. Its key features revolved around a pair of dance partners. Partners held on to one another in intimate ways, made frequent use of gesture and used boisterous movements, deployed angular body lines, and engaged in a high degree of spontaneity. As dancers traversed the floor they frequently broke apart to solo dance. As they did so, they divided their torsos into discrete parts, such as shoulders, waist, and hips. Angular body lines proliferated as limbs jabbed into space. Their sporadic movements mirrored the music's impulsive rags.[52]

Ragtime dancing stood in complete opposition to the more traditional Victorian-style ballroom dancing in which couples followed specific choreography while they kept space between each other, stood upright, and had no chance to improvise. Couples

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[51] Edward A. Berlin, *King of Ragtime: Scott Joplin and His Era.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1994.

[52] *Evolution and Victorian Culture,* edited by Bernard Lightman and Bennett Zon. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014; Theresa Jill Buckland, *Society Dancing: Fashionable Bodies in England, 1870-1920.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.

danced united, as a single unit within the rhythmic structure of the music. Dancers collaboratively moved in smooth, graceful lines. Their little to no variations did little to disturb the self-control they exuded. While ragtime celebrated change, difference, discontinuity, and disruption, Victorian-style dancing honored restraint, order, control, and organization.[53]

While ragtime freed the torso and limbs to express sexual pleasure and desire, Victorian ballroom dancing inhibited the torso and suppressed sexuality. This became increasingly distasteful to self-proclaimed "cultured" Americans, especially when they considered ragtime dancing encouraged interracial relations. Ragtime in many ways alluded to miscegenation by mixing 'black' movement with 'white' bodies. When European Americans practiced such dancing, it created a cross-cultural bodily experience for those dancing and those watching. For those accustomed to the contrasting representations of blackness on minstrel stages to white couples dancing in a Victorian-style manner, a black and white couple dancing together seemed ludicrous, and signaled a co-mingling of black and white cultures.[54]

After ragtime's initial spike in popularity around the turn of the century, "cultured" white Americans worked to refine American culture. The refinement process attempted to delegitimize ragtime because of its very association with blackness. The AFM played a major role in this effort. In 1901, the AFM ordered a ban on ragtime, forcing their musicians to refrain from playing it.[55] President Joseph Weber said of the

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[53] *Evolution and Victorian Culture,* edited by Bernard Lightman and Bennett Zon.

[54] *Evolution and Victorian Culture,* edited by Bernard Lightman and Bennett Zon.

[55] MacDonald Smith Moore, *Yankee Blues: Musical Culture and American Identity.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985, 75.

ban, "The musicians know what is good, and if the people don't, we will have to teach them."[56] President Weber's comment reflects a desire not only to delegitimize ragtime, but also a desire to rein in popular tastes in music.

While the ban prohibited any AFM musicians, white or black, from playing and profiting from ragtime, the ban adversely affected black musicians more than white musicians. First, since ragtime originated in black communities, black musicians were more likely to first hear and learn to play it. Attacking ragtime in its infancy threatened aspiring black musicians more than white musicians. Second, many black musicians could not afford the expenses that came along with classical training. Instructors were typically white and belonged to white schools and music institutions that barred African Americans because of their race or their financial means. Third, the ban effectively prohibited black musicians from recording music. Black musicians were left with fewer opportunities to profit financially and were forced to pursue other means of employment.

As a result of the ban, few ragtime records were available to the general public. The only records available to consumers were either those of classical music or minstrel tunes. When white consumers purchased records, they could choose from two ends of the spectrum. On one end, a "refined" genre fit for "civilized" white Americans. On the other end were minstrel songs, fit for the white working class. Together, these genres delegitimized black ragtime musicians and left a lasting impression of African Americans on the white consumer. The AFM connected music to race in ways that limited opportunities for black musicians.

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[56] Moore, *Yankee Blues,* 75.

Black musicians felt the ramifications. Record companies, owned and operated by white entrepreneurs, reinforced the racial status quo. They would not pay black musicians to record ragtime tunes, as sometimes neither they nor white consumers wanted to purchase material produced by black musicians. White consumers comprised their largest market, so recording companies often bowed to their preferences. By continuing to record white classical musicians, recording studios reinforced a racial hierarchy in the world of music. At the top sat white classical musicians. At the bottom, black ragtime musicians.

Segregation, Respectability, and the AFM

Pittsburgh's social character rapidly changed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, presenting a unique set of circumstances for its black musicians. In the last three decades of the nineteenth century, Pittsburgh's overall population mushroomed from 86,000 to over 320,000.[57] The African American population in Pittsburgh grew from 1,162 to 20,355, making Pittsburgh's black population the sixth largest in the United States.[58] Most African Americans that migrated into Pittsburgh during this period were poor and settled in a few segregated areas. Some settled in the Lower Hill District, squashed between the Allegheny and Ohio Rivers, south of the Monongahela River in Beltzhoover, and still others east of the city in Homewood.

They joined a small group of African Americans who had stayed after serving as conscripts in the Revolutionary War. By 1837, 2,400 African Americans comprised

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[57] Laurence Glasco, "Double Burden: The Black Experience in Pittsburgh," in *African Americans in Pennsylvania: Shifting Historical Perspectives* (University Park: Penn State University Press, 1997), 409.

[58] Glasco, "Double Burden," 409.

nearly six percent of Pittsburgh's total population. But a combination of the area's steep hills and industrial activity limited where these immigrants could live. Business tycoons quickly scooped up flat land near the riversides for their budding steel mills and iron foundries. The wealthy elite filled in what is now downtown Pittsburgh. Newer immigrants and other blue collar workers thus settled on the slopes and hills of neighborhoods south of the Ohio River (South Side), east of downtown and south of the Allegheny River (the Strip District, East Liberty, and the Hill District), and to the north of the Allegheny and Ohio Rivers.[59]

These migrants arrived with high degrees of literacy, musical fluency, and religious discipline. Many of the city's earliest settlers had been freed or former enslaved domestic workers who came from northern and eastern regions of the old South where there was a "long tradition of blacks learning to read sheet music and play classical instruments."[60] At the city's many black churches, choir members banded together in groups of jubilee singers. By 1900, Pittsburgh boasted two black classical orchestras. These new settlers created educational opportunities that were rare for African Americans of early-to-mid nineteenth century. Some found jobs as stewards, deck hands on steamboats, or working in coal factories and steel mills. Though most may not have succeeded in finding jobs in the steel mills, the community as a whole built a high standard of living in part from these wages. As early as 1817, the first school for African

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[59] Colter Harper, "The Crossroads of the World: A Social and Cultural History of Jazz in Pittsburgh's Hill District." Ph.D. dissertation, University of Pittsburgh, 2011. ProQuest (3471903), 55; Peter Gottlieb, *Making Their Own Way: Southern Blacks' Migration to Pittsburgh, 1916-1930.* Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 1987, 66.

[60] Whitaker, *Smoketown,* 129.

Americans was opened, relying on the Bible to teach students reading and writing. As early as 1822 Bishop William Paul Quinn organized Bethel African Methodist Episcopal, Pittsburgh's first black church.[61]

Through these community institutions and wages (though meager), this generation of black Pittsburghers, or the "Old Pittsburghers" as they would later be known, gained an elite status.[62] Some lived comfortably. Black families often adorned their homes with horsehair furniture, lavish dinnerware, and those who could afford them, pianos.[63] They took pride in their education, their religion, and their elite social status.

Like many early black communities, the Old Pittsburghers believed they could challenge stereotypes through a pursuit of wealth, status, and prestige. They hoped that setting aside cultural and moral practices thought to be disrespected by wider society might project a "respectable" image to the white community, and thus gradually soften racial tensions. This strategy, now known as "respectability politics," included combating stereotypes such as intellectual inferiority, drunkenness, and immorality.[64] The Old Pittsburghers fought these stereotypes by building stronger systems of education, churches, and through their public demeanor. Black musicians placed themselves at the center of this struggle.

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[61] Whitaker, *Smoketown,* 129.

[62] Colter Harper, "The Crossroads of the World," 61.

[63] *The WPA History of the Negro in Pittsburgh,* edited by Laurence Glasco. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2004, 53-60.

[64] Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993. This strategy was born out of the black Baptist church, and black women were a driving force behind it. A twentieth-century version of this strategy is now known as "pragmatic civil rights," coined by Tomiko Brown-Nagin. Tomiko Brown-Nagin, *Courage to Dissent: Atlanta and the Long History of the Civil Rights Movement.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.

Pittsburgh's black musicians not only felt the need to gain the respect of the white community but also faced stiff competition from the city's white musicians. In 1897, local white musicians in Pittsburgh chartered Local 60 of the AFM. They hoped to work together to earn better pay and demand better working conditions. Local 60 musicians also stuck to playing classical styles of music from written scores, which they believed was the quality of a "professional musician." Through examination boards, Local 60 all but barred African American musicians from its ranks and denied them access to the same channels of job opportunities that white musicians enjoyed.

The issue of black membership was a hot-button issue in all AFM locals. Some AFM members welcomed black musicians while others did not. Shortly after its charter, Chicago's Local 10 President Thomas Kennedy invited the Eight Illinois Colored Regiment Band, a band popular throughout the Midwest, to join its ranks. Local 10 members pushed back, believing that their union should not be an interracial one. The issue eventually came to a vote, and a majority decided to deny black musicians membership into Chicago's Local 10.[65]

The events in Chicago caught the attention of AFM President Joseph Weber. He worked quickly to draw up a resolution. At the 1901 AFM National Convention, just weeks after Chicago's Local 10 voted to deny black applicants, Weber proposed to establish separate locals for white and black musicians. Few black musicians were in attendance, thanks to strict examination boards. Thus, with no platform and few votes, the legislation easily passed. As of 1902, the AFM adopted segregated locals.[66]

[65] Spivey and Samuels, *Union and the Black Musician,* 10.

The decision forced black musicians around the country to establish their own musicians' unions. In 1906, after nearly a decade a struggle between white and black musicians, a small group of black musicians organized to form the Afro-American Musical Association (AAMA). The AAMA's purpose, as their application to the Allegheny County Court of Common Pleas read, to "Acquire a more thorough knowledge of the art of music and for intellectual culture and the advancement of our race."[67] Pittsburgh's black musicians believed that they could use classical music as a tool to garner respect for the black community. In doing so, they hoped that they too might join the ranks of the "cultured," and delegitimize the current racial hierarchy.

Drummer Curtis Young of Local 471, who became a member in 1935, recounted the AAMA as "real pioneers in Pittsburgh." Young continues, "They were considered 'legitimate' musicians because they focused on the classical musical style and did not play jazz. These musicians could read music, were formally trained in their instruments and maintained a performance demeanor that did not allow for the improvisation, spontaneity, or versatility of jazz. These musicians followed a more European concert traditional style because that is what was accepted as more 'intellectual' idiom."[68] They believed that playing classical music from written scores was a show of intellectual prowess, one that challenged the minstrel-like image of black Americans.

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[66] Clark Halker, "A History of Local 208 and the Struggle for Racial Equality in the American Federation of Musicians." *Black Music Research Journal* 8, no. 2 (Oct 1, 1988): 207-222, 209.

[67] Application of the AAMA to Allegheny County's Court of Common Pleas. AAJPSP Collection: Box 4, Folder 14.

[68] Curtis Young interview, Jun. 9, 1995. AAJPSP Collection: Box 4, Folder 11.

Despite their efforts, black classical musicians could not penetrate the white-owned and dominated recording industry. To this day, no classical records exist from black musicians from the turn of the twentieth century. Instead, black musicians and performers stuck to starring in minstrel shows. Black performers such as George Johnson, George Walker, and Bert Williams all adhered to displaying customary minstrel show images of black Americans. George Johnson stuck to singing in the "coon dialect." When George Walker and Bert Williams toured together in 1893, the advertised themselves as "Two Real Coons."[69] Most white Americans could simply not fathom the idea of a black musician playing classical music. The image of black Americans as presented by minstrel shows was too ingrained in the minds of white Americans.

Black musicians found it difficult to penetrate the recording industry. Record companies had no need to seek out the few and famous black musicians. Instead, they established a set of professional white recorders who covered favorite hits and for a lower fee than a famous performer required. These white recorders could also reproduce the works of African American performers with "authentic" dialect. In addition, professional recorders were better versed in the art of recording. They knew when to sing close to the recording horn and to stand back as not to "blast" their voice during loud verses.[70] Left

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[69] Thomas L. Riss, *Just Before Jazz: Black Musical Theater in New York, 1890-1915.* London, Smithsonian Institution Press, 1989; Karen Sotiropoulos, *Staging Race: Black Performers in Turn of the Century America.* Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2006. It is important to note that Sotiropoulos argues that George Walker and Bert Williams challenged black stereotypes by presenting respectable images off-stage. They tailored their dress, speech, and lifestyle to mirror prominent white artists of their time. While they may have begun to change the image of African Americans in the white mind by doing so, they were still confined by the white-owned and dominated music and record industry.

[70] Tim Brooks, *Lost Sounds: Black and the Birth of the Recording Industry.* Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004.

with few recording opportunities for a respectable form of music, the AFM and recording managers shut out most African American musicians.

With the hope that being a part of a national union could help them in their fight to gain respect and jobs in the music industry, the AAMA petitioned the American Federation of Musicians for a charter. On January 7 1908, the AFM granted them Local 471.[71] Unfortunately, the charter and the complete membership list of Local 471 has been lost preventing a comparison of membership names between the two documents. A 1946 article in the *Pittsburgh Courier* lists Charles Catlin, H.C. Waters, W.A. Kelly, and R.A. Dinguid among the charter's first members and Benny Mitchell as Local 471's first president.[72]

Though not much is known about the early days of Local 471, evidence points to the fact that these black musicians likely shared ideas of respectability as members of the AAMA. Notably, several of the names listed on the 1906 AAMA charter also appear in the earliest available membership records of Local 471 from the year 1922. For example, Emmett Jordan, James G. Jenkins, and Earl Gordon appear on both documents.[73] Henry "Prez" Jackson, who served as Local 471's president from 1938 to the mid-1940s, remembered Local 471's earliest days in the same light that Curtis Young remembered the AAMA. Jackson recalled, "Most of the engagements played at that time were for the wealthy families in affairs like banquets, weddings, social gatherings, and smokers. Few public dance halls were in operation at that time."[74]

[71] Bill Gambrell letter to Charles Austin. AAJPSP Collection: Box 4, Folder 14.

[72] "Who's Who in Labor?" *The Pittsburgh Courier,* Nov. 30, 1946, 14.

[73] Application of the AAMA to Allegheny County's Court of Common Pleas. AAJPSP Box 4, Folder 14; Local 471's 1922 membership records can be found in the AAJPSP Collection: Box 4, Folder 7.

The 1908 charter of Local 471 entitled Pittsburgh's black musicians to voice their opinions and vote at AFM national conventions. It also allowed Local 471 the same level of autonomy as their white counterparts. Local 471 became an organization in which black musicians could socialize with each other, set their own price scales, and strive to better their working conditions. However, AFM national leadership, business owners, recording studios, and consumers-imposed limits on black musicians. Though they had a union, black musicians found it extremely difficult to survive by solely playing music.

[74] "Who's Who in Labor?" *The Pittsburgh Courier,* Nov. 30, 1946, 14.

CHAPTER III: ARRANGING PITTSBURGH'S RACIAL HIERARCHY

At the turn of the century, white classical musicians still maintained a strong foothold in the most lucrative parts of the music industry. A base in the record industry and in theaters ensured jobs for white classical musicians' instead of their African American counterparts. The AFM exhibited powerful influence over the music industry, especially in terms of who could profit as a professional musician. The twentieth century, however, brought immense changes to American society in the forms of shifting populations, advancing technology, and Prohibition. Together, these new developments not only significantly altered American life but also changed American tastes in music. As blues and jazz made their way into mainstream culture, white classical musicians felt their jobs were threatened. They responded by tightening their grasp on the financial foundations of the music industry.

Canned Music

Theaters were critical sources of employment for classical musicians. Managers employed small in-house bands of usually of five to six musicians. These bands enlivened vaudeville shows, one of the most popular forms of entertainment in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Managers preferred classical musicians who could play from a music sheet, as vaudeville shows carefully choreographed dancers and music. But recorded, or "canned," music soon phased theater musicians out.

Small theater bands also profited after the advent of silent films. In April of 1896, Thomas Edison premiered the first ever silent film in New York's Koster and Bial's

Music Hall. The premier was a massive success. Audiences ducked when they saw waves rolling toward Manhattan Beach on the screen. At the showing, Edison set a precedent by employing an orchestra to play during the film. Managers still preferred classically trained musicians who could play along in concert with the film. The orchestra was essential in contributing to a lively atmosphere and also gave the audience vital emotional cues. The success of the showing inspired countless vaudeville theaters to offer moving pictures along with comedy acts, dance shows, and other routines. A growing number of entrepreneurs converted pawn shops, cigar stores, and other places into "nickel" theaters that showed movies from early morning until late at night. By 1905, an estimated ten thousand theaters opened. Movies quickly became one of the nation's most influential mediums of entertainment and culture.[75]

White classical musicians benefited most from silent film and vaudeville. Depending on the exhibition site, musical accompaniment could drastically vary in scale. Small town and neighborhood movie theaters often hired a solo pianist. Larger theaters tended to hire bands of at least five to six musicians. In sheer numbers, theaters employed upwards of one hundred thousand classical musicians at the turn of the century. The AFM quickly moved to capitalize on this massive source of jobs. Their bargaining efforts paid off. Ninety-eight percent of theaters agreed to closed shop contracts, meaning that only AFM musicians could play at the site. For theater managers, contracts guaranteed that musicians would show up. As theaters played shows around the clock,

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[75] James P. Kraft, *Stage to Studio: Musicians and the Sound Revolution, 1890-1950* (Baltimore, John Hopkins University Press, 1996) 34; Robert David Leiter, *The Musicians and Petrillo* (New York: Bookman Associates Inc., 1953), 54-74.

this assurance was critical. Joseph Weber, President of the AFM, estimated that theaters offered more full-time jobs than all other sources of employment for musicians combined.[76]

Since theater musicians played from set scripts, theater managers needed assurance that AFM musicians had the ability to play from script. In most cases, AFM locals barred black musicians using unfairly administered sheet-reading tests. In doing so, they not only prevented black musicians from joining their locals but also prevented black musicians from obtaining jobs in theater. Even if black musicians could have theoretically competed for these jobs, they rarely got them because they did not belong to white AFM locals.

While theaters represented a resource for musicians, advancing technology posed an increasing threat to classical musicians in the early 1900s. In 1910, the American Photo Player Company released a new piano, the Fotoplayer. With the help of a "conductor," the Fotoplayer could play thirty different songs in a row. The capability to switch between music rolls allowed longer playlists. The Fotoplayer also made sounds such as bells, horns, and percussion devices. Some theaters purchased these devices to substitute for musicians which threatened the livelihood of full-time theater musicians. Despite their versatility, however, Fotoplayers proved to be expensive, broke down frequently, and had an average lifespan of only seven years.[77]

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[76] Kraft, *Stage to Studio,* 34-40; Robert David Leiter, *The Musicians and Petrillo* (New York: Bookman Associated Inc., 1953). Into the 1920s, primarily white musicians benefited from theater opportunities.

[77] Ben M. Hall, *The Best Remaining Seats: The Golden Age of The Movie Palace* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1961).

Shortly after the Fotoplayer, Robert Hope-Jones partnered with the Rudolph Wurlitzer Company to create the "Mighty" Wurlitzer Hope-Jones Unit Orchestra in 1914. Between 1914 and 1943, the Rudolf Wurlitzer Company produced more than 2,000 of these theater organs. This unit mimicked the sound of a full orchestra, including sounds of the violin, cello, flute, tuba, oboe, piano, and others. The Wurlitzer theater organ also created sound effects like steamboat whistles, quacking ducks, and gunshots. It did not need to be connected with organ pipes, and thus it could be raised and lowered from orchestra pits. While an improvement over the Fotoplayer, the Mighty Wurlitzer was also expensive, running between $20,000 and $40,000. In addition, theater managers found it difficult to find an organist who could play them, as they were quite different from typical church organs.[78] For most theaters, the disadvantages of both fotoplayers and pianos outweighed the advantages. Most theaters continued to rely on musicians.

The Wurlitzer Company continued to improve its product, hoping to appeal to other entertainment venues. By 1910, the company advertised fifty different coin-operated pianos, at prices ranging from $1,500 to $10,000. Proprietors of cafes, bars, hotels, skating rinks, and bowling alleys suddenly found fotoplayers a worthwhile investment. Some proprietors reported returns from one hundred to three hundred percent on their investment in as little as six months.[79] With profits like these, musicians were theoretically replaceable.

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[78] Kraft, *Stage to Studio,* 40-44.

[79] Craig H. Roell, *The Piano in America, 1890-1940.* Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1989, 49-50.

Recorded music and radio gained traction in the early 1900s, but at first their poor quality meant they posed little threat to musicians. Recording studios offered a few musicians another way to supplement their income. Before a system of royalty payments was in place, musicians gladly accepted a few extra bucks for their time. During the earliest days of radio, stations used little recorded music. Early phonograph records sounded soft in comparison to live performers over the airwaves. Ultimately, neither fotoplayers, recorded music, nor radio broadcasts truly threatened musicians' jobs prior to World War I.

World War I, the Great Migration, and Social Change

At the time the United States entered World War I, four record firms dominated the industry: the Victor Company, Columbia Phonograph Company, Brunswick Company, and Edison's National Phonograph Company. These four companies dominated the record industry. Its base of white consumers purchased classical music prior to World War I, but a growing niche of consumers during and after the war gravitated toward blues, jazz, and ragtime.[80]

World War I ushered in social change that turned the music world upside-down. The Great War significantly altered the United States' social, cultural, and political landscape, in large part due to the demand for new laborers. The war slowed European immigration into the country and sent hundreds of thousands of able-bodied workers overseas. As a result the demand for industrial workers grew, especially in urban centers

[80] Kraft, *Stage to Studio,* 59.

such as Pittsburgh. African Americans in southern states who longed to escape poverty and violence sought the promise of a new life in northern industrial centers. They hoped to secure better paying jobs that could support their families back home.[81]

Many migrants were encouraged by the *Pittsburgh Courier,* a newspaper distributed nationally and read by over half a million people per week.[82] Others wrote to the Pittsburgh chapter of the Urban League to inquire into specifics such as much pay they might receive in a plant, rent and fuel costs per month, and education opportunities. In one letter, one man wrote for himself and seven others seeking jobs in Pittsburgh: "We Southern Negroes want to come to the north… they [white southerners] ain't giving a man nothing for what he do… they is trying to keep us down."[83] After hearing of promising stories in the city, many packed their bags and caught a railcar headed to the steel city. In fact, during the interwar years, Pittsburgh's African American population rose from 27,000 to over 82,000, representing an increase from 4.8 to 9.3 percent of the city's total population.[84]

While the promise of higher-paying jobs and a better education attracted many, the conditions as described in the *Pittsburgh Courier* were rarely as described. Some

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[81] On migration and World War I, see Mae M. Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004); Erika Lee, *At America's Gates: Chinese Immigration during the Exclusion Era, 1882-1943.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003; Adriane Lentz-Smith, *Freedom Struggles: African Americans and World War I.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011; and Peter Gottlieb, *Making Their Own Way: Southern Blacks' Migration to Pittsburgh, 1916-1930.* Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997; Jared Day and Joe Trotter, *Race and renaissance: African Americans in Pittsburgh Since World War II.* Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2010. The introduction of *Race and Renaissance* deals especially with the Great Migration.

[82] Gottlieb, *Making Their Own Way,* 4.

[83] Trotter and Day, *Race and Renaissance,* 10.

[84] Trotter and Day, *Race and Renaissance,* 9.

migrants settled in mill towns outside of the city. Those who chose company barracks had their rent deducted from their paychecks directly, often at high rates.[85] Outside of company barracks, housing was scarce. White property owners and real estate agents enforced neighborhood boundaries in ways which limited the areas in which African Americans could purchase homes. African American renters and the rare homeowner were limited to the overcrowded Hill District (see Figure 3.1), an area bordered by downtown to its West, the Strip District and Allegheny River to the North, and Oakland to its South and East. Black migrants were left with no choice. They were forced to pay high rents for the most dilapidated, poorly equipped, crowded, and unsanitary shelters.

[85] Gottlieb, *Making Their Own Way,* 68.

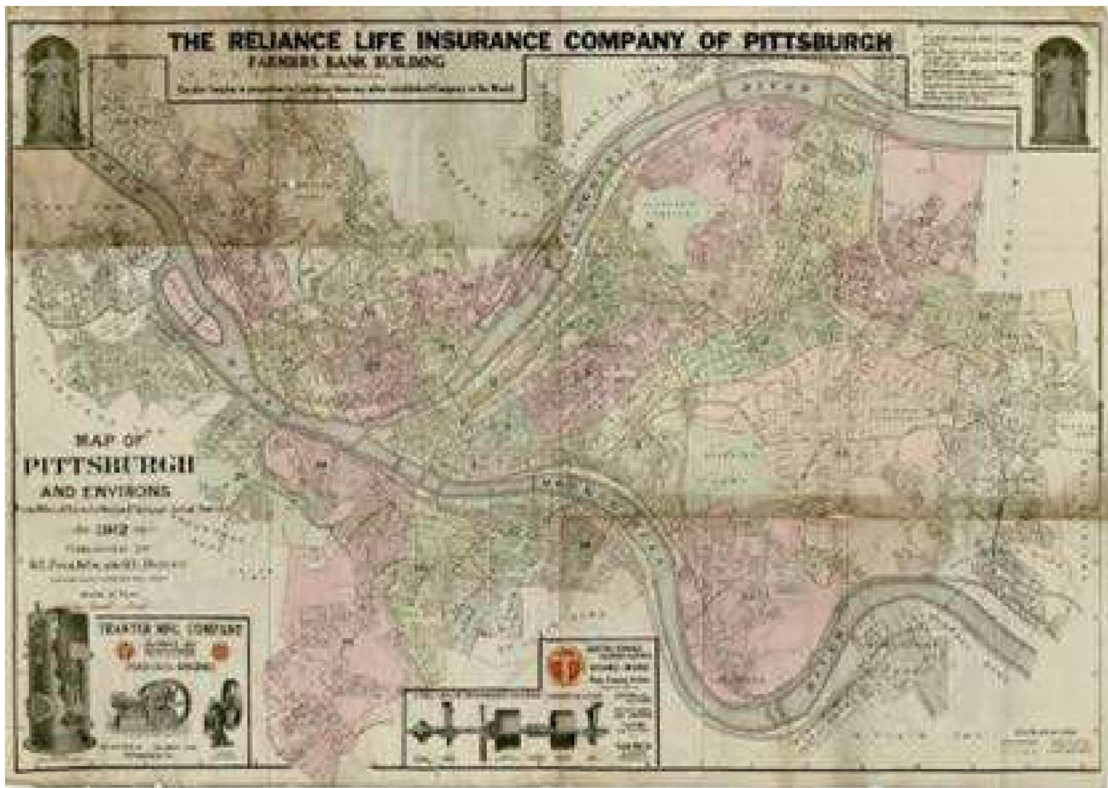

Figure 3.1: Map of Pittsburgh, 1912. Downtown Pittsburgh is located just East of where the three rivers meet. African American residents settled mostly in the Hill District, marked as 3rd and 5th Wards in this Figure (shaded in green and red, respectively). Figure courtesy of University of Pittsburgh, Historic Pittsburgh Digital Collections, Western Pennsylvania Maps, Identifier: DARMAP0811.

Those with an agricultural background, about one third of migrants, found it difficult to adapt to city life. One migrant wrote to his family, "Some places look like torment… everything was black and smoky here."[86] The Urban League, recognizing the difficult circumstances for migrants, shifted its focus during the Great Migration toward "improving the health, housing, and recreational conditions of our people, as well as finding employment for them."[87] In many cities, the Urban League sent Home

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[86] Trotter and Day, *Race and Renaissance,* 11.

[87] Gottlieb, *Making Their Own Way,* 190.

Economics workers to migrant households to teach them how to use gas and electricity, shop for food, purchase and prepare certain cuts of meat, and repair old clothing.

The other two-thirds of migrants came with previous experience of living in industrial and urban settings. According to marriage certificates in Allegheny County, nearly fifty-five percent of African Americans who applied for marriage licenses during the 1930s had migrated to Pittsburgh from towns of over ten thousand people, and more than a quarter came from towns of one hundred thousand or more.[88] These individuals adapted to city life more easily, and some found Pittsburgh a lot like southern cities such as Birmingham.

The Great Migration, coupled with segregation, reshaped Pittsburgh's physical landscape. African Americans settled in the Hill District, an area east of downtown. During World War I and the industrial boom of the 1920s, the black population of the third and fifth wards grew by 14,000, while 7,600 European immigrants and their children left.[89] Zoning laws reinforced racial segregation and forced African Americans to continue to rent from white landlords. As a result, poverty increased to the point that a national representative of the YWCA found poor housing conditions to be "universal" in the Hill District. Although Pittsburgh's public-school system banned *de jure* segregation in 1881, only a handful of schools accepted both black and white students.[90]

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[88] Trotter and Day, *Race and Renaissance,* 11.

[89] Trotter and Day, *Race and Renaissance,* 13.

[90] Trotter and Day, *Race and Renaissance,* 13. Out of 106 elementary schools in the city, only 20 admitted any black students. Between 1881 and 1933, no black teachers were hired.

Public accommodations - restaurants, theaters, swimming pools, department stores, etc. - barred African Americans as well. Department stores did not allow black customers to try on clothing. Banks restricted services to white clients. Insurance companies did not offer a full array of services to black customers. The policies companies did sell were at higher rates than white customers paid and often included less coverage. Many migrants were shocked at how similarly they were treated in the North compared to the South.

African American workers moved into jobs at the bottom of the pay scale as janitors, domestics, and factory hands. Carnegie Steel, Crucible Steel, and other companies placed over ninety and sometimes one hundred percent of new black workers in less desirable positions.[91] These positions were often unsanitary and dangerous. Black workers cleaned toilets, poured molten steel, and fed blast furnaces.[92] Despite their tough working conditions, African Americans workers could earn wages seventy percent higher than they could prior to World War I.[93]

As World War I drew to a close, hundreds of thousands of soldiers returned home to find the world they once knew had vanished. Wartime production ceased, jobs dried up, and wages declined. This led to a growing sense of insecurity among the white working class. In Pittsburgh, their fears seemed realized as plant managers dismissed

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[91] Trotter and Day, *Race and Renaissance,* 11.

[92] Dennis Dickerson, *Out of the Crucible: Black Steelworkers in Western Pennsylvania, 1875-1980*. New York: State University of New York Press, 1986.

[93] *Of the People: A History of the United States Since 1865.* Edited by James Oakes, Michael McGerr, Jan Ellen Lewis, Nick Cullather, Jeanne Boydston, Mark Summers, Camilla Townsend, and Karen M. Dunak. New York: Oxford University Press, 2017.

union workers in 1919, leaving thousands of workers without an income. This action prompted white steel workers to organize a strike beginning in September that year. In response, plant managers hired upwards of forty thousand African Americans in a strikebreaking measure. The tactic worked. By November, most white steelworkers crossed picket lines and returned to work. The 1919 Steel Strike was just one event that reinforced the existing attitudes of both white union members and employers toward southern blacks.[94]

World War I called into question the presumptive supremacy of Anglo-European civilization. Black Americans could not subscribe to the belief that they should measure their progress against Western civilization as they watched Western Europe destroy its people in battle. As African American soldiers returned from the warfront, they stood resolute in their conviction that their patriotic sacrifices would have a positive impact on race relations. However, it seemed that tensions between white and black people fueled a rebirth of white vigilantism. During the 1920s, an estimated 125,000 whites enrolled in newly found chapters of the Ku Klux Klan in Pittsburgh and the surrounding region. Klan members attempted to scare new black migrants into leaving neighborhoods that had been predominantly white. In one instance, Klansmen sent death threats to black migrants, "warning them to move out of the neighborhood immediately or they would take things into their own hands."[95] That same night, Klansmen set fire to a twelve foot

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[94] Cliff Brown, *Racial Conflicts and Violence in the Labor Market: Roots in the 1919 Steel Strike.* New York: Garland Publishers, 1998.

[95] "Klan Again Burns Cross," *Pittsburgh Courier,* August 15, 1925, 11.

high and six foot wide cross in the middle of an intersection.[96] Segregation in the public and residential sectors, the 1919 steel strike, and increasing white vigilante violence after World War I represented attempts by white Pittsburghers to re-establish the social and racial order they knew before the war.

New Politics, New Music

The world that white Americans once knew not only looked different, but also sounded different. During the Great Migration, African American migrant musicians brought jazz with them, a style of music that sounded foreign compared to the European classical music that the city was familiar with. In addition to new sounds, the sudden influx of black musicians seemingly threatened white working musicians. Just as the broader public and white workers attempted to re-establish the racial and social order they once knew, so too did white musicians.

Fate Marable, regarded as the father of Pittsburgh jazz, came to Pittsburgh shortly after World War I aboard a Mississippi steamboat. Marable took music lessons from his mother and began playing aboard steamboats along the Mississippi river as a teenager. In late 1907, Marable accepted a bandleader position aboard a steamboat running from New Orleans to St. Paul, Minnesota. Marable immersed himself in New Orleans' jazz scene and shared many lessons, such as how to read sheet music, with other musicians. A few years after Marable moved to New Orleans, he stumbled upon Louis Armstrong playing cornet in a club and quickly recruited him to his band that played along the Mississippi.[97]

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[96] "Klan Again Burns Cross," *Pittsburgh Courier,* August 15, 1925, 11.

[97] William Kenney, *Jazz on the River.* Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2005, 40-42.

With the help of musicians like Marable, jazz spread across the country. Shortly after World War I, Marable himself brought jazz to Pittsburgh. He visited Hill District nightclubs and taught black musicians how to blend jazz with classical tunes that Old Pittsburghers were accustomed to playing.[98] Some musicians appreciated the new style, but many classically trained musicians did not. This included many intellectuals and Old Pittsburghers, the generation of African Americans that settled in the city prior to World War I. These musicians, who believed that the music they produced should adhere to a respectable image, still valued the ability to read and play from sheet music.

Many black organizations and individuals who adhered to a politics of respectability still theorized that there was a close relationship between music and morals. The idea of respectability was popular in many black churches. One Yale-educated black minister gave a sermon that was published in several black and white newspapers in which he claimed, “Ragtime music makes ragtime character, just as noble music makes noble character.”[99] The National Association of Colored Women also shared this view and officially “equated public behavior with individual self-respect and with the advancement of African Americans as a group.”[100] As such, the organization officially opposed dancing to jazz and blues music. Ultimately, the music one listened to signified to the black elite one’s commitment to racial uplift, or a lack thereof.

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[98] Mark Whitaker, *Smoketown: The Untold Story of the Other Great Black Renaissance.* New York: Smith and Schuster, 2018, 129.

[99] Lerone A. Martin, *Preaching on Wax: The Phonograph and the Shaping of Modern African American Religion.* New York: New York University Press, 2014, 43.

[100] Martin , *Preaching on Wax,* 43.

The new generation of African Americans who travelled North during the Great Migration challenged the idea of respectability.[101] New migrants shared experiences that were much different than what the Old Pittsburghers had faced. The 55,000 African Americans that came to Pittsburgh from the South had and would hold a very different social status than the 27,000 Old Pittsburghers. While Old Pittsburghers relished in a higher class and social standings, new migrants lived in poverty, witnessed lynchings, and were restricted to the most menial and dangerous jobs.[102] Violence bred contempt toward white Americans and white culture. Rather than try to conform with white society, as the respectability strategy of the Old Pittsburghers tried to do, new migrants often went as far as to favor separatism.

New migrants' political views are evident in the sudden rise of a Pittsburgh chapter of Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association. In 1914, Marcus Garvey formed the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), a black nationalist group aimed at strengthening black communities. At the height of its power, the UNIA competed with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) for members. Garvey did not believe that African Americans could gain full equality within the United States and thus advocated for a separate global black nation.[103]

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[101] For a discussion of the ways some African Americans challenged politics of respectability, see Angela Davis, *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism: Gertrude "Ma" Rainey, Bessie Smith, and Billie Holiday* (New York: Vintage Books, 1998); Saidiya Hartman, *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments: Intimate Histories of Riotous Black Girls, Troublesome Women, and Queer Radicals* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2019).

[102] Gottlieb, *Making Their Own Way,* 187.

[103] Colin Grant, *Negro with a Hat: The Rise and Fall of Marcus Garvey and his Dream of Mother Africa.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.

Garvey's UNIA drew a number of new migrants into its fold. In September of 1919, Garvey headlined a massive UNIA meeting at Rodham Street Baptist Church, and the Pittsburgh chapter of the UNIA was founded. Garvey was inspired by Pittsburgh's residents, stating, "for enthusiasm I have not yet seen in any section of the UNIA anything to beat the enthusiasm of Pittsburgh. The people turned out by the hundreds and thousands to listen to the doctrines of the UNIA…. The people bought stocks not in five or tens, but one and two hundred dollars."[104] Pittsburgh's new migrants bought into Garvey's movement, a much different political ideology than the respectability politics of the Old Pittsburghers.

The success of Marcus Garvey's UNIA undermined Old Pittsburghers' strategy of respectability.[105] Unlike the Old Pittsburghers, many black musicians did not want to conform to the ways of the white musician or to what a majority of the American public wanted to hear. Their experiences and beliefs inspired a range of strategies to confront the white establishment. To black musicians, classical music was part of the white establishment. Rather than conform to white society by playing classical music, they instead experimented with a new form of music, jazz.

Jazz music and its increasingly popularity threatened white musicians and their jobs. Just as white steel workers had learned during the war that they needed to take measures to protect their jobs, white musicians took steps to secure their jobs. Although

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[104] Robert A. Hill (editor), *The Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Papers, Vol. II: August 27, 1919 - August 31, 1920.* Berkeley, University of California Press, 397-398.

[105] Mary G. Rolinson, *Grassroots Garveyism: The Universal Negro Improvement Association in the Rural South, 1920-1927.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007.

few black musicians were considered for gigs on racial grounds, white musicians still frequently demanded that contractors not hire black jazz musicians. Leaders in the AFM often expressed their disapproval with jazz. Pittsburgh's Local 60 was not shy about expressing their widespread views toward jazz and jazz musicians. Multiple scathing reviews appeared in Local 60's own publication, *The Musicians' Journal,* which was sent to members quarterly. The newsletter kept members up-to-date, notifying them of any changes in price scales, bylaws, and when the next general meetings would be held. Beyond housekeeping notes, the journal also contained what was typically a page long "President's Letter," or a letter from a notable resident in the Pittsburgh community. William L. Mayer wrote the first opinion of jazz in November 1921, titled "Jazz Maniacs."[106] The article garnered enough attention that *Variety,* a national weekly entertainment magazine, also printed it under the title, "Death to Jazz."[107] In the letter, Mayer claimed the jazz would "eventually prove socially demeaning."[108] For him, classical music was a respectable style of music while jazz was an "immorality which cannot be condoned."[109]

Mayer addressed the battle between classical musicians and jazz musicians for jobs. Though Mayer acknowledged that jazz was "financially remunerative," he assured classical musicians that "its life will surely be short." Mayer tells white musicians to

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[106] *President's Letter,* November 14, 1921. Local 60-471 Collection, Box 7.

[107] William L. Mayer, "Death to Jazz," *Variety* (November 5, 1921).

[108] *President's Letter,* November 14, 1921.

[109] *President's Letter,* November 14, 1921.

distance themselves from jazz, concluding his letter with: "I consider this sort of exploitation a 'musical immorality' which cannot be condoned because of its 'money-getting' potency." Mayer asked contractors to avoid hiring black jazz musicians.[110]

Mayer critiqued jazz as an art form, claiming that its sounds would eventually prove "socially demeaning." He wrote,

> "Musically speaking, these are the impressions: the fiddle whines and wails… the saxophone bawls periodically like a lonesome cow; the clarinet yelps occasionally as if a healthy brogan had descended on the tip of Fido's tail; the trombone heaves up spasmodically like the fellow who has imbibed too freely of bootlegging moisture; the muted cornet sounds like a cross between a cackling hen and a hare-lipped tenor with a cold in his head… and the piano - poor thing - is pulverized with arpeggios and chromatics until you can think of nothing else than a clumsy waiter with a tin tray full of china and cutlery taking a 'header' down a flight of concrete steps. So much for the musical effect."[111]

Undercurrents of racism bore strongly upon Mayer's opposition to jazz. He demeaned black jazz musicians, claiming that they acted "like a bunch of intoxicated clowns, indulging in all sorts of physical gyrations."[112]

Mayer also made comments about his experience visiting the Chicago World's Fair in 1893. Fair organizers, as historian Gail Bederman has demonstrated, divided the fair into two racially specific areas. The White City depicted millennial advancement of "white civilization," while the Midway Plaisance presented the "undeveloped barbarism

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[110] *President's Letter,* November 14, 1921.

[111] *President's Letter,* November 14, 1921.

[112] *President's Letter,* November 14, 1921.

of uncivilized, dark races."[113] Grand structures and replicas of technological advancements adorned the White City. Meanwhile, the Midway's attractions were organized linearly down a broad avenue, providing a lesson in racial hierarchy. "What an opportunity was here afforded to the scientific mind to descend the spiral of evolution," said the *Chicago Tribune,* "tracing humanity in its highest phases down almost to its animalistic origins."[114] At the end of the avenue was the Dahomeyan village, which most starkly contrasted "powerful, civilized, white men" from the "uncivilized, savage, and barbarous natives."[115]

The Dahaomeyan village particularly struck Mayer just as its creators had intended. Mayer drew similarities between the representation of black people at the village with black jazz musicians, saying:

> "[jazz musicians'] movements that took me back to 1893 when at the Chicago World's Fair I saw in the Dahomeyan village on the Midway a dance by about forty African females clad mostly in a piece of coffee bagging. I thought that was ridiculous, but never did I dream that in an enlightened country men could be found, who, even for money would go that show 'one better.' When the craze dies out, the demand for this sort of things will cease, but your status of being a 'clown' will not die with the crase [sic]."[116]

Local 60's tactics, and classical musicians more generally, forged musical color lines in Pittsburgh. It separated the city in terms of race and its musical styles. Classical venues, reserved for white audiences, operated in downtown Pittsburgh, just East of the

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[113] Bederman, Manliness and Civilization, 31.

[114] Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization,* 35.

[115] Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization,* 35.

[116] *President's Letter,* November 14, 1921.

three rivers. Black musicians, and those who played jazz, were relegated to less profitable areas. They could only play at establishments to the south and east of Grant Street, including the Hill District, in parts of the North Side, Homewood, and Wilkinsburg.[117] Local 471 musicians rarely crossed these boundaries (see Figures 3.2 and 3.3).

Figure 3.2: Downtown Pittsburgh and the Hill District, 1862. Grant Street, highlighted here, marked the divide between the Hill District (East of line) and downtown (West of line). Black musicians played East of this line. Courtesy of University of Pittsburgh, Historic Pittsburgh Digital Maps: Historic Pittsburgh http://digital.library.pitt.edu/maps.

[117] See Figures 3.1 and 3.2; Kevin Kirkland, "Pittsburgh's Historic Black Musicians' Union to be Honored," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette,* June 22, 2012.

Figure 3.3: Map of Greater Pittsburgh, sectioned by wards, 1910. Black musicians were relegated to playing in the Hill District (Wards 3 and 5), the North Side (Wards 34 and 35), Homewood (North of Ward 20), and Wilkinsburg (South of Ward 20). Courtesy of University of Pittsburgh, Historic Pittsburgh Digital Maps: Historic Pittsburgh http://digital.library.pitt.edu/maps.

Keeping the Color Line in Records and Radio

Up until the mid-1920s, the AFM successfully garnered jobs for its white classically-trained musicians in recording studios and on radio. Although jazz music resonated in speakeasies, white musicians still dominated the record industry and radio. As late as 1926, President Joseph Weber of the AFM told AFM conventioneers that records had created opportunities for musicians. Recorded music had, in Weber's view, stimulated "the love of music among the people."[118] The AFM harbored little animosity toward record companies, but this was all about to change.

[118] Kraft, *Stage to Studio,* 62-63.

After 1916 the cost of entry into the recording industry eased when many patents on recording technology expired. In the aftermath of the war, record studio executives began catering to all manner of markets -ethnic, religious, regional - that had been ignored by past executives. They did so for two reasons. First, home record players had advanced to the point that middle-class families could now afford them. Just prior to World War I, Victrola introduced several new low-priced models with an eye on the average family's budget. Models started at $15.00 and ranged up to $50.00. By 1913, Victrola had sold around 250,000 units. Though World War I slowed production, Victrola picked up where it left off after the war. This had the effect of turning the recording industry upside-down. Secondly, wartime service and manufacturing jobs had given minorities, especially African Americans, greater consumer power to buy records and record players. After the war, recording executives had to consider an increasingly viable group of consumers. This not only changed how executives marketed records, but also changed the very music that was recorded.[119]

In early 1920, Perry Bradford, a well-known African American vaudeville and minstrel performer, proposed the idea of recorded black popular music to several record companies. He continually lobbied managers, stating, "There's fourteen million Negroes in our great country and they will buy records if recorded by one of their own."[120] Most companies dismissed Bradford and his business venture, but one company gave Bradford a chance. That same year, the small Okeh record label brought in Mamie Smith, a female

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[119] W. Fitzhugh Brundage, *Beyond Blackface: African Americans and the Creation of American Popular Culture, 1890-1930.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011, 21-22.

[120] Martin, *Preaching on Wax,* 35.

African American singer, to record two of Bradford's popular songs, "That Thing Called Love," and "You Can't Keep a Good Man Down."[121] The record was a smashing success and sold over 75,000 copies in its first month, and over 100,000 copies by the end of the year.[122] Mamie Smith's recorded a follow-up record, "Crazy Blues," in August and was later released in November. That record reportedly went on to sell one million copies, a then unprecedented feat.[123] Smith's record forced companies to acknowledge black consumers. Still, the widespread belief that cast African American musicians and jazz music as immoral was not lost on executives. If they were going to release jazz records, they wanted to do so in a way that appeased its white upper-class consumers.

As a result, an entire genre emerged known as "race records."[124] Record labels such as Victor, Paramount, Emerson, and Okeh made and marketed gospel, blues, and jazz records to its African American audience. Mamie Smith's success demonstrated that the venture of race records could be profitable in a time in which record sales plummeted due to the rising popularity of radio. From 1921 to 1925, the sales Columbia, one of the dominant record companies of the time, declined from $7 million to $4.5 million. A sharp drop in sales, coinciding with the massive success of Mamie Smith's "Crazy Blues," encouraged recording managers to record more black artists. Race records

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[121] To listen to "Crazy Blues," follow the link: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/d/dc/Mamie_Smith%2C_Crazy_Blues.ogg.

[122] Martin, *Preaching on Wax,* 36.

[123] Martin, *Preaching on Wax,* 37.

[124] The term "race records" was penned by the *Chicago Defender* in 1922.

captured another target audience, garnered another revenue stream, and became a lucrative business for failing labels. Record stores sold out within an hour. Customers stood in lines that wrapped around buildings. Some bootlegged records for twice the original cost. The *Music Trades Magazine* observed in 1924, "The sale of Negro records is becoming more and more of a volume proposition for phonograph dealers all over the country… dealers who can offers the latest blues by the most important of all colored singers of blues selections, are in a strategic position to dominate the sale of records." By 1927, the three leading record producers (Okeh, Paramount, and Columbia) released an astounding 1,305 race records.[125]

Race records turned out to be quite profitable for record labels, though not for black musicians themselves. While the creation of race records revived the recording industry, the musicians that recorded the records were often compensated very little. Bessie Smith, one of the most famous blues singers of the 1920s, made Columbia millions of dollars. But because she could not read the details of her recording contracts, she was never paid royalties. Instead, Columbia only paid her $200 per song.[126] Only a few African American musicians recorded too. Black performers and managers looked on as white-owned recording companies bought songs from them and then used white artists to record them. Black performers also chafed when white record executives dictated the style and manner in which they performed while recording.

Poor pay was not the only reason the black community looked down upon race records. Many hated race records for their stereotypical and racist portrayals of African

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[125] Martin, *Preaching on Wax,* 38.

[126] Martin, *Preaching on Wax,* 38.

Americans on record covers. Record art exaggerated physical characteristics, such as large lips and tattered clothing, much as the sheet music of minstrelsy had done (refer back to Figure 2.1). It also often depicted African Americans engaging in illegal behavior such as murder, theft, and alcohol consumption. Okeh centered its advertisements on one principle: "folks love to laugh." Apparently for Okeh, laughter bore itself out in racist depictions of African Americans. According to an employee, Okeh's ads purposely presented caricatures so that "everyone will stop and look at it." Columbia went a step further. To advertise Bessie Smith's "Jail House Blues," they hired an African American actor to don a striped prison uniform.[127]

Race records did not sit well with most African Americans in Pittsburgh, a city with plenty of classical black jazz musicians who cherished a respectable image. Floyd Calvin, one of the first black radio journalists, noted on the front page of the *Pittsburgh Courier* that he and his friends "frowned" upon race records and their advertisements in the black press. Calvin was disgusted by how "colored women seem to thrive on salacious notoriety." He also saw the abundance of ads of blues women as "a direct affront to the influence of the churches."[128] Other African American intellectuals feared that race records and their ads constituted the primary interactions whites had with African Americans. A harmful image would only perpetuate stereotypes. Unless the phenomenon dwindled, Chicago's *Half-Century Magazine* concluded, race records and their ads would "do much to increase the hatred and widen the breach between the races."[129]

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[127] Martin, *Preaching on Wax,* 34-36.

[128] Martin, *Preaching on Wax,* 46.

These frustrations led Harry Pace to launch the first black-owned and operated record company in 1921, Black Swan Records.[130] Black Swan Records tested the control of white-owned music companies. Pace intended the company to provide an economic ideal for African Americans to strive towards, hoping that they could overcome social barriers and be financially successful. Black Swan's largest pool of recordings, nearly 150 in all, came from recording popular African American ragtime, jazz, and blues artists. But Pace wanted Black Swan Records to be more than profitable. In his larger vision, he hoped Black Swan could shatter the popular racialized categories of music. To do so, Black Swan Records produced classical records by African Americans, which they self-proclaimed were "high-class" black musical expressions.[131] Black Swan officially stated, "While it is true we will feature to a great extent 'blues' numbers, we will also release many numbers of a higher standard." Pace, along with other African American intellectuals such as W.E.B. DuBois, hoped that the label's production of classical records would counter the "negative" and debased folk singing and images of race record artists. Yet, his vision exhibited a certain classism that many middle-class black musicians did not agree with.

While Black Swan Records did record many blues artists, it only recorded particular artists that the label thought could perpetuate its musical and cultural vision.

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[129] Martin, *Preaching on Wax,* 46.

[130] David Suisman, "Co-Workers in the Kingdom of Culture: Black Swan Records and the Political Economy of African American Music," *The Journal of American History,* 2004, pp. 1295-1324.

[131] Martin, *Preaching on Wax,* 56.

William Grant Still, a member of the Harlem Symphony, was Black Swan's music director and arranger. Still brought in Bessie Smith to record for the label. While recording, Bessie stopped singing in the middle of her test record and requested, "Hold on, let me spit." After hearing this, Still ousted her from the studio, claiming that Smith was too "raw."[132] Rather than record artists such as Smith, Black Swan recorded what they considered more "dignified" versions of the blues. Ironically, the label used some white artists to record black popular music under pseudonyms such as "Black Swan Quartet" and "The Creole Trio."[133] Pace felt that if the label could shape public opinion, it did not matter if artists were black.

Black Swan Records opened with a massive success, selling 400,000 records in its first year. However, the company could not sustain its success in an industry dominated by white entrepreneurs. Companies such as Columbia, Brunswick, and Victor all had deeper pockets than Black Swan Records. They too, recognizing the success of Black Swan Records, began recording African American musicians themselves. Black Swan's refusal to record some blues artists also left the label in considerable financial trouble. Faced with the fact that consumers preferred to purchase popular records from well-known labels, it closed its doors in the summer of 1923. [134]In the end, the market for black classical music was dwarfed by the desire for blues and jazz. Black Swan Records failure symbolized the boundaries that the recording industry patrolled. African

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[132] Martin, *Preaching on Wax,* 56.

[133] Martin, *Preaching on Wax,* 57.

[134] Suisman, "Co-Workers in the Kingdom of Culture," 1295-1324.

American musicians could be recorded, but they would not be the primary profiteers from their own music.

Records were not the only medium that musicians grappled with. Musicians also had to confront a more popular form of entertainment, the radio. In 1896, a young Italian experimenter named Guglielmo Marconi sent the first wireless telegraphy message in England. From its creation to the dawn of World War I, radio stations provided ever increasing audiences with less and less expensive entertainment on a greater scale. In 1914, Lee DeForest's company broadcast the first mass-heard news bulletin, the election results of the 1916 election, to thousands of listeners within a four hundred miles radius. 1920 marked another landmark for radio technology when Westinghouse Electric and Manufacturing Company sold the first commercial radio receiver. The only issue was that no regular programming was available to listeners. Westinghouse set out to establish regular programming to increase the market for their radios. KDKA, the first commercial broadcast station owned by Westinghouse, began regular programming of music, weather reports, and crop prices out of Pittsburgh in 1920. In 1921, Westinghouse established a second station in Newark, New Jersey. It first aired on October 5 with a play-by-play broadcast of the World Series. These stations gained impressive notoriety and sparked a wave of interest across the nation. By the end of 1922, entrepreneurs of more than 550 licensed radio stations operated across the nation. [135]

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[135] Erik Barnouw, *A History of Broadcasting in the United States.* New York, Oxford University Press, 1966; George Douglas, *The Early Days of Radio Broadcasting.* Jefferson: McFarland & Company, 2001; Christopher Sterling and John Kittross, *Stay Tuned: A Concise History of American Broadcasting.* Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1978; John Dunning, *Tune in Yesterday: The Ultimate Encyclopedia of Old-Time Radio, 1925-1975.* Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, Prentice-Hall, 1976.

From the outset, broadcasters used music to attract listeners. The first commercial radio stations, however, used little recorded music. Early recording technology captured performances that sounded sub-par to live performers. Radio audiences therefore preferred live performances. In 1922, the Commerce Department endorsed this preference when they prohibited broadcast stations to use recorded music, including the music of piano players. The then Secretary of Commerce, Herbert Hoover, reminded broadcasters that stations belonged to the people and that they should not only gear their programming to the people, but also use local people for their programming as well. Part of their job then, was to create jobs locally. Worried that the government might takeover radio and use it as a public utility, broadcasters voiced little opposition.[136]

Though stations "hired" local talent, most stations refused to pay them. Their payment, stations argued, came in the form of free publicity over the airwaves. For most musicians, especially singers and bandleaders, this was enough. However, as royalties from record sales plummeted in the early 1920s, AFM musicians pressured radio stations for compensation. A group of AFM musicians in Kansas City were among the first to strike their local station. The AFM had enough influence in Kansas City that the local station was forced to concede, paying four dollars for each radio performance.[137] Other locals across the nation followed suit. The President of Chicago's Local 10, James C. Petrillo, complained, "People sit back in their homes and enjoy our performance. Parties enjoy dancing to the faraway invisible orchestra. This is all right, but if it brings

[136] Kraft, *Stage to Studio,* 64.

[137] Kraft, *Stage to Studio,* 64-66.

unemployment to our ranks we are justified in levying a moderate fee for our protection."[138]

AFM unions around the nation demanded that radio stations hire full-time orchestras according to audience size. Union officials demanded that the most powerful stations employ bands of at least twenty-three pieces, while the smallest stations needed only hire two. To enforce the demand, locals prohibited their members from performing for uncooperative broadcasters. The AFM boycott forced radio managers into signing musicians to lucrative year-long contracts with broadcasters. Most radio orchestras worked year-round and anywhere from twenty to thirty-five hours per week. At a time when an employee in manufacturing made less than $125 per month, radio musicians brought in as much as $250. By 1925, more than five hundred radio stations paid full-time AFM orchestras.[139]

Radio executives wasted little time in drawing in sponsors. Station WEAF in New York, one of the first to do so, offered sponsors airtime at the rate of $100 per ten minutes. Sponsors often bought air-time in the form of thirty-minute musical concerts performed by radio orchestras. This not only gave sponsors another method of advertising, but also gave radio executives another revenue stream with which to pay their musicians. Radio orchestras often also played small jingles for commercial sponsors. Radio executives preferred classically trained musicians for their ability to read sheet music. This was key as musicians had little time to practice for spontaneous

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[138] Kraft, *Stage to Studio,* 66.

[139] Russell Sanjek, Davis Sanjek, *American Popular Music Business in the 20th Century.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1991.

advertisements to which they played along.[140] In addition, broadcasters feared hiring African American bandleaders and sidemen as they feared it might offend their white audience. As a result, most radio musicians were white and African American musicians were again shut out from steady, lucrative jobs.

Up until 1926 then, white AFM musicians had great influence over broadcasters and broadcasting policy. The poor quality of recordings made live music and musicians indispensable, and broadcasters themselves were unorganized and unable to fight AFM demands. Under these market conditions, unions shaped hiring patterns, wage scales, and working conditions in the industry. As long as these conditions existed, white classical musicians stood at an advantage. In early 1926, President Joseph Weber of the AFM told AFM conventioneers that canned music had boosted public appreciation of music, and with it employment opportunities for musicians. The AFM had carved out thousands of steady jobs in radio, classical musicians worked deals with recording managers, and nearly one-fifth of the union's total members worked in theater pits nationwide.[141]

White AFM musicians actively differentiated themselves from African American musicians in an effort to garner steady employment. As William Mayer's "Death to Jazz" letter has shown, white classical musicians degraded jazz musicians openly. As late as the mid-1920s, they employed a similar tactic by sponsoring festivals to promote classical music. Local 60 and many other chapters continued to differentiate classical musicians from popular musicians. In May of 1925, Local 60 organized a "Music Week"

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[140] Kraft, *Stage to Studio,* 67.

[141] Leiter, *The Musicians and Petrillo,* 55-56.

in Pittsburgh with the intention to "get the public better acquainted with music and to instill a fervor for the higher classics." Local 60's Music Week was just one of 884 similar festivals throughout the country.[142]

Local 60 musicians also spread their anti-jazz message through the organization's quarterly, the *Musicians' Journal.* In its March 1925 issue, a member of the Pittsburgh community wrote, "Now I don't like jazz, as such, at all - that is jazz in the sense of flashing trombones, screeching cornets, and a plentitude of kettles and the bass drums. I can see no music in these 'arrangements,' as I believe the trade calls them.[143] In January 1926, another column wrote, "A jazz stampede, in other words, has set in; and it has started up an awful dust." Attacks on jazz often drew on racist sentiment, as its March quarterly claimed that "your typical jazz composer or jazz enthusiast is merely a musical illiterate who is absurdly pleased with little things because he does not know how little they are." He continued, "You cannot have music without composers. The brains of the whole lot of them put together would not fill the lining of Johann Strauss' hat." Right underneath this column a joke is written that depicted African Americans as subservient to whites. The joke, titled "The Psychological Moment," reads word for word,

> "Am dere anybody in de congregation what wishes prayer for deir failin's?' asked the colored minister. 'Yassuh,' responded Brother Jones. 'Ah's a spen'thrif,' an' ah throws mah money 'round reckless like.' 'Ve'y well. We will join in prayer fo' Brotheh Jones, jes afteh de collection plate have been passed.'"[144]

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[142] *Musicians' Journal,* May 1, 1925. Local 60-471 Collection, Box 7.

[143] *The Musicians' Journal*, March, 1925, Local 60-471 Collection: Box 7.

[144] *The Musicians' Journal*: March 1925, January 1926, March 1926, and August 1926. Local 60-471 Collection: Box 7.

To Local 60's white classical musicians, African American musicians and jazz as a whole did not contain the inherent qualities that which white musicians claimed made music respectable. To them, music had to be composed and arranged properly and played from a music sheet. Up until this point, the market itself preferred musicians with an ability to read sheet music. In all the language contained in the *Musicians' Journal,* white classical musicians of Local 60 demeaned African Americans and jazz music as the antithesis of classical musicians and music. To them, yet another columnist wrote in August of 1926, jazz was simply an "unacademic counterpoint" to classical music. As such, the columnist continued, jazz was an "obnoxious disease" and "musical profanity" that should be eliminated.[145]

Local 60's efforts to demean jazz music and black musicians were largely successful through the 1920s and into the early 1930s. In fact, black musicians found the AFM more a burden than a benefit. They expressed their discontent in March 1926 in a *Pittsburgh Courier* column. Speaking on the separation of Local 60 and Local 471, the columnist wrote, "Apparently the white president is interested in keeping the colored local for colored engagements and the white local for white engagements. Each member has to hustle for his own job."[146] Members also felt that it was unfair to have to pay dues to a union that seemingly only fought for white musician's interests. "It is unfair to charge a man fifty cents each month to have his name engrossed upon the records of a Jim Crow Local, with no other service than to be charged an additional twenty-five cents

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[145] *The Musicians' Journal*: March 1925, January 1926, March 1926, and August 1926. Local 60-471 Collection: Box 7.

[146] *The Pittsburgh Courier,* March 6, 1926, pg. 3.

should he be unable to produce his card when an arrogant inspector requests it - or a few flowers at death."[147] In terms of organized labor, Local 60's actions rendered Local 471 futile. In the opinion of the columnist and many members, black locals across the country shared a similar experience. Although black musicians enrolled in 43 AFM locals, the presidents of these locals were nothing more than a "figurehead" and the members themselves no more powerful.[148]

New Technology and New Tunes

As long as jobs in radio and theater relied on the ability to read sheet music, white classical musicians felt financially secure. However, a few short years, nearly all that the AFM had worked for came undone. This time, new developments in records, radio, motion pictures, and in the realm of labor eroded the pool of steady jobs available to classical musicians in theater, records, and radio.

In 1924, technicians at Western Electric learned to convert sound waves into electrical impulses. They then amplified and applied their discovery to the recording process, which had multiple benefits in the recording process. With the new discovery, electrical recording systems could now pick up sounds in the low end of the frequency spectrum. This meant that instruments such as the double bass could now be recorded, and the recording system could now survive the effects of percussion instruments. In addition, the discovery allowed record companies to produce records of unparalleled

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[147] *The Pittsburgh Courier,* March 6, 1926, pg. 3.

[148] Jacob C. Goldberg, *Swingin' the Color Line: African American Musicians and the Formation of Local 802, 1886-1946,* Master's Thesis, Amherst, Massachusetts (2008), 30; *The Pittsburgh Courier,* March 6, 1926, pg. 3.

clarity and range. Radio stations could now play and replay music with high quality sound, something that only live bands in the studio could do before.[149]

Improved record quality coincided with new broadcasting innovations. In the early 1920s, a new technique using telephone wires allowed radio stations to broadcast one program simultaneously in different localities. In 1925, a chain of twenty stations linked themselves together to broadcast news, sports, and weather to listeners. The recently founded Radio Corporation of America (RCA) was one of the most successful companies to link stations. In 1926, RCA purchased New York's station WEAF, a station with one of the largest audiences. It then created a subsidiary, the National Broadcasting Company (NBC), to transmit the station's commercial programming to other stations. NBC paid stations $30-$50 for each commercial program it aired, a handsome incentive to link one's station with NBC. Over twenty stations elected to affiliate with NBC that same year, stations ranging from Washington D.C. to Kansas City. By linking stations under its umbrella, NBC effectively created the largest and most effective advertising medium the world had ever known. This attracted advertisers, all of whom combined paid NBC a whopping $7 million for its services. NBC used its capital to create another network of stations, the Blue Network, which eventually became the American Broadcasting Company (ABC). Other start-ups followed suit, the second largest being the Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS). By 1930, three major radio networks, NBC-Red, NBC-Blue, and the Columbia Broadcasting System broadcast coast-to-coast.[150]

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[149] Kraft, *Stage to Studio,* 63.

Improved broadcasting technology made radio available to a wider audience as did a dramatic drop in the prices of radios. In 1924, a radio cost more than $200, but only three years later Sears, Roebuck sold Silvertone models for $34.95. In addition, newer models now had loudspeakers so that the whole family could listen, as opposed to the old models which had headphones suitable for only one listener at a time. These innovations quickly made radio the favorite mass entertainment medium among Americans. By 1927, nearly ten million Americans owned radios. They sat in living rooms listening to news, comedic programs, and the most popular tunes of the day. Radio offered endless variety, parallel sound quality to rival phonographs, and best of all, the consumer did not need to purchase records.[151]

Together, these innovations meant that stations no longer needed to keep full-time orchestras on hand. Improved record quality meant that stations no longer needed live bands to broadcast high-quality music. Rather than pay an orchestra, they could simply broadcast previously recorded editions of popular tunes. Additionally, intricate networks could now broadcast one record or live performance to hundreds of localities. Network programming made it more profitable to broadcasters to simply play high-quality commercial programs rather than create its own programs. It also meant that a few talented musicians in large cities provided higher quality music for Americans than could local bands across the country.

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[150] Barnouw, *A History of Broadcasting in the United States*; Douglas, *The Early Days of Radio Broadcasting*; Christopher Sterling and John Kittross, *Stay Tuned*; John Dunning, *Tune in Yesterday*; Kraft, *Stage to Studio,* 68-70.

[151] Kraft, *Stage to Studio,* 66-70.

Like many other employer organizations that pooled their resources to fight back against labor unions, broadcasters united to form the National Association of Broadcasters. Its origins dated back to 1923, when a number of stations organized to fight back against the AFM and the American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers from "extorting" license fees for the use of music composed by union musicians. During the mid-1920s the NAB lost most of its battles with the AFM and ASCAP. Over the decade the NAB brought several hundred broadcasters under its wing, and the power gradually shifted in favor of broadcasters.

The NAB had an extreme advantage over the AFM. Through its ability to control broadcasting, the NAB influenced public opinion of radio. NAB spokesmen filled time slots by talking about radio as a public resource. One broadcaster called radio a "tool of democracy." Such depictions made any critics of the broadcasting industry appear backward-looking opponents of technological and social progress. This campaign effectively swayed the public and legislators to prohibit musicians' unions from halting the use of recorded music in radio broadcasting. In addition, multiple court rulings restricted the Commerce Department's power to regulate the licensing and broadcasting of radio stations.[152] By the early 1930s, the NAB all but turned the music world upside-down. AFM leaders commented, "it has been a constant battle to secure for our membership even the smallest percentage of what should constitute their fair share of the profits industry. Records, electrical transcription, remote control and chain hook-ups have all contributed toward the complete elimination of the musicians or the causing of

[152] Kraft, *Stage to Studio,* 80-83.

each man employed to replace hundreds of men, just as in the case of the sound picture… A single station may one day service the entire country."[153]

The AFM fought back by turning to the government. In 1929, James C. Petrillo, president of one of the best-known AFM locals, Chicago's Local 10, spoke out against broadcasters' use of records. Petrillo warned the Federal Radio Commission, which was later succeeded by the Federal Communications Commission, "the invasion of the radio field by canned music is destroying the advancement of art at its base by depriving musicians of the necessary means of livelihood."[154] Petrillo, himself a classical musician who played in Chicago orchestras, argued that the use of records not only hurt musicians by American culture itself. The Federal Radio Commission, however, responded that it lacked the authority to intervene. The Commission believed broadcasters had rights too, and thus allowed stations to use recorded music.

Claims like Petrillo's were popular throughout the AFM and were part of a long tradition of fighting against the mechanization and nationalization of the music industry by framing their work as "art." White classical musicians had done this since they founded the National League of Musicians in 1886, and they continued to do so in 1929 with a million dollar propaganda campaign. Ads in 798 newspapers and 24 magazines across the nation attacked canned music on the basis that it "destroyed American culture."[155] A cartoon that appeared in the *Syracuse Herald* in 1930 (see Figure 3.4)

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[153] Kraft, *Stage to Studio,* 80-83.

[154] Leiter, *The Musicians and Petrillo,* 59-60.

[155] Leiter, *The Musicians and Petrillo,* 59-61.

depicted a maniacal-looking robot dropping instruments through a meat grinder. It then spit out clanging musical notes of “Bing! Bang! Biff!” into a can that read “canned music in theaters.”[156] A 1930 ad in Pennsylvania’s *The Bradford Era* (Figure 3.5) read in all caps, “HELP SAVE THE ART FROM RUIN.”[157]

Figure 3.4: “Making Musical Mince Meat,” *Syracuse Herald.* November 3, 1930.

[156] “Making Musical Mince Meat,” *Syracuse Herald.* November 3, 1930.

[157] “Trampling Art for Profits,” *The Bradford Era.* June 5, 1930.

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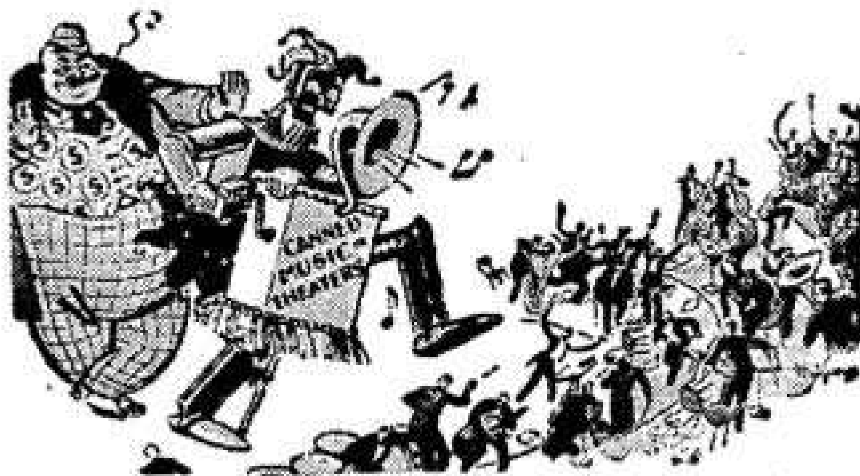

TRAMPLING ART FOR PROFITS

FOR all its virtues, modern industrialism *can* run amuck under the spur of greed for profits. Witness, the ruin threatening the Art of Music.

•

300 musicians in Hollywood supply all the "music" offered in thousands of theatres. Can such a tiny reservoir of talent nurture artistic progress?

•

The true function of the machine is to *increase* the value of the product fed into it—not to *debase* it. Therefore mechanical music, *as a substitute* for Living Music, is a spurious form of progress—Like a loom converting good wool into shoddy.

•

The grind organ, however operated, is a grind organ still. For music is an *emotional art*, a form of social intercourse, and hence dependent upon human contact.

•

Who profits by the elimination of genuine music from the theatre? *Not* the music-loving public! *Not* the musician!

•

If you agree that theatre patrons are entitled to real music—*in addition to* talking and sound motion pictures, for the price they pay—HELP SAVE THE ART FROM RUIN. Enroll with millions of others in the Music Defense League. *When the public's voice is raised its will must be served!*

American Federation of Musicians
1440 Broadway, New York, N. Y.

Gentlemen: Without further obligation on my part, please enroll my name in the Music Defense League as one who is opposed to the elimination of Living Music from the Theatre.

Name ....

Address ....

City.................... *State*..........

THE AMERICAN FEDERATION OF MUSICIANS

(Comprising 140,000 professional musicians in the United States and Canada)

JOSEPH N. WEBER, President, 1440 Broadway, New York, N. Y.

Figure 3.5: "Trampling Art for Profits," *The Bradford Era.* June 5, 1930.

The 1929 AFM ad campaign exposed the biggest fear of white musicians: losing their jobs. For decades, white classical musicians clung to the notion that their music was "civilized art." This elevated their work over African American musicians and guaranteed them access to jobs over black musicians. Canned music fed Americans' taste for popular music, a music that white musicians argued threatened "civilization" in general. This is most apparent in a 1929 ad that appeared in *The Pittsburgh Press* (see Figure 3.6). It claimed that recording companies "attempted corruption of musical appreciation and discouragement of musical education" and that it would inevitably lead to "a deplorable decline in the art of music."[158] White musicians could not bear that styles created by black musicians had become more popular than classical music, and expressed their disdain with a racist depiction of black musicians: "Aborigines, lowest in the scale of savagery, chant their song to tribal Gods and play upon pipes and shark-skin drums."[159]

[158] "Canned Music on Trial," *Pittsburgh Press,* 1929. https://idn.duke.edu/ark:/87924/r4rr1q397

[159] "Canned Music on Trial," *Pittsburgh Press,* 1929. https://idn.duke.edu/ark:/87924/r4rr1q397

Figure 3.6: "Canned Music on Trial," *Pittsburgh Press,* 1929. https://idn.duke.edu/ark:/87924/r4rr1q397

While musicians lost ground in radio studios, new broadcasting technology in theaters also erased the need for musicians at movies. Theater had been a steady source of income since the late nineteenth century for many classically trained musicians. In the mid-1920s, theater musicians too found themselves unemployed as superior recording technology allowed the playing of soundtracks alongside motion pictures. New technology again threatened theater musicians, this time in the form of a moving picture. In 1926, Warner Brothers used the Vitaphone to produce the first-ever sound film, *Don Juan*. Though the film had no spoken dialogue, it was the first to ever synchronize musical scores and sound effects with what appeared on screen. *Don Juan's* soundtrack

featured the 107-piece New York Philharmonic Orchestra and garnered national headlines. Audiences clearly enjoyed sound films.[160]

In the following years, theater owners increasingly turned to sound films. The Vitaphone technology saved theater owners considerable sums of money. Maintaining fifteen-piece band cost managers $60 per week, per musician. This equated to an annual cost of $46,800, while the most expensive sound systems ran upwards of $15,000, depending on the size of the theater.[161] The Vitaphone was also more reliable than actors and musicians. Talking movies could not demand higher wages, go on strike, or fail to show up to work.[162] The Vitaphone took Warner Bros. to the top of the industry. During the last 2 years of the 1920s, Warner's assets rose from $5 million to $160 million, a testament to the growing popularity of sound movies. Restaurants, hotels, and other venues also adopted the technology. By 1929, 2,000 theaters had been wired for sound, resulting in a substantial loss of jobs for theater musicians.[163] In Chicago for example, the number of available theater jobs decreased from 2,000 to 125.[164]

AFM President Joseph Weber quickly rallied the AFM to counter the growing threat of "canned music." In 1928, Weber enacted a "spare no expense" campaign to promote the cause of theater musicians. The substitution of mechanical for live music,

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[160] Kraft, *Stage to Studio,* 48.

[161] Leiter, *The Musicians and Petrillo,* 56.

[162] Kraft, *Stage to Studio,* 48.

[163] Leiter, *The Musicians and Petrillo,* 56-57.

[164] Kraft, *Stage to Studio,* 48-49.

the union insisted, was "a perversion which constituted a fatal blow to musical culture," a step backward that would be detrimental to American culture as a whole. The AFM spent $1.2 million to rally public support for live music and theater musicians. However, the campaign proved to be quite unsuccessful. AFM musicians never recouped their losses.[165]

AFM musicians all over the nation felt the pinch, including Pittsburgh. The September 1928 issue of Local 60's quarterly, the *Musicians' Journal,* expressed their concern with local theaters converting to the Vitaphone sound system. "Consternation has been very noticeable for the last few weeks among theatre musicians, as to what harm the vitaphone and talking movies might have on the profession," the column wrote. At the time of the article, Pittsburgh's Aldine Theater had recently purchased a Vitaphone sound system. By replacing Local 60 musicians with the Vitaphone, the Aldine theater could drop ticket prices while still increasing its revenue, a harrowing proposition for musicians who relied on steady theater work. The column continued, "Should matters come to the worst, it will be necessary to show the managers where they are making a huge mistake by taking out an orchestra, which is an attraction and substituting artificial music." The union remained cautious, but still expressed a resolve that "canned music cannot can musicians."[166]

In the matter of a few short months, Local 60's optimism all but vanished. The February 1929 issue of the *Musicians' Journal* read, "The inroads which machinery has

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[165] Kraft, *Stage to Studio,* 54.

[166] *Musicians' Journal,* September 1928. Local 60-471 Collection, Box 7.

made on the employment problem of the working class has been increasing with vast rapidity. Today the Vitaphone, Movietone, and other mechanical music devices have inaugurated a new era in the amusement field that is revolutionary in character. It is one that may require considerable readjustment by the professional musician."[167] One month later, the union lamented that the Vitaphone had "finally turned all amusement places into art mausoleums." Local 60 called its members to action to combat the increasing threat. Leadership encouraged members to address other social clubs to rally support against canned music. It also gave members permission to protest local theaters that purchased new sound systems.[168] Despite their attempts, the AFM's efforts were largely unsuccessful. By October 28, 1929, the day before the Stock Market Crash, *Film Daily* estimated that nearly one-third of theater musicians and actors were jobless.[169]

Many of the AFM members who fought against the sound systems were the last of a dying breed of classical musicians. Though they had successfully captured the market for decades, recent advances in sound and radio technology dealt a crippling blow to any existing jobs for classical musicians. Classical musicians turned into critics who claimed that canned music degraded the moral and aesthetic value of music, stymied creativity, and "dehumanized the theatrical stage."[170] Others claimed that recorded music would homogenize musical culture at the expense of art. Such critics were also

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[167] *Musicians' Journal,* February 1929. Local 60-471 Collection, Box 7.

[168] *Musicians' Journal,* March 1929Local 60-471 Collection, Box 7. .

[169] Kraft, *Stage to Studio,* 50.

[170] *Musicians' Journal,* March 1929. Local 60-471 Collection, Box 7.

undoubtedly concerned that new records brought forms of "disreputable" music into mainstream culture.[171]

Prohibition

No matter how hard classical musicians fought for their jobs they could not stem the tide of popular music. Technological change brought jazz and blues into the mainstream by the mid to late 1920s, which contributed to the downfall of classical music. Social change sparked by Prohibition and changes in the realm of labor also contributed to the downfall of classical music.

On January 16, 1920, the sale of drinkable alcohol became illegal. Prohibition gave rise to speakeasies and underground clubs that illegally sold alcohol and were often home to other vices. Rum runners and bar owners operated covert businesses that attracted countless customers. Most speakeasies, according to historian Kevin Mumford, operated in African American neighborhoods.[172] In Pittsburgh, the city's largest African American neighborhood, the Hill District, developed into one of the city's most vibrant scenes. Speakeasies operated quite openly in the Hill District to the point that the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* declared, "These are not speakeasies, but 'yell-outs.'"[173] In 1930, Alexander Pittler, a Masters student researching Prohibition at the University of

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[171] *Musicians' Journal,* March 1929. Local 60-471 Collection, Box 7.

[172] This was for two reasons, Mumford argues. First, that the white American public's attitude toward African Americans internalized a mindset that African Americans were "naturally" immoral. Second, this mindset led police and federal bureaus to police white and black neighborhoods differently. Kevin Mumford, *Interzones: Black/White Sex Districts in Chicago and New York in the Early Twentieth Century.* New York, Columbia University Press, 1997.

[173] Steve Mellon, "Pittsburgh: The Dark Years," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette.* http://newsinteractive/postgazette.com/prohobition/. Accessed November 12, 2016.

Pittsburgh, claimed the Hill had at least eight stills producing bootlegged liquor and 178 speakeasies.[174]

Many people associated the Hill District with vice because of the popularity of drinking, gambling, and prostitution. Some took issue with the fact that white and black patrons subverted racial norms in speakeasies. Black and white clients subverted racial boundaries when they socialized, danced, and engaged in sexual relations with one another. It was this fact, perhaps above all, that many white Americans were disgusted with. Progressives believed anything associated with speakeasies was immoral, including jazz. Some urban reformers, intellectuals, and religious-minded folk looked down upon the activities in clubs, jazz included.[175] This group held a widespread belief that jazz stimulated sexual activity, largely because of the new dances that went along with it. New dance crazes such as the turkey trot, the monkey glide, and the Charleston moved their patrons, both figuratively and literally. Many critics viewed dance halls as immoral because "patronage consists of both Negroes and white persons."[176] The fear that jazz and dance led to interracial sexual activity led many white Americans to despise jazz music.

Despite the outrage among progressives, the working class across the nation largely accepted jazz. By the 1920s, the working class consisted of a new generation of people who grew up in immigrant and black working-class neighborhoods. Second generation immigrants - Italians, Jews, Poles, Mexicans, Serbians, Slovaks, Japanese, Chinese, and Filipinos - and African Americans who migrated north shared class and

[174] Colter Harper, "The Crossroads of the World," 59.

[175] Eric Porter, *What is this thing Called Jazz?* 7.

[176] Mumford, *Interzones,* 139.

living experience that made them more receptive to jazz. In fact, by 1930, two-thirds of those in the United States were immigrants themselves or the children of immigrants.[177] Many of these workers frequented speakeasies as an enjoyable escape from backbreaking factory work. So much so, that labor and cultural historian Michael Denning has termed this phenomenon as "the laboring of American culture."[178]

The entertainment industry boomed in the 1920s in part due to do changes in the realm of labor. In 1926, owner Henry Ford of the Ford Motor Company hoped that an eight-hour workday would attract workers and speed up productivity. Ford's decision had ramifications for the world of entertainment. Ford himself knew this and viewed leisure as the backbone of modern consumer capitalism. When making the change, he claimed, "It is high time to rid ourselves of the notion that leisure for workmen is either 'lost time' or a class privilege."[179] Many companies followed Ford's vision, offering workers shorter work days. By the mid-1920s workers in the sectors of the automobile, railroad, mining, and other smaller firms all welcomed the eight-hour day, as it gave them more leisure time and wages sufficient to pay for commercial entertainment.

Workers flocked to speakeasies during their free time and made them one of America's primary sources of nightlife in the Prohibition era. Workers of all ethnicities frequented speakeasies which sat in and on the outskirts of African American neighborhoods. In fact, speakeasies often went by the term "black and tans" for their

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[177] Michael Denning, *The Cultural Front: The Laboring of American Culture in the Twentieth Century.* New York and London: Verso, 1997.

[178] Denning, *The Cultural Front.*

[179] Steven Watts, *The People's Tycoon: Henry Ford and the American Century.* New York: Vintage Books, 2005, 121.

multi-racial crowds. While interracial sociability upset racial purists, the act of associating with people of other ethnic or racial groups — during a period in which segregation was not only the norm but a government policy — brought many white patrons back. Because of their location on the outskirts and in African American neighborhoods, African American jazz musicians were the primary beneficiaries and were hired to play as live entertainers.

African American jazz musicians found opportunities for employment in the North Side, East Liberty, and the Hill District. During the Prohibition era, these areas developed into some of the city's best spots for nightlife. Some speakeasies were smaller dives, some opened in run-down buildings, some in the back of clothing stores, and others were not hidden underground but in plain sight, such as the luxurious club on the third floor of the Kenyon Theatre on Federal Street.[180] The Hill District was a lively scene, one that brought patrons back again and again, patrons who listened to jazz music during each visit.

The new generation of workers who frequented speakeasies and listened to jazz wanted more of it. They listened to and purchased jazz records at astounding rates. [181]As a group of workers, they had enormous purchasing power that recording studios and radio stations respected. As the popularity of jazz among the working class soared, so too did its profitability. Recording studios recognized this and produced race records.

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[180] Walter W. Liggett, "Pittsburgh: Metropolis of Corruption." Published in *Plain Talk,* August, 1930.

[181] Porter, What Is This Thing Called Jazz? 7-10

[182] Porter, What Is This Thing Called Jazz? 7-10

Radio stations increasingly played jazz records as well.[182] Speakeasy culture could not be contained.

Black musicians capitalized on the technological and social change that popularized jazz music. In fact, jobs were so plentiful that Local 471 practically became irrelevant. According to drummer Curtis Young of Local 471, black musicians were so successful in acquiring jobs independent of Local 471 that the union almost "fell apart" in the late 1920s.[183] The culture of the roaring twenties freed black musicians from AFM restrictions and weakened the AFM's power over the music industry.

Jazz music itself had an enormous impact on American culture. By the late 1920s, jazz had become a popular music form that marked the decade. One jazz musician captured shifting attitudes toward jazz when he said, "Jazz isn't changing, its [sic] just being recognized as fine music at last."[184] African American jazz musicians produced music that gradually eroded the hold that white musicians had on the industry. Jazz itself crossed racial boundaries of Jim Crow, as musicians played to interracial audiences and bands themselves were sometimes composed of both black and white musicians.[185] Jazz's ability to cross racial lines not only harbored a spirit of interracial cooperation but it also opened up jobs in live venues for African American artists.

However, African American jazz musicians did not experience as much success in the recording studios and on radio, at least on a national scale. The very musicians who created jazz were consistently pushed to the lower rungs of the entertainment industry. In fact, this would become one point of contention between black and white musicians in

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[183] Interview with Curtis Young, June 9, 1995. AAJPSP: Box 3, Folder 18.

[184] Denning, *The Cultural Front,* 157.

[185] Denning, *The Cultural Front,* 360.

speakeasies. Many black musicians worried that white musicians came to their clubs to "steal their music."[186] Others were forced to compromise their art in order to gain entrance into the entertainment industry. Black musicians were seldom heard on national radio networks in the 1920s. Instead, the commercially successful white dance bands of the era such as Paul Whiteman, the self-proclaimed "King of Jazz," were regularly featured on the airways. Some of the most recognized African American vocalists — Louis Armstrong, Bessie Smith, Ma Rainey, etc. — were hardly broadcast by CBS and NBC-affiliated stations. Countless other black artists who recorded on race record labels during the decade never heard their albums aired. To hear black musicians on the radio, Americans in larger urban markets had to tune to local stations that were not affiliated with larger networks. The fact of the matter was that the financial foundations of recording and radio remained in the hands of white businessmen. These circumstances would only be exacerbated during the Great Depression.

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[186] Interview with Cecil Brooks II, October 24, 1995. AAJPSP Collection: Box 1, Folder 11.

CHAPTER IV: CHANGING DYNAMICS AND STEADY BEATS IN THE MUSICIANS' CLUBHOUSE

The Great Depression crippled the entertainment industry and hit musicians especially hard. Individual musicians suffered as restaurants, skating rinks, hotels, and theaters closed their doors, and as new recording technology played them out of their jobs. Eighty percent of musicians in New York's Local 802 were unemployed as businesses struggled to survive.[187] Though the depression crippled the economy, it provided an opportunity for larger record labels and broadcasting stations to monopolize the industry. As smaller record labels and stations struggled, larger corporations such as NBC (National Broadcasting Company), CBS (Columbia Broadcasting Systems), and RCA (Radio Corporation of America), and Decca bought them out. These companies systematically gained control over the industry and routinely excluded African Americans from the recording and radio industries.

From the creation of segregated AFM locals in 1902 through the Great Depression, the AFM as a union had done little to protect black musicians in Pittsburgh. In fact, as seen in previous chapters, Pittsburgh's Local 60 officials actively degraded black musicians and jazz music as "uncivilized." Given this history, Local 471 musicians at best had mixed feelings about the AFM. Throughout a collection of interviews conducted in the 1990s by Charles Austin, a former Local 471 member, musicians expressed their disgust with the union. One former member and pianist, Cecil Brooks II,

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[187] Jacob C. Goldberg, *Swingin' the Color Line: African American Musicians and the Formation of Local 802.* Amherst: Lulu Publishers, 2008, 64.

plainly declared, “Don’t ask me about the union because I think nothing of the union. The union didn’t get me the jobs.”[188]

As the nation recovered, African American musicians strategically addressed their need for jobs. In Pittsburgh, Local 471 members responded by founding their own clubhouse, the Musicians’ Club. The club created jobs for musicians in a multitude of ways. Local 471 musicians entertained nightly by playing in the clubhouse and it quickly became one of the best after-hours clubs in the city. The clubhouse also became a space in which black musicians could network with other musicians and business owners to book gigs outside of the clubhouse. In addition, national headliners often frequented the clubhouse after playing a gig downtown. After hearing the talent inside the clubhouse, many national headliners hired Local 471 musicians to tour with them.

In effect, the clubhouse brought Local 471 into a new era. In its previous two decades of existence, membership in Local 471 had provided very little benefit for black musicians, largely because the AFM, at the national and local level, failed them. In fact, white musicians of Local 60 actively worked against black musicians to secure jobs for themselves. After Local 471 founded the Musicians’ Clubhouse, however, black musicians experienced a new level of prosperity that they did not have either before or after the clubhouse’s heyday.

Black musicians benefited not only financially from the clubhouse, but also in terms of camaraderie. Members forged life-long friendships with one another. One member, Charles Cottrell, pointed to the clubhouse as the best part of his membership

[188] Interview with Cecil Brooks II, October 24, 1995. AAJPSP Collection: Box 1, Folder 11.

with Local 471. "You know it was more than just a union," he recalled, "because, I can never remember going in there where I didn't feel as though I was richer, was not richer after going in there… I'd either learn something about music or something about life."[189] Cecil Brooks II, the same musician who expressed his disappointment with the union itself, asserted, "Now, as far as the club is concerned, we had one of the best musician's clubs in the country."[190] Jerry Elliott reminisced, "I think Pittsburgh spoiled me because there was no place in any of my travels like the Musician's Club in Pittsburgh…Everyone came to the Musician's Club. I mean white or black. When you come to Pittsburgh, this is where you went."[191]

By founding the Musicians' Clubhouse, Pittsburgh's black musicians took control of their own financial situations. They created an avenue for their own employment. In addition, they established a space in which they could experiment with music. Free of any restrictions from radio and recording studios, African American musicians collaborated with other musicians from around the country. In effect, the clubhouse became a space in which musicians were free from the demands of Local 60 and the respectability politics that had limited black classical musicians a generation before. Musicians experimented during late-night jam sessions and nurtured the creation and spread of bebop. For nearly two decades, the Musicians' Clubhouse stood at the center of the Hill District as a beacon for black AFM musicians.

[189] Interview with Charles Cotrell, Jan. 29, 1997. AAJPSP Collection: Box 1, Folder 15.

[190] Interview with Cecil Brooks II, Oct. 24, 1995. AAJPSP Collection: Box 1, Folder 11.

[191] Interview with Jerry Elliott, July 25, 1997. AAJPSP Collection: Box 1, Folder 17.

The Great Depression

On "Black Tuesday," October 29, 1929, declining confidence in the stock market shook the economy. Within a month, the market shrunk to half its size. Between 1929 and 1933, the combined incomes of American workers fell by more than forty percent. Banks failed at alarming rates, and the gross national product dipped from $104.4 billion to $74.2 billion. As businesses collapsed, joblessness skyrocketed. Nationwide, the overall unemployment rate rose to nearly twenty-five percent.[192] The AFM estimated that two-thirds of the nation's musicians were out of work.[193]

Prior to the Great Depression, African Americans typically worked unskilled jobs. After the stock market crash, those entry-level jobs either disappeared or were filled by whites in need of employment. Levels of unemployment for African Americans in industrial cities typically doubled or tripled that of white Americans. In just one year after the stock market crashed, industrial production dropped fifty-nine percent, forcing businesses to lay off employees. In Pittsburgh, unemployment rates for white workers reached twenty-five percent, while the rate for African Americans soared to forty-eight percent.[194]

The Depression crippled almost every industry, including the music industry. As the Depression worsened, Americans stopped purchasing records. Victor Records, once a titan in the recording business, saw sales plummet to the point that its owners were forced

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[192] United States Department of Commerce, *Historical Statistics of the United States* (1960), p. 70.

[193] Kenneth J. Bindas, *All of This Music Belongs to the Nation: The Federal Music Project of the WPA and American Cultural Nationalism, 1935-1939* (Toledo: University of Toledo, 1988), 31-32.

[194] John Bodnar, Roger Simon, and Michael P. Weber, *Lives of Their Own: Blacks, Italians, and Poles in Pittsburgh, 1900-1960.* Champaign, University of Illinois Press, 1983, 185-186.

to sell the company to RCA. As American incomes dried up, recording companies ceased their production of race records. Black consumers especially had no money, so companies saw no need to make records for their market. In turn, the few black musicians that had penetrated the recording industry by recording race records were left unemployed.

Theater musicians, once the AFM's largest contingent, also lost jobs at alarming rates. By the summer of 1931, half of theater musicians were unemployed. Musicians and the AFM did everything they could to save their jobs. They accepted lower wages, dropped demands for minimum-size orchestras, and agreed to restrictions on working conditions, but all to no avail. By 1934 only 4,100 theater musicians were still employed nationwide, and many of them lost their jobs in the next few years.[195] The AFM's inability to secure employment for its members was reflected in membership numbers. From 1929-1934, nearly 50,000 members turned in their membership cards, decreasing the AFM's membership to just 100,000.[196] In terms of the recording, theater, and film sectors, the Depression did not discriminate.

Much like theater managers, however, radio station managers did discriminate. They excluded African American performers almost entirely from their broadcasts. The lack of black voices on the airwaves tended to discourage black listenership, which remained under ten percent of the total population through the Depression years. Consequently, NBC and CBS — the two dominant commercial networks during the

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[195] Kraft, *Stage to Studio,* 56.

[196] Kraft, *Stage to Studio,* 58.

Depression — ignored African American musicians. In fact, the two companies commonly hired white entertainers to cover the popular black music of the era.[197] These conditions left most African American musicians jobless. The consolidation of recording and broadcasting companies, recording studios' abandonment of race records, the introduction of the jukebox, and broadcasting stations' preference for white musicians left black musicians with nowhere to turn.

Making a Deal to Swing

In an effort to stave off the effects of the depression, President Roosevelt initiated several reforms that impacted Local 471 musicians directly. One of the first and most obvious reforms was to end Prohibition. The Eighteenth Amendment had done little to curb the sale, production, and consumption of liquor. Instead, crime rates had spiked and states lost their former revenue from liquor taxes. Desperately needing relief, Congress ratified the Twenty-First Amendment in February of 1933, ending Prohibition. The end of Prohibition was widely celebrated. Entrepreneurs steadily re-opened restaurants, nightclubs, and dance halls as Americans slowly recuperated from the depression.

A flourishing club scene was further stimulated by Federal One, a New Deal program that provided job-relief to 40,000 artists, actors, writers, and musicians. The Federal Music Project (FMP), employed 16,000 instrumentalists, singers, and composers at its peak. The FMP also introduced music into the public schools that did not provide regular music instruction. In addition, FMP employees wrote, copied, and disbursed

[197] William Barlow, "Black Music on Radio During the Jazz Age," *African American Review,* Vol. 29, No. 2, (Summer 1995), Indiana State University, pp. 325-328.

music to the general public. Together, the end of Prohibition and the FMP created a welcoming climate for big bands. With the help of federally-funded employment, musicians formed large ensembles with upwards of thirty instrumentalists. The music they produced, swing music, defined the decade.

Swing was quite different from the jazz music that preceded it. While musicians had been largely divided by race and style — formalist classical styles for white musicians and improvised styles for black musicians — swing blended the two. While playing from written arrangements, swing instrumentalists often had the freedom to engage in a solo improvisation session. In addition, the new music was marked by a shift from two-beat to 4/4 time, meaning that the pace of songs was often times twice as fast as older jazz and classical tunes.[198]

Swing music was part of a larger "cultural renaissance" during the New Deal era as historians have pointed out.[199] Swing shaped an audience that was much more youthful, diverse, and modern than the jazz audiences that came before. Audiences of both black and white Americans listened and danced to integrated bands, such as the Benny Goodman Trio featuring Benny Goodman on clarinet, Teddy Wilson on piano, and Gene Krupa on drums. Swing venues remained segregated, however, with black listeners confined to upper balconies.

Swing still had its critics. Critics often focused on dancing that accompanied

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[198] Porter, *What is This Thing Called Jazz?,* 40.

[199] The term "cultural renaissance" as it pertains to swing comes from Lewis A. Erenberg, *Swingin' the Dream: Big Band Jazz and the Rebirth of American Culture.* Urbana: University of Chicago Press, 1998. David Stowe makes a similar argument in *Swing Changes: Big Band Jazz in New Deal America* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994.

swing. Swing's fast pace inspired a new dance craze, the Lindy Hop. Like swing music, the Lindy Hop utilized a formal eight-count structure of dance, popularized in Europe, with movements and improvisations of African American dances. Other popular styles included the Charleston, the Balboa, and the Collegiate Shag. No matter what dance listeners partook in, critics associated it with immorality. Dr. Abraham Arden Brill, a noted psychiatrist at the time, maintained "Swing dancing represents a regression to the primitive tom-tom [African drum]. A rhythmic sound that privileges savages and children alike. It acts as a narcotic and makes them forget reality."[200] Dr. Brill went further, claiming that swing dancing was more like "orchestrated sex" and a "phallic symbol set to sound."[201]

In Pittsburgh, Local 60 had used similar tactics to corner the job market. African American musicians in Pittsburgh found it difficult to access jobs through Local 471. Owners of downtown clubs were business partners with Local 60 musicians, and club owners sat on Local 60's Executive Board. Only the most accomplished black musicians could play in white clubs, but even then they worked for meager wages or were discriminated against. Jerry Bettors, one musician who played in white clubs during the 1940s and 1950s, remembered frustrating issues at white clubs. His black band was forced to drink at a separate bar set up just for the band. Instead of mingling with others during intermissions his band was forced to wait in the hot kitchen just before being

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[200] Ken Burns and G.C. Ward, *Jazz: A History of America's Music. Part 5 - Swing: Pure Pleasure.* New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2000. 56:43 - 58:30.

[201] Ken Burns and G.C. Ward, *Jazz:* 56:43 - 58:30.

called to the stage.[202] Outside of nationally recognized big bands such as Count Basie and Duke Ellington's, African American bands had a tough time finding gigs. When they did, they often faced segregation and discrimination on the road. In addition to numerous incidents such as this, black musicians were typically paid far less, were prohibited from cafes and restrooms on the road, and were rarely permitted to eat or sleep at the hotels where they performed. Big bands often had to split up to stay at houses in nearby black neighborhoods. Musicians who chose to stay or returned to Pittsburgh were forced to work other jobs. Local pianist George "Duke" Spaulding worked as a technician and tuner for Baldwin Piano Company.[203] After all-night jam sessions, Charles Austin would load up his van to clean carpets the next day.[204] These conditions meant black musicians had to find another way to secure jobs.

The Musician's Clubhouse: A Beacon on the Hill

In 1933, Local 471 purchased the Paramount Inn from Gus Greenlee, an African American entrepreneur and owner of Pittsburgh's Negro League Baseball team, the Pittsburgh Crawfords. The Paramount Inn had been a successful business venture for Greenlee, but also a frustrating one. The Paramount Inn was one of the Hill District's premier hotels and nightlife spots. Police heavily monitored the Paramount Inn. In the Spring of 1925, authorities raided and shut down the Paramount Inn after a customer

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[202] Interview with Jerry Bettors, July 1, 1997. AAJPSP Collection: Box 1, Folder 7.

[203] Interview with George Spaulding, October 2, 1997. AAJPSP Collection: Box 3, Folder 10.

[204] Cathy Cairns interview with Charles Austin, August 2, 1995. AAJPSP Collection: Box 1, Folder 3.

complained that patrons inside had broken management's "no intermingling of the races" rule.[205] Though Greenlee reopened the club a year later, the club was never quite as profitable and proved too risky a venture for the businessman.[206]

After the purchase, musicians of Local 471 renamed the Paramount Inn the Musician's Clubhouse. For the next eight years, Local 471 largely used the building to store union files, conduct official business, hold meetings, and as a space to practice their musical craft. In addition to having a central space in the heart of the Hill District for its musicians, the clubhouse was also a prime space in which bands could practice. Big bands needed significant time to synchronize their sound. Bands typically consisted of a minimum of ten instrumentalists and upwards of thirty to forty. Big bands had four sections: trumpets, trombones, saxophones, and a rhythm section of guitar, piano, double bass, and drums. Swing arrangements were fast-paced, half-arranged, and half-improvised. Knowing when and how loud to play was critical for each instrumentalist. This was only achieved through intense repetition. Swing bands commonly created significant portions of their "arrangements" while they practiced. Bands experimented during practice sessions and then memorized how they would play each piece without writing it on sheet music. Having a space such as the Musicians' Clubhouse was especially important during the Big Band era as large spaces to practice were difficult to find, especially for African American bands.

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[205] "Revoke License of Paramount Inn: Dancing License Revoked," *Pittsburgh Courier,* March 28, 1925, 1.

[206] "New Cabaret is Modern in All Respects," *Pittsburgh Courier,* July 26, 1924, 10. The Paramount Inn was originally named Collins Inn.

In the early 1940s, members decided that the clubhouse should also be used to generate revenue. Henry Jackson, Local 471 President, applied for a liquor license and a Pittsburgh judge approved the license in October of 1941.[207] In a little over a month, Local 471 prepped the clubhouse for its grand opening, set for the end of November. The week leading up to its opening, *The Pittsburgh Courier* anticipated that the Musicians' Club would be the "entertainment center of Pittsburgh."[208] To be granted entrance to the club, individuals had to purchase "associate memberships" for two dollars and had to be recommended by a member of Local 471.[209] These memberships were not difficult to obtain and became another source of revenue for the Local.

At 1213 Wylie Avenue, the Musicians' clubhouse sat amidst the vibrant Hill District (see Figures 4.1 through 4.7). Its first floor served as a rehearsal space fitted with a white baby grand piano. The second floor was furnished with a bar, small bandstand, and dance floor where guests could dance into the morning hours, which they often did (see Figures 4.3). "It was like they never bothered to lock the doors," trumpeter Charles Austin recalled.[210] A small dining area and kitchen complimented the space and nourished musicians and guests whenever they pleased. The third floor provided a convenient space for big bands to rehearse and for Local 471 to hold meetings, as well as a small office space for the Local's business. In a time when the music industry still restricted all but the most famous African American musicians, the Musician's

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[207] "Wylie Avenue," *The Pittsburgh Courier,* Oct 25, 1941, 12.

[208] "Wylie Avenue," *The Pittsburgh Courier,* Nov 29, 1941, 14.

[209] "Wylie Avenue," *The Pittsburgh Courier,* Dec 20, 1941, 15.

[210] Interview with Charles Austin, August 2, 1995.

Clubhouse provided a space in which black musicians could interact, network, and develop their own styles of music.

Figure 4.1: The Musicians' Clubhouse (highlighted) in the Hill District. Courtesy of University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh Historic Maps: Historic Pittsburgh http://digital.library.pitt.edu/maps.

Figure 4.2: The Musicians' Club (highlighted under the previous owner, Harry Collins), at the heart of the Hill District. Adjacent to another center of the community, the Bethel A.M.E. Church. Courtesy of University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh Historic Maps: Historic Pittsburgh http://digital.library.pitt.edu/maps.

Figure 4.3: Interior of Musician's Club, Local 471, with striped awning over bar, television in the corner, and round bar stools. Courtesy of Carnegie Museum of Art, Charles "Teenie" Harris Archive. Accession number: 2001.35.21302.

The Musician's Clubhouse was first and foremost a space in which musicians could socialize with other musicians and guests. Local musicians enjoyed the camaraderie of the clubhouse. Local 471 member Jerry Elliot first joined the union because he had to be a card-carrying member to work with AFM musicians. After experiencing little benefit from the union, he was on the verge of giving up his membership. Instead, he chose to stay.

> "The main reason I… [chose to stay] was the camaraderie at the club, plus you could go down there and play as much as you wanted to, as long as you wanted to… After a gig you couldn't wait to get back to the club," Elliot reminisced. Cecil Brooks II summarized his days at the club, "We all helped each other. We all rehearsed together. We had jam sessions. It was a great club."[211]

[211] Interview with Cecil Brooks II, October 24, 1995. AAJPSP Collection: Box 1, Folder 11.

Figure 4.4: Group Portrait of musicians on stage of Musician's Club with "MC" monogrammed on wall. Courtesy of Carnegie Museum of art, Charles "Teenie" Harris Archive. Accession number: 2001.35.6837.

Figure 4.5: Group portrait of nine women posing in front of Musician's Club stage. Courtesy of Carnegie Museum of Art, Charles "Teenie" Harris Archive. Accession number: 2001.35.22759.

Figure 4.6: Group portrait of four women wearing matching light colored sleeveless floral dresses, top hats, and holding canes after performing at the Musician's Clubhouse. Courtesy of Carnegie Museum of Art, Charles "Teenie" Harris Archive. Accession number: 2001.35.50758.

Figure 4.7: Group portrait of five women, including two toasting with glasses at bar with sign for "471 Cocktail" in background. Courtesy of Carnegie Museum of Art, Charles "Teenie" Harris Archive. Accession number: 2001.35.34621.

National headliners frequented the Clubhouse after playing in downtown establishments such as the Mercury, Door, Encore, and the Balcony, which were typically restricted to white musicians or famous black musicians such as Dizzy Gillespie and Cab Calloway. But the most famous African American entertainers could not stay or eat in downtown areas that they played due to segregation.[212] After their downtown gigs, national musicians found the Musician's Clubhouse as a welcome respite from the discrimination they faced during their travels.

Legends remain of times when national headliners visited the Musician's Clubhouse. After playing a show downtown, Dizzy Gillespie heard about magnificent jam sessions that took place at the club and decided to stop for a visit. He remembered the wealth of talented musicians: "One thing I like about playing Pittsburgh is that you've really got to cut it or get laughed off the stand. Seems like the whole audience in Pittsburgh is made up of critics. They all seem to know what's happening. You don't dare relax and hit a bad note."[213]

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[212] "Pittsburgh's Historic Black Musicians' Union to be Honored," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, June 22, 2012.

[213] "Pittsburgh's Produced Some of Nation's Top Show Folk," *The Pittsburgh Courier,* Feb. 24, 1962, A17.

Figure 4.8: Ray Brown, jazz double bassist and composer known for working extensively with Ella Fitzgerald and Dizzy Gillespie, performing at Musician's Clubhouse with his band, the "B All Stars." Walt Harper joins him on piano, Nate Harper on saxophone, Calvin Folkes on trumpet, and unknown musicians playing guitar, drums, and saxophone. Courtesy of Carnegie Museum of Art, Charles "Teenie" Harris Archive. Accession number: 2001.35.11415.

Figure 4.9: Musicians Edgar Willis, Calvin King, unknown woman, J.C. McClain, unknown man, Mary Dee, George "Duke" Spaulding, Leroy Brown, and Ruby Young Buchanan, posed in Musician's Clubhouse, Jan. 1950. Courtesy of Carnegie Museum of Art, Charles "Teenie" Harris Archive. Accession number: 2001.35.1554.

After the clubhouse began offering its "associate memberships" to the public, the Musician's Clubhouse transformed into an integrated space. Both black and white patrons could purchase associate memberships and come to eat, drink, and listen to their favorite local musicians (See Figures 4.8 through 4.11). If they were lucky, they might catch a glimpse of a famous musician who frequented the club when passing through town. White musicians from Local 60 also visited the club. Most gatherings were cordial and productive as white musicians of Local 60 participated in jam sessions alongside Local 471 musicians.[214] It is unclear how frequently white patrons and musicians frequented the club, as pictures of the Clubhouse rarely show white patrons. However, multiple Local 471 musicians recall playing in jam sessions with Local 60 musicians. Not all Local 471 musicians wholeheartedly welcomed white musicians, however. Some were skeptical, especially when Local 60 musicians showed up on the clubhouse doorstep. Some shared Cecil Brooks II's sentiment that white musicians only came to the clubhouse to "steal their music" and "learn our beats and what we had going."[215]

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[214] Interview with Jerry Elliot, July 25, 1997. AAJPSP Collection: Box 1, Folder 17.

[215] Interview with Cecil Brooks II, October 24, 1995.

Figure 4.10: Eddie Cole, brother of Nat King Cole, performing with two other musicians and band in the background in old Musician's Clubhouse. Courtesy of Carnegie Museum of Art, Charles "Teenie" Harris Archive. Accession number: 2001.35.6564.

Figure 4.11: Seven band members from "Sonny and his Premiers & Leroy," including drummer Thomas Gilmore, posed theatrically in front of Musician's Club curtain. Courtesy of Carnegie Museum of Art, Charles "Teenie" Harris Archive. Accession number: 2001.35.9213.

Nationally, camaraderie between black and white musicians was rare during the swing era. Though Benny Goodman formed one of the first integrated bands during this era, most white musicians did not agree with integration. In 1939, a writer for the national entertainment magazine, *Downbeat,* interviewed multiple musicians to ask about

their attitudes toward integration. He fielded a variety of responses which opposed integration. One white musician responded, "White people do not want to mix socially with Negroes. It's not a question of equality, it's a matter of privacy." Despite a rather public career, he only wanted to work alongside white musicians and play in front of white crowds. A second cited musical differences, "I wouldn't have a Negro in my band for the simple reason that the musical ideas of the Negro and White are too far apart for the best results." Another seemed shocked when the *Downbeat* writer suggested that white and black musicians should work together. He retorted, "It will break down race lines!" Finally, a union member called upon the AFM to take action, "It's not fair for Negroes to replace white musicians when there is so much unemployment. The Union should forbid it!"[216] Many white musicians still clearly believed that they were higher on the social hierarchy and believed they should be given jobs over their African American counterparts. Given this sentiment, a welcoming space such as the Musician's Clubhouse, no matter how infrequently white patrons and musicians visited, was rare for the era and all the more critical toward breaking down racial boundaries.

The clubhouse did not refuse any card-carrying customer, no matter one's ethnic or racial background.[217] Patrons of all backgrounds subverted racial norms when they socialized, danced, and drank with one another. Chuck Austin recalled, "it was a melting pot for musicians; North Side, East Liberty, Homewood, Braddock, Rankin, and

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[216] *Downbeat,* Vol. 6, No. 11. October 15, 1939.

[217] Interview with Jerry Elliot, July 25, 1997. AAJPSP Collection: Box 1, Folder 17. Seattle's black musicians' union Local 493 clubhouse was also the center of Seattle's jazz scene. The similarities between Seattle's Local 493 and Pittsburgh's Local 471 later inspired Austin to conduct the AAJPSP interviews.

Sewickley."[218] Their actions directly challenged those who thought people of different races should not intermingle.

Nearly everything about the culture of the Musician's Clubhouse subverted societal norms. Patrons that danced along to the music expressed a new sense of sexuality much like the youth that packed swing dance halls years earlier (see Figure 4.12). The way guests and performers dressed also rebelled against societal norms. One performer wearing a sequined bikini (see Figure 4.13) performed to drums in front of guests. Her outfit signified rebellion from the more conservative values that most of America shared. Another woman wearing a dance shirt and high-cut skirt performed on stage (See Figure 4.14). Black musicians also attempted to elevate jazz music to a more prestigious social level by the dress they chose as well. Dressing in expensive suits was a conscious effort to elevate a new style of music and culture within the clubhouse. Pianist Willie Smith remembered, "Everybody in the entertainment business made it a point to dress sharp. I usually paid around a hundred dollars for my suits… It was customary for entertainers to have at least twenty-five suits. You saw all kinds of suit material with fancy tailoring."[219]

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[218] Colter Harper interview with Charles Austin, August 31, 2008.

[219] Jacob C. Goldberg, *Swingin' the Color Line: African American Musicians and the Formation of Local 802* (Amherst: Lulu Publishers, 2008), 50.

Figure 4.12: Men and women dancing on stage at the Musician's Clubhouse. Courtesy of Carnegie Museum of Art, Charles "Teenie" Harris Archive. Accession number: 2001.35.3167.

Figure 4.13: Dancer in sequenced bikini holding sticks while performing on dance floor in old Musician's Clubhouse. Courtesy of Carnegie Museum of Art, Charles "Teenie" Harris Archive. Accession number: 2001.35.4748.

Figure 4.14: Woman wearing dance shirt with hat, holding cigarettes on Musician's Club stage. Courtesy of Carnegie Museum of Art, Charles "Teenie" Harris Archive. Accession number: 2001.35.10071.

Musicians gathered in Local 471's clubhouse for all-night jam sessions, sometimes until 11:00 a.m. the following morning (see Figure 4.15).[220] These musicians did not rehearse or play from written sheets. There were no performing "bands" per say. Rather, musicians could come and go as they pleased, sometimes in the middle of a number. Performers hardly communicated besides the quick "blues in B-flat" or a quick countdown to set the tempo. Each musician took his turn in a string of solos. Local 471 musicians tested the travelling musicians that came through. Pittsburgh gained a national reputation of being tough to play in because local musicians were so talented. The

[220] Cathy Cairns Interview with Charles Austin, August 2, 1995. AAJPSP Collection: Box 1, Folder 3.

Clubhouse's intense jam sessions bettered musicians in the city to the point that saxophonist Hill Jordan recalled, "a guy might jump off a garbage truck and play you off the stage."[221]

Figure 4.15: Band performing in old Musician's Club with sign reading, "Talent Nite and Jam Session every Friday from 10 to ?" Courtesy of Carnegie Museum of Art, Charles "Teenie" Harris Archive. Accession number: 2001.35.1870.

But the jam sessions were much more than a chance to trade chops. The interaction between local musicians and touring band members also served as an introduction and sometimes an impromptu audition for a ticket out of Pittsburgh. Prior to the founding of the clubhouse, bassist William "Bass" McMahon remembered, "guys would stand there on the corner with a horn under their arm hoping someone would come up and say, 'Hey, buddy! Can you play? Can you play that horn?' He might get a job,

[221] http://explorepahistory.com/story.php?storyId=1-9-D&chapter=1

and it would last for a week or maybe a month."[222] But many national headliners, after they witnessed the talent at the Musician's Clubhouse, hired Local 471 musicians to play with them in Pittsburgh and on national tours. For example, as Gillespie played at the Arch Tavern in Monessen, a town just thirty miles outside of Pittsburgh, Gillespie brought Kenny Clarke Spearman and Ray Brown, both born and raised in Pittsburgh, to play with him. The *Courier* wrote about Ray Brown,

> "The talented young artist has been featured for the past year with Gillespie and his crew of 'beboppers… Just twenty years old, Brown is already a favorite of Fifty-Second Street and gets high praise from the peers of Jazzdom. He is the son of the C. L. Browns of Webster Avenue and a product of local schools."[223]

Though Brown and Spearman were not official members of Local 471, many official members benefited in similar ways. In 1950, the Local made Wednesday nights "Celebrity Night" and opportunities for musicians expanded. After Billie Holiday sang in Pittsburgh, 471 musician Bobby Boswell found an opportunity to tour with her in the 1950s. After networking with other famous musicians, Boswell connected another local black musician, Harold Betters, with an opportunity to play with Ray Charles in the late 1950s.[224] Jazz drummer Max Roach also visited Local 471's clubhouse after a show. After competing during a jam session, Roach fired all three of the sidemen he brought with him, and quickly hired Local 471 musicians Bobby Boswell, Stanley Turrentine, and his brother, Tommy Turrentine. The next night, Roach finished his last Pittsburgh gig

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[222] James Doran, *Erroll Garner: The Most Happy Piano.* Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press and the Institute of Jazz Studies, Rutgers University, 1985, 33.

[223] "Ray Brown to Share Spotlight at Savoy," *The Pittsburgh Courier,* Nov 16, 1946, pg. 22.

[224] Harold Betters interview, AAJPSP Collection: Box 1, Folder 6, 7.

with the 471 musicians.[225] Four black musicians from Pittsburgh, including Charles Austin, landed an opportunity to tour with vocalist Lloyd Price from the mid-1950s until 1960. During this time, they performed at some of the most recognized theaters in the country including New York's Apollo Theatre, the Regal in Chicago, and the Royal Theater in Baltimore. They performed internationally in Nassau and Jamaica and landed an appearance on the Ed Sullivan Show.[226] During tour breaks, Austin and company recorded some of Price's biggest hits such as "Personality," "Have You Ever Had the Blues," and "Do you want to get Married?"[227] These are just a few of the opportunities that Local 471 musicians accepted. At a time when black musicians found it difficult to acquire contracts with recording studios, networking initiated in the Musician's Clubhouse provided jobs for Local 471 musicians.

Musicians of Local 471 did not necessarily have to travel because the clubhouse served as one of Pittsburgh's top entertainment venues. This was important to many black musicians who did not want to risk becoming targets of racial discrimination, or who were bound to the Pittsburgh area due to financial concerns or familial obligations. Black musicians were the victims of discrimination when travelling, especially when playing as part of an otherwise all-white band. Trumpeter Al Aarons vividly recalled his experience with segregation on a tour to San Antonio, Texas, where he had to drink from

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[225] "Pittsburgh's Produced Some of Nation's Top Show Folk," *The Pittsburgh Courier,* Feb. 24, 1962, A17.

[226] Cathy Cairns interview with Charles E. Austin, August 2, 1995. AAJPSP Collection: Box 1, Folder 3.

[227] Cathy Cairns interview with Charles Austin, August 2, 1995; "Obituary: Charles 'Chuck' Austin/Jazz Trumpet Great Helped Preserve History," *Pittsburgh Post Gazette,* May 29, 2012.

separate water fountains. He vividly recalled one instance when a restaurant manager informed him that he could not eat in the diner with the remainder of his band. Instead, he was forced to eat in the kitchen.[228] Drummer Cecil Brooks II remembered his struggle while on tour with six white musicians in the early 1950s. The venue manager refused to allow the band to play unless "they got rid of me." Brooks' bandmates said, "if he can't come in, we won't come in either."[229]

The Clubhouse also served as a retreat from racially-motivated violence. Saxophonist Stanley Turrentine, who travelled extensively, was both a victim of and a witness to racial violence on multiple occasions. One time, police pulled the band's bus over on a Mississippi back road. Police approached the young Turrentine first, asking his name, to which he responded, "Stanley Turrentine, sir." Others responded in a similar manner, except his trumpeter Fleming Askew, who responded with, "Fleming Askew." The officer retorted, "Fleming Askew what?" But Fleming would not say, "sir." The officers grew angry, and while dragging him behind the bus and beating him with their nightsticks, called him a "Smart Nigger." Askew received a fractured skull in the altercation, and his band members had to drive thirty miles to a hospital, only to be informed, "We don't take no niggers here." The band hopped back on the bus and drove another forty miles before finding a hospital that would treat the injured trumpeter.[230]

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[228] Interview with Al Aarons, Nov. 7, 1999. AAJPSPCollection: Box 1, Folder 1.

[229] Interview with Cecil Brooks II, Oct 24, 1995. AAJPSP Collections. Box 1, Folder 11.

[230] "Turrentine Recollects About Good (and Bad) Ole' Days," *New Pittsburgh Courier,* March 31, 1990, p. 2.

Black musicians faced discrimination not only on the road but also at home. Local 471 musicians faced discrimination no matter the city. Even Pittsburgh, a city in which public accommodations had been legally desegregated by the Pennsylvania legislature in 1887, still unofficially practiced segregation. Saxophonist Hosea Taylor recalled, "Jim Crow was very much in effect in and around Pittsburgh back in the forties. The fact that Pittsburgh was quite a ways north of the Mason Dixon Line didn't mean a damned thing. Black people may have been welcome to work downtown and/or do a little shopping, but if you were black and in the market for a garment that might tend to touch the skin, you were certainly not invited to try it on."[231] Stanley Turrentine called Pittsburgh part of "Up South," due to his shared experiences with discrimination in northern and southern states. Local 471 musicians also felt discrimination in the jobs available to them within the city. White musicians "got all the best jobs," according to Cecil Brooks II. "Any job of any note that would come in they would get the jobs. We got something I guess if they couldn't get somebody else."[232]

Brooks' comments also highlight how Local 471 was structurally hampered by AFM leadership at both national and local levels, the music industry, and by those who still believed segregation should be a legal practice. For most of its existence, Local 471 had not effectively garnered jobs for its black musicians. Only after Local 471 founded the clubhouse did jobs start to become available. Some musicians joined national headliners on tour and others worked at the clubhouse itself. Many worked steadily on weekends, playing to a packed house. Saxophonist Leroy Brown became one of the

[231] Taylor, *Dirt Streets,* 125.

[232] Chuck Austin interview with Cecil Brooks II, Oct 24, 1995. AAJPSP Records, Box 1, Folder 11.

Hill's most popular bandleaders by playing Sunday nights at the club (see Figure 4.16). It was through his playing at the Clubhouse that Brown received regular work from popular artists such as pianist Erroll Garner and singer Billy Eckstine, as well as from local Pittsburgh clubs such as the Trianon Club.[233]

Figure 4.16: Unknown male vocalist performing with Local 471 members George "Duke" Spaulding on piano and Leroy Brown on saxophone behind him in old Musician's Clubhouse. Sign on wall in background reads, "Talent Nite and Jam Session Every Friday from 10 to ?" Courtesy of Carnegie Museum of Art, Charles "Teenie" Harris Archive. Accession number: 2001.35.2048.

Brown's act also inspired young musicians, such as Pittsburgh's Hosea Taylor. Born in 1928, Taylor grew up in Penn Township just East of the city. He acquired his first saxophone in 1943 and joined Local 471 shortly after. One of his earliest influences

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[233] *The Pittsburgh Courier,* Dec 27, 1941, p. 20; *The Pittsburgh Courier,* Jan 18, 1941, p. 14.

was Leroy Brown, whom Taylor heard frequently in the Musician's Clubhouse. Taylor modeled his style after Brown's and became quite successful at the local level. Taylor then joined the Walt Harper Band in 1945, another group of Local 471 musicians (see Figure 4.17). The following year he worked with Joe Westray's Orchestra. Through these gigs, Taylor remained a prominent musician in the Pittsburgh area. He played nearly all of Pittsburgh's major jazz venues, including the Crawford Grill.[234]

Figure 4.17: Walt Harper band playing at the Musician's Clubhouse. Local 471 members Walt Harper playing piano, Nate Harper on tenor saxophone, Hosea Taylor on alto saxophone, Tommy Turrentine on trumpet, Billy Davis on trombone, and Joni Wilson on drums, performing in old Musician's Clubhouse. Courtesy of Carnegie Museum of Art, Charles "Teenie" Harris Archive. Accession number: 2001.35.11414.

The Musicians' Club on Wylie Avenue was a hub of productive social activity for Pittsburgh's musicians for over twenty years. It served as a space for musicians to practice their craft, network with local and nationally known musicians, and navigate a

[234] Hosea Taylor, *Dirt Streets: The Pittsburgh Jazz Struggle During the 1940s* (Pittsburgh, Arsenal, 2007), 3-4.

fiercely competitive and discriminatory job market. Ample opportunities presented themselves through the Clubhouse if one could play.

Financial Viability of Music Styles in Pittsburgh Nightclubs

For African American musicians in Pittsburgh, especially those most concerned with earning a paycheck, options were limited. One had to constantly balance club owner and audience tastes when playing gigs in any nightclub. An examination of three nightlife venues in Pittsburgh's Hill District - the Loendi Social and Literary Club, the Crawford Grill, and the Musician's Clubhouse - demonstrates how musicians tailored their styles to each venue. In addition, it reveals how spaces like the Musician's Clubhouse were critical to the creation and spread of bebop, a genre that was pioneered in New York City with the help of Pittsburgh's own musicians.

The Loendi Social and Literary Club was founded in 1897 by George Hall. Hall founded the club with the intention that it would be an exclusive club for the area's black elite. In 1902, Hall purchased a three-story building on the corner of Fullerton and Wylie Avenue for $100,000 (see Figures 4.18 and 4.19). Hall modeled the building after Pittsburgh's prestigious Duquesne Club, another social organization meant for the city's top rail and steel businessmen. Inside the Loendi Club, lavish carpets adorned the floors and expensive paintings lined the walls. Members discussed business over lunch in the elegant dining room or, if they preferred, over a game of cards or billiards. Members could venture to the club's private library with its vast collection of books. Its

membership included African American doctors, entrepreneurs, business owners, and celebrities.[235]

Figure 4.18: Exterior of Loendi Club at 83 Fullerton Avenue, Hill District. Courtesy of Carnegie Museum of Art, Charles "Teenie" Harris Archive. Accession number: 2001.35.3415.

Figure 4.19: Interior of Loendi Club with floor lamps, love seats, chairs, and ashtray stands. Courtesy of Carnegie Museum of Art, Charles "Teenie" Harris Archive. Accession number: 2001.35.107993

[235] Whitaker, *Smoketown,* 46-47.

In addition to its use as a space for meetings, the Loendi Club offered educational lectures, sponsored private events, and welcomed countless celebrities through its doors. The club held "Private Artist Parties" quite regularly which featured musicians such as Lena Horne (see Figure 4.20), Count Basie, Cab Calloway, Louis Armstrong, and Billy Eckstine. Events were rarely public at the Loendi Club. Entertainments at night were reserved for members only. Members prided themselves on the fact that the club served upper-class African Americans during a time when social outlets and networking were not open to them in downtown Pittsburgh.[236]

Figure 4.20: June Eckstine and Lena Horne posed behind table with lobster during a reception in honor of Horne. Reception held at Loendi Club in October 1944. Courtesy of Carnegie Museum of Art, Charles "Teenie" Harris Archive. Accession number: 2001.35.15619.

The music that filled the halls of the Loendi Club was not featured as the night's entertainment. Instead, music in the Loendi Club served to ratify members' sense of themselves as upper-class citizens. The Loendi Club did not hold many public events. Instead, the club brought in local bands, rarely larger than quartets, to play for members

[236] William G. Nunn Sr., "Famed Loendi Club Holds 'Open House' For Last Time at '83 Fullerton Site," *Pittsburgh Courier,* Jun 7, 1958, p. A3.

during weekends, dances, or special events. Often, the club just hired a solo pianist. The music itself tended to be a blend of classical, jazz, and swing, and members heard it in the background while they read or socialized. One of the biggest hits at the Loendi Club was Teenie Trent's Trio (which was actually four men) that played regularly on Sunday nights. According to a 1950 column in the *Pittsburgh Courier,* "Trent can (and does) play just about any number that enjoys popularity… These gents lend their music in a manner that fits the atmosphere of the Loendi Club, where the music is so unintrusive that bridge players are not disturbed. That's something."[237] The style of music played at the Loendi Club was especially tailored toward Pittsburgh's upper-class African Americans, as those such as Teenie Trent and others played "classier" contemporary pieces or reworked classical standards.

In 1930, Gus Greenlee, an African American businessman and owner of Pittsburgh's Negro League baseball team the Pittsburgh Crawfords, purchased a hotel on the corner of Crawford Street and Wylie Avenue and converted it to the Crawford Grill (see Figures 4.21 through 4.23). The building spanned nearly a full city block with three floors. Recognizing the need for an entertainment center among the Hill District's middle-class, Greenlee worked for the next three years to convert the hotel into just that. The Crawford Grill featured a restaurant on the first floor. Its second floor was the main entertainment space which focused around a central elevated stage that musicians and

[237] "Requests of Loendians Up Trent's Popularity," *The Pittsburgh Courier,* Jan 14, 1950, p. 24.

comedy acts entertained crowds. The third floor was reserved for insiders of "Club Crawford," where Greenlee and his closest business associates socialized.[238]

Figure 4.21: Outside of the Crawford Grill No. 1, 1401 Wylie Avenue, Hill District. Courtesy of Carnegie Museum of Art, Charles "Teenie" Harris Archive. Accession number: 2001.35.2368.

Figure 4.22: William "Gus" Greenlee and his son William "Bill" Greenlee Jr., standing in front of bar inside the Crawford Grill No. 1. Courtesy of Carnegie Museum of Art, Charles "Teenie" Harris Archive. Accession number: 2001.35.3487.

[238] In fact, *The Pittsburgh Courier* dubbed the Crawford Grill as the Hill's "most popular 'Hot Spot.'" *the Pittsburgh Courier,* March 30, 1935, p. 9; "The New Crawford Grill Opens with the Repeal Glory in 'New Ways and Wines' on Christmas Even: Gus Greenlee to Present Pittsburgh with Finest Restaurant and Drinking Place in Western Pennsylvania - Opening Christmas Eve at Midnight," *The Pittsburgh Courier,* Dec. 23, 1933, p. A6.

The Crawford Grill was the first Hill District nightclub to obtain a liquor license. After Prohibition officially ended on December 5, 1933, Greenlee planned the Grill's opening for shortly after on Christmas Eve. The *Pittsburgh Courier* encouraged readers to "GO NO FURTHER!" when looking for entertainment.[239] The Crawford Grill was a smashing success and catered to non-elite. It helped that Greenlee used his prestige and financial power to attract celebrities. Famous athletes, actors and actresses, and musicians made it a point to stop at the Crawford Grill when coming through the Steel City. Top jazz musicians such as Louis Armstrong, Lena Horne, Ella Fitzgerald, Dizzy Gillespie all performed at the Crawford Grill along with talents from Pittsburgh such as Billy Eckstine, Roy Eldridge, Mary Lou Williams, Erroll Garner, and Earl Hines. It remained in business until 1951 when a fire destroyed it.[240]

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[239] "The New Crawford Grill Opens with the Repeal Glory in 'New Ways and Wines' on Christmas Even: Gus Greenlee to Present Pittsburgh with Finest Restaurant and Drinking Place in Western Pennsylvania - Opening Christmas Eve at Midnight," *The Pittsburgh Courier,* Dec. 23, 1933, p. A6.

[240] Mark Whitaker, *Smoketown.*

Figure 4.23: Interior of Crawford Grill with customers seated at counters and tables. Round windows with neon lights reading "Bar" and "Grill" adorn the windows. Courtesy of Carnegie Museum of Art, Charles "Teenie" Harris Archive. Accession number: 2001.35.19414.

Like at the Loendi Club, musicians at the Crawford Grill played as entertainers rather than artists. In the 1940s, when bebop reached its peak, musicians strayed away from playing bebop in favor of popular tunes more rooted in a classical/swing/blues style. Pianist John Hughes, for example, often dabbled in bebop but chose to play songs based on their popularity. In an interview with Colter Harper, Hughes' priority was "to be commercial" and play "to the people who are going to put a twenty dollar bill up there."[241] Because audiences preferred other styles, musicians that played the Crawford Grill did not play bebop. For musicians like Hughes that depended on tips to make a living, the popularity of a tune had to be considered. Unlike the Musician's Clubhouse, musicians at the Crawford Grill were influenced by the demands of the market.

[241] Colter Harper, "Crossroads of the World," 107.

Musician's Clubhouse, Minton's Playhouse, and Bebop

Previous historians have demonstrated that bebop originated in the early 1940s with the onset of World War II and the decline of swing. The draft removed tens of thousands of Americans from swing jazz ballrooms and musicians from big swing bands. Gas and rubber rationing curtailed road trips and midnight curfews shut down clubs during their prime hours of operation. As a result, musicians gravitated away from big band swing to smaller band bebop.[242] While these factors partially account for the rise of bebop, they do not completely account for its origins.

Bebop employed smaller, flexible combos in which each individual voice could be heard. Improvisation served as bebop's most defining characteristic, in addition to a rapid tempo, complex chord progressions and melodic lines, numerous key changes, and chordal substitutions. Bands usually featured a walking bass line, polyrhythmic drumming, and an offbeat piano.[243] The story of the creation of bebop is a long and convoluted one, but connecting the dots demonstrates how spaces like the Musician's Clubhouse allowed for the creation and spread of bebop. In fact, while the genre is largely regarded as a creation of New York City's talented musicians, it also had deep roots in Pittsburgh. Roy Eldridge, a trumpeter born on Pittsburgh's North Side, left Pittsburgh in 1935. At the age of seventeen, the young Eldridge moved to New York City. There, big band leader Teddy Hill heard Eldridge play one night and coaxed him to

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[242] DeVeaux, *The Birth of Bebop,* 205-206.

[243] When playing a walking bass line, musicians walk through the appropriate scale of each chord, but the musician chooses a new note each time you play the same song. Polyrhythmic drumming is a combination of two or more rhythms played at the same linear tempo. Porter, *What Is This Thing Called Jazz?* 54.

join his band. Eldridge inspired numerous musicians, including one Dizzy Gillespie Gillespie moved to New York City just as Eldridge was leaving the Teddy Hill Orchestra. Hill hired Gillespie as soon as he heard the trumpeter. Gillespie sounded just like Eldridge, and Hill wanted him.[244]

Kenny Clarke, a young drummer who grew up in Pittsburgh's Hill District, also moved to New York City in 1935. Clarke had a unique way of keeping time by "riding" the hi-hat with his left foot. This maneuver freed up his right foot to throw in bass drum accents that he called "dropping bombs."[245] Clarke's unique style also earned him a spot in Teddy Hill's band, and he and Gillespie immediately clicked. The more the two played together, the more they improvised on stage. Other band members claimed that Clarke "upset their rhythm" by playing in such a manner and kicked Clarke out. By 1939, Teddy Hill's band completely disbanded. Hill moved on to manage a new club on 188th Street in Harlem called Minton's Playhouse.[246]

Minton's Playhouse was owned and operated by Henry Minton, the only black delegate of New York's Local 802 of the AFM. Minton opened the club to provide cover for musicians who wanted to jam after hours. Local 802's leaders strictly enforced a pay-to-play policy, which prohibited members from performing unless they were paid. For the AFM, this included jam sessions. Local 802 assigned "walking delegates" the duty of patrolling nightclubs in the area, whose job it was to issue fines to anyone caught playing

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[244] Dizzy Gillespie, *To Be or Not to Bop,* 58-65.

[245] Gunther Schuller, *The Swing Era" The Development of Jazz, 1930-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 421.

[246] Whitaker, *Smoketown,* 205.

or jamming without pay. Frustrated with the policy, Minton opened Minton's Playhouse just blocks from the Apollo Theater. For years, Minton's status in the union allowed him to protect musicians who jammed within his club.[247]

Minton encouraged club manager Teddy Hill to look for unique talents for the house band at Minton's Playhouse. Hill drew on past relationships and quickly hired Kenny Clarke to play drums, Dizzy Gillespie to play trumpet, and newcomers Charlie Christian to play guitar and Thelonious Monk on piano. Over the next few years, according to historian Mark Whitaker, Minton's transformed into a "nightly musical laboratory."[248] After headliners finished playing the Apollo, they headed to Minton's to listen to the ensuing jam sessions, sometimes lasting until dawn. Together, these musicians tested each other in cutting contests, dueled incoming musicians, and crafted improvisations that stretched far beyond the four and eight-bar solos of swing. During these jam sessions, musicians fashioned what would later be known as "bebop." Though lesser-known, the jam sessions at Pittsburgh's Musician's Clubhouse were similar in structure and equally as vital to the music scene. Just like musicians at Minton's were doing, Local 471 musicians crafted their own style during jam sessions.

The house band at Minton's did not stick together long. Gillespie left to play with Benny Carter. Charlie Parker later joined Gillespie in Pittsburgh native Earl Hines' band, and the two continued to develop new rhythmic ideas while on tour. In fact, Gillespie wrote two of bebop's earliest recordings, "A Night in Tunisia" and "Salt Peanuts,"

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[247] Whitaker, *Smoketown,* 206.

[248] Whitaker, *Smoketown,* 206.

during his time with Hines.[249] After playing with Hines, Gillespie decided to join forces with Parker to join Billy Eckstine, who was one of the nation's top singers after recording his major hit, "Jelly Jelly." Eckstine, Gillespie, Parker, and others toured together, playing a new and very different sound than the nation was accustomed to. According to Gillespie himself, "There was no band that sounded like Billy Eckstine's. Our attack was strong, and we were playing bebop, the modern style. No other band like this one existed in the world."[250]

Dizzy Gillespie made multiple stops in Pittsburgh during his tours. While records are not entirely clear as to an exact date that Gillespie visited the Musician's Clubhouse, interviews and *Pittsburgh Courier* articles from members of Local 471 indicate that he did indeed play at the club at least on one occasion.[251] The *Pittsburgh Courier* indicates that as early as 1944, during a tour with Billy Eckstine, Gillespie may have visited the Musician's Clubhouse.[252] At the very latest he visited the clubhouse by 1946, when bebop was still reaching its peak in popularity.

On November 20, 1946, Dizzy Gillespie and Ella Fitzgerald played Pittsburgh's Savoy Ballroom. Their appearance drew much fanfare. "Dizzy Gillespie is the newest idol that trumpet players imitate," *The Pittsburgh Courier* clamored. "His ideas come so

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[249] These were not recorded until 1944 because the AFM had implemented a recording ban of all major record labels from 1942-1944. The ban aimed to force labels to agree to share more revenue that came in as radio stations increasingly relied on recorded music.

[250] Dizzy Gillespie, *To Be or Not to Bop,* 188.

[251] "Walt Harper 'Made it' Without Leaving the City: Courier Exclusive," *The Pittsburgh Courier,* Mar. 1, 1986, p. 2.

[252] "Turrentine Recollects about Good Ole' Days," *The Pittsburgh Courier,* Mar. 31, 1990, 2.

fast that it is difficult to keep up with his art if the listener is not versed in the Bebop style that is taking the country by storm and Dizzy is the boy who helped start the whole thing."[253] As the date neared, the paper suggested, "It goes without saying that this star attraction will draw a record crowd and will all but break the house record at the Savoy."[254] After his performance at the Savoy, Dizzy Gillespie paid the Musician's Clubhouse a visit. Local 471 member Charles Austin spoke fondly of the night when Gillespie joined them for an hours-long jam session.

> "It was that kind of period of time, musically, you know, where we were all developing. In fact, bebop, the new music was just coming in and a lot of guys would bring in - we had a couple of guys here that were a little bit ahead of our time - so when guys would in from New York or Chicago or wherever, they would, you know, lay something on us, and we kept abreast of what was going on. You know. And it was just something, I mean, when you think of it, it's an unbelievable period of time, but it actually happened."[255]

It was in moments like these that national headliners "bent over backwards" to help Local 471 members, according to Austin.[256] Austin's fond remembrance of that night demonstrates how a visit from a musician such as Gillespie brought in a tremendous amount of recognition for the clubhouse and how musicians relayed ideas to each other. Dizzy, the foremost bebop musician in the nation, taught Local 471 musicians in this moment. The act of Dizzy "laying something" on Local 471 musicians helped them to

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[253] *Pittsburgh Courier,* Nov 2, 1946, pg. 20.

[254] "Ella Fitzgerald and 'Dizzy' Gillespie Primed for Savoy Session, Nov. 20," *The Pittsburgh Courier,* Nov 16, 1946, pg. 21.

[255] Interview with Charles Austin, August 2, 1995.

[256] Interview with Charles Austin, August 2, 1995.

better understand the intricacies of bebop and to further cultivate the art among themselves. Gillespie and other beboppers inspired numerous Local 471 musicians, including bebop trumpeter Tommy Turrentine.

Tommy Turrentine was born and raised in the Hill District in 1928. His parents encouraged musicianship, and all his siblings played an instrument.[257] He joined Local 471 in his late teens and aspired to be a professional bebop musician and modeled his style after Gillespie's. According to the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette,* Turrentine's style was "lyrical, full-toned, and stylistically related to that of Gillespie… His long-breathed solos invariably display a fine sense of balance and stricture."[258] Turrentine frequently played the Musician's Clubhouse and tutored other 471 musicians on the art of bebop (see Figure 4.24). Through his days at the Clubhouse, Tommy Turrentine eventually landed gigs with Benny Carter, Dizzy Gillespie, Earl Bostic, Charles Mingus, Count Basie, and felloy Pittsburgher Billy Eckstine.[259]

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[257] Charles Austin interview with Stanley Turrentine, Nov 23, 1997. AAJPSP collection: Box 3, Folder 15.

[258] "Tommy Turrentine: Trumpeter Who Performed with Many Jazz Greats," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette,* May 17, 1997.

[259] "Tommy Turrentine: Trumpeter Who Performed with Many Jazz Greats," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette,* May 17, 1997; "Turrentine Recollects about Good Ole' Days," *The Pittsburgh Courier,* Mar. 31, 1990, 2.

Figure 4.24: Tommy Turrentine (middle) on trumpet playing with Cecil Brooks II on drums and unknown musician on piano in the Musician's Clubhouse. Courtesy of Carnegie Museum of Art, Charles "Teenie" Harris Archive. Accession number: 2001.35.1791..

Turrentine was one of the few musicians who enjoyed financial success as a bebop musician. Bebop was not financially viable for Local 471 musicians outside of the Musician's Clubhouse. While many venues supported live music, not all accepted black musicians or bebop music. Regular employment depended on one's ability to appeal to a wide range of listeners, especially white consumers. In his autobiography, Dizzy Gillespie explains how audience expectations shaped his performances, "Dancers had to hear those four solid beats and could care less about the more esoteric aspects, the beautiful advanced harmonies and rhythms we played and our virtuosity, as long as they could dance."[260] In fact, the most profitable 471 musicians were those who stuck to playing swing, jazz, or blues standards.

Local 471 musicians had a difficult choice to make. Some played what they

[260] Gillespie, *To Be or Not to Bop,* 356.

desired, even if it was not profitable. Others, like pianist Walt Harper, played popular music to appease listeners. Harper would go on to lead one of the longest and most successful careers of any musician that stayed within the city. Harper formed his first group in the mid-1940s and continued to play until his death in 2006. Harper was innovative in the sense that his style allowed him to commonly play to white, black, and integrated crowds throughout Pittsburgh. This was a key to his financial success. In addition to various stints he played throughout the city, Harper's popular style jived with the Crawford Grill. He became a mainstay there and played weekly for a stint of nearly seven years.[261] Clubhouse owners desired popular music that customers could dance to. Harper's style enabled his commercial success outside of the Musician's Clubhouse. Harper is a prime example of how the market restricted a musician's creativity, that is, if they wanted to earn a living as a musician.

For many members, including the likes of Tommy Turrentine, the Musician's Clubhouse became a rare space that provided bebop musicians with freedoms that were seldom available to black musicians. Only here were musicians free to creatively experiment with the fresh idiom of bebop. For nearly two decades, the Musician's Clubhouse at 1213 Wylie Avenue presented Local 471 musicians with jobs, a space free of discrimination, and the chance to play music free of the pressures of the market. These spaces were necessary for black musicians to sustain their careers as musicians.

[261] "Walt Harper 'Made it' Without Leaving the City: Courier Exclusive," *The Pittsburgh Courier,* Mar. 1, 1986, p. 2."

CHAPTER V: URBAN RENEWAL'S REVERBERATIONS

In the first half of the twentieth century, Pittsburgh's African American community grew rapidly. Between 1900 and 1949, Pittsburgh's African American population had risen from just 20,355 to 73,384, a rate of growth that also increased their share of the total population from 4% to 11%.[262] Some settled in areas of Homewood, the North Side, and East Liberty, but most settled in the Hill District. Decade after decade, the Hill District became increasingly crowded and living conditions worsened as a result of poverty, exorbitantly high rents, and negligent landlords. Though the Hill District was a thriving cultural and economic center for the community, conditions worsened to the point that city planners suggested redeveloping the Hill District, one of a wave of "urban renewal" efforts across the country.

Urban renewal leveled thousands of neighborhoods across the country, and in doing so fractured communities. As early as the dawn of the twentieth century, W.E.B. DuBois recognized the importance of neighborhoods as primary locations for social interaction. In *Souls of Black Folk,* DuBois wrote,

> "In the civilized life of today the contact of men and their relationships to each other fall in a few main lines of action and communication: there is, first, the physical proximity of homes and dwelling-places, the way in which neighborhoods group themselves, and the contiguity of neighborhoods."[263]

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[262] "Report on Population Movements and Housing Trends," Civic Unity Council, Pittsburgh, PA, 1950. University of Pittsburgh, Digital Collections: https://digital.library.pitt.edu/islandora/object/pitt:31735051651366/from_search/d66510fbf04849889d27da623bf9b619-10#page/1/mode/2up/search/Negro+Housing+Needs+in+Pittsburgh+and+Allegheny+County

[263] William Edward Burghardt DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk.* Chicago: A.C. McClurg & Co., 1903. Republished New York: Dover Publications Inc., 1994, 39.

In other words, DuBois theorized that an individual's relationships with other residents and the community at large relied on close proximity to others. Individuals formed critical connections with other people, with specific places and structures. The memories people made while socializing with each other were connected with the spaces in which they socialized in very real ways. It was as if specific structures held memories and bonded communities together.

Mindy Thompson Fullilove, a professor of clinical psychiatry and public health, expounds upon DuBois's theory in her book, *Root Shock.* She writes,

> "buildings, neighborhoods, cities, nations - are not simply bricks and mortar that provide us shelter… each of these places becomes imbued with sounds, smells, noises, and feelings of those moments and how we lived them… the cues from place dive under conscious thought and awaken our sinews and bones, where the days of our lives have been recorded."[264]

Through one's experience in these spaces, Fullilove continues, one constructs a "Mazeway," or a "way of moving in an environment that maximizes the odds that he will survive predators, find food, maintain shelter from the harsh elements, and live in harmony with family and neighbors."[265] When mazeways are destroyed, one sinks into "root shock," a "traumatic stress reaction to the destruction of all or part of one's emotional ecosystem."[266] Root shock results in feelings of hopelessness, desperation, and a sense of separation from the community.

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[264] Mindy Thompson Fullilove, *Root Shock: How Tearing Up City Neighborhoods Hurts America, and What We Can Do About it.* New York: Random House, 2004, 10.

[265] Fullilove, 11.

[266] Fullilove, 11.

The Musicians' Clubhouse, and the Hill District more generally, functioned exactly as DuBois and Fullilove have theorized and more. Not only did residents and musicians benefit from the clubhouse financially, they also benefited emotionally as they formed close bonds with each other. Places such as Local 471 Musician's Clubhouse proved fertile ground for black musicians and the continued growth and experimentation with jazz into the 1950s.

These places came under increasing threat as federal officials and city planners across the nation formed plans to redevelop land. Officials typically targeted black neighborhoods for redevelopment in their plans of "urban renewal." White authorities connected jazz to vice, and the presence of spaces like the Musicians' Clubhouse attracted negative attention from urban planners. Rather than benefit black neighborhoods, urban renewal destroyed them, resulting in feelings of root shock. Urban renewal leveled the Hill District, including the Musicians' Clubhouse, leaving Local 471 musicians feeling as if they lost a place that provided comfort and safety from a discriminatory world and the music industry. In addition, by destroying the Hill District, urban renewal fractured the black community, separating residents from each other. Churches, schools, and other community centers were erased. Musicians no longer could walk down the street to the clubhouse to jam or have a drink with other musicians. Choices made by city planners proved detrimental to Local 471 musicians.

Struggle on the Hill

Decades of poverty, joblessness, and discrimination led to the distressed state of Pittsburgh's Hill District. If employers hired black workers, they relegated them to the

hardest, most dangerous, and most unsanitary jobs. The steel industry, Pittsburgh's largest manufacturing sector, hired African Americans workers in at the bottom of the job hierarchy. Seniority systems limited the upward movement of black workers at steel mills. These systems were instituted department-wide rather than plant-wide. If a black worker wanted to transition out of his job manning a furnace, the backbreaking work of masonry, or janitorial departments, he risked losing all seniority and possibly his job to younger workers. Some plants, such as Jones and Laughlin's Southside plant excluded black workers entirely until the 1970s.[267]

The steel industry was not the only sector to discriminate against African Americans. Employers in other sectors, such as construction and other building trades, limited the number of African Americans they hired. By World War I, despite making up five percent of Pittsburgh's total population, only three percent of employed Pittsburghers were African American.[268] Utility companies, department stores, hotels, and grocery chains also maintained the color line, only hiring African Americans in menial positions such as janitors and elevator operators. Skilled and white-collar jobs in Pittsburgh public schools as teachers, administrators, and counselors were typically reserved for white Americans. Labor unions besides the AFM shut out black workers. Unions for electricians, pipefitters, ironworkers, and plumbers did not accept black apprentices. The city's 1,400 member Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 5 had only one black

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[267] Dennis Dickerson, *Out of the Crucible: Black Steelworkers in Western Pennsylvania, 1875-1980.* Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986; John Hinshaw, *Steel and Steelworkers: Race and Class Struggle in Twentieth-Century Pittsburgh.* Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002.

[268] Joe Trotter and Jared Day, *Race and Renaissance,* 7.

member by the early 1960s. These conditions led to massive rates of unemployment in the black community. As late as June 1963, the *Pittsburgh Press* estimated that nearly three times as many African Americans were unemployed as whites.[269]

The color line in the workplace encouraged and was in turn encouraged by racial discrimination in residential, institutional, and community life of the city. At the height of the Great Migration, realtors had converted railroad cars, basements, boathouses, and warehouses into living quarters for black families. Steel companies built segregated camps to house their employees. African American employees occupied rooms with "hot beds," or beds upon which two, three, and sometimes four men took turns sleeping between shifts.[270] Low wages, underemployment, unemployment, and housing discrimination translated to poor living conditions in black communities.

Low incomes forced many African Americans into renting. In fact, just after World War II, 97% of African Americans in the city rented. White landlords, who owned most rental housing units in the Hill District, charged exorbitant prices for units they often neglected to repair. African Americans paid larger proportions of their total income for housing than whites. Fifty percent of African Americans paid more than a quarter of their annual earnings for housing while only thirty percent of white families paid as much.[271] If black buyers had the financial capability to escape black run-down neighborhoods, they still could not. Private homeowners and real estate agents refused to

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[269] Joe Trotter and Jared Day, *Race and Renaissance,* 42-58.

[270] Trotter and Day, *Race and Renaissance,* 12.

[271] Trotter and Day, *Race and Renaissance,* 46-68.

show units in white neighborhoods to potential black buyers. Advertisements reinforced discrimination in the housing industry by classifying properties by race. "For Colored" listings filled the pages of newspapers.[272] A lack of jobs, high rent prices, and a discriminatory real estate industry ensured the deterioration of black neighborhoods.

Urban Renewal

In 1934, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt signed the National Housing Act into law. The act created the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) and aimed to improve housing standards and living conditions. It was also designed to make housing and home mortgages more affordable, especially in areas of need. However, the FHA's mortgage underwriting standards significantly discriminated against minorities in a process known today as redlining. In 1935, the FHA requested that the Home Owners' Loan Corporation (HOLC), created as part of the New Deal, assess 239 cities for their level of security for real-estate investments. HOLC mapped each city, designating neighborhoods with "Type A," "Type B," "Type C," and "Type D" classifications (for Pittsburgh's map, see Figure 5.1). Those considered most desirable for lending purposes were outlined in green, or "Type A" neighborhoods. "Type B" neighborhoods were colored red and labeled as "Still Desirable." "Type C" were deemed "Declining" while "Type D" were considered unsuitable by federal standards to issue mortgages.

Due to decades of high rent prices, unemployment, and discrimination, the HOLC most commonly classified black neighborhoods as "Type D" neighborhoods. The

[272] Trotter and Day, *Race and Renaissance,* 46-48.

HOLC's classifications resulted in a nationwide trend in which lending institutions refused to issue loans to those in black communities. Between 1945 and 1959, African Americans nationwide received only two percent of all federally insured home loans, despite composing nearly ten percent of the nation's total population.[273] FHA officials followed this trend when mapping Pittsburgh. Black neighborhoods such as Homewood, the North Side, and the Hill District were all graded as "Type D" neighborhoods. In fact, neighborhood grades correlated rather strongly to race. The lower the grade a neighborhood received, the higher the proportion of black residents in that neighborhood (see Table 5.1). In addition, FHA officials noted in official forms that the Hill District contained a "concentration of negro and undesirables," was "very congested," and value of residential structures were "expected to go down."[274] Unable to secure mortgages, African Americans were constricted to renting.

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[273] Thomas W. Hanchett, "The Other Subsidized Housing: Federal Aiud to Suburbanization, 1940s-1960s," in John Bauman, Roger Biles, and Kirstin M. Szylvian, *From Tenements to the Taylor Homes: In Search of an Urban Housing Policy in Twentieth Century America* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000), 163-179.

[274] FHA NS Form-8, Aug. 26, 1937. Courtesy of Robert K. Nelson, LaDale Winling, Richard Marciano, Nathan Connolly, et al., "Mapping Inequality," American Panorama, ed. Robert K. Nelson and Edward L. Ayers, accessed August 28, 2019: https://dsl.richmond.edu/panorama/redlining/#loc=12/40.449/-80.033&city=pittsburgh-pa&area=D10&adview=full&adFigure=4/82.367/-162.729

Racial Makeup of HOLC Classified Neighborhoods

Grades/Minority	White	Minority
A: Best	100.00%	0.00%
B: Desirable	88.87%	11.13%
C: Declining	74.45%	25.55%
D: Hazardous	68.27%	31.73%

Table 5.1: Courtesy of the National Community Reinvestment Coalition: http://maps.ncrc.org/holcanalysis/holcpdf/HOLC_Pittsburgh,%20PA.pdf

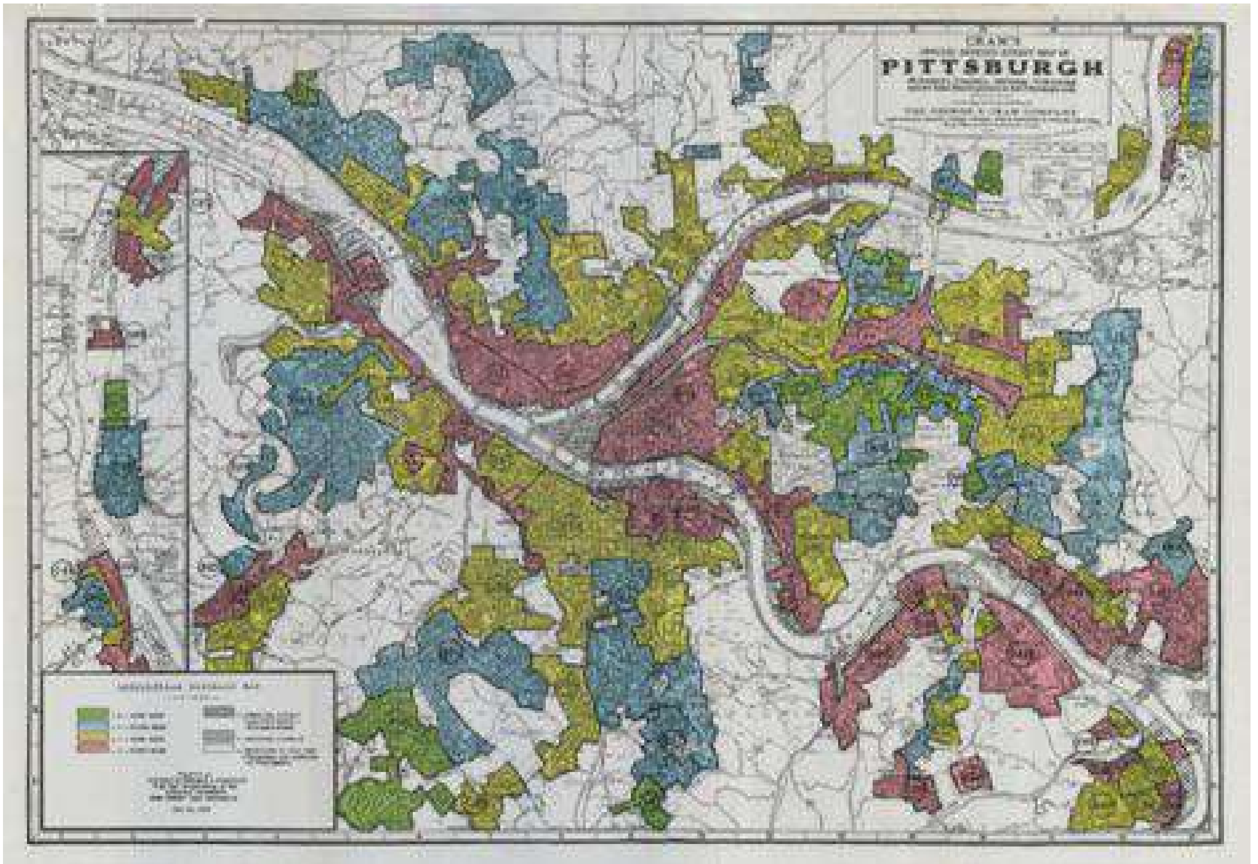

Figure 5.1: FHA map for greater Pittsburgh. "Type A" neighborhoods are shaded green, "Type B" shaded blue, "Type C" shaded yellow, and "Type D" shaded red. Hill District displayed just East of Ohio River split, shaded in red. Courtesy of digital archive: Robert K. Nelson, LaDale Winling, Richard Marciano, Nathan Connolly, et al., "Mapping Inequality," American Panorama, ed. Robert K. Nelson and Edward L. Ayers, accessed August 28, 2019, https://dsl.richmond.edu/panorama/redlining/#loc=12/40.44/-79.994&city=pittsburgh-pa.

While these policies hurt, not all African Americans in Pittsburgh were left out in the cold. Pittsburgh was one of the earliest cities to engage in efforts to house minorities and the poor, and the city formed its own public housing agency, the Housing Authority of the City of Pittsburgh (HACP), in 1937.[275] HACP quickly set in motion plans for two of the nation's first public housing projects, Bedford Dwellings in 1939 and Terrace Village in 1940. The two complexes received national attention, as President Roosevelt officially approved Bedford Dwellings and visited the grand opening ceremony of Terrace Village (see Figures 5.2 through 5.4).

Figure 5.2: Construction of the Bedford Dwellings, May 23, 1940. Pittsburgh City Photographer Collection. 715.4055959.CP.

[275] HACP went by many names, including the Pittsburgh Housing Authority, Housing Authority of Pittsburgh, etc. These were all the same organization.

Figure 5.3: Terrace Village public housing complex sitting atop a hill. Allegheny Conference on Community Development Photographs. MSP285.B012.F15.I14.

Figure 5.4: President Franklin Roosevelt inspecting Terrace Village, 1940. Carnegie Museum of Art Collection of Photographs. 84.88.46.

By most accounts, Bedford Dwellings and Terrace Village were a success for low-income residents, aside from the grumblings that Bedford Dwellings was built atop an old cemetery.[276] Those who earned a salary of $150 per month or less qualified to live in the 1,245 newly built units.[277] Their construction also created jobs for African American residents in the Hill District. While only temporary jobs, the *Pittsburgh Courier* praised the fact that more than one-fifth of laborers for these projects were African American.[278] According to the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette,* Bedford Dwellings remained the preferred public housing complex among residents for nearly fifty years after its construction.[279] Over the next four years, two more complexes were built, the Addison and Wadsworth Villages, which provided an additional 1,690 units.[280]

The 2,935 units constructed in the late 1930s and early 1940s were highly praised by residents and black leaders but these new units hardly put a dent in the overcrowded city. Redevelopers recognized the rapidly deteriorating conditions in the Hill District and conducted a series of surveys to examine housing conditions. In September of 1946, the Pittsburgh Housing Authority published a report, "Negro Housing Needs in Pittsburgh

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[276] Contractors actually unearthed the remains of the dead in Lincoln Memorial Cemetery without notifying friends and relatives, "Construction to Start on Bedford Dwellings Next Month," *Pittsburgh Courier,* Feb 4, 1939: 2; The Urban League of Pittsburgh held placards at the opening event that read, "Better Housing for the Poor." The Hill District Tenants' League also praised the opening of Bedford Dwellings with a placard, "Better Homes Make Better Citizens." "Housing Project Hailed as Gift of Democracy: Vast Crowd Sees Mayor, Officials Lay Cornerstone," *Pittsburgh Courier,* Oct 14, 1939: 1.

[277] "New Low Cost Project Will Aid Poor, But Leave Man with Salary Out in Cold. One Solution of Problem May be to Build New Homes," *Pittsburgh Courier,* Sep. 30, 1939: 4.

[278] "Workers on Housing Projects Earn $67,000: Sum Equals More Than One-Fifth of Total Payrolls," *Pittsburgh Courier,* Nov. 18, 1939: 3.

[279] "Bedford Dwellings," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette,* May 30, 2014. https://newsinteractive.post-gazette.com/thedigs/2014/05/30/bedford-dwellings/

[280] "Tomorrow's Housing: The Low Cost Federal Housing Project," *Pittsburgh Courier,* May 26, 1945: 2.

and Allegheny County." The report claimed, "Housing needs of the Negro group in Pittsburgh and Allegheny County are great, urgent, and undisputed."[281] Wartime migrations to the city contributed to overcrowding, as well as the return of veterans from the war front. From 1940-1945, Pittsburgh's African American population increased by 9.2%, most of whom resided in the Hill District.[282] This led to extreme levels of overcrowding (Figure 5.5). 17.5% of African Americans rented apartments that housed 1.51 persons or more, compared to 11.7% for white renters. 8% of units rented by black tenants housed eight or more, doubling the same rate for white-occupied units.[283]

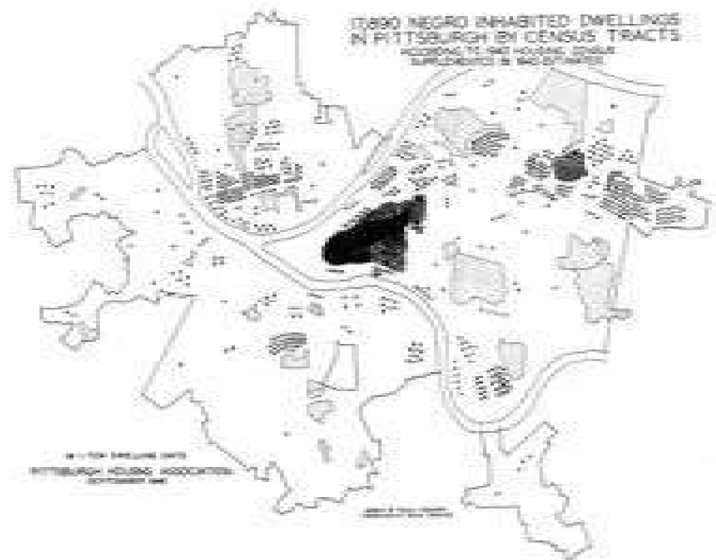

Figure 5.5: Map of dwellings with African American residents in 1946 according to 1940 Housing Census and estimates of the Pittsburgh Housing Association. A major concentration of African Americans resided in the Hill District.

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[281] "Negro Housing Needs in Pittsburgh and Allegheny County," Pittsburgh Housing Authority, September 1946, 7.

[282] "Negro Housing Needs in Pittsburgh and Allegheny County," Pittsburgh Housing Authority, September 1946. https://digital.library.pitt.edu/islandora/object/pitt:00aeu9978m/from_search/d66510fbf04849889d27da623bf9b619-1#page/1/mode/2up

[283] "Negro Housing Needs in Pittsburgh and Allegheny County," Pittsburgh Housing Authority, September 1946.

The report confirmed the FHA's findings. It found that higher percentages of substandard housing among Pittsburgh's black community. While nearly 34.1% of whites owned homes in the city, only 12.7% of African Americans owned a home. Of the 260 inspected homes that were owned by African Americans, moreover, more than half of them "needed major repairs." 129 had no running water and/or no private bathroom in the house. Of the 3,694 homes owned by white residents, only 30% needed major repairs. Conditions were worse in rental units, the primary source of housing for the African American community. 28% of units rented to white people needed major repairs, whereas 63% of units rented to African Americans needed major repairs.

The Pittsburgh Housing Association estimated that African Americans occupied 4,043 "substandard" units, meaning that the units had no running water, no private bathroom, or both. Moreover, roughly two-thirds of black-occupied tenants were considered "unfit for use" and approximately 2,700 such units "should be demolished or otherwise eliminated from use." In contrast, the report deemed only one-third of white-occupied units "unfit for use." As accommodations deteriorated, the percentage of the black population in the Hill District increased. Due to a lack of vacancies in the Hill District, and knowing that black residents could not acquire FHA loans, white landlords also charged black tenants more. The report found that employed African Americans paid an average $20.18 per month for their unit, while employed whites paid an average of $17.27, despite African Americans earning barely half of what white workers did on average.[284] Based on national income levels for each group, African American renters

[284] "Negro Housing Needs in Pittsburgh and Allegheny County," Pittsburgh Housing Authority, September 1946; To derived white and African American incomes in Pittsburgh by averaging the average wage gap between the two groups in the 1939 and 1949 U.S. Census. In 1939, African Americans earned only 44%

allocated 45% of their yearly income toward rent, while white workers allocated 17% of their yearly income toward rent.

The report concluded that African Americans faced poor living conditions, including overcrowding, poor lighting, and poor heating. African Americans faced these conditions in higher proportion than white residents, all while paying higher rent. Inspections from 1938-1946 conducted by the Pittsburgh Housing Authority proved that this situation had been prevalent for years. Inspectors graded units on a scale of 1-4, with 1 being "fit for use," 2 designating "needing repairs," 3 "needing major repairs," and 4 "unfit for use." Of all units inspected from 1938 to 1946 in the Hill District, only 18 units received a rating of 1, while 410 received a 4. Given the rate of building for black buyers, builders would not come close to building enough housing to counteract birth rates for the black community. The report concluded that an estimated 9,000 additional dwellings were needed to house Pittsburgh's African American population, which would cost an estimated $55,000,000.[285]

In addition to city planners, Hill District residents and business owners recognized an urgent need to reconfigure the housing sector. In fact, Hill residents had long praised the nearly 3,000 units built in 1939-1945 between the Bedford Dwellings, Terrace

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of what white workers did ($537.45 compared to $1,234.41). In 1949, African Americans earned 59% of what white workers did ($1,761.06 compared to ($2,984.96). A reasonable estimate given the two is that in 1945 (the time of the Pittsburgh Housing Authority report), African Americans earned 50-55% of what white workers did. U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, Series P-60, Money Income of Families and Persons in the United States, nos. 105 and 157; Money Income of Households, Families, and Persons in the United States, nos. 162, 174, and 180; Money Income and Poverty Status in the United States, nos. 166 and 168; and Income, Poverty, and Valuation of Noncash Benefits, no. 188. U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Consumer Price Index.

[285] "Negro Housing Needs in Pittsburgh and Allegheny County," Pittsburgh Housing Authority, September 1946.

Village, Addison, and Wadsworth complexes. They appreciated that public housing provided units to families with low incomes. One column in the *Courier* read,

> "Those persons who had been against the building of low-rent housing projects had long used the argument that 'slum folk just don't want to live in a clean place.' They had said that the projects would be dirty and ill-kept within a matter of months. Fortunately for Pittsburgh, these die-hards were entirely wrong. A walk through any one of the four villages today will produce pictures of men, women, and children busily engaged in planting grass and flowers. There is intense rivalry among members of different courts for the 'prettiest yard' title. The halls and garbage receptacles are cleaned (by set schedule) by the tenants. Fumigation of furniture before moving into an apartment takes care of any insects, although in a few cases it has been necessary to disinfect later. On the whole, the homes and yards are kept in extremely neat manner."[286]

The wartime and postwar surge of residents meant that far more high-quality public housing was needed. While organizations such as the Urban League, the Hill District Tenants' League, and the *Pittsburgh Courier* called for more houses to be built for black buyers, city authorities overlooked their pleas and instead had other ideas.

Business leaders and politicians cared about poor housing conditions, but for slightly different reasons. Poor housing conditions contributed to growing skepticism about Pittsburgh's future. Smoke clogged the air, sewage roiled the waters, and rats infested the streets. In 1943, the *Chicago Tribune* dismissed Pittsburgh, claiming it was no longer a major city. In 1944, the *Wall Street Journal* rated Pittsburgh as a "Class D" city with little hope for recovery. Several of the city's largest corporations, including Alcoa, Westinghouse, and U.S. Steel, purchased real estate in New York with plans to move east.[287] Business leaders and redevelopers, afraid of the city's downfall, organized

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[286] Dorothy Anderson, "Tomorrow's Housing: The Low Cost Federal Housing Project," *Pittsburgh Courier,* May 26, 1945: 2.

[287] Dan Fitzpatrick, "The Story of Urban Renewal," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette,* May 21, 2000.

to address the issue. Midway through World War II, director of the Pittsburgh Regional Planning Association Wallace Richards and banker Richard King Mellon sat down to discuss the future of Pittsburgh over breakfast. Mellon told Richards, "We've either got to do something about this place or give it back to the Indians."[288]

Mellon owned nearly $3 billion in assets and had connections to nearly every large company in western Pennsylvania including Gulf Oil, Alcoa, Pittsburgh Consolidated Coal, U.S. Steel, Westinghouse Air Brake and Pittsburgh Plate Glass. If Pittsburgh fell, so did his financial empire. To save both, Mellon backed the Allegheny Conference on Community Development, formed in 1943. The conference accomplished very little over the next two years. Its fortunes changed after Mellon befriended Pittsburgh's newly elected mayor in 1945, Democrat David Lawrence. Their relationship was a peculiar one, as Lawrence did not typically get along with the city's elite. However, after Mellon promised to donate a 13.5 acre plot on Fifth Avenue for a park, the two forged an effective partnership across the business and political sectors.[289]

Lawrence confided in Mellon as a powerful ally in the business world who could forward his agenda. When coal companies resisted Lawrence's measures of smoke control, Mellon insisted that Consolidated Coal, the city's largest coal company, implement new smoke control technologies. Mellon could do so because he was Consolidated Coal's largest stockholder. When the Pennsylvania Railroad balked at new regulations, Mellon phoned the railroad's President. Mellon persuaded the President

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[288] Dan Fitzpatrick, "The Story of Urban Renewal," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette,* May 21, 2000.

[289] Michael Weber, *'Don't Call Me Boss,' David Lawrence: Pittsburgh's Renaissance Mayor.* Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1988.

because he himself was a director at the company.[290] With Mellon's support, Lawrence won four elections and served as the mayor of Pittsburgh from 1946-1959. The two forged a powerful partnership that influenced business and politics in the city.

Mellon's and Lawrence's relationship directly shaped Pittsburgh's urban renewal plans. In March of 1946, Mellon, Wallace Richards, and Arthur Van Buskirk (Mellon's personal attorney and advisor) lobbied the state to approve the Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA), an organization that could seize private properties through eminent domain. The state approved the URA, and Van Buskirk convinced Mayor David Lawrence to be its first Chairman, with Van Buskirk himself as Vice Chairman and head of finance. The URA soon persuaded local legislatures, the governor, and the state to buy land, provide funds, and pass legislation allowing insurance companies to invest money in redevelopment projects. All of this enhanced the URA's power. By the early 1950s, the URA completed two projects in downtown Pittsburgh. The Gateway Center, three 20-24 story high rises full of office spaces, and Point State Park, a spacious 59-acre park overlooking the Ohio, Allegheny, and Monongahela rivers.[291]

Gateway Center and Point State Park were only part of an ambitious redevelopment plan devised by the URA known as Renaissance I, an effort to restore and preserve Pittsburgh central business district and the region more broadly. In 1947, the URA proposed a combined convention hall and sports arena along with residential apartments that would bring more people to the city. Pittsburgh's musicians shared

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[290] Burton Hersh, *The Mellon Family: A Fortune in History.* New York: William Morrow and Company, 1978.

[291] Dan Fitzpatrick, "The Story of Urban Renewal," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette,* May 21, 2000.

optimism for these plans with city planners, hoping that a boost to the city's business district would result in more job opportunities. Some of the funding was designated toward music venues specifically. One such donation came from Edgar Kaufmann, owner of Pittsburgh's most prominent department store and sponsor of the Pittsburgh Civic Light Opera. He promised $1.5 million if plans for the arena included a retractable roof for Civic Light Opera concerts.

The Allegheny Conference on Community Development examined fifteen possible sites for the cultural center. The Hill District was originally one of these, but the committee ruled it out because the area's population density presented a "rehousing problem."[292] The committee's first choice was in Highland Park, along North Negley Avenue. Most of the land however, belonged to Robert King, an uncle of Richard King Mellon.

Highland Park's middle- and upper-class homeowners hated the idea. One thousand people signed a petition fighting the project and three hundred angry residents presented it before City Council. A councilman criticized Mayor Lawrence, claiming he colluded with the Allegheny Conference. One attorney decried the "terrible power of eminent domain." The hearing reached a climax when Richard King took the stand. King stood before the raucous crowd and said, "I am in favor of light opera and musical comedy but I am against the proposal by promoters who may think that this particular site, which is now a refuge for birds and wildlife, can be man made by destruction into something better than God made it." If the city chose a different spot to build the cultural

[292] Dan Fitzpatrick, "The Story of Urban Renewal," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette,* May 21, 2000.

center, King promised he would donate his land as a park. At first, Mayor Lawrence refused to budge. However, after King's attorney challenged the move with an injunction, Lawrence reversed his position. In a letter to the Allegheny Conference chairman, Edward Weidlein, Lawrence announced that the Highland Park site was being dropped and that the city planning commission would be asked to recommend another site. He gave a curious set of reasons,

> "Despite the opinion reached by the technicians, and accepted by us, that the Highland Park site is the best use for the purpose, so much time has been consumed in discussion and legal action that it is now physically impossible to construct the outdoor theater in time to make use of it during the summer of 1950 .... [Therefore] we are able without sacrifice of the objectives, ... to give renewed thought and study to the problem of the site ... . I now propose that we initiate ... a review and reanalysis ... which will be understood and supported by the great majority of our citizens. That is how all controversies must be resolved under a system of free government."[293]

To Lawrence, a mere lapse of five weeks from the announcement of the project and his letter now made it "physically impossible" to complete the arena in a timely fashion and warranted a full reanalysis of the project. A more likely explanation is that Lawrence did not want to upset a relative of Richard King Mellon, with whom he had worked so effectively. In addition, the threat of an injunction could have delayed Lawrence's entire plans for urban renewal. In Lawrence's mind, selecting a new site and continuing Renaissance I was the preferable scenario than delaying the project for an indefinite amount of time.

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[293] David L. Lawrence to Edward Weidlein, Aug 15, 1949, Allegheny Conference on Community Development.

Lawrence, the URA, and the Allegheny Conference on Community Development looked elsewhere. They believed that demolishing blighted areas and replacing them with cultural institutions would revitalize the city. George Evans, a member of Pittsburgh's city council, was a longtime proponent of redeveloping the Hill District. In 1943, he wrote an article that appeared in the city's *Greater Pittsburgh* magazine, titled, "Here is a Job for Postwar Pittsburgh: Transforming the Hill District." In the article, Evans wrote, "The Hill District is probably one of the most outstanding examples in Pittsburgh of neighborhood deterioration. Approximately 90% of the buildings in the area are substandard and have long outlived their usefulness, and so there would be *no social loss* if they were all destroyed."[294]

Comments such as Evans's echoed those of Local 60 decades earlier: that Pittsburgh's African American community had no culture and no social value. These actions not only hurt black musicians but also shaped the lens through which white Americans viewed African American culture. Local 60's effort in the 1920s were hardly the only factor, but one that contributed to a complex set of white assumptions about black culture. Assumptions that prompted George Evans to conclude that African American culture was worthless if not nonexistent and that destroying the Hill District would result in "no social loss." Comments such as Evans's perpetuated racial stereotypes and encouraged white city planners to overlook the needs of the black community.

[294] George Evans, "Here is a Job for Postwar Pittsburgh: Transforming the Hill District," Greater Pittsburgh, July-August 1943. Emphasis added.

A report issued in 1950 by Pittsburgh's Civic Unity Council also supported redevelopment of the Hill.[295] The council found "bits and pieces of information which hint at a deep seated and seriously growing problem with respect to the housing situations of the Negro population. The problem is not only one of inadequate housing available to Negroes, but also the far-reaching one of growing ghettoization."[296] In classifying what a "ghetto" was, the Civic Unity Council did not do so by income or building conditions. In fact, in this report, race was the main factor. The report read,

> "It is, of course, exceedingly difficult to say what proportion of Negro population in any census tract, ward, or larger area makes such as area a ghetto, but there are strong indications that when the proportion passed fifty percent a cumulative movement is begun which increased the rate of change drastically. Then, if no countermeasures are devised or applied, that particular area quickly becomes predominantly colored and, because of the increased density, takes on the characteristics of a ghetto."[297]

In other words, race was the primary factor in how "ghettos" were defined. When more than half of the residents were black, then the Civic Unity Council labeled that neighborhood a ghetto. Nowhere did the report consider other factors such as income levels or building conditions in that determination.

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[295] The report indicates that P.L. Prattis, Clarence, C, Klein, Stanley Rowe of Jones & Laughlin Steel Corporation, Emery Bacon of the United Steelworkers of America, and Bryn J. Hovde composed the Civic Unity Council's Committee on Housing, which composed this report.

[296] "Report on Population Movements and Housing Trends," Civic Unity Council, Pittsburgh, PA, 1950. University of Pittsburgh, Digital Collections: https://digital.library.pitt.edu/islandora/object/pitt:31735051651366/from_search/d66510fbf04849889d27da623bf9b619-10#page/1/mode/2up/search/Negro+Housing+Needs+in+Pittsburgh+and+Allegheny+County

[297] "Report on Population Movements and Housing Trends," Civic Unity Council, Pittsburgh, PA, 1950. University of Pittsburgh, Digital Collections, 11.

The Hill District, with nearly 70% of its population African American, exhibited patterns of "ghettoization" in the eyes of redevelopers.[298] "The ghettos coincide with badly blighted areas," the report read. "Unless the city is opened up again, not only will the City of Pittsburgh perpetuate a great social injustice, but the almost solid Negro population of the ghettos will prevent the redevelopment of slum areas."[299] Instead of suggesting a program to alleviate poverty, the Civic Unity Council suggested that the "Third and Fifth Wards ought to be 'de-ghettoed' by the transplantation of at least one half of their Negro families."[300] After reading this report and earlier reports that deemed the Hill as a "blighted" neighborhood, the choice seemed obvious to Mayor Lawrence. Knowing that others on city council backed him made the choice easier. He also recognized and later admitted that residents of the Hill District would not organize in opposition as strongly as people in Highland Park had.[301] In January of 1951, Mayor Lawrence announced that the Hill District would be the site for the cultural center (see Figure 5.6).

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298 U.S. Census Bureau, "Characteristics of the Population, By Census Tracts: 1950," pg. 8: https://www2.census.gov/prod2/decennial/documents/41557421v3p4ch01.pdf

299 "Report on Population Movements and Housing Trends," Civic Unity Council, Pittsburgh, PA, 1950. University of Pittsburgh, Digital Collections, 55.

300 "Report on Population Movements and Housing Trends," Civic Unity Council, Pittsburgh, PA, 1950. University of Pittsburgh, Digital Collections, 60.

301 Dan Fitzpatrick, "The Story of Urban Renewal," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette,* May 21, 2000.

Figure 5.6: Aerial view taken for proposed redevelopment of the Lower Hill District, outlined in black. 1950. Courtesy of the University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh City Photographer Collection.

Hill District residents initially supported urban renewal. Residents grew tired of suffering from a lack of running water, electricity, decrepit structures, disease, overcrowding, and unsanitary conditions. The Hill still remembered when Bedford Dwellings and Terrace Village were built and how they had improved the lives of many residents. Homer S. Brown, an African American judge, helped to pass the "Pittsburgh Package" bills and to win approval for the URA. Writers at the *Pittsburgh Courier* also saw potential benefits of urban renewal. Columnist Paul L. Jones wrote a three-part series spelling out how residents might benefit from urban renewal. He believed that residents would benefit from a fresh Hill District with better living conditions and free of the practices of greedy landlords. The URA promised jobs to the black community. Jones fully supported the URA and city planners whom he claimed would construct

15,000 new units all while compensating landlords of their old units. He concluded, "All in all, the dream of a good house for everyone will be closer to realization, and that will be all to the good."[302]

Jones's beliefs turned out to be idealistic. Over the next five years, the URA used its power of eminent domain to push Hill District residents out. Residents were compensated little, if at all, while the URA swallowed up tracts of land. Homeowners had no contact with the city until a notice appeared in the mail which often gave them mere weeks to move out and find new accommodations. When the minister and congregation of the Hill District's oldest church, the Bethel AME Church on Wylie Avenue, received an eviction notice, Hill residents appealed for a reprieve. Members of the Loendi Club just blocks away also filed their own appeal but the URA ignored both. Instead, URA officials simply sent a final deadline to move out just days before demolition.[303]

To finance the project, the URA appealed to both the federal government and a collective of private firms and wealthy individuals. This collective had little interest in the cultural significance of the Hill District. In fact, if they could prove that the Hill District was an "unsalvageable ghetto," then the federal government could supply funding for "slum clearance" provided by the Housing Act of 1949.[304] This intention is evident in the juxtaposition of two collections of photographs taken of the Hill District. The first collection of photographs, taken by Teenie Harris, an African American

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[302] "Hill Housing Future, What Will it Mean?", *Pittsburgh Courier,* May 6, 1950: 31.

[303] "Loendi Members Must Plan for New Location," *Pittsburgh Courier,* Nov. 16, 1957: A3.

[304] *Smoketown*, 317.

photographer and Hill District resident, captured life in the Hill. The second collection taken by city redevelopers who sought to prove the Hill District was indeed an "unsalvageable ghetto."

Hill District resident and *Courier* photographer Teenie Harris portrayed the Hill District in a very positive light (see figures 5.7 - 5.11). While Harris and the *Courier* publicly criticized the Hill's poor housing conditions, they also celebrated its thriving social life. To them, the Hill District's social fabric was worth preserving, even if most structures were not. Despite the overcrowded neighborhood, those in the Hill still found ways to enjoy life. Figures 5.7 – 5.9 are all of the Crawford Grill, one of the premier nightlife attractions. The online archive has preserved over 120 photographs that Harris has taken of the Crawford Grill and nearly 100 of the Musicians' Clubhouse. Nearly all the photos display people celebrating, networking, drinking, dancing, singing, or playing cards. Men frequently dressed in suits (Figure 5.7) when enjoying Hill District clubs and bars because it gave them a sense of pride in themselves. Dressing in a suit directly confronted the idea that black culture was worthless. Suits acted as political and cultural symbols to Hill District visitors. Despite the overcrowded Hill, bar managers still made do. The Crawford Grill raised pianos atop bars (Figure 5.8) to ensure that crowds could see the night's entertainment. In the thousands of photographs that Harris shot, people were typically the focus. Harris depicted the Hill District residents enjoying a close bond with each other and with their community (see Figures 5.7 through 5.11). For Hill residents, though the Hill's buildings may have been in poor shape, its residents transformed these spaces into social and recreational spaces that were critical to their community. This, to Harris, was something worth preserving.

Figure 5.7: Men dressed in suits standing outside of Crawford Grill No. 1, c. 1942-1945. Courtesy of Carnegie Museum of Art, Charles “Teenie” Harris Archive. Accession number: 2001.35.2229.

Figure 5.8: Three musicians with bass, guitar, and piano performing in Continental Bar inside of the Crawford Grill No. 1. Courtesy of Carnegie Museum of Art, Charles “Teenie” Harris Archive. Accession number: 2001.35.1832.

Figure 5.9: Women and men gathered in Crawford Grill No. 1, with neon signs reading “bar” and “grill” in windows, c. 1935. Courtesy of Carnegie Museum of Art, Charles “Teenie” Harris Archive. Accession number: 2001.35.2971.

Figure 5.10: Four men playing cards at table with stage, piano and drums in background at the Musician’s Club. Courtesy of Carnegie Museum of Art, Charles “Teenie” Harris Archive. Accession number: 2001.35.3695.

Figure 5.11: Nine women seated on counter with crossed legs in Musician's Club. Courtesy of Carnegie Museum of Art, Charles "Teenie" Harris Archive. Accession number: 2001.35.45587.

Photographs by urban redevelopers clearly lacked interest in the Hill District's social life. John Schrader, photographer for the Allegheny Conference on Community whose photos are stored online in the University of Pittsburgh's Historic Pittsburgh database, only took one photograph of the Crawford Grill and none of the Musicians' Clubhouse. Schrader's photographs (see Figures 5.12 – 5.15) depict the Hill District as a place full of dilapidated buildings and densely populated blocks of structures as examples of blight that threatened the city.

Figure 5.12: Scenes of the Lower Hill before demolition taken by photographer for Allegheny Conference on Community Development. Allegheny Conference on Community Development Photographs, MSP285.B001.F17.I08.

Figure 5.13: Scenes of the Lower Hill before demolition taken by photographer for Allegheny Conference on Community Development, circa 1954. Allegheny Conference on Community Development Photographs, MSP285.B033.F05.I04.

Figure 5.14: Scenes of the Lower Hill before demolition taken by photographer for Allegheny Conference on Community Development, circa 1954. Allegheny Conference on Community Development Photographs, MSP285.B033.F06.I01.

Figure 5.15: Lower Hill District and Crawford Grill just before demolition, circa 1954. Allegheny Conference on Community Development Photographs, MSP285.B033.F06.I04.

Shrader's photographs were taken for the Allegheny Conference on Community Development and presented at various meetings of the organization. Most images

(Figures 5.12 through 5.15) of the Hill District depict it as a barren neighborhood, absent of any sort of culture and social activity. When people happen to be captured, they are rarely the center of the photograph. If people are captured, such as in top-right photograph in Figure 5.12, they seem to wander aimlessly through barren streets. In the one and only photograph of the Crawford Grill (Figure 5.15), for example, Schrader depicts it as simply another shabby structure amidst a row of run-down buildings.

Schrader's photographs reinforced David Lawrence's view of the Hill. Destroying the Hill District truly would result in "no social loss." To Schrader, Lawrence, and redevelopers, the Hill was clearly an area that needed to be redeveloped. Moreover, city planners and redevelopers pushed a view of the Hill District that encouraged its redevelopment. City planners and redevelopers, much like the photographs, did not and hardly would consider the Hill's population and housing needs as they redeveloped the Hill. City planners distributed these photographs through brochures and the city's press to acquire more funding. Redevelopers' ad campaign worked. Whereas the city provided $600,000 toward renewal, private firms and individuals financed nearly $118 million. The URA also applied for and received nearly $88 million in funding from the federal government.[305]

With funding in hand by 1955, the city quickly moved to clear the rest of the existing residents out of the Hill District. The only problem was that the city did not have enough available housing for them. Some 230 families moved to the already existing Aliquippa Terrace, Addison Terrace and Bedford Dwellings. The remaining families,

[305] Whitaker, *Smoketown,* 317.

numbering over 1,300, had difficulty finding adequate housing. Existing racial covenants made it almost impossible to find anything in white neighborhoods. Nearly 250 single individuals lived temporarily in the Improvement of the Poor Shelter on Webster Avenue, a structure that was slated to be demolished in the next phase of redevelopment. Those who could afford to left for neighborhoods such as the North Side, Homewood, and East Liberty. At least 100 families, those who made just enough that they could not qualify for low-income housing, struggled to find housing. Some stayed until the very end, leaving with what they could carry as demolition workers and police officers forced them from their homes while a wrecking ball waited outside.[306]

Demolition began in November of 1956. In total, the city seized and cleared 989 parcels constituting 105 acres of land (see Figures 5.16 through 5.28). The city razed 1,324 structures in total, 413 of them commercial and the remainder residential. Redevelopment displaced 5,400 families, most of them African American. Hill District residents who had originally been on board with redevelopment soon lamented the direction that redevelopment began to take. Instead of constructing enough units to house the entirety of those formerly of the Hill District, an estimated 9,000 units in according to the Pittsburgh Housing Authority's own reports, the URA and redevelopers only led the construction of 1,719 new units by 1966. Less than 75% of these were affordable enough to former lower Hill residents, including only 594 in the Lower Hill. 311 were nearby in the Gateway Center and 350 North of the Allegheny River in Allegheny Center. This amounted to a total of about 1,250 total units, or 14% of the estimated need. An

[306] Whitaker, *Smoketown,* 318-319.

additional 3,610 units were projected, but these included 540 luxury units in the Lower Hill and 1,240 in Allegheny Center.[307]

The impact of urban renewal on the social fabric of the Hill District is also evident in photographs taken by Teenie Harris. While Harris made an effort to show the life of the Hill District prior to urban renewal, he also made an effort to demonstrate the impact that urban renewal had on the Hill District. The photographs that Harris captured after urban renewal starkly contrast those taken prior to urban renewal. Harris's photographs taken during and after urban renewal reveal how urban renewal displaced Hill residents. Figure 5.18 depicts three boys who watched as a crane razed an area that would be the future site of the Civic Arena. Figures 5.20 and 5.21 show the Hill's Bethel A.M.E. Church, before and during renewal. In Figure 5.20, cars line the streets in front of the church as congregants worship inside. In Figure 5.21, a crane picks up pieces of the structure next to an abandoned street. Figures 5.22 and 5.23 capture the impact of urban renewal. While Figure 5.22 shows a bustling city street, that same city street (Figure 5.23) is devoid of any life. Urban renewal destroyed shops, apartments, and houses, practically erasing the social fabric of the Hill District.

[307] Roy Lubove, *Twentieth Century Pittsburgh Volume I: Government, Business, and Environmental Change* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1995), 130; Trotter and Day, *Race and Renaissance;* Urban Redevelopment Authority of Pittsburgh, "Proposal for the Redevelopment of Redevelopment Area No. 3 in the 2nd and 3rd Wards of the City of Pittsburgh (Pittsburgh: Urban Redevelopment Authority of Pittsburgh, 1955), pg. 3.

Figure 5.16: Civic Arena groundbreaking with crowd gathered around dump truck while Police and Firemen bands play a tune. Pittsburgh Mayor David L. Lawrence pictured in dump truck. Corner of Wylie Avenue and Elm Street. Courtesy of Carnegie Museum of Art, Charles "Teenie" Harris Archive. Accession number: 2001.35.9140.

Figure 5.17: Beginning of demolition of the Lower Hill District. Allegheny Conference on Community Development Photographs, MSP285.B001.F17.I02.

Figure 5.18: Three boys watching demolition of buildings by crane at future site of the Civic Arena, November, 1956. Courtesy of Carnegie Museum of Art, Charles "Teenie" Harris Archive. Accession number: 2001.35.6539.

Figure 5.19: Lower Hill District Demolition. Possibly the Musicians' Clubhouse. Allegheny Conference on Community Development Photographs, MSP285.B033.F07.I02.

Figure 5.20: Hill District's Bethel AME Church at Wylie Avenue and Elm Street before destruction. August 1955. Courtesy of Carnegie Museum of Art, Charles "Teenie" Harris Archive. Accession number: 2001.35.11405.

Figure 5.21: Demolition of Bethel AME Church. July 24, 1957. Courtesy of Carnegie Museum of Art, Charles "Teenie" Harris Archive. Accession number: 2001.35.4127.

Figure 5.22: Hill District before demolition (looking toward downtown from Wylie Avenue), 1951. Courtesy of Carnegie Museum of Art, Charles “Teenie” Harris Archive. Accession number: 86.16.147.

Figure 5.23: Hill District looking toward downtown after demolition. Demolition area from Wylie Avenue near Townsend Street, toward Downtown, Hill District, c. 1955-1957. Courtesy of Carnegie Museum of Art, Charles “Teenie” Harris Archive. Accession number: 2001.35.3439.

Figure 5.24: Lower Hill District before demolition. Allegheny Conference on Community Development Photographs, MSP285.B033.F04.I02.

Figure 5.25: Lower Hill District clearance near completion, c. 1955. Allegheny Conference on Community Development Photographs, MSP285.B033.F07.I08.

Urban Renewal and Black Musicians of Local 471

Prior to demolition, the Hill District had proved to be a space in which black musicians in Local 471 thrived. Local 471's Musicians' Clubhouse, located in the heart of the Hill District at the intersection of Wylie Avenue and Crawford Street, was easily accessible for members, most of whom lived just blocks away in another part of the Lower Hill. For nearly two decades prior to urban renewal, the Clubhouse provided jobs and opportunities for black musicians. The music played within bonded the community together and strengthened black musicians both artistically and financially. As Local 471 President Joe Westray once remembered, "It was just like we didn't notice segregation [because] we had everything right here."[308] Places such as Local 471 Musician's Clubhouse proved fertile ground for black musicians and the continued growth and experimentation with jazz into the 1950s.

Urban renewal completely reshaped the physical landscape for Pittsburgh's black musicians. From the mid-1930s to 1955, nearly twenty venues in the Hill District had welcomed black musicians including the Musicians' Clubhouse, Crawford Grill, Sonia Club, Ritz Club, Stanley's, Lopez, Javel Jungles, Washington Club, and big venues such as New Granada and Roosevelt theaters. They were all destroyed during urban renewal. In and beyond Pittsburgh, black musicians experienced a serious loss of not only friendships, but also their sense of community, primary source of jobs, and spaces in which they could comfortably escape a segregated and discriminatory world. In total,

[308] Joe Westray, AAJPSP Interview, 18. Comments like Westray's are not completely accurate though, as segregation was in fact a barrier to Local 471 musicians. Comments such as these are unpacked in chapter five.

urban renewal wiped out an estimated 1,600 black neighborhoods nationwide, many of which were central to the jazz world.[309] By destroying the spaces in which black musicians thrived, urban renewal damaged and often destroyed local and national networks that black musicians had created. Moreover, the destruction of places such as the Musicians' Clubhouse silenced the music that once filled the Hill District. Urban renewal crippled black musicians and jazz music. Pittsburgh is just one example of the impacts that urban renewal had on unionized black musicians.

Ironically, the Hill District was chosen as the future site of a cultural center, the Civic Arena (see Figures 5.26 through 5.28). Musicians remained in their Wylie Avenue clubhouse until July 1953, when the *Courier* wrote, "Time is growing short on the hands of the AFM Local 471 and they are still lying dead in the creaky old crib down at 1213 Wylie Avenue. Guess it will take a bulldozer to get them out."[310] Local 471's musicians held on to their location at Wylie Avenue and Crawford Street for as long as they could, despite the condition of the structure. By December Local 471 temporarily moved its clubhouse to a storefront in East Liberty on Centre Avenue, then to a former bar on the corner of Frankstown and Enterprise Avenues.[311]

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[309] Fullilove, *Root Shock,* 20.

[310] *The Pittsburgh Courier,* July 11, 1953, pg. 16.

[311] Interview with Curtis Young, June 9, 1995. AAJPSP Collection: Box 3, Folder 18; Trotter and Day, *Race and Renaissance,* 136-137.

Figure 5.26: Downtown view of Civic Arena construction looking toward the Middle Hill District. Allegheny Conference on Community Development Photographs, MSP285.B001.F17.I03.

Figure 5.27: Civil Arena wall construction, facing the Hill District. William V. Winans Jr. Photograph Collection, PSS027_B001_F008_I03.

Figure 5.28: Wylie Avenue looking towards downtown at Crawford Street intersection, with Civic Arena construction in background, c. 1959. Courtesy of Carnegie Museum of Art, Charles "Teenie" Harris Archive. Accession number: 1996.69.296.

The new clubhouse at 5400 Frankstown Avenue was, by all accounts, a nicer building than the old clubhouse. It could hold up to 600 people, all on one floor. Local 471 was quite successful, at least initially. At its grand opening in late January 1954, Local 471 brought in Vibraphonist and bandleader Lionel Hampton, after which Hampton claimed, "This is the foxiest musicians club in the country, bar none."[312] In October later that year Local 471 attempted to bring big band music of the 1930s back to life when it unveiled its own 18-piece orchestra which played on Sundays.[313] For about two years, from 1954-1956, Local 471 continued to provide jobs to its musicians and remained an entertainment center.

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[312] "New Musicians Club Jumps All the Time Harper Plays Friday," *The Pittsburgh Courier,* Jan. 23, 1954.

[313] "Musicians Club to Unveil 18-piece House Ork Oct. 17," *Pittsburgh Courier,* Oct 2, 1954: 18.

Over time, however, musicians and customers gradually stopped frequenting the Frankstown Avenue clubhouse, mainly because the club was too far away from their new homes. The physical displacement of residents fractured the Lower Hill community and forced Local 471 to move its headquarters a considerable distance from musicians and customers. Most Lower Hill residents retreated to various pockets of the city during the initial phases of urban renewal. Some two hundred families relocated into Bedford Dwellings and Terrace Villages, two public housing complexes erected in 1940. Most moved in with family or friends in various pockets of Greater Pittsburgh, such as the Upper and Middle Hills, Homewood, the North Side, Wilkinsburg, and East Liberty. Sudden relocations and the destruction of Hill District businesses also left many without an income.[314] The separation of black musicians was a symptom of the larger displacement of the Hill's African American community.

Unlike the Hill District clubhouse, the Frankstown Avenue clubhouse was simply too far or too inconvenient for black musicians and customers to visit (Figure 5.29). George Benson, drummer and future member of Local 471, was only eleven years old when Local 471's clubhouse relocated. Just before demolition of the Hill District, Benson and his family moved from Wylie Avenue a few blocks South to Bentley Avenue. At their new location, the Bensons had to travel almost five miles to get to the Frankstown Avenue clubhouse.[315]

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[314] Whitaker, *Smoketown,* 312-323.

[315] John M. Brewer, John M. Brewer Jr., *Pittsburgh Jazz* (Charleston: Arcadia Publishing, 2007).

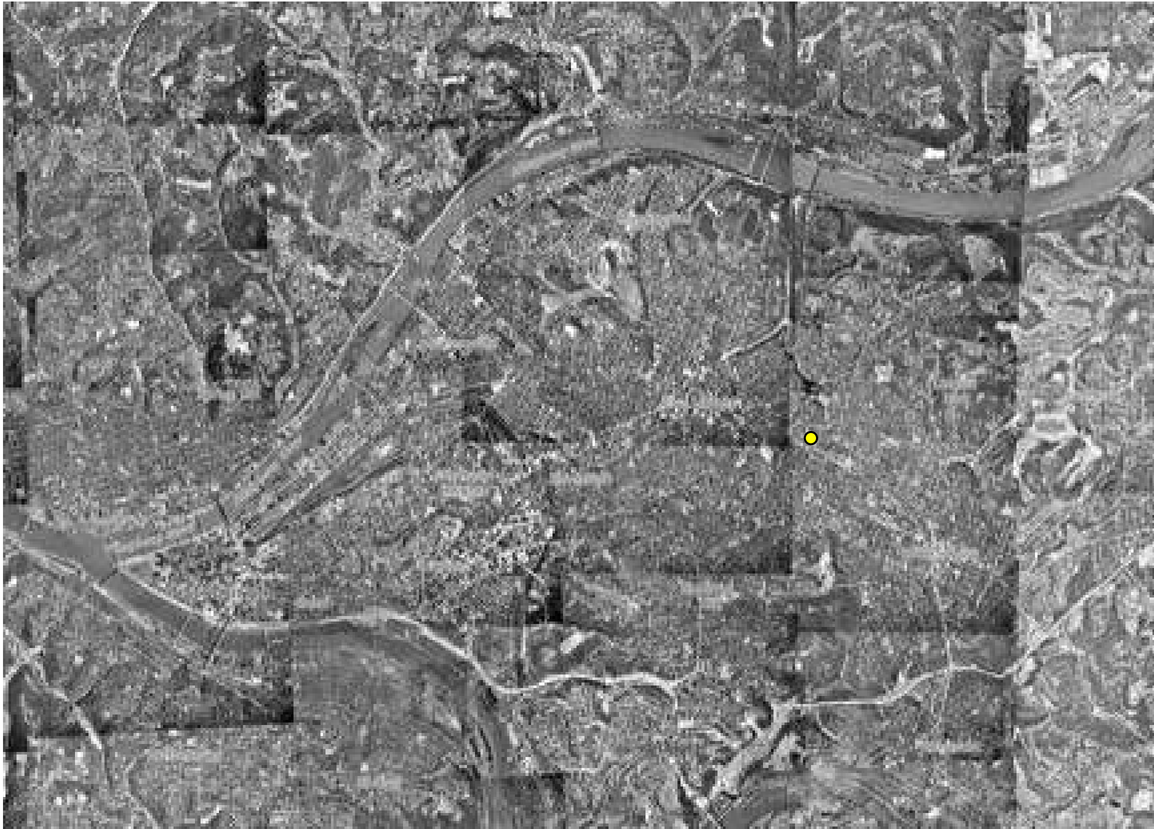

Figure 5.29: By January of 1954 Local 471 operated out of its new location at 5400 Frankstown Avenue (highlighted in yellow). The new location was quite a drive for many members who relocated throughout the city after urban renewal. It became too difficult to sustain. Courtesy of University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh Historic Maps: Historic Pittsburgh http://digital.library.pitt.edu/maps.

Pianist John Thomas also moved a considerable distance away from the new clubhouse. Luckily for Thomas, he was one of the few who owned a car and could consistently frequent the club.[316] Walt Harper, one of the more successful African American musicians who played locally, only visited the Frankstown club two to three times per month. When asked why, "The move, I think, made things change. It just never seemed to be the same that it was."[317] Before relocation, most musicians and

[316] Interview with John Thomas, May 27, 1997. AAJPSP Collection: Box 3, Folder 15.

[317] Interview with Walt Harper, July 21, 1997. AAJPSP Collection: Box 2, Folder 3.

customers could simply walk a few blocks to the clubhouse to participate in jam sessions and meet national headliners. That kind of education and inspiration was just too far away for those who could not afford a car, gas, or the time it took to travel to the new location. In the documentary *Wylie Avenue Days,* one Hill District resident recalled, "The most devastating thing that ever happened to the black community was to tear out the Lower Hill… people went in all directions where they could find a place."[318]

The physical displacement of Hill District residents contributed to the second reason why the Frankstown Avenue club failed. That is, urban renewal and the resulting move altered social dynamics within the walls to a point that many musicians no longer recognized the clubhouse as a welcome place. The considerable number of musicians and regular customers that once frequented the Musicians' Club in the Hill District contributed to a sense of camaraderie and a shared sense of community within the old clubhouse. After the move, a considerable hole was left by those that could not continue to frequent the club.

According to President Joe Westray, urban renewal split the union into separate factions based on the neighborhoods members retreated to after urban renewal. To Westray, cliques consisting of musicians from the North Side, the Middle and Upper Hill, and an East Liberty group emerged. Prior to urban renewal, there was simply "more harmony," according to Westray. Drummer Roger Humphries expressed a similar feelings, "But then when we moved to East Liberty, it kind of splintered a little bit, it went a different direction."[319] Trumpeter Pete Henderson added that black musicians in

[318] Bolin, Doug, Christopher Moore, and Nancy Levin. *Wylie Avenue Days: Pittsburgh's Hill District.* Pittsburgh QED Communications, Inc., 1991. Film

[319] Interview with Roger Humphries, July 8, 1997. AAJPSP Collection: Box 2, Folder 10.

Pittsburgh as a whole "lost our unity" when the club moved to East Liberty.[320] The cliques that emerged after the move resulted in a loss of camaraderie among Local 471 musicians. During a 1997 interview between former Local 471 members, Charles Austin and Roy Jones speak to this dynamic.

> Roy Jones: "That club down on Wylie Avenue, whew, it wasn't a big place…
> Charles Austin: "But it was home."
> Roy Jones: "Yeah, it was like home, it was really a nice place."
> Charles Austin: "Things that happened down there didn't happen when we came to East Liberty."
> Roy Jones: "No. I think too, I know I didn't go out there as much. Once they moved out there, I very seldom went out there. Of course, I was playing most of the time, but most of the time, when I was on the Hill, most of us that played together lived on the Hill. It was a lot more convenient to us."
> Charles Austin: "As long as the club was in the Hill, I mean we would go down and there was a nice feeling there. But when we came out here to East Liberty, there was a difference in the relationship with one another."
> Roy Jones: "I think it was the atmosphere of the people that were there themselves."[321]

Local 471 members also felt alienated at the Frankstown Avenue clubhouse because of the new direction it seemed to take under President Carl Arter (see Figure 5.30). Arter grew up on the North Side of Pittsburgh and attended Allegheny High School. He began to play the tenor saxophone at the age of 23 after he heard a solo on the radio one morning. Shortly after he enrolled in music lessons from local bandleader Max Atkins and later honed his skills in the Army. After his service, he returned to the Hill District and joined Local 471. Local 471 members elected Arter as President in

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[320] Interview with Pete Henderson, March 8, 1998. AAJPSP Collection: Box 2, Folder 6.

[321] Interview with Roy Jones, March 12, 1997. AAJPSP Collection: Box 2, Folder 12.

1954, in part because of his reputation as a music teacher.[322] Arter's presidency was full of turmoil, however, as members did not appreciate the direction the club began to take. Trying to keep the Frankstown Avenue clubhouse afloat, Arter placed an emphasis on the club's celebrity nights over its own members. This alienated 471 musicians from the new location, who yearned for the all-night jam sessions of the old days. John Hughes claimed, "I never did, you know, get a real good feel for the building and the bar and the environment that I had for the other."[323] Despite Arter's attempt, Local 471 did not earn enough through celebrity nights to pay the rent and the local fell into financial ruin.

Figure 5.30: Carl Arter on saxophone performing at the Pirate Inn with The Gambrell Tio, c. 1945-1950. Courtesy of Carnegie Museum of Art, Charles "Teenie" Harris Archive. Accession number: 2001.35.1496.

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[322] "Obituary: Carl Arter, Gifted Jazz Pianist, Saxophonist, Teacher," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette,* Jan. 14, 2006.

[323] John Hughes interview with Ms. Yamu, April 4, 1996, 17.

In 1958, Local 471 elected Joe Westray as their new president. Westray grew up in the Pittsburgh area and took an interest in music at a young age. He eventually became an influential black businessman and musician. Known for his arranging skills, he started his own band that became quite successful in the greater Pittsburgh area (see Figure 5.31).[324] As business gradually slowed at the Frankstown clubhouse, 471 members grew tired of Carl Arter's leadership and nominated Westray to take over as president. Shortly after Westray assumed the presidency in 1958, he moved 471 headquarters to his own establishment, the Westray Plaza. The move immediately upset members who felt that Westray simply moved the Local to Westray Plaza in the interest of personal profit.[325]

Figure 5.31: Group Portrait of Joe Westray band, with Joe Westray on keyboard, c. 1944. Courtesy of Carnegie Museum of Art, Charles "Teenie" Harris Archive. Accession number: 2001.35.1481.

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[324] Joe Westray Ace Leader on City Scene, *Pittsburgh Courier,* May 3, 1952.

[325] "The Grapevine," *Pittsburgh Courier,* Oct. 31, 1959: 18.

The turmoil of the 1950s seemed impossible for any president to lead Local 471 through. The destruction of the clubhouse and the Hill District crippled Local 471 financially. Multiple relocations and the scattering of its members during urban renewal alienated current members from each other and the club. In addition, the black community also lost an important tool to teach and inspire young musicians. Stanley Turrentine remembered in a 1997 interview, "Musicians today do not have the same on the job training as they did back then, playing jam sessions at the Musicians' Clubhouse."[326] Jam sessions had always been more than a chance to play with and network with famous musicians. They were also on-the-job training that enhanced their skills. In fact, these jam sessions were part of the reason why many travelling musicians regarded Pittsburgh's musicians as some of the most talented in the country. The loss of these jam sessions, Turrentine claimed, effectively "reshaped the music world."[327]

The absence of jam sessions negatively impacted Pittsburgh's black musicians and the potential for future younger musicians. At the Hill location, many young black musicians such as Hosea Taylor, remembered that the jam sessions he listened in on as a boy inspired him to pick up a saxophone and join the union.[328] Roy Jones remembered the older members in the Hill as family. Jones recalled, "those guys took me in like I was a long lost brother. They took after me."[329] Trumpeter Pete Henderson added, "See, the

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[326] "Turrentine Recollects about Good Ole' Days," *The Pittsburgh Courier,* Mar. 31, 1990, 2.

[327] "Turrentine Recollects about Good Ole' Days," *The Pittsburgh Courier,* Mar. 31, 1990, 2.

[328] Hosea Taylor, *Dirt Street: The Pittsburgh Jazz Struggle During the 1940s* (Pittsburgh: Arsenal, 2007).

[329]Interview with Roy Jones, March 12, 1997. AAJPSP Collection: Box 2, Folder 12.

old club had a lot to do with inspiring you and directing you."[330] These members all agreed that they did not share the same feelings of camaraderie after relocating that once attracted them to the union.

The physical displacement of residents, the loss of jam sessions, and loss of camaraderie at the clubhouse contributed to the downfall of the Frankstown Avenue club. One final factor, rumors of the urban renewal of East Liberty, also hastened the downfall. In 1956, Pittsburgh's City Council and the Urban Redevelopment Authority applied for a $325,000 federal loan, $168,000 of which would be used "for studies in a 275 acre East Liberty area adjacent the main shopping center."[331] At the time, the East Liberty site would have been the largest urban renewal site in the city. Despite the URA's urging that "there's no cause for alarm for people or businesses in the affected areas," residents panicked.[332] After all, many East Liberty residents had just lived through displacement as a result of the renewal of the Hill District. While East Liberty's urban renewal process did not begin until 1960, the rumors were enough to encourage residents to move and dissuade others from keeping up their homes, fearing that they would soon be demolished. As a result, property values diminished, businesses closed, and poverty levels rose.[333] For Local 471's Frankstown Avenue clubhouse, profits quickly dried up. By the end of 1957, the club moved again because it did not have enough money to pay

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[330] Pete Henderson interview with Charles Austin, March 8, 1998.

[331] "Federal Loan Sought for Urban Renewal," *The Pittsburgh Courier,* July 14, 1956: 7.

[332] "Federal Loan Sought for Urban Renewal," *The Pittsburgh Courier,* July 14, 1956: 7.

[333] Trotter and Day, *Race and Renaissance.*

the rent.[334] With little money to afford another space, President Joe Westray moved Local 471's headquarters to a small bar that he himself owned where it remained until 1966. By all accounts, musicians rarely gathered at Westray's location. It simply functioned as the headquarters for Local 471 business.

National Implications

A study of urban renewal through the lens of Pittsburgh's Local 471 reveals a much greater transition in the music world. Urban renewal was a critical point in not just Local 471's history, but for black AFM locals across the nation. Countless spaces were destroyed during the process, spaces in which jazz music and black jazz musicians had thrived. When these spaces and networks were destroyed, rank-and-file black jazz musicians lost some of their most effective job and creative networks. As a result, jazz quickly died out in Pittsburgh.

For rank-and-file African American musicians in Pittsburgh, urban renewal dealt a devastating blow. Once one of the nation's jazz capitals of the world — producing talents such as Art Blakey, Billy Eckstine, Billy Strayhorn, Kenny Clarke, Erroll Garner, Ahmad Jamal, Mary Lou Williams, and Roy Eldridge — and heralded by historian Mark Whitaker as the site of "the other great black renaissance," Pittsburgh receded from the spotlight, and so did its black musicians.[335] The world, and historians, shifted their focus away from the jazz clubs of Pittsburgh to the soul sounds of Detroit, St. Louis, Chicago, and Philadelphia.

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[334] Joe Westray with Charles Austin, November 13, 1997.

[335] Whitaker, *Smoketown.*

CHAPTER VI: MEASURING INTEGRATION

"Here I am sitting in the courtroom again. This room smells stuffy and feels as sterile and cold as the process of trying to get justice has turned out to be. I can feel my energy draining. It feels like the strain to get out that last breath and hit that last high note on my trumpet after a long hard gig in a smoke filled joint following a full day's work. It's the feeling you get when you know what you have to do to keep tempo but your chest burns and your throat is dry and your head throbs. It's the feeling a musician gets when he wants to give a top rate performance but he also wants the night to be over. I need a rest. I need to clear my head."[336]

- Trumpeter Charles Austin, Local 60-471 Member

After urban renewal forced Local 471 to relocate three times in as many years, Local 471 no longer operated at the same level. The destruction of the Musicians' Clubhouse and the Hill District, along with various urban renewal projects throughout the city, hindered Local 471's ability to attract customers, national talent, and jobs. However, many black musicians maintained their membership in the union and a small pact of dedicated individuals kept it afloat. Joe Westray designated his small bar as headquarters of Local 471, but not many members frequented it compared to the Musician's Clubhouse on Wylie Avenue. The union may have only been a shell of what it once was, but it was still an effective tool for some black musicians.

Local 471 operated in this state during the late 1950s through the early 1960s. However, drastic changes were on the horizon. During the same time period, the nation witnessed a surge of grassroots protests that aimed to end segregation, disenfranchisement, and discrimination against minorities. AFM leaders drew increasing pressure to integrate from civil rights organizations such as the National Association for

[336] "The More Things Change…" letter of reflection written for archival purposes by Charles Austin. Pittsburgh Music Files, AAJPSP Collection, Box 4, Folder 15.

the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE). After years of struggle, the movement culminated in a couple of impressive legislative wins. First, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 outlawed discrimination based on race, color, sex, or national origin and prohibited racial segregation in schools, workplaces, and public accommodations. Second, the Voting Rights Act of 1965 secured the right to vote for racial minorities. Together, these acts were and are great triumphs of the Civil Rights Movement. It was a big win for integrationists, who believed that true liberation could not be achieved without integration.[337]

Yet most black musicians opposed integration of the AFM. They worried that integration would make them a numerical minority in integrated locals. They did not want to risk losing the autonomy the enjoyed in their own locals. Despite their appeals, AFM locals across the country were forced to integrate. This chapter details the integration process for Locals 60 and 471. In doing so, it illuminates that the power dynamics in the AFM and music industry were still defined along racial lines. It also reveals the tough scenario that national AFM officials faced. Integrating AFM locals would appease civil rights organizations but at the same time would upset black musicians within the AFM. Integration was anything but synonymous with racial equality for Local 471's black musicians. The story of the merging of Local 60 and Local 471 demonstrates that it was one thing to establish the principle of integration and quite another to achieve its hoped-for benefits.

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[337] In his "Birth of a New Age" speech in 1956, Martin Luther King Jr. stated, "I cannot see how the Negro will be totally liberated from the crushing weight of poor education, squalid housing and economic strangulation until he is integrated, with power, into every level of American life." Thomas F. Jackson, *From Civil Rights to Human Rights: Martin Luther King Jr. and the Struggle for Economic Justice.* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 300.

Opposing Integration of AFM

By 1950 over sixty locals for black musicians remained in operation. Most members remained opposed to integration through the 1950s, despite the rising tide of the Civil Rights Movement. Some white musicians still harbored racist attitudes toward African Americans and did not want to work alongside them. A large majority of black musicians steadfastly opposed integration as well. Some did not want to work alongside white musicians who they felt did not want to work with them. Most simply saw integration as a movement that would strip black musicians of their representation in the AFM. In 1954, a twenty-six-page article was featured in the AFM's publication, the *International Musician,* titled, "Civil Rights in the American Federation of Musicians."[338] The article noted that in some cities "the colored members prefer to maintain their own locals." He claimed that African Americans members "are guaranteed representation, since they thereby have their own elected officers. Even more important, they are entitled to delegates to the Convention."[339] The article expressed defensiveness over the AFM's allowance of segregated locals, stating, "the colored musicians holds no secondary class membership insofar as the Federation is concerned. He may be denied admission in certain locals, which are in the minority, but he is granted the privilege of joining any other neighboring local that will accept him."[340]

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[338] William P. Steeper, "Civil Rights in the American Federation of Musicians, *International Musician,* December 1954, S1-S26.

[339] William P. Steeper, "Civil Rights in the American Federation of Musicians, *International Musician,* December 1954, S24.

[340] William P. Steeper, "Civil Rights in the American Federation of Musicians, *International Musician,* December 1954, S24.

James C. Petrillo, president of the AFM, did not favor integration either. He held dual status as both AFM President and president of Chicago's Local 10, another position he had held since 1922. Petrillo formed a working relationship with Harry Gray, president of Chicago's black Local 208. Gray expressed his opposition to integration multiple times and Petrillo came to oppose forced integration. However, Petrillo could only hold off integrationists for so long.

Los Angeles's Locals 47 and 767 became the first locals to integrate in 1953. Los Angeles musicians gravitated toward integration before other cities because black members of Local 767 believed integration would give them access to the film industry and national television. In fact, *Billboard* reported in the early 1950s that Local 47 musicians earned an average of $9,135 per musician, twice the median white family income and three and a half times the median black family income.[341] Though negotiations dragged on for over a year, the two locals agreed to terms in December of 1952. To do so, Local 767 risked a lack of representation on Local 47's executive board.[342]

Los Angeles's locals were part of a broader movement to integrate in the labor movement. In 1955, the AFL and Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) merged, bringing hundreds of thousands of black trade unionists into the fold. Los Angeles's AFM musicians formed the Musicians Committee for Integration (MCI), which pushed for nationwide integration of the AFM. At the June 1957 AFM Convention in Denver,

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[341] Ingrid Monson, *Freedom Sounds: Civil Rights Call Out to Jazz and Africa.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2007: 42-53.

[342] Years later, most black musicians in Los Angeles's Local 47 felt that amalgamation did little for the majority of black musicians. Monson, *Freedom Sounds,* 48.

the MCI proposed an anti-segregation resolution which asked the AFM to "take immediate steps to eliminate any membership restrictions based upon race, color, creed, religion, or place of national origin." The proposed legislation sparked immediate controversy at the convention, especially among African American members. Sixty delegates (56 of them African American), representing twenty-eight Negro locals (a majority), signed a petition to oppose forced integration. They worried that "the financial aspect involved with some of the larger colored locals, who have spent many years of hard work to attain their present status in the Federation," would be threatened. Others also feared losing their jobs or being swallowed up in the newer, larger union.[343] Some simply felt uncomfortable merging with white locals that did not support a merge. Instead of a mandate handed down nationally, those opposed to integration urged independent action in each city. Delegates from Pittsburgh's Local 471, including president Carl Arter, shared these concerns and were among the delegates that signed the petition.[344] Petrillo sidestepped the issue by referring it to the office of the president for study, a move generally regarded as a parliamentary maneuver to delay voting on the issue.

The MCI grew increasingly upset with Petrillo's leadership. In November 1957, the MCI requested that Petrillo issue a public statement of support to end membership restrictions based on race. After receiving no response from Petrillo, the MCI notified

[343] In 1954, Local 471's membership stood at 99 members. Local 60's at 2,231 members. Leta E. Miller, "Racial Segregation and the San Francisco Musicians' Union, 1923-60," *Journal of the Society for American Music* (2007), Vol. 1, No. 2, 194.

[344] The resolution and petition are published in the *International Musician,* November 1957, 42-43; George Seltzer, *Music Matters,* 110.

Petrillo that they planned to bring the issue before AFL-CIO President George Meany. Facing backlash over the issue, Petrillo resigned as president of the AFM in 1958.[345] He went back to Chicago to serve as President of Local 10.

Herman Kenin, an orchestra leader and trade unionist, stepped in as AFM President. Kenin stalled on the issue of integration until 1959, when California attorney general Stanley Mosk threatened to file suit over the AFM's failure to adhere to California's new Law Fair Employment Practices Act, which mandated that labor organizations could not refuse membership on the basis of race, creed, color, national origin, or ancestry. The act also prohibited segregated locals. Kenin acted quickly, sending three AFM officials, Vice President William Harris, Secretary Stanley Ballard, and Treasurer George Clancy, to San Francisco to facilitate talks between Locals 6 and 669. After a four-day period of negotiations, the two locals agreed to terms.[346]

Outside forces continued to pressure the AFM to integrate. In 1960, the AFL-CIO issued a directive that required its member unions to integrate but gave no deadline to do so. Bad press increasingly exposed the AFM and its policy of segregation. The *Pittsburgh Courier* highlighted the issue of integration again in 1962 when the AFM national convention was to be held in Pittsburgh. Held at the newly built Civic Arena in the Hill District, the convention assembled a total of 1,236 delegates from the United States, Canada, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands. The *Courier* also noted that "The Negro musician was well represented at the convention with delegates present from all

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[345] Monson, *Freedom Sounds,* 51-52.

[346] Miller, "Racial Segregation and the San Francisco Musicians' Union," 161-206.

over the United States."[347] Despite a push for integration by some members, the *Courier* reported, "It was more or less of a foregone conclusion among the delegates present that the issue of separate locals would not come before the convention."[348] This was "not surprising in view of the fact that the vast majority of Negro delegates in attendance… are quite content with the status quo."[349]

The fact that the AFM did not touch on the issue, according to the *Courier,* was based on three reasons. All of them revolved around the desires of the AFM's black constituents. First, some black locals had more money than white locals. Second, black musicians feared losing jobs to white musicians. They claimed that certain white musicians could use their power in the AFM to exercise complete control of their jurisdictions, thus shutting black musicians out of jobs. Third, black musicians feared that integration could result in a loss of representation in the union. A loss of representation meant an inability to shape union policy.[350] These reasons, coupled with tensions between black and white locals, encouraged black musicians to maintain their own separate unions.

Though at first reluctant to force integration, Kenin succumbed to public pressure, the press, and potential future litigation brought against the AFM. Kenin began to publicly praise any locals that integrated, such as Cleveland's Local 4 and Local 550. In

[347] "AFM has Key Issues at Pittsburgh Meet," *Pittsburgh Courier,* June 9, 1962, p. 21.

[348] "AFM has Key Issues at Pittsburgh Meet," *Pittsburgh Courier,* June 9, 1962, p. 21.

[349] "AFM Ignores Separate Locals Issue," *Pittsburgh Courier,* June 23, 1962; "Complete Harmony Sets Tone for AFM Sessions," *Pittsburgh Courier,* June 16, 1962.

[350] "AFM Ignores Separate Locals Issue," *Pittsburgh Courier,* June 23, 1962; "Complete Harmony Sets Tone for AFM Sessions," *Pittsburgh Courier,* June 16, 1962.

October of 1962, Kenin commended the merge of Cleveland's Local 4 (white musicians) and 550 (black musicians), claiming it was a stepping stone toward a "completely integrated international union."[351] He added, "The fraternal unity of our two long-established Cleveland locals sets an example that I trust will be followed in many other communities where separate white and Negro locals still exist." Kenin felt that black musicians were being unreasonable and slowing the integration process,

> "The achievement of our fundamental policy of a complete integration is a tedious process, mainly because many of our Negro locals are wary of surrendering the autonomy granted at their request a half century ago. Nevertheless, the AFM is dedicated to complete integration through orderly procedures that will protect the rights of all concerned."[352]

Each president of the Cleveland locals expressed their satisfaction with the merge. President Lee Repp of Local 4 said, "This merge is in the best interest of all members of the Federation. It is increasingly evident that the concept of dual autonomy is no longer tenable and feasible in view of mounting economic pressures and circumstances affecting adversely the employment of professional musicians." President W. Franklin Sympson of Local 550 said, "The merger should benefit all musicians and insure more efficient service to members and to the public. The intermingling of talents will lead to higher standards of performance."[353]

Still, not all locals supported integration. In fact, Alfred J. Manuli, New York's Local 802 President, found that in "99 percent of such cases it is the Negroes who do not

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[351] "Integration of Cleveland Locals Hailed by AFM Head," *Pittsburgh Courier,* Oct 13, 1962, p. 22.

[352] "Integration of Cleveland Locals Hailed by AFM Head," *Pittsburgh Courier,* Oct 13, 1962, p. 22.

[353] "Integration of Cleveland Locals Hailed by AFM Head," *Pittsburgh Courier,* Oct 13, 1962, p. 22.

want to integrate."[354] But a small constituency of young black musicians increasingly pushed for integration as they trickled into the AFM. These musicians were emboldened by CORE's campaign to desegregate and wholeheartedly believed in integrating society. In 1963, a member in Chicago's Local 208, Theodore "Red" Sanders, led a campaign to integrate Chicago's AFM locals. To do so, he gathered a group of 76 members to apply for membership to Local 10 and were admitted.[355] They hoped their dual membership in each union would be enough to convince the remainder of members from Local 208 to join Local 10. Or, perhaps national leadership would force the merge. However, the remaining members of Local 208 were hesitant to join and talks between the two stalled. Nearly a year later, Chicago's locals remained separate.[356]

Seeing no end in sight, President Kenin sent Hal Davis, President of Pittsburgh's Local 60, to facilitate talks between Chicago's Local 10 and 208. It appeared to the remaining members of Local 208 that Davis was forcing the two locals to integrate. In their words, he was "using a baseball bat" in his role as mediator.[357] James Mack, one of the members who held dual membership in both unions, found Davis's approach infuriating. "We don't think Hal Davis is the right man to conduct these talks," Mack exclaimed. "His entire attitude and methods indicate that he was sent here to act in the role of international 'whipping boy.' He has refused to let us have representation in these

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[354] "Union Tells of Plans to End Entertainment Discrimination," *Pittsburgh Courier,* Nov 10, 1962.

[355] "Chicago Musicians Integrate White Local in Cool Move," *Pittsburgh Courier,* Mar 30, 1963, p. 1.

[356] "Musicians Grapple Over Integration," *Pittsburgh Courier,* Oct 19, 1963, p. 1.

[357] "Chicago Music Locals Near Deadline on Merger of Units," *Pittsburgh Courier,* Mar 21, 1964, p. 18.

talks, when we are the ones directly concerned. We can't stand for the way things have been going, because the international, apparently, is out to set a precedent in this instance, and the union wants to appear as the big brother in this case. There is no excusable reason for putting a guy like that in charge of these talks, with his own house, back in Pittsburgh, in the shape that its in."[358] After Davis was sent, Mack backtracked on his desire to integrate, claiming that many of Chicago's "white [music] houses" have closed shop arrangements with Local 10. Unless this was resolved, Mack would not integrate. However, Mack did not have much of a choice.[359] In early 1964, AFM President Kenin warned that unless the Chicago units of the AFM reached a merger agreement by April 1, 1964, that the AFM would have to "take such action as may be deemed necessary to achieve the merger… with due regard to the rights and privileges of all concerned."[360]

With a firm date set, Chicago's Local 10 and 208 had no choice but to integrate. The two executive boards met days before their deadline to hammer out an agreement. At the time of the merge, Local 10 maintained 12,500 members, and Local 208 1,500. Due to the overwhelming majority of white musicians, Local 208's executive board asked that certain provisions be made that guaranteed their representation in the new local. Local 10 eventually agreed to appoint black delegates to AFM national conventions and the new local's executive board. The guarantee of black representation was temporary, however, and would end in 1970.

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[358] "Chicago Music Locals Near Deadline on Merger of Units," *Pittsburgh Courier,* Mar 21, 1964, p. 18.

[359] "Chicago Music Locals Near Deadline on Merger of Units," *Pittsburgh Courier,* Mar 21, 1964, p. 18.

[360] "Chicago Music Locals Near Deadline on Merger of Units," *Pittsburgh Courier,* Mar 21, 1964, p. 18.

By 1964, segregated musicians' unions still operated in forty-five cities, including Philadelphia, Cleveland, Milwaukee, Buffalo, Washington DC, Boston, Omaha, and Pittsburgh.[361] Locals in these cities, except for Chicago's Local 10 which was strong-armed into an agreement, remained segregated. Despite how determined black musicians were to control their own locals, they were forced to integrate after President Lyndon Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act into law on July 2, 1964. In addition to barring segregation on the grounds of race, religion, or national origin, the law directly prohibited labor organizations from excluding members based on race or from segregating their ranks.[362] Suddenly, locals had no choice. In 1964, AFM President Herman D. Kenin ordered all segregated AFM locals to integrate by the following year.

Pittsburgh's Local 471 was more reluctant than Chicago's Local 208 to integrate. Events in the early 1960s damaged the relationship between Local 60 and Local 471. In one instance, Local 60 President Hal Davis attempted to use his power to force one local night club owner, Ralph Mastrangelo, to hire Local 60's white musicians over Local 471's black musicians. Mastrangelo, owner of the Pittsburgh jazz club the Chateau, first began talks with Local 60 to hire jazz talents in the area. A contract that Hal Davis drew up for Mastrangelo mandated that the price scales included were "predicated on at least 75% Local 60 employment when music is used."[363] This clause would have limited Mastrangelo from hiring Local 471 musicians and from bringing in travelling talents.

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[361] Miller, "Racial Segregation and the San Francisco Musicians' Union," 162.

[362] A copy of the 1964 Civil Rights Act can be found here: https://www.eeoc.gov/laws/statutes/titlevii.cfm.

[363] "Federation Rules Against Local 471, Then Reverses Decision; New Era Opening Now?" *Pittsburgh Courier,* Aug 6, 1960.

Mastrangelo felt restricted and did not like being forced to hire Local 60 musicians over Local 471 musicians. In addition, hiring Local 60 musicians at least 75% of the time left Mastrangelo with little room to hire outside musicians for Chateau performances. For these reasons, Mastrangelo refused to sign the contract.

Hal Davis responded with a letter which threatened to place Mastrangelo's business on the "local and national unfair list." This official list, kept by the AFM, prevented those on the list from hiring any AFM musicians. For nightclubs like the Chateau, the inability to secure steady bands and musicians put their entire businesses at risk. Mastrangelo went to New York to refute this action to AFM President Herman Kenin. Kenin however, did not discuss the 75% clause. Instead, he claimed that since Mastrangelo had first tried to negotiate with Local 60, and because Local 60 was the principal local in Pittsburgh, that he must accept the contract with the 75% clause or be placed on the unfair list by August.[364] When Mastrangelo pointed to a contract that he wished to sign with Local 471, Kenin claimed that the contract had been forged by Local 471 to claim that his negotiations between Mastrangelo and Local 471 began before his negotiations with Local 60.

Despite Mastrangelo's persistence, President Kenin ordered that the Chateau be placed on the unfair list, preventing him from hiring any AFM musicians. Carl Arter, then the President of Local 471, wrote a letter to Kenin asking that Mastrangelo not be placed on the unfair list. Instead, he suggested, Mastrangelo could sign contracts with both Locals 60 and 471 as a solution and that the 75% clause could refer to musicians of

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[364] "Federation Rules Against Local 471, Then Reverses Decision; New Era Opening Now?" *Pittsburgh Courier,* Aug 6, 1960.

both locals. Kenin, wishing to avoid backlash and to quell tensions between the locals, agreed to Arter's solution and Mastrangelo's Chateau was removed from the unfair list.[365] Despite finding common ground, the Mastrangelo event worsened relations between the locals and stymied any desire among black musicians to integrate.

After President Kenin ordered the AFM to integrate following the Civil Rights Act, integration no longer became an option. The only question that remained were the terms of each agreement. Local 60 President Hal Davis recognized that white musicians of Local 60 could remain in power if he negotiated strategically and in terms similar to that of Chicago's merger. If representation was the biggest issue for Local 471 musicians, he would give it to them, but only temporarily. By introducing temporary leadership positions and reserving limited spots on the executive board for black musicians, Davis could ensure that white musicians could remain in power.

Pittsburgh's Local 60-471

Following the order to integrate, the executive boards of Pittsburgh's Local 60 and Local 471 reluctantly agreed to meet. Talks began during a series of special meetings to decide the details of the eventual merge. The first meeting was held at Local 60's headquarters on March 22, 1965. President Hal Davis of Local 60 and President Joseph Westray of Local 471, co-chairmen of the integration committee, called the meeting to order.[366] The meeting's agenda consisted of thirteen resolutions proposed by

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[365] "In the Foreseeable Future?: Locals 60 and 471 May Merge, But Past and Present Problems Must Be Forgotten," *Pittsburgh Courier,* Aug 13, 1960: 4.

[366] President Hal Davis of Local 60 eventually serve as AFM national president from 1970-1978.

Local 471 for the merger. Both locals hoped, as expressed by President Davis, that the merger could be completed "fairly and equitably to all concerned."[367] However, Local 471's members remembered the heavy-handed role that Davis had played in the integration of Chicago's AFM locals and resolved that they would not back down. Davis, on the other hand, was determined to achieve an agreement to integrate, but on his terms. He believed that offering temporary representation to Pittsburgh's Local 471, as he did in the Chicago case, might convince Pittsburgh's black musicians to merge. Despite their being forced by the AFM to merge, Davis continued, "The agreement to merge is far better than compulsion to do so."[368] Despite Davis's optimism, Local 471 members would leave the first meeting wary about the impending merge.

Both Executive Boards found it difficult to compromise around the issue of representation, concerns that had prompted African Americans at the 1957 national convention to sign a petition against integration. President Davis began the meeting asking, "How can we meet on common ground?"[369] Westray, concerned that Local 471 musicians would be swallowed by the much larger Local 60, answered, "It revolves around representation."[370] At the time of the first merger meeting, 1,950 white musicians operated within Local 60, six times the 324 members of Local 471.[371] Given that Local

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[367] Special Merger Meeting Minutes, March 22, 1965. Local 60-471 Collection: Box 5.

[368] Special Merger Meeting Minutes, March 22, 1965. Local 60-471 Collection: Box 5.

[369] Special Merger Meeting Minutes, March 22, 1965. Local 60-471 Collection: Box 5.

[370] Special Merger Meeting Minutes, March 22, 1965. American Federation of Musicians, Local 60-471, Pittsburgh, Pa. Records, 1906-1996 (AIS.1997.41). Box 5, Archives Service Center, University of Pittsburgh.

[371] Financial Summaries of Locals 60 and 471 within Special Merger Meeting Minutes, March 22, 1965. Local 60-471 Collection: Box 5.

60 dwarfed Local 471 in terms of membership, Executive Officers of 471 wanted assurance of representation at both the local and national levels.

Of the thirteen resolutions proposed, most revolved around the issue of representation. These happened to also be the most contested proposals. Every other item, except for a question concerning insurance which needed to be referred to the insurance provider, passed unanimously.[372] Concerning representation, Local 471 proposed six legislative changes. Local 471 requested a second office position to be created and reserved for an African American member and for that member to be paid a comparable salary to the Local 60 office staff. Local 60's executive board claimed, according to official minutes of the meeting, that "to create a new job, so to speak, is unwise and expensive."[373] In addition, Local 60 members claimed that there was not enough room in their office space for another employee.

The second issue concerned the timing of elections. Local 60 typically held elections every two years, with the next election scheduled for January 1967, nearly two years away. Local 471's executive board, fearing that they would be underrepresented at the local level, suggested that two current members of Local 471's executive board be added to Local 60's, thus forming the new Local 60-471 executive board. Local 471 proposed that this addition be made in January 1966 and that those two officers be automatically elected again in the 1967 election. This meant that two African Americans

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[372] Special Merger Meeting Minutes, March 22, 1965. Local 60-471 Collection: Box 5. The items passed unanimously included combining the assets of each local, matters of equal rights and membership tenure, renaming the union (The Pittsburgh Musical Society, Local 60-471) and agreeing on a date for the second merger meeting.

[373] Special Merger Meeting Minutes, March 22, 1965. Local 60-471 Collection: Box 5.

members would be guaranteed a space on the executive board from 1966 through 1968. Local 60 officials argued "at great length" over the proposition, and it was eventually tabled.[374]

Local 471 also proposed that three additional officers, chosen by Local 471 before the merge, be guaranteed positions on the Executive Board. In addition, they proposed that the merged local employ an Administrative Vice President from Local 471. As for the Administrative Vice President position, Davis said that there was no such comparable position in Local 60 at the time, and to add one would not be practical. Local 60 officers expressed disgust at the proposal for three executive board positions to be reserved for African American musicians. Local 60's executive board went so far as to claim that this proposal was "actually a type of segregation in reverse."[375] In addition, they considered these positions "contradictory and untenable," and thus should not be considered.[376] Local 60 representatives were clearly reluctant to provide black musicians with permanent representation on the executive board.

Local 471 wanted two African American delegates sent to AFM national conventions on behalf of black members in the integrated local. In addition, they asked that these members represent Local 471 for a period of six years. Local 60 agreed, as long as the six year term could be changed to "indefinitely," subject to future determination during a final merge agreement. If passed by the AFM International Office, there would thus be two delegates from (former) Local 471, two delegates from

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[374] Special Merger Meeting Minutes, March 22, 1965. Local 60-471 Collection: Box 5.

[375] Special Merger Meeting Minutes, March 22, 1965. Local 60-471 Collection: Box 5.

[376] Special Merger Meeting Minutes, March 22, 1965. Local 60-471 Collection: Box 5.

(former) Local 60, and one additional delegate who would be whoever the elected president was at the time. Local 471 also proposed, during a discussion for Item 10, that one delegate to AFM conventions permanently be reserved for an African American member. Local 60 objected, and this motion was removed from discussion.

Local 60 hardly conceded any ground during the first merger meeting, leaving tensions high between the locals. A second merger meeting was scheduled for April 19, 1965. In between the first and second meeting, Hal Davis encouraged Local 60's membership to agree to a deal on their own terms rather than other terms decided by national officials. By agreeing to certain terms with black musicians, such as *temporary* positions of leadership, white musicians felt they could secure their future in the union. With the merge scheduled for January 1, 1966, an agreement would have to be in place soon to facilitate the merge. In the second merger meeting on April 19, 1965, Local 60 unofficially agreed to: (1) hire an additional black office employee; (2) create an "Assistant to the President" position; and (3) expand the Executive Board to allow two temporary three-year positions for members of Local 471.[377] Westray claimed that Local 60 would "never agree on three [year] terms," and counter proposed six-year terms.[378] The Secretary-Treasurer reported that President Davis refused to compromise on the issue of permanent representation on the basis that "'Permanency' generally means 'forever.'"[379] Westray eventually gave in to demands, fearing that a deal facilitated by national leaders could be worse for black musicians.

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[377] Merger Meeting Minutes, April 19, 1965. Local 60-471 Collection: Box 5.

[378] Merger Meeting Minutes, April 19, 1965. Local 60-471 Collection: Box 5.

[379] Merger Meeting Minutes, April 19, 1965. Local 60-471 Collection: Box 5.

On May 17, 1965, Executive Boards of Locals 60 and 471 officially agreed to terms to integrate. The Executive Board would consist of nine members, three of whom would be from Local 471. In lieu of a Vice President, Local 60-471 would employ two "Assistants to the President," one being from Local 60 and the other from Local 471. In the case that a third assistant was needed, he/she would be appointed from Local 471. In addition, two African American delegates and two white delegates would attend AFM National conventions for the next six years, as well as the acting president. After a temporary six-year period Local 60-471 would hold open elections with "no mandated positions with former affiliation from either Local."[380] Before such an open election however, the agreement stated that the Local would revisit the issue of black representation if needed, and consider extending the temporary positions of leadership for black members. The agreement stated that the "election of the three Negro officers mentioned above shall be *considered* a permanent mandate of the merged union, guaranteeing continual Negro representation on the board and at the policy-making level of the merged union." This fell in line with the agreement's "Statement of Intent," which read, "It is our sincere desire to see the merged union after this five-year period, represented by officers from each of the former unions. As human beings, we will do everything reasonable within our power to see that this desire is consummated."[381] These terms would take effect on January 1, 1966, when Locals 60 and 471 merged into Local 60-471. Black musicians felt they negotiated a fair deal, despite the temporary

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[380] Merger Agreement, May 17, 1965. AAJPSP: Box 4, Folder 11.

[381] Merger Agreement, May 17, 1965. AAJPSP: Box 4, Folder 11.

guarantees. Once the agreement expired however, Local 60-471 never reconsidered the issue of black representation, despite the persistent urging to do so by its black constituents.

Post-Merge: 1966-1975

Black musicians benefited very little from the merge. In fact, they voiced multiple frustrations in later interviews. One major point of frustration was the mysterious disappearance of Local 471 records. Shortly after the merge, Local 471 moved their records to the third floor of Local 60's headquarters on Duquesne Street. This created confusion but did not seem to affect membership. Still, black musicians were skeptical. After being effectively stripped of their representation, African Americans expressed their skepticism in oral histories conducted thirty years later. Curtis Young suspected that former President Herb Osgood of Local 60-471 (successor to Hal Davis) destroyed the documents after he was voted out of office.[382]

A second issue of contention was the AFM pension fund. In order to draw funds after reaching the age of 55, members needed to individually contribute to their own pension. The more they contributed, the greater their return after retirement. Because black musicians of Local 471 had been largely prohibited from playing in more profitable areas of Pittsburgh from 1908-1965, they had been unable to contribute as much as white musicians to their pension funds. This issue was compounded after Local 471 records

[382] Interview with Curtis Young, June 9, 1995.

were "mysteriously" lost. With no records, Local 471 members could not prove their tenure in the union, which restricted many from receiving any benefits.

Once the temporary six-year period of representation concluded, moreover, black musicians lost any guarantees of representation. Black musicians were no longer guaranteed three of the nine executive board positions, one of two assistants to the president, and two of five delegates to AFM conventions. Immediately upon the expiration of the temporary positions, black musicians looked to implement permanent positions for black members. However, the all-white executive board did not agree and African Americans, the numerical minority, could never get enough numbers to vote any such by-law in.

After the period of temporary representation, black musicians were not able to send any delegates to national conventions to discuss discrimination or any other issues they saw fit. Only in 1977 did the AFM reverse this trend by allowing merged locals to send one extra black delegate to national conventions.[383] By this time, most black musicians had already withdrawn their membership from Local 60-471. Bitter feelings between black and white musicians, the politics of the merge, and the ineffectiveness of the new union for its African American constituents led black musicians to quit. Former member Jerry Bettors summed up black frustrations with white resistance when he said, "The majority of black musicians didn't get anything… and the majority of white musicians couldn't care less."[384]

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[383] According to Leta E. Miller, most black unions experienced a loss of representation after merging. Leta E. Miller, "Racial Segregation and the San Francisco Musicians' Union," 199.

[384] Interview with Jerry Bettors, July 1, 1997. AAJPSP: Box 1, Folder 7.

1968: The Result of Systematic Oppression

In the years and decades leading up to Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination, African Americans in Pittsburgh had experienced widespread discrimination. By the early 1960s, the promise of an additional 15,000 public housing units promised under the 1949 Housing Act had yet to materialize. Many families were displaced and others forced to live and rent with others. Rising tension sparked a new wave of activism in the African American community who mobilized first around the housing issue. In the mid-1960s, word spread that city officials were seeking more federal money to tear down the Middle Hill. This time though, a group of young civic leaders lead by local activist Byrd Brown mobilized to stop them. He and a group of other activists organized the Citizens Committee for Hill District Renewal and pressured the city to put money into improvement rather than destruction. The committee bought a billboard at the Southern edge of the Middle Hill, facing the Civic Arena and what once was the lower Hill (see Figure 6.1). It read, "Attention: City Hall and URA. No Redevelopment Beyond This Point." Brown mobilized the community with a slogan that later swept the nation, "Urban Renewal Means Negro Removal."[385]

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[385] Whitaker, *Smoketown,* 320-321.

Figure 6.1: Billboard purchased in 1969 by the Citizens Committee for Hill District Renewal reading, "ATTENTION: CITY HALL AND THE U.R.A.: NO REDEVELOPMENT BEYOND THIS POINT! WE DEMAND: LOW INCOME HOUSING FOR THE LOWER HILL. Courtesy of Carnegie Museum of Art, Charles "Teenie" Harris Archive. Accession number: 2001.35.9463

Activists like Brown were a part of a new wave of militant activism that swept the country in the late 1960s. These activists were fueled by decades of systematic oppression. In Pittsburgh, as in many other cities, urban renewal had divided and ripped at the social fabric of the black community. In early 1968, Carl Morris, a young black writer for the *Courier,* summed up African Americans' feelings of oppression in a three-part series called the "Black Mood in Pittsburgh."[386] In it, Morris wrote of the systematic oppression of African Americans in Pittsburgh. He harkened back to the failure that was urban renewal and how it left so many families worse off than they were before. Morris

[386] Carl Morris, "Black Mood in Pittsburgh," *New Pittsburgh Courier,* March 2, 9, 16, 1968.

warned the community that local militants had planned a "Burn Day" for May. According to Morris, militants intended to set fire to downtown buildings and show that they would no longer bound by Martin Luther King Jr.'s nonviolent approach. Before "Burn Day" though, news broke on the night of April 4 that King himself was assassinated.

Violence erupted in dozens of cities, including Pittsburgh.[387] Residents filled the streets and set fire to local establishments. While white businesses were the target, black businesses were far from safe. The Hill District, Lawrenceville, and lower Oakland were among the neighborhoods hardest hit. The *Courier* reported, "Scores of windows were smashed, stores were looted, a liquor store was razed in Herron Hill, streets were blocked and police cars stoned."[388] Around 9:30 p.m., "a gang of about 100 young Negroes gathered in the 1900 block of Center Avenue at a supermarket. They started marching toward Downtown, smashing windows and looting stores as they went."[389] Over the next two days, black neighborhoods of Homewood, Oakland, Hazlewood, and the North Side became sites of protest. Mayor Joseph Barr saw no end to the activity and pleaded with Pennsylvania Governor Raymond Shafter to dispatch National Guardsmen. Nearly 4,000 Guardsmen poured into the city to support 350 state troopers and the city's 1,400 police officers. 1,300 arrests were made, 500 fires put out or let burn, and $620,000 worth of property was destroyed.[390]

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[387] "King Assassinated in Memphis; Violence Erupts," *Pittsburgh Courier,* Apr 5, 1968: 1.

[388] "Pittsburgh Hit By Gangs in Hill District," *Pittsburgh Courier,* Apr 6, 1968: 1.

[389] "Pittsburgh Hit By Gangs in Hill District," *Pittsburgh Courier,* Apr 6, 1968: 1.

[390] Whitaker, *Smoketown,* 321-324.

To militant black activists, white businesses in black neighborhoods stood as symbols of white supremacy that needed to be torn down. In 1965, just three years before, 38% of Hill District business owners were white. White business owners tended to have higher annual gross figures, enabling them to extend credit to customers, something that nonwhite merchants often could not do. After the events of April 1968, one hundred white Hill District merchants met to discuss the future of their businesses. Only ten wanted to remain in the neighborhood. Even these ten would only stay if the city provided adequate security. The other ninety fled the Hill. Yet many still retained their property, limiting black ownership rates and control.[391]

The destruction of businesses in the Hill felt like another link in the chain of systematic oppression. After April 1968, all talk of saving the Middle Hill from redevelopment ceased. Many black residents left the Hill for the surrounding neighborhoods that would take them in such as Homewood, East Liberty, and Beltzhoover. Nightclubs that had relocated from the Lower Hill or still existed in the Middle and Upper Hills were gone. Black musicians had nowhere left to turn, and many laid down their instruments. For black musicians in Pittsburgh, the Civil Rights Act and desegregation did not break the system that oppressed them for decades. In fact, their opportunities for jobs decreased.

Resentment between white and black communities after April 1968 divided the two to an unprecedented degree. Just a week after King was assassinated, one columnist

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[391] Sam Spatter, "White Merchants Leaving Hill," *Pittsburgh Press,* Apr 9, 1968; Alyssa Ribeiro, "A Period of Turmoil: Pittsburgh's April 1968 Riots and Their Aftermath," *Journal of Urban History,* 39 (2), 156-158.

in the *Pittsburgh Courier* captured the resentment of the black community toward white America. He wrote:

> "Whitey has always tried to determine what black folks think and why they do things… He has been anti-black oriented all his life and now in a crisis he becomes an expert having only investigated the situation from the surface. The ghetto is a smoldering pot of frustration, bitterness, and poverty. There is no one reason for what happened last week. It's the result of years and years of anguish.[392]

White residents in black neighborhoods who heard these grumblings decided to pack up and leave. The looting and burning of April 1968 were the last straw for many white residents. After April 1968, whites feared violent protests like these would rise in number and in severity. This, and the perception of increased urban crime at both the local and national level, drove many whites out of the city. Most moved to the suburbs, joining other white residents who fled neighborhoods whose population was becoming increasingly African American. As a result, Pittsburgh became more segregated than it had ever been.

By the late 1960s, a community that had once come alive with the sounds of jazz, blues, and bebop was all but silenced. Black businesses had been destroyed, and many white customers preferred their suburban shopping malls rather to small shops in the inner city. The new racial climate dried up sources of employment for black musicians. They now had to look toward white-owned businesses for gigs, most of which were still closed off due to close relationships between owners and Local 60-471's white members. With nowhere left to turn, most remaining musicians rescinded their membership in the union, which meant they could no longer play professionally in Pittsburgh.

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[392] "Did Dr. King's Assassination Cause Riots?" *Pittsburgh Courier,* Apr 20, 1968: 4.

Black Musicians of Pittsburgh

By the early 1970s many African Americans had become skeptical of the idea that integration was the solution to the problems of racial inequality. As apparent in the case of many AFM locals, including those in Pittsburgh, integration minoritized African Americans in their own unions. White musicians dominated positions of power. African Americans still felt helpless in unions that temporarily nominated black musicians to executive board positions. After all, white musicians still had close relations with the most profitable businesses in town, which often meant black musicians never heard of possible jobs. Forced integration without any safeguards for the interests of the numerical minority destroyed possibilities of self-determination and self-governance that had existed in segregated locals.

In January of 1971, at the conclusion of temporary black representation in Local 60-471, black musicians were effectively removed from all positions of power.[393] Local 60-471's black members attempted to extend the 1964 merger agreement, but with little voting power and no members on the executive board, they were denied. In October of 1971, with few jobs available, 85 former members of Local 471 formed the Black Musicians of Pittsburgh (BMOP) and filed a class-action lawsuit against Local 60-471.[394] The BMOP claimed black union members were "racially discriminated against from

[393] In fact, with the exception of one temporary six month appointment, no black person served on Local 60-471's Executive Board until 2000. Robert Gorczyca, "Musician with a Mission," *Western Pennsylvania History* (Winter, 2010-11), 31.

[394] Civil Action Lawsuit Nos. 71-1008, 72-787. Black Musicians of Pittsburgh and George Childress et al. V. Local 60-471, American Federation of Musicians, AFL-CIO.

holding positions of union leadership and in union job referral practices."[395] When requests were made to the union for musicians, the requesting parties were referred to white musicians. This resulted, they claimed, in "an undetermined amount of lost work to black musicians."[396] The *Courier* added, "When musicians are needed for a recording session or to play with a visiting entertainer, a show or concert, the Union is called and according to BMOP members only white musicians are notified to report to work. As a result of this practice, most black musicians receive assignments only to the ghetto clubs and dance dates they had filled prior to the merger."[397] In addition to a cash settlement and back pay for lost performances, BMOP wanted a quota on jobs assigned to black union musicians and representation on Local 60-471's executive board.

The BMOP believed they had built a strong case. They hired Stanford professor and lawyer, William B. Gould, to represent them. Gould had previously won a $4,000,000 settlement for 250 black plaintiffs in which plaintiffs claimed Detroit Edison Company (DTE) deliberately discriminated against black electrical workers. Gould argued then that DTE had systematically relegated black employees to the lowest paying jobs. He borrowed that argument and claimed that Pittsburgh's black musicians had "been systematically excluded from better jobs downtown, in clubs and hotels."[398] Gould believed that the lack of a black representative after the temporary period contradicted the

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[395] Civil Action Lawsuits, 71-1008, 72-787.

[396] "Union Suit Charges Musicians Federation with Discrimination," *New Pittsburgh Courier,* Nov 20, 1971: 1.

[397] "Union Suit Charges Musicians Federation with Discrimination," *New Pittsburgh Courier,* Nov 20, 1971: 4-5.

[398] "Musicians Prepare for Legal Action," *Pittsburgh Courier,* May 11, 1974: 1.

"Statement of Intent" contained in the final merge agreement. It read, "It is our sincere desire to see the merged union after this five-year period, represented by officers from each of the former unions. As human beings, we will do everything reasonable within our power to see that this desire is consummated."[399] However, after black musicians attempted to extend the agreement, Local 60-471 refused. The BMOP believed that the temporary agreement encouraged white musicians to make no effort to undo discrimination, knowing that they would be relieved of the agreement in a matter of time. This attitude, the BMOP felt, was a violation of the "Statement of Intent." White musicians' actions were simply part of a "long, vicious record of racial injustice perpetrated on black musicians," said one spokesperson.[400]

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) conducted their own investigation. The EEOC concluded in October of 1971 that there was "reasonable cause to believe all respondents were engaged in unlawful employment practices." The EEOC's investigation led officials back to the early 1900s, to which the EEOC found,

> "The history of employment discrimination against black musicians in Pittsburgh dates back to the beginning of the century. The national doctrine of 'separate but equal' kept the walls of racial separation fortified and the doors of racial equality sufficiently closed… Repeated appeals by black members of Local 471 to eliminate the discriminatory pattern of employment fell on deaf ears on the national and local level, prior to the effective date of Title VII. Moreover, Local 60 enforced the status quo blocking opportunities of black musicians through the ouster of members of Local 471 from all-white clubs and imposing discipline in the form of suspensions and fines on black musicians who darted defy the ban… In addition, the Musicians Club of Local 471 was open to whites while the social club of Local 60 continued to exclude black musicians. Black musicians were also banned from the symphony orchestras and opera

[399] Merger Agreement, May 17, 1965. AAJPSP: Box 4, Folder 11.

[400] "Union Suit Charge Musicians Federation with Discrimination," *Pittsburgh Courier,* Nov 20, 1971: 1.

company until 1964."[401]

The EEOC believed this evidence was enough to prove discrimination and issued a right to sue letter to the BMOP on September 7, 1972.[402] After three years of litigation, the District Court for the Western District of Pennsylvania heard their case. Passed down from previous court rulings, "fair" representation in labor unions meant serving "the interests of all members without hostility or discrimination toward any, to exercise is discretion with complete good faith and honesty, and to avoid arbitrary conduct."[403] However, the court dismissed the case, ruling that "Plaintiffs apparently read *Vaca* and related cases to say that the duty of fair representation extends to any action a union takes toward its members which the members consider to be in derogation of their rights. We do not think the duty is that broad. The duty does not reach, into and control all aspects of the union's relationship with its members. The duty extends only to negotiating, administering or enforcing a collective bargaining agreement."[404] In addition, the court claimed that since the merger agreement had been negotiated with black musicians, white musicians of Local 60 only had to see out that agreement. There was no need for it to be extended.

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[401] EEOC Case #TPI-1134. Report found in AAJPSP Collection: Box 4, Folder 15.

[402] Civil Action Lawsuit Nos. 71-1008, 72-787. Black Musicians of Pittsburgh and George Childress et al. V. Local 60-471, American Federation of Musicians, AFL-CIO.

[403] The Court drew this definition from previous rulings of *Vaca v. Sipes* and *Humphrey v. Moore*. Civil Action Lawsuit Nos. 71-1008, 72-787. Black Musicians of Pittsburgh and George Childress et al. V. Local 60-471, American Federation of Musicians, AFL-CIO.

[404] Civil Action Lawsuit Nos. 71-1008, 72-787. Black Musicians of Pittsburgh and George Childress et al. V. Local 60-471, American Federation of Musicians, AFL-CIO.

Black musicians were disgusted at the ruling. Thomas "Doc" Miller, President of the BMOP, echoed the belief that black musicians had been victims of a long period of discrimination. He remarked, "We've made the music, gave American its cultural music and we haven't received the benefits."[405] Another member of the BMOP added, "We are now in a worse position now than the one that we had before Congress passed the Civil Right Act of 1964. At least then we had some leadership positions, our own hall and more work. Now black musicians have been driven out of leadership and the 'black jobs' to which we were relegated are diminishing."[406]

The BMOP appealed and the case was reviewed by on August 28, 1975. Black musicians were confident that they could win the appeal. One musician said, "We believe that our case can serve as a pattern for the nation. Black musicians have the same problems in other cities as well. Experience has taught us that the courts are our best hope - and not vague promises by those who have held us down for so many years."[407] However, the court did not rule in their favor.

After reviewing the case, the court claimed that black members had contributed to their own lack of representation. Members had withdrawn their membership, and those still in the union refused to attend meetings.[408] Furthermore, the court cited an issue in the 1974 election. President Herb Osgood had asked a "prominent" black union member to run for office. The court concluded that it seemed the black member was going to win

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[405] "Musicians Prepare for Legal Action," *Pittsburgh Courier,* May 11, 1974: 1.

[406] "Musicians Prepare for Legal Action," *Pittsburgh Courier,* May 11, 1974: 1.

[407] "Musicians Prepare for Legal Action," *Pittsburgh Courier,* May 11, 1974: 1.

[408] Civil Action Lawsuit Nos. 71-1008, 72-787. Black Musicians of Pittsburgh and George Childress et al. V. Local 60-471, American Federation of Musicians, AFL-CIO.

the election, but that he eased up on his campaign. Though he testified that white leadership was trying to use his election to thwart the pending court case, the court concluded that this was an example of the lack of active participation by black members.[409] In addition, the court concluded that black musicians' earnings improved since the merger, though it noted they could not determine the disparity in earnings between white and black musicians. The court ruled that no evidence was presented in which the defendants actively discriminated against black musicians and dismissed the case. The BMOP eventually filed an appeal to the United States' Supreme Court, but their case was never heard.[410]

Remembering Local 471

After the Supreme Court refused to hear their appeal, black musicians felt they had no other options. While some black musicians had held out hope after the merger, it became apparent after the BMOP civil action lawsuit failed that Local 60-471 would not benefit them. Many of the remaining members rescinded their membership, unwilling to pay dues to support what they saw as bigoted leadership. Only a few remained and only one remained active, trumpeter Charles Austin.

Austin stayed in the union in hopes that he could bridge the divide between white and black musicians. He believed he was in a unique situation to do so, based on his background and life experiences. Born in the greater Pittsburgh area, Austin came to

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[409] Civil Action Lawsuit Nos. 71-1008, 72-787. Black Musicians of Pittsburgh and George Childress et al. V. Local 60-471, American Federation of Musicians, AFL-CIO.

[410] The Supreme Court denied the writ of certiorari on February 22, 1977.

know and be a part of the Hill District and the politics of the community. After a messy divorce between his parents, he was sent to the suburbs to live with his grandparents. His grandparents raised him and gave him a trumpet at the young age of five. Austin took his first music lessons in elementary school at Ben Avon, a few miles downriver of Pittsburgh. The school had no formal music program, but he and fellow students studied with teacher Nick Lomakin after classes. In high school, Austin played with the school's marching band. Austin recognized that his musical training at a suburb school was likely much better than what inner-city students received. He claimed in an interview,

> "First of all, when I came through school, all I ever did was read music. I mean, for those six years, junior, through school. And I didn't know how to improvise, I didn't know anything about jamming and making a gig and that kind of thing, but if it's on paper, I'll play it. I'm not the best reader, but I can read fairly well… And, then, there was so much going on in the city, you know, I mean they would leave high school and they would hand out and do all their things."[411]

Austin also joined the high school dance band, which played popular jazz tunes of the day. He remembered that his grandfather, George Austin, founder and preacher of Mount Zion Baptist Church in Bellevue, strongly believed, "that popular music was the work of the devil." George Austin's motives were not only founded in his religion but lined up with Old Pittsburghers' strategy of respectability politics. If African Americans presented a "respectable" image by adhering to the practices of the white community, then white people would respect them. His grandparents gave him an ultimatum: quit the dance band or move out. Austin, part of a new generation that did not see any merits from the era of "respectability politics," chose the latter. He moved in with his father

[411] Cathy Cairns interview with Chuck Austin, Aug. 2, 1995. AAJPSP Collection: Box 1, Folder 3.

nearby and maintained a close relationship with his mother, Beaulah Wood. After the divorce, Beaulah had moved to the Hill District and was working as a waitress in several Hill District nightclubs. After Charles moved out of his grandparents' home, his mother regularly brought him to the clubs to listen and learn from the city's best players.[412] Charles Austin graduated from Avonworth High School in 1945 and joined the Navy. After serving for three years, Austin returned to the Hill District in 1948. Using funds from the G.I. Bill, Austin studied at the Pittsburgh Music Institute, a luxury that few musicians could afford. Meanwhile, Austin also joined Local 471.

Austin's background, experience as a young musician in Hill District clubs, and his formal training at the Pittsburgh Music Institute and in the Army put him in a unique situation. His ability to read sheet music and improvise were skills of both the classical and jazz worlds. Though he largely played jazz and improvised while experimenting with bebop, Austin could also compose and read sheet music. In effect, this gave him the ability to present a respectable image to white musicians. His skills encouraged him to strategically adopt his own version of respectability politics.

Moreover, Austin's training helped him lead a successful career after Local 60 and Local 471 merged. Shortly after the merge, Austin joined a band led by Jack Purcell, a white bandleader who during the 1950s and early 1960s had led an all-white band. Purcell was fairly progressive politically and believed in integration. After he saw Austin's abilities to improvise and play along with sheet music, Purcell hired him as the first black musician in his band. Some black musicians degraded Austin as a "traitor," an

[412] Robert Gorczyca, "Chuck Austin: Musician with a Mission," *Western Pennsylvania History,* Winter 2010-2011, p. 24-34.

"Uncle Tom," and a "House Nigger" for joining Purcell's band.[413] But Austin felt his path was the right one. For him, the opportunity to earn an income while bridging the racial divide was worth dealing with all the insults.

The insults might have been a symptom of systemic racism that put black musicians out of work. Most who did not have Austin's training found it harder to find bands to play with after the merge and thus had no choice but to rescind their memberships in the union. Austin's gig with Purcell's band did not pay all the bills. To supplement his income, Austin joined a band that entertained during Pittsburgh Steelers games, a gig that lasted seventeen years. Even that was not enough to support himself, a reason why many of his friends gave up on their musical careers. Austin also ran his own carpet cleaning business. He often headed straight to job sites after playing late the night prior. Though Austin still struggled financially as a musician, his classical training allowed him to continue his musical career while other musicians could not, a fact that they resented.

In 1996, Austin read a copy of Paul De Barros's *Jackson Street After Hours: The Roots of Jazz in Seattle.* The plight and success of Seattle's black jazz musicians reminded Austin of Pittsburgh's musical history. It motivated him to organize the African American Jazz Preservation Society of Pittsburgh (AAJPSP) in 1996, an organization dedicated to finding and preserving Pittsburgh's musical heritage and the memory of the men and women of Local 471 who built that heritage. Austin kicked off an oral history project that aimed to capture the memories of many members of Local

[413] Robert Gorczyca, "Chuck Austin: Musician with a Mission," *Western Pennsylvania History,* Winter 2010-2011, p. 24-34.

471. From 1996-1999, Austin interviewed 72 former Local 471 members, all of whose stories are currently housed at the University of Pittsburgh. In the AAJPSP interviews, Austin and each musician discuss a variety of topics. They talk about each other's background, career as a musician, fellow musicians, bands they used to play in, the music industry, the music scene in Pittsburgh, the history of Local 471, Local 471's merge with Local 60, the lawsuit between Local 60 and the Black Musicians of Pittsburgh, and advice they would give to younger musicians.

The AAJPSP interviews reveal several themes. First, African Americans musicians faced prejudice, no matter where they went. Jerry Bettors, one musician who played in white clubs during the 1940s and 1950s in Pittsburgh, remembered frustrating issues at white clubs. When he toured with an all-African American band, managers often set up a separate bar so the band could not intermingle with white customers. When he was the sole black member of an otherwise-white band, managers forced him to wait in hot kitchens, separate from the rest of the band, before taking the stage.[414] Trumpeter Al Aarons vividly recalled his experience with segregation while on tour in San Antonio, where he had to drink from separate water fountains. A restaurant manager informed him that he could not eat in the diner with the remainder of his band and instead had to eat in the kitchen.[415] Drummer Cecil Brooks II remembered a manager who refused to allow the otherwise white band to play "unless they got rid of me."[416] Local 471 musicians faced discrimination no matter the city. Pittsburgh, a city in which public

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[414] Interview with Jerry Bettors, July 1, 1997. AAJPSP Collection: Box 1, Folder 7.

[415] Interview with Al Aarons, Nov 7, 1999. AAJPSP Collection: Box 1, Folder 1.

[416] Interview with Cecil Brooks II, Oct 24, 1995. AAJPSP Collection: Box 1, Folder 11.

accommodations were legally desegregated by the Pennsylvania legislature in 1887, still unofficially practiced segregation. Saxophonist Hosea Taylor recalled, "Jim Crow was very much in effect in and around Pittsburgh back in the forties. The fact that Pittsburgh was quite a ways north of the Mason Dixon Line didn't mean a damned thing."[417] Local 471 musicians also felt discrimination in the jobs available to them within the city. White musicians "got all the best jobs," according to Cecil Brooks II. "Any job of any note that would come in they would get the jobs. We got something I guess if they couldn't get somebody else."[418] In addition to numerous incidents, black musicians received lower payments, were prohibited from cafes and restaurants on the road, and were rarely permitted to eat or sleep at the hotels they performed at. Discrimination was almost inescapable.

Second, the Musicians' Clubhouse was remembered fondly by all former Local 471 musicians. While every musician had various opinions on subjects such as the merge, one topic they all agreed on was the clubhouse. For nearly two decades, the clubhouse provided black musicians with things that they could not find at other venues, in other cities, or the AFM itself. Local 471 members warmly recalled memories of life-long friendships or bands that they played or listened to while at the clubhouse. Friendships they forged at the clubhouse were arguably the most important aspect of the clubhouse, as a majority of nearly every interview consists of Austin and the interviewee discussing friends, bands, and the clubhouse.

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[417] Taylor, *Dirt Streets,* 125.

[418] Interview with Cecil Brooks II, Oct 24, 1995. AAJPSP Collection: Box 1, Folder 11.

Third, everyone's background, especially whether they received classical music training in their youth, played a large factor in the path each musician took after the forced integration of the white and black locals. Most musicians who had had classical training continued their membership with Local 60-471, despite its failings and the politics of the merge. These musicians found job openings in white bands or had the skills necessary to play gigs such as halftime shows at Pittsburgh Steelers games. Pianist Walt Harper had one of the strongest and most successful careers of any musician that stayed within the city. He formed his first group in the mid-1940s and continued to play until his death in 2006. Harper's background and classical training, much like Charles Austin, gave him an ability to play styles of music that black and white audiences enjoyed. Harper's style enabled his financial success.

Black musicians who did not have classical training were not as welcomed into white bands after the merge. Musicians who grew up in the inner-city and improvised or played from heart did not have these same opportunities. Drummer Cecil Brooks II, for example, began playing piano at age eleven but never had the classical training that Harper and Austin had. In fact, when Brooks applied to join the union, Local 471 decided to ignore the AFM mandated reading test. "Some of us got past that," Brooks recalled.[419] Brooks dove headfirst into bebop in the 1940s, and he was one of the most renowned bebop musicians for his ability to improvise songs from memory. After the merge, however, Brooks's inability to read sheet music prevented him from finding gigs. He rescinded his membership shortly after the merge.[420]

[419] Interview with Cecil Brooks II, October 24, 1995. AAJPSP Collection: Box 1, Folder 11.

[420] Interview with Cecil Brooks II, October 24, 1995. AAJPSP Collection: Box 1, Folder 11.

Fourth, everyone's background and path they took after the merge shaped their memories of Local 471. Those with classical training and the ability to get jobs after the merge, such as Charles Austin, viewed the white Local 60 in a more positive light than those that did not. Austin's relative success diluted any negative feelings toward Local 60-471. He himself recognized that he was fortunate to not have "some of the bitterness and angry feelings that a lot of former 471 members have, but I can understand their frustrations. I don't have them because I slipped into a situation where I'm playing, I'm working, I'm doing a lot of country clubs, class engagements, a lot of major shows that have come through Pittsburgh."[421] In many interviews, Austin pushes back against other musicians who expressed their distaste with Local 60's white musicians. For example, in the interview between Austin and Harold Betters, the two discuss how they viewed the merge differently from other black musicians. Austin claims that black musicians could have been better off had they not rescinded their memberships. He continues by saying, "The merge was to have benefitted us, you know, if those of us that were on the sidelines had looked at it that way.[422]

Austin was not the only black musician with classical training. Harold Betters, another Local 471 musician, also speculated that his background helped him continue his career after the merge. Betters was born on March 21, 1928 in Connellsville, Pennsylvania, a town fifty miles away from the center of Pittsburgh. Betters' parents made music a center of their lives, and he and his other six siblings all learned to play instruments before the age of eight. Harold himself received his first trombone in the

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[421] Cathy Cairns interview with Chuck Austin, August 2, 1995. AAJPSP Collection: Box 1, Folder 3.

[422] Interview with Harold Bettors, March 22, 1996. AAJPSP Collection: Box 1, Folder 6.

third grade. Harold and his siblings practiced their craft in the school band and dance bands throughout their middle and high school days. In High School, his music director never let him play jazz. After graduating, Betters enlisted in the Army, and moved to New York for a short period, where who continued his musical education at Brooklyn's Conservatory of Music before returning to Pittsburgh. After the merge, Betters recorded fourteen albums and started a band that played at halftime of Pittsburgh Steelers games. For Austin and Betters, their success after the merge was a result of their rich music background and ability to read sheet music.

Job prospects were bleak for black musicians who did not have classical training and largely grew up in the inner-city. Cecil Brooks II did not have classical training and was not able to acquire the gigs that Austin, Harper, or Bettors did. Austin recognized this in his interview with Harold Bettors when he said, "The suburbs area, I think, did a little more in preparing the guys, you know, in reading in learning a legitimate form of music. They city guys, they were too busy - and I don't want to say they were too busy, being hip. And I'm not saying that they were slow readers, but you know, in the suburban area you got and end up being the only black."[423] This contributed to feelings of animosity among black musicians toward white musicians of Local 60, the merge, and Local 471. In fact, while other musicians warmly remembered jam sessions between white and black musicians, Brooks believed that white musicians of Local only came to the clubhouse to "steal their music" and "learn our beats and what we had going."[424]

[423] Interview with Harold Bettors, March 22, 1996. AAJPSP Collection: Box 1, Folder 6.

[424] Interview with Cecil Brooks II, October 24, 1995. AAJPSP Collection: Box 1, Folder 11.

Concerning the merge, Brooks himself believed that black musicians "haven't seen the light of day" since the merger.[425]

Finally, classical training and the ability to read sheet music were profoundly important to Austin and other classically trained musicians. Austin believed that training in suburban schools, where he was the only black marching band member, taught skills that were necessary for black musicians. Meanwhile, "city schools, whatever they were doing, didn't compare with what you were getting in your [to Harold Bettors] high school musical background," Austin noted.[426] Austin concluded most interviews by asking interviewees one piece of advice that they would offer to young aspiring musicians. When he asked for one piece of advice from Walt Harper, Harper succinctly stated, "Learn how to read."[427]

The memories contained in the AAJPSP interviews also illuminate the resourcefulness of African American musicians. If only for a brief time in the larger history of Local 471, the Musician's Clubhouse stood as a beacon for Pittsburgh's black musicians. Only through their action in founding the clubhouse did they sustain careers for more than a decade.

Despite the creative and strategic actions of Local 471 musicians, they could not overcome the system that oppressed them. AAJPSP interviews reveal a complicated history that demonstrates how music is a function of much broader, political, economic,

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[425] Interview with Cecil Brooks II, October 24, 1995. AAJPSP Collection: Box 1, Folder 11.

[426] Interview with Harold Bettors, March 22, 1996. AAJPSP Collection: Box 1, Folder 6.

[427] Interview with Walter Harper, July 21, 1997. AAJPSP Collection: Box 2, Folder 3.

and social conditions. These conditions were often determined and founded on notions of race. Prejudice penetrated the AFM and the music industry, shutting black musicians out of profitable venues, theater, radio, and the recording industry. Notions that belittled black music, black musicians, and black culture perpetuated the system. They revealed themselves when Pittsburgh city councilman George Evans commented that the destruction of the Hill District would result in "no social loss."[428] Integration, thought by many to be a possible solution, did not benefit black musicians.

The systematic racism that penetrated the music industry continued to affect Local 60-471 and Pittsburgh's black musicians into the 21st century. There is perhaps no more powerful example than Charles Austin's continual fight to end discrimination in Local 60-471. Despite prejudice among white musicians, the stripping of black representation in the AFM, and friends' decisions to withdraw their membership, Austin persevered. Through all of this, Austin still believed that the only way forward for black musicians was through the union movement. In 2000, Austin's perseverance won him election to Local 60-471's executive board, the first African American since the merge and in thirty years. Austin held the position for over a decade. While in office, he proposed the union implement a hiring diversity program, but the proposal was never considered by members.[429] Local 60-471's indifference toward black members and its near-exclusive status for white musicians was simply too much for one man to overcome.

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[428] George Evans, "Here is a Job for Postwar Pittsburgh: Transforming the Hill District," Greater Pittsburgh, July-August 1943. My emphasis added.

[429] Robert Gorczyca, "Chuck Austin: Musician with a Mission," *Western Pennsylvania History,* Winter 2010-2011, p. 24-34.

VII. CONCLUSION: CODA

The history of Locals 60 and Local 471 has many stories. One is that of discrimination. From the founding of the AFM, white musicians attempted to corner the market for themselves. To do so, they drew racist distinctions based on musical styles: white classical musicians were cultured while black jazz musicians were "clowns."[430] White musicians leveraged racism to encourage the public and managers of theater, record, and radio to listen to and hire white classical musicians. Their actions not only impacted the music industry, but also shaped white opinions of African American culture. Through these efforts, Local 60's musicians became pivotal actors in the larger trajectory of U.S. racial politics. Their actions in the early twentieth century contributed to a feeling among some white Americans that African American culture had little to no value.

The history of Local 471 is also a story of African American determination and resourcefulness. When all but shut out of the most lucrative and steady jobs, black musicians of Local 471 founded the Musicians' Clubhouse, which served black musicians for decades. Black musicians not only benefited financially but also emotionally as they bonded with other musicians. The Clubhouse was a space in which black musicians could practice and play free of the demands of the market. Decades later, when the history was all but lost, one man, Charles Austin, worked countless hours to capture and preserve it in the memories of former members.

[430] *President's Letter,* November 14, 1921.

In recent decades, writers filmmakers, museum curators, and tour guides have promoted music as a space in which the races have come together as equals and as friends.[431] The AFM's own website glosses over decades of struggle within itself:

> The only object of AFM is to bring order out of chaos and to harmonize and bring together all the professional musicians of the country into one progressive body," said AFM's first President Owen Miller in 1896. 120 years later, AFM musicians continue standing together to have power. Now we are 80,000 musicians strong playing in orchestras, backup bands, festivals, clubs and theaters—both on Broadway and on tour. We also make music for film, TV, commercials and sound recordings.

Musicians themselves perpetuate this view. Statements like "racism did not exist" or "there is no black and white music, only good music" are commonplace in the discourse. Former President of Local 471 Joe Westray remembered, "It was just like we didn't notice segregation [because] we had everything right here."[432]

These romanticized presentations of music contradict the reality of what most musicians in the AFM experienced. Music was another realm in which color lines were drawn. These lines were often very distinct, such as the divide between classical and jazz. Black musicians were relegated to playing in certain venues and in certain neighborhoods. The AFM's official policy of segregation bred contempt between white and black musicians. Nothing structured American musicians' work more than race. While interracial colorations did exist and should be celebrated, one must properly

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431 Exhibits at the Country Music Hall of Fame and the Memphis Rock n' Roll Museum all centralize interracial collaborations in their presentations, and both of them present a simplfied version of integration as an overwhelming success.

432 Interview with Joe Westray, Nov. 13, 1997. AAJPSP Collection: Box 3, Folder 17.

contextualize them. For most rank-and-file musicians, they did not exist prior to 1965, and to a degree, less so in the immediate aftermath of the integration of the AFM.

This dissertation also demonstrates that integration was a complex issue. For black musicians of Local 471, integrating their ranks within the union was not something that excited them. In fact, most black musicians throughout the AFM opposed it. Integration did not lead to true equality. In this case, integration striped away African American representation and a source of income for those musicians that felt no way out but to rescind their memberships and quit playing.

Today, a historical marker sits where the Musicians' Clubhouse used to stand (see Figure 7.1). In the heart of the Hill District, with a massive concrete parking lot that once was the Civic Arena nearby, the plaque reads,

> "Organized in 1908, this local was one of the first African American musicians unions in Pennsylvania. Pittsburgh was the forefront of the jazz world in the mid-20th century, and jazz greats Mary Lou Williams, Art Blakey, Ray Brown, George Benson, among others, were members. A controversial merger with the white union local in the 1960s ended one of the oldest black union organizations in the U.S. Headquarters was nearby, 1940-1954."

Figure 7.1: Local 471 Historical Marker. Courtesy of the Pennsylvania Labor History Society: https://palaborhistorysociety.org/labor-markers/

Thanks to Charles Austin and other black musicians in Pittsburgh, more than a historical marker remains of Local 471. Instead, the memories of over seventy former members remain, telling of an important chapter in American history.

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